

# **THE REDEEMED CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF GOD (RCCG), NIGERIA. LOCAL IDENTITIES AND GLOBAL PROCESSES IN AFRICAN PENTECOSTALISM**

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## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

<b>AFC</b>	Apostolic Faith Church
<b>AFM</b>	Apostolic faith Mission (of South Africa)
<b>AGO</b>	Assistant General Overseer
<b>BAC</b>	British Apostolic Church
<b>C&amp;S</b>	Cherubim and Seraphim Movement
<b>CAADs</b>	Church Asset Acquisition and Development Scheme
<b>CAC</b>	Christ Apostolic Church
<b>CAC</b>	Corporate Affairs Commission
<b>CADAM</b>	Campaign Against Drug Abuse Ministry
<b>CBN</b>	Christian Broadcasting Network
<b>CCC</b>	Celestial Church of Christ
<b>CEB</b>	City Express Bank
<b>CGG</b>	Church of the Glory of God
<b>CHGS</b>	Campus Holy Ghost Service
<b>CHURPMAS</b>	Church Planting and Missions Account
<b>CJC</b>	Church of Jesus Christ (Nigeria)
<b>CMM</b>	Camp Maintenance Manager
<b>CMS</b>	Church Missionary Society
<b>CREMAS</b>	Church Remittance Account Scheme
<b>CRFU</b>	Christ the Redeemer's Friends Universal
<b>CRM</b>	Christ the Redeemer's Ministries
<b>CRMC</b>	Christ the Redeemer's Ministries on Campus
<b>CRSM</b>	Christ the Redeemer's School Movement
<b>CRWS</b>	Christ the Redeemer's Welfare Service
<b>CSCs</b>	Campus Secret Cults
<b>CSW</b>	Commercial Sex Worker
<b>DCE</b>	Directorate of Christian Education
<b>DGO</b>	Deputy General Overseer
<b>DLBC</b>	Deeper Life Bible Church
<b>DTE</b>	Directorate of Teens Education
<b>FBB</b>	Our Fundamental Beliefs in the Bible

<b>FESTAC</b>	World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture
<b>FGBMFI</b>	Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International
<b>FHI</b>	Family Health International
<b>FYL</b>	Follow Your Leader
<b>GO</b>	General Overseer
<b>GS</b>	General Superintendent
<b>HGC</b>	Holy Ghost Congress
<b>HGN</b>	Holy Ghost Night
<b>HGS</b>	Holy Ghost Service
<b>IBI&amp;LTS</b>	International Bible Institute and Leadership Training School.
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IPCC</b>	Interpersonal Counselling and Communication
<b>JCS</b>	Jubilee Cooperative Society
<b>JDF</b>	Jubilee Development Foundation
<b>KICC</b>	Kings International Christian Church
<b>MBI</b>	Minaj Broadcasting International
<b>MCH</b>	Marriage Counselling Handbook
<b>MZH</b>	Mount Zion Hour
<b>NCE</b>	National Certificate of Education
<b>NEPA</b>	National Electric Power Authority
<b>NFVCB</b>	Nigeria Film and Video Censors Board
<b>NRM</b> s	New Religious Movements
<b>NUC</b>	National Universities Commission
<b>NYSC</b>	National Youth Service Corps
<b>OAU</b>	Obafemi Awolowo University (formerly, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria)
<b>OBV</b>	Outside Broadcasting Van
<b>PHE</b>	Peer Health Educators
<b>RAC</b>	Redeemed Apostolic Church
<b>RAC</b>	Redeemed Apostolic Church
<b>RAPAC</b>	The Redeemed AIDS Programme Action committee
<b>RBA</b>	Redeemer's Business Academy
<b>RC</b>	Redeemed Church

<b>RCCF</b>	Redeemed Christian Corpers Fellowship
<b>RCCG CommCentre</b>	RCCG Communication Centre
<b>RCCG</b>	Redeemed Christian Church of God
<b>RCCGINTSTRAT</b>	RCCG Internet Strategy
<b>RCCGNA</b>	Redeemed Christian church of God North America
<b>RCF</b>	Redeemed Christian Fellowship
<b>RESCOM</b>	Redeemed Christian School of Missions
<b>RG</b>	Redemption Guard
<b>RTVM</b>	Redemption Television Ministry
<b>RUN</b>	Redeemer's University for Nations
<b>SAP</b>	Structural Adjustment Programme
<b>SOD</b>	School of Disciples
<b>TAC</b>	The Apostolic Church
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organisation

## **Part 1: Introduction**

### **Chapter 1**

#### **Historical Background, Method and Scope**

##### **1.1 The Object of the Study and its Context**

The motto of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) is “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever”. This is a text derived from New Testament book of Hebrew (13:8). This text summarises the central rule of behaviour as well as organising principle of the church. However, the same “changelessness” which is attributed to Jesus Christ by the text of the church’s motto, cannot be said of the church itself. Established fifty-one years ago in a suburb of Lagos, Nigeria, the RCCG has gone almost full circle through the vicissitudes of “days of small things” to periods of intense evangelistic fervour and search for doctrinal anchor and purity, to the present explosion into socio-political power, economic privilege and spiritual aristocracy. This history of the RCCG bears out a central truth of the New Testament, which is summarised neatly thus: the world as we know it is changing (1 Cor. 7:31b). This study investigates and documents the changes that have taken place in the history of RCCG from inception to the present.

At the beginning of the present study in 2000, the basic facts about RCCG could be stated thus: The RCCG is a church in Nigeria established in 1952. It is a member of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), the umbrella body of pentecostal churches in the country. RCCG’s founder and first leader was the Reverend Josiah Olufemi Akintoye. He was converted into Christianity from Yoruba traditional religion, particularly *Ogun* worship by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Ondo town in the early 1920s. Some years later he joined the Eternal Sacred Order of Cherubim and Seraphim movement (C&S), one of the early *Aladura* movements in Yorubaland and rose to the rank of apostle and prophet. In 1952 he left the C&S authority and he established his own religious group which became known as the Redeemed Christian Church of God. When this founder died in 1980, the group had grown to have 39 branches in the southwest region of Nigeria. Before Josiah died, he had appointed a successor, Dr Enoch Adeboye, who was then a lecturer at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. In 1981 the successor took over office as leader. It was during this period that the church rapidly expanded both in Nigeria and outside the country. By the middle of

2000, the RCCG had more than three thousand branches, with close to a hundred of these established outside the country. This church is the object of the present study. However, in order to understand the history of the RCC, it is necessary to describe briefly the social and political context in which it exists.

Nigeria is a religiously plural society made up of people who practise a diversity of religions. This religious diversity is illustrated firstly by the existence of three main religious groups, namely: the adherents of traditional religions often called African Traditional Religions (ATR), Muslims and Christians. Secondly, each of these three traditions is internally diverse, particularly Christianity. Within Christianity alone, there exists a great amount of diversity in terms of smaller strands of traditions and churches and ministries. The first attempts to christianise Nigeria were in the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries when Portuguese commercial boats sailed to Warri with Roman Catholic missionaries. The missionaries were able to get to the kingdom of Benin, made some converts and built some churches, but these attempts did not last (Ojo 1998). The second attempts to bring Christianity to Nigeria was in 1842, this time, it came in its institutional variety. In 1842 and 1843 the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society respectively sent missionaries to Badagry in Nigeria to assist former slaves from Freetown. From this period on, different mission churches such as the Baptists, the CMS and the Roman Catholic Church founded different missions in the country. The mission churches made their initial converts from members of the indigenous religions and sometimes from Islam in parts of the country with Muslim population such as the Yorubaland. In such places as Peel (2000) shows, it was Islam and Christian missions that competed for the souls of members of indigenous religions.

By March 1888 the first case of a break away from a mission church took place. This was the founding of the Native Baptist Church by some Yoruba laity who seceded from the American Baptist Mission as a result of their opposition to American missionary leadership (Ayegboyin and Ishola 1997: 14). This event marked the inauguration of an unprecedented phenomenon of indigenous forms of Christianity, as the United Native African Church was established in 1891. Soon after, there were schisms and secessions from the mission churches, a situation that further diversified the religious landscape. This early strand of indigenous Christianity is designated as Ethiopianism, a term first used by Bengt Sundkler (1961: 55) to describe incidences of this type among the Zulu of South Africa, and interpreted as the rebellion of local Christians against White missionary domination.

By the 1920s, the second wave of independent churches, often seen as the local appropriation of Christianity, emerged through the Aladura movement in Yorubaland. The Aladura churches are part of the movement of indigenous churches in Africa which soon became very popular among Nigerians especially in the southwest. Some scholars have argued that this movement was motivated by the desire to make missionary Protestantism relevant to the practical needs of the Yoruba (Mitchell 1970c). The hallmark of the Aladura movement is the vibrant worship sessions, the appropriation of elements of the traditional worldview such as belief in spiritual powers, mystical forces and spiritual healing. As a consequence of this, some of these churches were soon described as blending occultic materials with Christianity (Kalu 1998), synthesising Yoruba worldview with Christianity (Ray 1993) or as a form of “syncretism” (Enang 2000: 31).

The third wave of local appropriation of Christianity, according to Kalu (1998; 2000), occurred in the 1930s and 1940s when, through a dynamic process of increased understanding of Christianity as well as interaction with external forces (foreign pentecostal groups and their tracts, magazines, books) and cultural demands, an indigenous form of pentecostalism emerged. This new form of religious groups was different from both the mission churches and the AICs. The groups showed more reliance on the Bible which was literarily interpreted; they also sought local relevance by insisting that they were capable of delivering this-worldly services such as healing and deliverance or protection from evil spirits and persons (witches, wizards, sorceries, etc.). These churches soon proliferated, further diversifying the religious landscape of the country.

There are three discernible strands even within this “third wave” of the emergence of local Christianity. The first strand represents what is usually regarded as “classical indigenous pentecostal churches” which were established in the 1940s, for example, Gospel Faith Mission and Salem Gospel Mission (Ojo 1998: 26). The second strand was the emergence of charismatic movements as distinct groups within the structures of some mission churches such as the Roman Catholic and the Anglican churches. Historically, these movements started in the 1960s and 1970s as internal renewal movements pioneered by youth wings or fellowships from within these churches. Within the Catholic Church, this renewal started at the Dominican Community at Samanda in Ibadan in 1972 (Holt 1977). The third strand within the third wave was the proliferation of neo-pentecostal groups, ministries, parachurches and churches with distinctive theological and leadership structure

(Marshall 1993). Each of these three strands led to further diversity in Christian groups and practices.

Religious diversity in Nigeria is guaranteed by the 1999 Constitution of the country which prohibited the adoption of any religion as “state religion”, thus: “The government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion” (Chapter 1, art. 10). This provision, regarded as the “non-establishment norm” is the legal framework for the exercise of individual right to religious freedom. This freedom is stipulated in the same constitution in this way:

Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance (Chapter IV, art. 38.1).

Although the 1999 Constitution does not use the word, Nigeria is politically a “secular” state considering the “non-establishment norm”. In practice, however, religion occupies an ambiguous situation as the state meddles in religious matters, for example, by subsidising pilgrimages and religious festivals, appointing the leader of Muslims in the country (the Sultan of Sokoto) and funding the construction of places of worship such as mosques and Christian ecumenical centre in Abuja. Muslims and Christians benefit from overt and covert state patronage, but member of indigenous religions are marginalised. An obvious case may be the establishment of military chaplaincy for Christians and Muslims without any provision for members of indigenous religious. Religion is neither fully established nor totally disestablished and free from governmental interference.

The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) was a marker in the transformation of these local pentecostal churches. Campus Christianity which infiltrated tertiary institutions in the southwest of Nigeria from Britain and the United States of America soon introduced a new form of dynamism. This was seen in the American-style prosperity preaching, the use of market or business strategies in church organisation and evangelism. In the area of doctrine, there was much emphasis on being “Born Again”, paying tithes, speaking in tongues and post-conversion experiences. The pentecostal field proliferated during this period as the economy of the country came increasingly under stress and there was mass unemployment. As politicians and military officers engaged in what Gore and Pratten

(2003) call “politics of plunder”, pentecostalism expanded, an observation Peel (2000: 314) had made earlier when he wrote that the pentecostal movement “expanded faster even as economic and political conditions worsened in the 1980s”. Prolonged military misrule resulted in economic mismanagement, and sanctions by the West precipitated an economic melt-down which exacerbated the socio-economic conditions of the masses. Expansion and proliferation brought about increased competition and rivalry for membership, worship space and other socio-economic resources. This introduced unprecedented changes in the countries religious situation. As David Martin (2002: 152) rightly observes, there was also a shift in the old pentecostal churches from a “humble egalitarian fellowship to a bureaucratic church under an authoritarian personality”, which applies to the RCCG.

The Nigerian religious situation, observes Rosalind Hackett (1987: xiv) “merits sensitive and ongoing analysis and a balanced consideration of both internal and external factors”. Although scholars generally acknowledge the influence of pentecostalism as a political and economic force in Nigeria, there exist few analyses of its social and cultural influence. The present study responds to Hackett’s suggestion by investigating “both internal and external factors” in the history and transformation of the RCCG. This study documents the emergence of RCCG and relates this to contemporary trends of increased social interconnectivity, often conceptualised as globalisation.

## **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

From what is generally known about the church, several questions arise which form the objectives of our study.

The church extended faster within the nineteen-year period (1981-2000) after the death of its founder than the previous twenty-eight year (1952-1980) period. This study intends to account for this phenomenal growth of the church during the post-founder period. What factors have facilitated the expansion of the RCCG in both Nigeria and outside the country? The late twentieth century, which was the period of rapid growth for the RCCG, is also generally recognised as the era of globalisation (Giddens 1990; 2000; Robertson 1992; Held *et al.* 1999). Pentecostalism is also regarded by some scholars as an aspect of “global culture” (Poewe 1994; Varga 1999; Berger 2000; Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001; Jenkins 2002). As a member of the PFN which exercised influence in the entire

country, in what ways can the expansion of RCCG be accounted as a form of religious globalisation?

Two aspects of globalisation have been highlighted in the literature: one, the assimilation of external ideas and influences, and two, the spreading outward of specific ideas and practices. If the first is the appropriation of global influences, the second is the exercise of global aspiration. Some scholars have argued that expansion of pentecostalism in Africa is because of incorporation of external influences and the cultivation of instruments of extraversion, especially with other pentecostal groups especially in Western Europe and the United States of America (Brouwer *et al* 1996; Gifford 1991: 9-19; 1998: 307-348). Is the expansion of the RCCG because of global influences from outside resulting from the cultivation of “overseas links” (Gifford 1998: 314) or because of its global aspirations based on its local rootedness? The present study intends to provide empirical material for an understanding of the interplay between the global and local forces.

The RCCG has its roots in the Aladura movement that started in Yorubaland in the 1920s. One persistent issue in the studies of this movement is its local cultural identity and continuity with Yoruba traditional religion. Some scholars maintain it is a syncretic movement. Robert Cameron Mitchell, for example, writes that some of the prophets of the Aladura movement “encourage a new form of syncretistic magic” (Mitchell 1963: 51). Avoiding the overt use of the concept of syncretism, Benjamin Ray (1993: 266) also writes that “the Aladura churches” constitute “a distinctive synthesis of Yoruba and Christian beliefs and practices”. More generally, Yoruba culture has been described as syncretistic in nature, that is, being able to absorb foreign influences. Ulli Beier (1988, 2001) has described this syncretic nature of the Yoruba culture as a demonstration of creativity and strength in the search for survival. For him, the Yoruba have “an extraordinary capacity for synchretism” [*sic*] which accounts for the survival of their culture and identity (Beier 1988: 65). Beier argues that “the flexibility and adaptability of Yoruba culture” is a cultural strategy for continued relevance (Beier 2001: 49). Since the RCCG has its roots in Yoruba culture and the Aladura movement, the study intends to examine the role of cultural continuity and syncretic processes in the history of the RCCG. Also, it examines in what ways the church could be described as a local form of pentecostalism and its vitality be accounted for by its local rootedness.

In view of the development from a small prayer group to an institutional church, and in view of the transfer of leadership from Josiah the founder to Adeboye his successor, it may be asked to what extent Max Weber's theory of charisma and routinisation applies in the history of RCCG. Can these concepts help to account for the emergence and the growth of the church especially after the death of its founder? In what ways can the founder, Josiah, be seen as the charismatic figure and his successor, Adeboye, as the routiniser? Our study examines the interplay of charismatic authority and the process of routinisation in the church.

### **1.3 Research Methodology**

For this study, two methods were used: the first is the empirical method, and the second, the historical method involving the use of records and secondary data. Field research involved the use of observation which was both participatory and non-participatory, interviews and informal discussion.

#### **(i) Empirical Research:**

**a) Observation:** Two periods of field work were conducted in Nigeria. The first phase spanned from early April to mid-July 2001, while the second phase lasted from end of July to early November 2002. During both phases, the author lived in the church's Redemption Camp located at the outskirts of Lagos. This Camp also serves as the international headquarters of the church. The Camp is the principal ritual site of the church, thus, the author participated in a number of ritual activities such as the monthly Holy Ghost Service, the Divine Intervention, and Deliverance services. Also, the author participated in the church's Ministers' Conference held in June 2001 and the Annual Convention held from 5 - 11 August 2002. During this period the author also observed the performance of the Service of Songs, baptism, pastors' ordination ceremonies, normal Sunday service, Digging Deep, Faith Clinic and workers-in-training meetings. With the exception of the Holy Ghost Congress which holds every December, the author personally observed all the ritual events described in chapter 6 of this study. The brief description of marriage ceremony given in chapter 5 is not a direct observation but based on the church's text for the conduct of such event and on an earlier description by Adekola (1989).

Moreover, the author on several occasions visited the national headquarters of the church at Ebute-Metta in Lagos where he observed other ritual activities of the church such as the mid-week Prayer Meetings for pregnant women and other women searching for the “fruits of the womb”. He also participated in the normal Sunday services at some of the parishes of the church in Ibadan and at the first model parish at Acme Road, Ikeja, as well as at House of Praise for all Nations (Unity Parish), Metro Cinema, Onipanu, Lagos.

**b) Interviews:** In-depth interview sessions were conducted with leaders and significant elders of RCCG. In all, thirty-two (32) people were interviewed; twenty-two (22) were male while ten (10) were female. Of this figure, twenty-one were members of the clergy of RCCG and one person was a clergy of C&S church while nine (9) were members of the laity of the RCCG and one person was a former member of the church. The selection of such key informants was purposively done; as the author inquires about specific aspect of the church’s activities, specific officials were identified as responsible for co-ordinating such activities. These officials were then located and interviewed. The patterns of interview sessions were both structured and unstructured; the sessions began with a history of the interviewee’s conversion and involvement with the church. From this departure point, further leads were followed as they appear during the discussion.

With the exception of two individuals, all members of the RCCG clergy interviewed were university or tertiary institution graduates. One of those interviewed was a retired professor of Agricultural Engineering from the University of Ibadan, and two were doctoral students in two Nigerian universities. Among the laity interviewed, only two persons were non-college graduates. These were females in charge of some of the church’s retail outlets. Among the clergy interviewed, the highest ranking person in the church’s administration was an Assistant-General Overseer (AGO) and the lowest was a deacon/deaconess. Also, among the non-RCCG members interviewed was the *Baba Aladura* (Father of Prayer) or Spiritual Head of the Mount Zion C&S church, Ebute-Metta, Lagos, from where the founder of RCCG seceded in 1952. The chronological ages of the interviewees ranged from 22 (who is a female member of RCCG) to about 85 (for the *Baba Aladura*).

The interview sessions were conducted in English and tape-recorded on audiocassettes.<sup>1</sup> These were later transcribed and edited by the author. The content analysis of the interviews was presented as ethnographic summaries in the description and discussion of different aspects of the church.

Several attempts were made by the author to interview the leader of the church and his wife but all failed. This was because of the busy travelling schedule of the leader who, according to his secretary, only spends one weekend in Nigeria each month. He is constantly on pastoral visits to congregations of the church outside the country. He, however, gave his pastors and other members of the church permission to co-operate with the study by providing relevant information. Among those interviewed were his direct assistants and the son of the founder of the church.

**c) Discussions:** In-depth discussions were held with about sixty-five (65) people. With the exception of two male pastors who were also formally interviewed, those with whom in-depth discussions were held were completely different individuals from the group interviewed. These included pastors of the church and members of the laity many of whom demanded anonymity. In addition to this group are non-members of the church who frequent religious activities of the church. Those who demanded anonymity often insisted that the discussion be not recorded. A senior pastor of the RCCG with whom the author shared several hours of discussions insisted that he “must not be quoted under any circumstance!” While these discussions were not tape-recorded, hand-written notes were taken during such events and fuller reconstructions made immediately after. Non-RCCG members who participated in discussions constitute “outdoor clients” of the church. Another group of non-members who provided information is made of individuals who come to the church’s Redemption Camp as sales representatives of companies, vending their employer’s products. Finally, discussions were held with some former members of the church. Information from these discussions was used in much the same way as information from our interview sessions. The discussions served to provide insights into the various descriptions of the activities and doctrines of the church, though it was not possible to acknowledge all these sources by name as a result of the condition of anonymity which some of the interlocutors insisted on.

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<sup>1</sup>In the last two decades, the RCCG has gradually evolved a crop of educated elite that today all the pastors can fluently express themselves in English, unlike what was the situation at the earlier period of its development.

**(ii) Historical Method:** This involves the data collected by means other than observation, interviews and discussions. Two forms of existing material are printed and electronic sources of information.

1. **Printed Sources:** Information was collected through content analysis of printed sources: sermons, books written by the leader, statistics/annual reports, diaries, directory, magazines, constitutions, bulletins, brochures, prospectuses, church manuals, and hymn books. These items were only available in Nigeria and were collected there during our two phases of field work.

a) **Sermons:** Twenty-four (24) booklets and pamphlets of sermons of the leader of the church were collected during field work. The smallest is 16 pages while the longest is 79 pages. Some of the booklets are collections of, say three, lengthy sermons delivered over a period of time, while some are single sermons. It was not possible to determine when they were first delivered as oral sermons but they were published in printed form from 1986 to 2003. The two smallest volumes of 16 and 23 pages respectively carry no dates. References to the printed sermons in this study are cited as published materials, with the publication date, where available, given in a footnote (and not when they were first delivered as sermons).

b) **Books by the Present Leader:** The leader of the church is a prolific writer. There are sixty-seven titles in the list of his publications. These publications include the twenty-three booklets and pamphlets of published sermons mentioned in the above subsection. In addition to these, fourteen (14) full-length books were collected during field work. These titles were those available and in circulation during the field work. According to the head of publication unit of the church, those titles unavailable are apparently out of print. Some of the books are treatises focusing on a theme such as the Holy Spirit, Love, Heaven or a bible personality such as David, Peter or Elijah. Some developed from bible study materials collected over a long period of time and edited. One, the thickest of them all, is a 336-page concordance to the King James Version of the Bible containing 3,700 key word entries. Since these texts often emerged over a long period of time from the church's bible study programme called Digging Deep, which started in 1982 by the founder's successor, it is not known

when the themes were first taught. These publications contain details about the church's doctrines and biographical information on the present leader of the church. References to these texts are made according to their published form and date.

- c) **Statistics/Annual Reports:** Two annual reports/statistics for 2001 and 2002 were collected and used for the present study. The 2001 edition of the annual report is 305 pages while that of 2002 is 350 pages. These documents are prepared by the church's Directorate of Missions, Lagos. They are not publicly circulated because they are strictly produced for members of the clergy. They contain the list of all the branches of the church, their addresses and the names of the pastors in charge of them. In addition, they contain average numbers of attendance in each parish, number of deaths, births, and marriages, house fellowship centres and new branches planted by a particular parish.
- d) **Diaries:** Two diaries called *Redemption Diary*, for 2000 and 2001 were also collected and used for the present study. The diary for 2000 contained a brief introduction of the different arms of the church and a list of all the parishes of the church in and outside Nigeria. It also contained twelve (12) themes in the church's belief system. The diary for 2001 contained a two and a half-page history of the church, a list of the church's Board of Trustees and Governing Council and an abbreviated version of the "Fundamental Beliefs of the Church". In addition, it contained the attendance figures recorded at some of the church's popular programmes, particularly the Holy Ghost Service. These two documents were produced by the church's Directorate of Missions for members of the church and the general public. They are usually sold in religious bookstores in Nigeria.
- e) **Directory:** One *International Directory* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) for 2000-2001 was also collected. This is a 205-page document containing almost all of the information in the diaries and some details about the number of branches of the church outside Nigeria. These are arranged according to country. In addition, it contained information on the church's business and missionary schools and the admission requirements. It is produced by the Directorate of Missions for open circulation.

- f) **Magazines:** The RCCG does not maintain an archive of its publications and rare documents. Although it runs a library of less than a thousand titles, these are mainly of recent books of American pentecostal writers and some prominent Nigerian pentecostal pastors. The RCCG publishes a range of magazines. Some are published by special groups within the church such as women's group, or specific parishes, or an arm of the church, directorates or departments. Attempts were made to collect all that were available during field work. It was more difficult getting older editions than recent ones, even from the arm of the church responsible for these publications. Three types of magazines were collected during field work. (i) Thirty-one editions of the church's official newsmagazine, *Redemption Light* (from March 1999-September 2003) were collected. The General-Overseer of RCCG, Pastor Enoch Adeboye, is the editor-in-chief, his wife, Pastor Folu Adeboye, is the Executive editor and Pastor Olaitan Olubiye is the managing editor. The magazine is published once every month. (ii) Three editions of the *Catalyst*; the newsmagazine of the Directorate of Missions were also used. The editor-in-chief is Pastor J.A.O. Akindele, former Assistant General Overseer in charge of Missions, its managing editor is Pastor 'Delana Adeleye-Olusae and Pastor Patrick Uponi is the editor. Pastor (Mrs) Toyin Ogundipe, the director of the Directorate of Missions is chairperson of the management board. It is a quarterly publication that averages 40 pages. (iii) Three editions of *Redemption Testimonies* were collected. This is a magazine that publishes a collection of testimonies of people, whether members of the church or not, who write in to the church's office narrating how prayers by the church's leader or attendance at the church's activities have helped them in a miraculous way. This is a monthly magazine published by the national headquarters of the church. It has Pastor E. Adeboye as editor-in-chief and Pastor Kolawole Babatunde as its editor.
- g) **Constitutions:** Three constitutions were also collected and used in our analysis. These were i) The church's 15-page Constitution titled *Memorandum and Article of Association of the Redeemed Christian Church of God*; ii) the Constitution of the Redeemed Christian Fellowship (RCF), the students' arm of the church; and iii) the *Rules and Regulation* for Christ the Redeemer's Friends Universal (CRFU), an elitist interdenominational group founded by the leader of the church.

h) **Bulletins, Brochures and Prospectuses:** Eighteen different types of bulletins, brochures and prospectuses formed part of our collection of primary data. The bulletins were produced by different arms of the church such as the Directorate of Teens Education in charge of all crèches and nursery schools operated by the church. The brochures were order of programmes for past events in the church such as previous editions of the annual conventions or Holy Ghost Congress or graduation ceremonies of one of the missionary and bible schools of the church. The prospectuses were those of the church's bible and missionary schools.

i) **Church Manuals:** Seven different church manuals for different purposes were used in the present study. These are i) Our Fundamental Beliefs in the Bible (for doctrinal teaching), ii) Baptismal Manual (for the teaching for new converts), iii) marriage counselling handbook, iv) the Sunday School Manual; v) Workers-in-training Manual, vi) Qualification and Code of Conduct for Workers and, vii) RCCG Missions Policy (for organising mission's awareness and support).

j) **Hymn Books:** Two hymn books with identical title (*Redemption Hymns: English/Yoruba*) were also collected. Each of these books contained 100 hymns in both English and Yoruba; while one is 108 pages, the other is 112 pages. Some of the hymns are duplicated. The books are undated and there is no publisher's name or place of publication but they carry the church's logo and are sold in the Redemption Camp.

2. **Electronic Sources:** Additionally, two electronic sources of information were used. These were:

(i) **Sermons:** Thirty (30) sermons of the present leader of the RCCG were collected during field work. The sermons were those delivered during the monthly all-night vigil programme called Holy Ghost Service (HGS) which holds every first Friday of the month at the Redemption Camp of the church in Nigeria. As at the time of concluding this research, these sermons have not been published in book form. They exist in three forms: (a) audio recorded cassettes; (b) video (VHS) cassettes, and (c) Internet texts. The sermons are delivered in English and simultaneously translated into Yoruba by one of the assistants of the leader. The audio and video

cassette versions of the sermons carry both the English and Yoruba translation. The Internet version of the sermons are transcribed by some members of the church in the United States of America and posted on the church's Internet website.<sup>2</sup> What are available here are only the English versions and not the Yoruba translations. The transcribed texts average 25 pages, and delivery time at the Camp averaged two and a half hours. While the audio and video forms of these sermons can be purchased from the website, the transcribed text can be freely downloaded. However, the Internet texts are frequently removed to free space for new sermons as these are made available from Nigeria. All the references to electronic sermons especially in chapters 5, 6, and 7, are from the Internet versions and not the audio or video recordings.<sup>3</sup> Dates of delivery and access are given in a footnote when these sermons are cited for the first time.<sup>4</sup>

- (ii) **Electronic File:** A file, tentatively titled *RCCG at 50* was another source of information. This is an electronic version of a 157-page document on the history of some of its branches in Nigeria. Formatted on Abode PageMaker, this document was not in circulation at the end of the second phase of field work. It was made available in a diskette to the author by an official of the church's Directorate of Missions, Lagos. Although it was an electronic file, it is here considered as a written source of information and cited in this study as *RCCG at 50* which is the title given to the entire file by the directorate. The page numbers correspond to the version printed by the author.
- (iii) **Video Recordings:** All major activities in the church are video-recorded, mass produced and sold to the public. Seven video recordings, some of which are recordings of ministerial ordinations of pastors, or annual convention or thanksgiving events and a documentary on the fifty years of existence of the church were collected and used for the present study.

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<sup>2</sup> Thirty four sermons from July 2000 to April 2003 are still available at: [http://jht.rccg.org/holy\\_ghost\\_service/hgs\\_index.html](http://jht.rccg.org/holy_ghost_service/hgs_index.html) (last accessed 20.06.03).

<sup>3</sup> All the sermons printed from the Internet are listed in the bibliography.

<sup>4</sup> All sermons (both printed and electronic) of the leader can be procured through a sister organisation of RCCG called Christ the Redeemer's Ministry (CRM) or at the church's International Headquarters in Nigeria, both based at the Redemption Camp complex of the church.

(iv) **Internet Texts:** The church's two official websites, ([www.rccg.org](http://www.rccg.org)) and *RCCG CommCentre* (<http://rl.rccg.org>).<sup>5</sup> These Internet sites contain information on the church's history and some of its activities. These texts are in the public domain, and so the author considers them as *published* texts. References to material on the sites are made in footnotes with dates of access.

**(ii) Secondary Sources:**

**Texts by RCCG Pastors:** Five published texts by senior church pastors exist which are relevant for the present study (Ojo 1997; 2001; Ajayi 1997; Bankole 1999; 2001). Tony Ojo, who was the managing editor of *Redemption Light* from 1994 to 1998, and secretary to the leader of the church from 1998 to 2000, has compiled prophetic utterances concerning the RCCG from its inception to 1997. This work is a 20-page booklet titled *The RCCG in Prophecy* (1997). In a follow-up work, Ojo (2001) writes about the life and ministry of Pastor Adeboye. This latter work is more a hagiography of the leader than a biography; it is explicitly written to edify the faithful of the church.

Olusola Ajayi's (1997) *Warrior of Righteousness* is the only existing biography of the founder of RCCG, the Rev. Josiah Akindayomi. Ajayi, a veterinary surgeon, joined the church in 1987 and did not have a personal contact with Akindayomi. He relied on information provided by the widow of the founder and some of the personal assistants of the late founder for his book. Just like Ojo's books, Ajayi's is also written from the point of view of Akindayomi's follower writing for other followers. This objective is stated in the Forward of the book thus: "it is very thoughtful of our generation to write and read about the lives of men who have served God ahead of us so we can learn both from God's word and experiences of our fathers in the faith".<sup>6</sup>

Of a different category from the above three texts is Olusegun Bankole's (1999) *The Trees Clap their Hands*. This is a photo book of the structures and layout at the Redemption Camp. A sequel to this first photo book is Bankole's (2001) *Beauty from Ashes*. It is a photo book on the year 2000 edition of Holy Ghost Festival. Consisting of eight chapters, this book contains information on the history of the church, and of the

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<sup>5</sup> These two websites were last accessed for the present study on 20.06.2003.

<sup>6</sup> Pastor (Mrs) Folu Adeboye, "Forward" to Ajayi's (1997: 8) book.

Holy Ghost Festival (now called Holy Ghost Congress), the publicity for the event, and dignitaries that graced the occasion.

## **1.4 History of Research**

### **1.4.1 Research on RCCG**

**(i) Unpublished:** Three undergraduate long essays and a doctoral dissertation were identified and used.<sup>7</sup> The oldest of these is the work of Adebisi Tijani (1985),<sup>8</sup> a member of RCCG, who documented the early history of the church in Ilesa. It was based on oral interviews with pastors who worked in the church starting from the 1960s before the establishment of the Ilesa branch in 1972. All these pastors interviewed by Tijani personally knew and worked with the founder of the church. These pastors are almost all deceased by the time of our field work. Tijani documents life of the church as it was in the 1970s and early 1980s, providing some details nowhere else found in the official records of the church.

The second essay is Erinoso's (1999)<sup>9</sup> work on the life and ministry of Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye, the successor to the founder of RCCG. Although Erinoso interviewed some members of the church for his study, he, in the main, reproduced the official church history as contained in Ajayi (1997). The third essay is Babatunde's (2000)<sup>10</sup> examination of the role of the Internet on RCCG's evangelistic strategies. He describes what pastors of the church claimed they do with the Internet. He did not actually describe the church's official website or investigated how materials on the site are used or the characteristics of those who use such site.

The fourth is Moses Akinwumi Adekola's (1989)<sup>11</sup> doctoral dissertation submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. The scope of Adekola's work covered the early history and growth of the RCCG, its doctrines, liturgical

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<sup>7</sup> All of the essays and dissertation are available at the students' respective institutions in Nigeria.

<sup>8</sup> R. Adebisi Tijani, "The Establishment of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Ilesa". Long Essay submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, Oyo State College of Education, Ilesha, Osun State Nigeria, 1985.

<sup>9</sup> J. K. Erinoso, "The Life and Ministry of Pastor Adeboye, the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God". Long Essay submitted to the Department of Religions, Lagos State University, Lagos, Nigeria, 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Oyelakin Olusegun Babatunde, "The Role of Internet on Evangelism: A Study of Redeemed Christian Church of God". Long Essay submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, 2000.

practices and structure. The study was based mainly on “oral evidence” from members of the church interviewed between April 1983 and September 1986. Adekola was already a senior pastor in RCCG when he undertook this study, a fact that heavily influenced his investigation.<sup>12</sup> Adekola, for example, had no single word on the leadership tussle following the death of the founder and how his successor emerged. Being an insider, and writing very close to the time these events occurred, one expected to get details of the happenings and how the leadership tussle was resolved, but there was no mention of these in the 332-page dissertation.<sup>13</sup>

**(ii) Published:** Stephen Hunt and Nicola Lightly (2001) have examined the character of the largest RCCG parish in the United Kingdom (U.K). Using empirical methods of in-depth interviews and questionnaire, these scholars found that although the “Jesus House” (as the RCCG parish is called), claims to be a place for all nations, “tribal” affiliation is most obvious. Most of its members are Nigerians of Yoruba extraction. Stephen Hunt (2002a: 147-169) investigates the role of RCCG congregations in the articulation of identity in contemporary western context. Hunt emphasises the role of religion in the formation of a sense of self-worth and belonging among black migrants in Britain. According to him, as a distinct and innovatory mode of pentecostalism, the RCCG epitomises “a faith relevant to the needs of black ethnic minorities”. In a related study, Hunt (2002b) attempts to present the RCCG in the church’s own image as “a church for all nations” whose new outlook could “be viewed as a product of quite specific social and economic conditions of the last two decades” (Hunt 2002b: 202). A significant shortcoming of Hunt’s analysis of the RCCG is that it is not borne out of field study of the church in Nigeria but solely dependent on secondary materials collected from members of the church in the United Kingdom.

The present study transcends the limitations imposed by faith commitment or by direct connection to the establishment which is evident in the writings of Tijani (1985), Adekola

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<sup>11</sup> Moses Akinwumi Adekola, “The Redeemed Christina Church of God: A Study of an Indigenous Pentecostal Church in Nigeria”, PhD Dissertation, Department of religious Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 1989.

<sup>12</sup> Adekola was later to secede from the church because of differences with the leadership of Adeboye, whom he portrayed so positively in his dissertation. He reaffiliated himself with the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) Igbala-Itura, Ibadan, for sometime before moving away in 2001 to establish his own church, *The Resurrection Life Church*, with its headquarters at the Ibadan end of the Lagos - Ibadan Expressway. Several visits to his Ibadan church and home in October 2002 did not yield any fruit in the effort to speak with him on his Ph.D. thesis and his experiences in and out of the RCCG.

(1989), Erinoso (1999), and Babatunde (2000) who were all members of the church that they studied. Furthermore, the RCCG has changed so much since some of these works were produced making it important to account for new developments in the church. The studies by Hunt and Lightly are also limited by their focus which is on the UK congregations of the RCCG. Thus, the present study goes beyond the various limitations of the previous ones.

#### **1.4.2 Nigerian Pentecostalism**

As the discussions above indicate, few published research exists on RCCG. Unlike some other religious groups that quickly attracted scholars' attention soon after their formation, the RCCG has existed in relative obscurity till lately. Although not directly on the RCCG, a few studies exist on Nigerian pentecostalism. Some of these studies mention RCCG only in passing. Such studies that mention the RCCG in passing include Marshall (1991: 22; 1993: 216; 1995: 253-254), Marshall-Fratani (1998: 297-298)<sup>14</sup>, Ojo (1988b: 147; 1998: 26), and Peel (2000: 314).

Matthews Ojo (1986, 1988a, b, 1992, 1996) pioneered the study of Nigerian pentecostalism of the late 1960s and 1970s. His research concentrates on two facets of the pentecostal movement of this period: Campus Christian groups and the Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC). A group that began in 1973 and became a full-fledged denomination in 1982, the DLBC experienced a rapid growth rate that characterised it as the "fastest growing" denomination in Nigeria in the 1980s. Emphasising the influence of educational institutions, the print media and cassette technology in the expansion and practice of DLBC, Ojo (1992:153) maintains that this church provides an "incentive towards self-determination for other religious movements in Nigeria". In the same vein as Ojo's study is Alan Isaacson (1990) documentation of the history and activities of DLBC's founder, the Rev. W. F. Kumuyi.

In another study Ojo (1998) writes that the "charismatic movements" are products of the 1970s, concentrated on urban centres and their activities are targeted at urban dwellers. Characterising the movement as "a religion of the youth", he writes that the charismatic

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<sup>13</sup> Adekola's silence was a conscious practice in the church not to discuss unpleasant aspects of the church's history. According to one senior pastor of the church, it is a deliberate strategy to demonstrate modesty, good will and magnanimity to opponents.

<sup>14</sup> In a republication of Marshall-Fratani (1998) in Corten and Marshall-Fratani (2001: 80-105) all references to the RCCG were deleted, further indicating how the RCCG is marginalised in the discourse on Nigerian pentecostalism.

doctrinal and liturgical emphases on prosperity, success, health and healing and deliverance exploit contemporary urban problems such as joblessness, loneliness and inadequate health care. He further maintains that the pentecostal organisations “reflect socio-economic changes” taking place in their respective contexts (Ojo 1996: 110). Thus, he concludes that the leaders of this movement exhibit creativity, protest and non-conformism as they adapt to changing situations (Ojo 1998: 28f).

The political scientist, Ruth Marshall-Fratani has also documented some significant aspects of Nigerian Pentecostalism. In an early study on “Power in the Name of Jesus”, she examines the power discourse of pentecostal Christians against the political situation in Nigeria (Marshall 1991). According to her analysis, pentecostalism in Nigeria is not only a spiritual movement. It is also a political doctrine and practice geared towards securing a political sphere for its members in the volatile national political environment. In a related study, Marshall (1992) makes a distinction between holiness and pentecostal strands within the “new wave” revival in southern Nigeria. For her, the DLBC represents the former while Idahosa’s Church of God Mission represents the latter. Both strands are unified under the PFN which is a powerful avenue of political mobilisation for the pentecostal community in Nigeria. Marshall (1995) insists that Nigerian pentecostals are actively involved in politics which creates opportunities for pastors and the institutions they found to have access to the state. She maintains that such involvement can be “used by ambitious politicians to legitimate their bid for power” (Marshall 1995: 259). Media use by pentecostal groups has been one focus of attention by scholars. Ruth Marshall examines this aspect and concludes that Nigerian pentecostals are fascinated by modern media because of its triple power: i) as a tool which assists the spread of the gospel, ii) as a new mode of imagining the self and the community in terms of transnational identity, and iii) as a mode of appropriating modernity and the material and symbolic goods it offers (Marshall-Fratani 1998: 299).

In a similar way, the scholar of religion, Rosalind Hackett, examines the role contents and roots of “the gospel of prosperity” in West Africa. She focuses on teaching of Nigeria’s “Archbishop Professor Benson Idahosa” as a pioneer of this strand of new pentecostalism (Hackett 1995). According to Hackett, the increasing attention given to prosperity and financial matters by the new pentecostals may be attributed to a number of reasons: i) the first is the economic recession which brought in its wake the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes; ii) the second reason is political disillusionment or instability

which has given rise to increased religious activities. These activities reflect a quest for alternative forms of power; iii) the influence of government in urging religious groups to demonstrate pragmatism and their utilitarian mettle; iv) the impact of relations of certain religious leaders (such as Idahosa) with American groups with the former emulating the styles and techniques of their latter; v) the role of para-church organisations such as Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMFI) in disseminating the gospel of prosperity. Hackett argues further that FGBMFI's success in Africa is partly because of the group's employment of "proven American administrative and marketing techniques" (Hackett 1995: 208).

Hackett traces the expansion of pentecostalism particularly in Nigeria but also in Africa to "the global mass communications revolution" which has opened up possibilities of mass evangelism and mass appeal. For Hackett (1995: 209), the diversity in the means of mass communication (radio, television, literature, cassette, videos), "overseas expertise and ability to attract large numbers of people are important variables of ritual power in the African context". Religious use of the media demonstrates freedom of the spirit which is in turn tied to the spirit of free enterprise. Elsewhere Hackett (1998) argues that the use of the media, particularly the electronic media, has generated possibilities for the transmission of symbolic forms and creative self representation for the new pentecostals. Hence, she concludes that the religious situation is a competitive one "for members generate funds and funds facilitate expansion and success" (Hackett 1995: 210).

The Nigerian pentecostal scene is marked by diversity. The Nigerian church historian, Ogbu Kalu (1998), traces this diversity to the different routes through which pentecostalism emerged in the country. According to Kalu, pentecostalism represents the *third wave* of African response to the Christian message. The first wave represents the emergence of Ethiopianism as a decisive response to the introduction of Christianity in Africa. Ethiopianism was a network of cultural protests against European domination in church life. The second wave was the emergence of the "Zionist Aladura/Bantu prophets" of the mid-1920s onwards. The leaders of this group of movements were particularly interested in the quest for vital force with which to cope with life's exigencies. Arguing that there are different local origins of pentecostalism in Nigeria, he traces how groups such as the Garrick Braid movement (1910-1918) exhibited pentecostal features even before any contact with outsiders. He cites further instances of "Spirit movement" in Ibibioland in 1927, and the

founding of the Church of Jesus Christ in 1934 as a trend of local emergence of pentecostalism in Nigeria. However, he observes that the pentecostal wind blew strongly from 1970 onward. It is from this period that the diversity within the pentecostal movement became marked and “the enlarged scale and adoption of modern strategies [and] European influence became more pronounced” (Kalu 1998: 7).

Kalu describes pentecostalism as “a process of intensification of Christian experience which starts from the base line with degradation ceremonies and bridge burning rituals to achieve brokenness and to reconstruct a new identity” (Kalu 1998: 10). In a related study, Kalu (2000) further investigates how pentecostal Christians position their new identity in relation to economic and political situation. He observes that “deliverance” for the new pentecostal Christians includes the expelling of hindering spirits from individuals and places which also involves resistance to economic and political oppression. For him, the movement typifies a new form of Christian political activism with the conscious aim of using evangelism to mobilise potential voters for godly candidates in the country. By redefining the role of the Christian in politics, the movement aims at providing the individual with spiritual and material benefits which the state promised but failed to provide because of misrule by a predator political class (Kalu 2000: 130-132).

Significant issues emerge from the literature on Nigerian pentecostalism which call for more field study. The first is the characterisation of the movement. There is no generally agreed nomenclature for the movement. Some scholars such as Ojo (1992) and Poewe (1994) prefer to call it “Charismatic movement” while others such as Hackett (1998) and Kalu (1998, 2000) prefer “pentecostal-charismatic” movement. This “pentecostal-charismatic” overlap is recognised sometimes though it is also a source of serious analytical confusion as far as it fosters the application to intrachurch groups certain concepts appropriate only to independent pentecostal movements. For the present study, pentecostalism is used to represent the Christian movement which emphasises such important features as speaking in tongues, being born again, and a post-conversion experience of spiritual regeneration, an intense appropriation of modern technologies of information and mass communication. These features do not exhaust what pentecostalism is all about, for, it also includes such doctrines as tithe, unquestioned authority of a leader-founder of the group who is regarded as a mediator of grace and revelation, and the integration of modern business practices as forms of “evangelism”. The above enumerated features specifically apply to the RCCG.

Pentecostalism is as much a spiritual movement as it is also a social, economic and political enterprise. The term “Charismatic Movement” is reserved for movements that exhibit some of these features in addition to their being part of an institutional church such as the Catholic Charismatic Movement. The term “neo-pentecostalism” is used in designating the “new pentecostals” who emerged from the 1970s onwards in Nigeria. In significant respects, these “new wave” groups are different from the older pentecostals in terms of history, structure, liturgy, beliefs, socio-political and economic involvement.

Related to nomenclature is the issue of periodisation. While Turner (1979: 121f) traces the beginning of pentecostalism in Nigeria to the activities of Garrick Braid in 1915, Peel (2000: 314) writes that “Pentecostalism first made its appearance in Nigeria in 1930-1931 when the leaders of the Aladura revival [...] made contact with the Apostolic Church, a British Pentecostal body”. Again, while Turner (1979:121) claims that the first developments of pentecostalism in Nigeria “were peculiarly African in form and local in origin” Peel clearly links it with an outside body. These apparent contradictions call for more in-depth field work on specifically pentecostal groups in Nigeria, a task that the present study seeks to make contribution.

Another source of confusion is the use of the term “fundamentalism” as a blanket category for pentecostal groups in Nigeria (Brouwer *et al* 1996; Gifford 1991). The use of this term may in significant respect misconstrue the self-understanding of pentecostal Christians. It may be plausible to describe the founder of RCCG as a *fundamentalist* in the sense of the contents of the doctrines he taught his followers such as literary understanding of the scriptures, belief in the second coming of Jesus Christ, etc. But it is not certain whether this concept applies to the RCCG in its present self-understanding. Also, in recent years, this term has come to acquire the aura of a delegitimising stereotype used by outsiders in describing some groups they dislike or disagree with. In the light of recent development, especially in the United States of America, where the concept has come to depict violent or reactionary religious activism (Kimball 2002; Zeidan 2003), it is preferred not to use the concept in the present study. The above identified issues call for in-depth field work on major groups in order to provide further insights into their history and structures in order to better understand the pentecostal movements in Nigeria.

### 1.4.3 Aladura Churches

The study of pentecostalism in Nigeria builds on the earlier study of the Aladura movement, which, as we have just described, represents Kalu's second wave of Christian response. The Aladura movement is one of the more visible strains of Yoruba Christianity. Its study owes much to the pioneer work of Harold W. Turner whose interest goes back to 1957 when he was teaching in Sierra Leone. There he encountered branches of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) whose parent organisation was established by Oshitelu in the late 1920s in Nigeria. In 1963 he came up with his first work on the Aladura movement, "The Church of the Lord: The Expansion of a Nigerian Independent Church in Sierra Leone and Ghana" (Turner 1963). This is followed by a two-volume work on the Church of the Lord (Turner 1967b). While the first volume is on the history of the group, the second volume is on the doctrine. As a Presbyterian minister and theologian, Turner's extensive research on the Aladura movement shows great theological emphasis for this had been his standpoint. Hence, he describes at great length what he considers to be "pagan features" or tendencies and "occultism" in the Aladura movement (Turner 1979: 159-172).

Just about the same time that Turner was documenting the history of the Church of the Lord, Robert Cameron Mitchell (1963) was researching Prophet Joseph Babalola's revival which took place at the end of 1920s and early 1930s in Yorubaland. Using theories of social change prevalent at the time, Mitchell (1970a, b, c) sought to explain the occurrence and popularity of the Aladura Christianity by suggesting that the greater the importance of witchcraft belief in an ethnic group, the more likely the Aladura-type churches would emerge (Mitchell 1970b: 19). For him, the movement was successful because of many factors some of which were: i) the economic strain caused by the economic depression of the 1930s, ii) the deprivation associated with physical health and wellbeing caused by the scarce availability of Western medicine, iii) the brand of Victorian Christianity introduced among the Yoruba which socialised people in other-worldly values while Yoruba religion socialised the people in this-worldly values, iv) the over-expansion of Christianity which did not have the trained indigenous clergy or adequate manpower to properly educate new converts (Mitchell 1979: 203-209). Also, he maintains that the Aladura churches "adapted Christianity to the primal [Yoruba] religious world view" (Mitchell 1979: 188; see also Mitchell 1964: 1427-1429)). Hence, these churches appealed more to people from this worldview than those who do not share this cosmological underpinning such as the Igbo of southeastern Nigeria.

By 1964, the sociologist J. D.Y Peel had independently commenced studying the Aladura movement in Yorubaland. This study came up with the book *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba* (1968b). He concentrated attention on documenting the history of two important groups within the movement, the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) and the Cherubim and Seraphim movement (C&S). He describes their belief systems, congregational life and some of their more prominent personalities. He concludes that the doctrinal distinctiveness of the movement is due an integrated world view which reorders in a new and more coherent way an individual's experiences and knowledge. The movement emerged as a response to a series of natural disasters and economic depression which demanded a religious interpretation (Peel 1968b: 289f). Peel argues that the peculiar doctrinal content of the movement is determined by a particular (traditional Yoruba religious) worldview (Peel 1968b: 298)

Further studies of the Aladura movement were carried out by scholars in the 1970s and 1980s. Akinyele Omoyajowo, who researched the C&S in the 1970s, came out with *Cherubim and Seraphim: The History of an African Independent Church* (1982). The author adopted a historical and theological approach in examining the history, structure, finances (pp. 208f) and liturgy of the C&S. He concludes that contrary to the assumption common among previous studies of the Aladura movement which construed it as “a radically refined form of traditional religion, blended with elements that are basically Christian”, the C&S is a Christian church (Omoyajowo 1982: 219). For him, the practices of the C&S are not a heretical departure from the Christian faith.

The Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) is part of the Aladura movement that has attracted scholarly focus. Rosalind Hackett (1980), although coming from *religionswissenschaft* (history of religions) background, examines the growth and transformation in the CCC from a sociological perspective. She argues that there is a predominance of church-over-sect tendencies within the CCC which should further clarify typological considerations within the studies of the Aladura movement. In her view, the final profile of the church would emerge after the death of its founder and the transference of power to a new generation of leaders. In a related study, C.O. Oshun (1983) describes the pentecostal perspectives of the CAC. A member of CAC himself, Oshun coins the phrase “Aladura pentecostals” as a generic term for the Aladura movement in order to emphasise the distinctively pentecostal and African elements within the group. He traces the history of the CAC as a fusion of the Precious Stone

Society, the Nigerian Faith Tabernacle and the 1930 Revival of Babalola. He characterises “Christ apostolic pentecostalism” as “a religiously-empirical objective reality” which makes the church a desirable object for experience and further study (Oshun 1983: 112).

Two recent studies on the Aladura movement are Adogame’s (1999) and Omoyajowo, Jr (1999) investigations of the CCC and the CAC respectively. While the former documents the history, rituals and symbolic worldview of the CCC, the latter examines the mutations of the Aladura movement and the evolution of the CAC. With the controversies surrounding the CCC as “a Yoruba religion in disguise”, Adogame argues that the church is an authentic form of African appropriation of Christianity (Adogame 1999: 213). Omoyajowo concludes his study by insisting that the CAC is to be more appropriately classified as a pentecostal, rather than an Aladura, church.

#### **1.4.4 African Independent Churches and New Religious Movements in Africa**

Studies of the Aladura movement is part of wider research on the AICs, an acronym that now stands for four possible meanings depending on a user’s emphasis: (i) African Independent churches; (ii) African Initiatives in Christianity; (iii) African Instituted Churches; and (iv) African Indigenous Churches. Bengt Sundkler’s *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (1948) which was enlarged in a second edition published in 1961 was influential in the early study of the AICs. Christian G. Baëta (1962) study of prophetism in Ghana, although critical of the AICS, was bold in calling them “churches”.

In September (6-13) 1962, the World Council of Churches’ (WCC) Department of Missionary Studies held a Consultation at the Mindolo Ecumenical Centre at Kitwe, Northern Rhodesia on “African Independent Church Movement”. There were thirty-five participants in this consultation twenty of whom were Africans. The proceedings of the group were published in 1963 as a research pamphlet titled *African Independent Church Movements*, edited by Victor E. W. Hayward. Among the participants in this consultation was Harold W. Turner, who was already at this time, grappling with “Classification and Nomenclature of modern African Religious Groups” (Hayward 1963: 13). He proffered four broad categories thus: i) Neo-pagan; ii) Islamic; iii) Hebraist, and iv) Christian. The Christian group was further split into “Subsidiary Movements” and “churches”. The latter were also called “Independent African Churches”, which were made of two subgroups of “Zionist or Aladura Churches” and “Ethiopian churches”. He followed up this initial attempt with a more

elaborate presentation in “A Typology for African Religious Movements” (Turner 1967a) published in the very first edition of *Journal of Religion in Africa*. It is in this paper that Turner offered what has come to be the often cited definition for African Independent church as a church “which has been founded in Africa, by Africans, and primarily for Africans” (Turner 1967a: 17).

Sundkler, Baëta and Turner are representative of an early phase of research on African religious movements carried out principally by missionaries and mission agents. This phase was characterised by ambivalence in recognising these initiatives in Christian enterprise as full-fledged “churches”. During this early phase and for the writers of this period, the AICs were regarded as syncretic groups, sects, and separatist movements. Furthermore, as syncretic groups, the AICs were seen, at least from a theological point of view, as a viaduct through which newly converted and poorly disciplined African Christians reached back to their traditional religious practices which the missionaries had scathingly condemned.

As Turner’s classification of modern African religions indicates, the AICs form part of a larger study of New Religious Movements (NRMs). The NRMs represent different strands of religious innovations in Africa. David B. Barrett’s *Schism and Renewal in Africa* (1968) is an analysis of six thousand contemporary religious movements in Africa. *African Initiatives in Religion* (Barrett 1971) is a collection of case studies on some of these movements. The collection of twenty-seven seminal essays by Turner (1979) is an assemblage of the author’s numerous investigations of NRMs spanning almost two decades. Most of these essays concentrate on the phenomenological, liturgical, missiological and theological aspects of independent church forms of Africa’s NRMs.

Hackett’s (1987) *New Religious Movements in Nigeria* presents in-depth studies on a variety of these religious groups in Nigeria. Hackett (1987: 3) offers a working definition of new religious movement as “an indigenously created religious organization stemming from social and religious encounter, and selecting and combining local and exogenous religious elements in diverse and dynamic ways”. The collection of ten essays examines different movements from multi-disciplinary perspectives, each pointing out how the particular group encounters change. She followed up this first collection with an ethnographic and historical analysis of religious pluralism in the south-eastern city of Calabar. In this study, the author mapped the

religious landscape of the city and discussed some of the more significant religious practices (Hackett 1989).

In the studies reviewed above, the RCCG was not given prominent focus because in the 1970s and 1980s, the church was still evolving and so little known even in Nigeria. By the late 1990s and early in the beginning of the twenty-first century, the church has successfully come into national and international limelight. It, therefore, deserves more scholarly attention. Hence, the need for the present study.

#### **1.4.5 Globalisation and Religion**

Globalisation theory is the central theoretical framework of this study. It is a theory that, in various ways, attempts to describe the way different parts of the world are increasingly interconnected, especially during the late twentieth century. The theory became popular in the 1980s and 1990s, a situation that prompted many scholarly research on it. For some theorists of globalisation such as Roland Robertson (1992a), the process represents a compression of the world and a corresponding consciousness of the world as a whole. The density of interaction and interpenetration which “compression of the world” represents has made the whole world a significant category of making sense of local occurrences, practices and actions. While some scholars have conceptualised globalisation as largely economic driven processes (Kanter 1995; Hirst and Thompson 1996; Wallerstein 1999<sup>15</sup>; Stiglitz 2002), others have sought to envision it as a complex set of processes involving wider socio-cultural ramifications (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton 1999; Held 2000; Giddens 2000; Castells 2000a; b; c; Berger and Huntington 2002).

Another debate about globalisation is its historical origins or time frame. Giddens, describing globalisation as “the way we live now” (Giddens 2000: 37), maintains that the processes that connect “the local and the global are quite new in human history” (Giddens 2001: 51). For him, they are products of late modernity, the result of the dramatic advances in communication, information technology and transportation (Giddens 1990). Some other scholars, however, insist globalisation has a long history behind it. Ali Mazrui, for example, claims that religious globalisation “started with the conversion of Emperor Constantine I of

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<sup>15</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein (1999), “Globalization or the Age of Transition: A Long-term View of the Trajectory of the World-System”, <http://fbc.binghamton.edu/iwtraws.htm> (accessed 21.03.01)

Rome in 313 C.E”.<sup>16</sup> The social theorist John B. Thompson, writing in *The Media and Modernity* (1995) argues that although globalisation is a distinctive feature of the modern world, it is by no means a new phenomenon. He traces the origins back to the expansion of trade in the late European Middle Ages (Thompson 1995: 150).

Similarly, Immanuel Wallerstein, writing in 1999, argues that “the processes that are usually meant when we speak of globalization are not in fact new at all”. For him, “[t]hey have existed for some 500 years”, having started “from circa 1450 to today”.<sup>17</sup> Wallerstein, who thinks that the discourse on globalisation is “a gigantic misreading of current reality”, would rather insist that what is happening in contemporary society is not a transformation of a few “backward countries” but a transition in the entire capitalist world-system.<sup>18</sup> He argues that the capitalist economy has expanded such that every part of the globe is inexorably drawn into an international economic order or a world-system. This system, which disregards national borders, is based on the distinction between i) the core, ii) the semiperiphery and iii) the periphery. The core areas which are the most developed, exploit both the semiperipheral and peripheral areas which are more distant from the centres of capitalist economic power (Wallerstein 1979; 1980; 1991). This distinction is further based on the changing roles of different countries in the international division of labour within the capitalist world-system. Wallerstein’s world-system approach could be regarded as a precursor to globalisation theory (Sklair 1999; Chase-Dunn 1999).<sup>19</sup> The concept of “proto-globalisation” is coined by Cohen and Kennedy (2000: 42) to describe “early aspirations to universalism that failed to embrace all of humanity or to attain global reach”.

Aside from Wallerstein’s argument that globalisation discourse is a misreading of current events, Fredrick Cooper (2001) has argued that the concept of globalisation itself is not useful in understanding the processes it is used in describing. He argues that the concept has two major problems, viz.: i) the *global* and ii) *-ization*. The implication of the first is that it presumes that the unit of analysis is an all-inclusive one, that is, the entire globe. But this is

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<sup>16</sup> Ali Mazrui (2000). “Pretender to Universalism: Western Culture in a Globalising Age”, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/wor.../mazrui\\_lect.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/wor.../mazrui_lect.shtml), (accessed 21.02.01).

<sup>17</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *op.cit.*

<sup>18</sup> *idem.*

<sup>19</sup> Leslie Sklair “Competing Conceptions of Globalization”, *Journal of World-System Research*, vol V, 2, 1999: 143-162, [http://csf.colorado.edu/jwsr/archive/vol5/vol5\\_number2/html/sklair/index.html](http://csf.colorado.edu/jwsr/archive/vol5/vol5_number2/html/sklair/index.html) (accessed 14.02.01); Christopher Chase-Dunn, “Globalization: A World-System Perspective”, *Journal of World-System Research*, vol. V, 2: 165-185, [http://csf.colorado.edu/jwsr/archive/vol5/vol5\\_number2/html/chase-dunn/index.shtml](http://csf.colorado.edu/jwsr/archive/vol5/vol5_number2/html/chase-dunn/index.shtml) (accessed 14.02.01).

not so because, for him, the processes that create interconnections among peoples, cultures and regions have their limits. The second, he continues, is that “-ization presumes that the processes are ongoing and this present period is “the moment of globalization [...] whereas I would argue that there is considerable time depth to the kinds of connections that we want to study”.<sup>20</sup> He further points out that “[w]hat is missing in discussions of globalisation today is the historical depth of interconnections and a focus on just what the structures and limits of the connecting mechanisms are” (Cooper 2001: 190). Arguing against what he calls “the sweeping metaclaims of globalization arguments”, Cooper proposes the use of such concepts as “social network” and “social field” as analytically fruitful in examining long distance connections and their limits, especially in relation to Africa and the continent’s role in the development of the Atlantic economy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>21</sup>

The controversy about the historical origins of globalisation is also reflected in Giddens’ classification of attitudes of scholars towards the processes of globalisation. Giddens, in his 1999 Reith Lectures, groups scholarship on globalisation into two, viz.: i) sceptics, and ii) radicals.<sup>22</sup> The first group, he says, construes globalisation discourse as “Just talk” while the second group, which Giddens places himself, argues for the objective reality of the processes of globalisation. Held *et al* (1999: 10f) have produced a three-fold classification thus: i) sceptics, ii) hyperglobalisers and, iii) transformationists. The first school of thought depict globalisation as old and nothing new at all considering the histories of trade and commercial interactions between different regions of the world. The second school corresponds to Giddens’ “radicals” who believe that globalisation is a real phenomenon which is producing a new global order through eroding the autonomy and influence of the nation states. The third group straddle the fence between the first two groups: the world is not the same but the change is not such that has completely wiped out the old order of governance and social forms of life. For the scholars grouped in this school, globalisation is a multifaceted network driven by many interlocking factors and from many parts of the world. However, for the purposes of the present study, the two important theorists of cultural globalisation with specific relevance to religion will be discussed. These scholars are Roland Robertson and Peter Beyer.

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<sup>20</sup> Fredrick Cooper, “Interview”, *Newsletter of African Studies at University of Bayreuth* (NAB), vol. 1/2 Fall 2002, p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>22</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/events/reith\\_99/week1/lecture1.htm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/events/reith_99/week1/lecture1.htm) (accessed 21.02.01). See also the critique of Giddens’ lectures: “Globalisation: ‘Sceptical’ Notes on the 1999 Reith Lectures”, <http://www2.ucsc.edu/cgirs/publications/kiosk/article9.html>, (accessed: 14.02.01)

Arguably the most influential theorist of cultural globalisation, Robertson (1992a) argues that the entire globe constitutes a systemic whole such that the world is increasingly being understood as “a single place”. Linking the globalisation processes to modernity and modernisation as well as postmodernity and postmodernisation, Robertson (1992a: 52) argues that the take off period of globalisation spans from the 1870s through to the 1920s. Events and inventions of this period increasingly compressed and globalised the world. The “world as a whole” becoming “a single place” is the result of diverse social and technological transformations. Different parts of this “single place” have meaning according to how they reference the whole. Different societies are therefore orientated towards the whole since this is their source of meaning and significance. Hence, he speaks of a “global society” or a “global eucumene”. What constitutes this global society is the attempt of the constituent parts to relate their histories and experiences to the whole.

Robertson further argues that there exists a global field. This is a sociocultural system encompassing civilisational cultures, sub-societies, intra-societal, quasi-groups and individuals. This system is made up of a plurality of cultures. For Robertson (1992a: 87), religion is a “critical ingredient” of globalisation. Within the new “global field” is a distinctive, irrepressible “religious field” (Robertson 1994). Religion structures some of the ways in which a society is involved in the global situation. Because globalisation relativises local cultures, it creates conditions that ignite processes of vitalisation. Local interpretations of actions are characterised by how they connect to the global scene. Within the processes of globalisation therefore, both global and local elements are simultaneously active and operative. The attempt to adapt global ideas and practices leads to the process of localisation, while the search for relevance in the global context produces the globalisation of the local. Globalisation processes generate religious underpinning which are local mobilisations in search of global alternatives. Robertson’s argument is that religious practices and currents are to be understood according to their situatedness in the “global field”.

For Peter Beyer (1994), religion is at core a system of communication. For Beyer, global religion is a product of modernisation/globalisation. He begins his analysis of religion in global society by examining four variants of globalisation theory. These four approaches are the world system theory of Immanuel Wallerstein, the method of John Meyer and his Stanford colleagues, the cultural globalisation theory of Roland Robertson, and the model of

Niklas Luhman (Beyer 1994: 15-41). Claiming that Robertson gave more priority to political constitution of society than to religion in the latter's theory, he proposed to make his contribution to the discourse on religion in global society. Beyer further selects five case studies against which to apply his "theory" of private function and public performance of religion in global society. These case studies are: (i) religious environmentalism; (ii) the New Christian Right; (iii) the Islamic revolution in Iran; (iv) Liberation Theology movement in Latin America, and (v) religious parties and movement in Israel. These different groups, according to Beyer, have modified their public performance in the light of "global reality". This is to help them gain public influence in the face of deregulation and privatisation.

Beyer situates his analysis of these groups in the context of changes brought about by new communications technologies. For him, changes in the means of communication have not only altered societies, it is also changed the ways in which people understand themselves as well as practice their religious faiths. As modern technologies of communication contract social space, they also bring hitherto isolated communities together, making them aware of their differences and similarities (Beyer 1994: 2). Such direct confrontation of differences poses challenges to local beliefs systems and worldviews.

According to Beyer, in the situation of globalisation, "system religions" which he defined as institutionalised, organised forms of religions, gain public influence through restructuring their status as cultural resources for other aspects of social system (Beyer 1994: 225). He further asserts that neither globalisation nor its predecessor, modernisation, vitiates the importance of religion in the conduct of social life or in public visibility. As a mode of communication, religion in the situation of globalisation is deregulated and privatised. This makes it difficult for religion to achieve public influence if it continues to play its traditional roles in society. He argues further that for religion to achieve public influence, religious leaders must "have control over a service that is clearly indispensable in today's world as do, for instance, health professionals, political leaders, scientific or business experts" (Beyer 1994: 71). Public influence is possible for religion when it assumes the function of cultural resource for other systems of society. The contemporary situation has put strain on religious institutions to come to terms with social reality. In turn, religious professionals and actors find in global situation opportunities and potentials to actualise. In reacting to globalising tendencies, religions, according to Beyer, contribute to the shaping of "global reality" rather

than its negation. For him, religious force has become in the context of globalisation, a proactive force which accentuates the processes of globalisation.

Evident in the works of these two pioneers (Robertson 1992a; 2001; Beyer 1994; 2001) is a high level of abstraction and generalisation which often confounds rather than enlightens the conditions of primary social/religious actors. As Marfleet (1997: 193) rightly points out, “most global accounts exclude the specific. Consistent with its emphasis on large issues, global theory strains to a higher level of generalisation and ‘empirical matters’ are rarely a concern. The result is that global perspectives on religion strongly discourage contextual understanding”.

Neither Robertson nor Beyer mentions Africa and its religious diversity in their analyses of the “global situation”, an omission that Gifford (2001: 78) considers as “another sign of the marginalisation of Africa” in contemporary globalisation discourse. Our case study is designed to fill in this need for cultural and social details in the discourse of the interface between globalisation and contemporary religious (pentecostal) practice especially in Africa.

#### **1.4.6 Africa and Globalisation**

It is sometimes argued by some scholars that Africa is marginalised in contemporary discussions and global developments. Paul Gifford (1998: 324) claims, for example, that “afro-pessimism” is the dominant mood for Africans who have lost “self-confident” in the face of current global order. He insists that “Africa is in danger of being bypassed by the processes of globalisation” (Gifford 2001: 78). For Gifford, Africans are responding to global “marginalisation of Africa” by “opting into exotic religions” by which he means pentecostalism and other non-African religions (p. 78). He sees African pentecostalism as primarily creating “links with the outside” for “Africans in the current plight” (p. 79). In Huntington’s (1996: 47) reckoning, African heritage does not amount to a distinctive civilisation comparable to either Asian or European civilisations. Castells (2000a: 19f; 2000c: 68f) argues that the delinking of Africa from what he calls “global information capitalism” has created “a fourth world” of poverty and suffering. Fredrick Cooper (2001: 207) writes that “Africa now appears to be part of the half of the globe that is not globalized”.

The above picture of Africa is gloomy. But this is not the only image of the continent in the era of globalisation. There is another category of scholars who maintains that Africa and Africans are not altogether forgotten in the present scheme of things. For these scholars, Africans are adapting the resources available to them in creating access to global resources and goods. In various ways these scholars have tried to show that Africa has a long history of global connectivity. Terence Ranger (1993), for example, maintains that African traditional religions are inherently globalising even before any contact with outsiders. He further insists that within these religions are diverse elements that he characterised as “local” and “global” which showed obvious tension. These elements play important roles in understanding the impact of globalisation in Africa.

Henroit (1998) identifies four patterns of globalisation in Africa. The first for him was the period of the slave trade during which many Africans were carried to the new world and formed a significant chain in the production of wealth for societies in the west. Certain western practices were also introduced into Africa during this period. The second period was during the era of colonialism when transportation and communication lines were established in Africa, agricultural and mineral resources from Africa were also exploited to feed the expanding industries and factories in the Western world while long lasting religious and cultural patterns were also introduced to Africa. It was during this period that African societies were forced into imperial and capitalist economic systems. He recognises the period of the “Cold War” as one of neo-colonialism in Africa which further embedded the continent into international politics through the influence of the Breton Woods institutes that created different types of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) for many African nations. Henroit argues that these institutes created a free market system which became the dominant actor of globalisation. These market forces created the fourth pattern of globalisation. In the new political and economic arrangement, Africa experiences “minimal influence and maximum consequences” (Henroit 1998: 2). Through these four periods and patterns, Africa and her people have become increasingly embedded into global processes.

Greg Mills makes four observations in *Poverty to Prosperity* (2002) in relation of globalisation and Africa. Firstly, in the present dispensation, Africa’s economic situation has degenerated such that Africans are less well off today than three decades ago. Secondly, the internal diversity of Africa demands specific attention to specific countries. Thirdly, western engagement with Africa is marked by failure because of inappropriate policies and

institutions. Fourthly, Africa is experiencing “global economic marginalisation”, though it has also received extraordinary attention from outside (Mills 2002: 232-233). He further observes that globalisation has its good sides and bad sides both of which must be taken into consideration in respect to Africa. On the good side of globalisation, Mills enumerates the opening up of economies, demands for transparency in official dealings, better governance that creates access to international markets which in turn break up local and expensive monopolies. On these counts, globalisation removes corruption and gives individuals access to the global economy. On the negative side, however, he enumerates the “pernicious transnational influence” such as crimes, drugs and corruption. For Mills, the good sides of globalisation do not uncritically include liberal, neo-liberal or free-market policies or “the current global policy regimes and institutional framework of the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO” (Mills 2002: 259). He recommends that Africans must develop their own specific policies and institutions which will facilitate the move from poverty to prosperity.

Paulinus Odozor (2000) in a paper titled “Emerging African Alternatives to Globalization” argues that the Christian missionary movement has been a major and potent force for globalisation in Africa. According to him, “[t]he proliferation in Africa of various types of Christianity other than the ones which the European missionaries brought with them very early before [p]entecostalism caught on world-wide, was clearly a revolt from the overpowering globalising effects of the mainline Christian Churches”. He goes on to conceptualise the AICs in general and new religions in Nigeria in particular, as an attempt to localise a globalising religious impulse, and in so doing, the AICs put up postures of passive but effective resistance to globalisation. The AICs are, therefore, theorised as forms of African revolt, resistance and alternative to globalising religions. The administrative flexibility, organisational pragmatism and liturgical improvisation of the AICs are all alternative structures to multinational and globalising religions. As viable alternatives, these churches are increasingly globalising as they spread out to different parts of the world.

Through the activities of indigenously founded religious groups Africa is witnessing regeneration from below, a form of unofficial globalisation from the very bottom of society where members of these groups are encouraged and provided with the opportunity to participate in the remaking of their immediate social and economic environment. David Martin (2002: 151) argues that in Africa “economic life is likely to be furthered and enriched by the expansion of Pentecostalism”. Ruth Marshall (1991: 21) has earlier described how

pentecostalism in Nigeria offers “powerful metaphors for new types of practice” and material resource that create autonomous spaces and challenge oppressive power monopolies, articulating “strategies to create, exercise and legitimate new power relations and new opportunities for survival”. These scholars are convinced that pentecostalism for many people is a viable alternative to globalisation, it is a way some people reshape in the search for global access, economic resource and political power.

There are very few case studies discussed in the discourse on religious globalisation. The approach of David Martin is a very broad overview of the spread and impact of pentecostalism in many third world societies such as Latin America, African and -East Asia. Only a chapter of his book is devoted to African pentecostalism and here, only a few pages to the Nigerian context. Ruth Marshall-Fratani, who has done ethnographic field work in Nigeria in the early 1990s, focuses on the analysis of political engagement and rhetoric among pentecostal blocs such as the PFN. While these authors’ relevance to the present study is obvious, the views expressed by Odozor are directly relevant. In the discussion that comes up in chapter 7, it will be discussed whether Odozor’s perspective fit in with the data on RCCG, and if so, in what ways.

#### **1.4.7 The Religious Economy**

Apart from the theories of religious globalisation, the theory of religious economy is relevant for our case study. The “market model” for religious practice and participation was first used by Peter Berger (1963) in an attempt to describe the relation of religions in a secular or secularising society. In a society where state power cannot be used to enforce religious adherence, new religions tend to emerge, each making itself as attractive as possible in order to win adherents. This situation, Berger argues, would create a free market situation whereby these different religious groups are compelled to compete among themselves for the interest, allegiance and financial support of their (potential) adherents and public patronage. According to Berger, religious groups could thus by “perceived as economic units which are engaging in competition within a free market” (Berger 1963: 79). However, the explicit statement of a theory of religious economy emerged from those scholars who disagreed with Berger’s initial theory of secularisation. While Berger argued that secularisation precipitated a market situation for religious practice, these other scholars argued that American society was not secularising *because* of the market situation of religious behaviour (Stark 1998).

The theory of religious market or religious economy has been a major research interest since the 1980s, especially in the United States of America. Pioneered by American sociologists, notably Rodney Stark and his collaborators, this theory which the economist Laurence R. Iannaccone (1991) traces to Adam Smith, seeks to explain the persistence of religion and the ongoing religious mobilisations in America. The “religious economy” is an integral aspect of an elaborate theory of religion which Stark and Bainbridge first put forward in their book, *The Future of Religion* (1985). This theory was developed to explain the persistence of religion in a secular age in the United States as well as its outlook for the future. A general theory of religion which built on the first was developed around the nature of socio-religious exchange and on the fact that the religious organisations compete for members using different guises and methods (Stark and Bainbridge 1996 [1987]).

As an alternative to the secularisation theory, the religious economy theory sees religious practice as an exercise in a marketplace, and conceives religious organisations as more or less successful firms operating more or less like other firms in an economic space regulated by discernible laws and logic. Central to this theory is the conceptualisation of “religion as a commodity, an object of choice” (Iannaccone 1991: 159). Recently, Stark and Finke (2000: 193) defined a religious economy as consisting of “all religious activities going on in any society: a ‘market’ of current and potential adherents, a set of one or more organizations seeking to attract or maintain adherents, and the religious culture offered by the organization”. In an earlier elaboration on the concept of a religious market, Finke and Stark (1988: 42) maintain that “Religious economies are like commercial economies. They consist of a market and a set of firms seeking to serve that market. Like all market economies, a major consideration is their degree of regulation. Some religions are virtually unregulated, while others are restricted to state-imposed monopolies.”

Religious adherents are construed as consumers who shop for religious commodities for which they are ready and willing to bargain and pay a price. In a similar way, religious leaders are seen as producers and entrepreneurs whose actions represent “rational responses to the constraints and opportunities found in the religious marketplace” (Iannaccone 1995a: 77). The relative freedom of choice exercised by religious consumers constrains the activities of religious producers in such ways that religious commodities are made attractive to potential consumers. Because consumers exercise a certain degree of choice, producers of religion must produce commodities that must appeal to their clientele. These producers

endeavour to produce or supply attractive commodities to their clients, advertise and market their wares; they struggle with other competitors to maintain a niche and keep a steady demand for their supplies (Iannaccone 1992: 123).

The central insight of the religious market theory, as Chaves and Cann (1992) observe, is that “religious markets ought to function like other markets in that more competition should produce a religious product that is more to the liking of consumers”. Religious consumption, they emphasise, is ordinarily higher, therefore, where the market is unregulated and free. The basic elements of this theory can be distinguished as plurality, rationality, competition and freedom of choice or participation. An unregulated religious economy, like that of Nigeria where freedom of religion is constitutionally guaranteed (Ilesanmi 2001), shows a high level of religious plurality and a diversification of religious firms, portfolios and affiliation or participation (Iannaccone 1995b). This theory not only examines religious consumers, but focuses a great deal of attention on the character and conduct of religious firms who supply religious commodities and also try to create and maintain demand for their goods (Stark and Iannaccone 1994: 230-233). It highlights the creativity of religious entrepreneurs in the generation of visibility for themselves and their portfolios, the management of diversity, vitality and religious expansion.

In recent rendition of the theory, Stark and his collaborators have dropped their earlier notion of “religion as a compensator” (Stark and Bainbridge 1996: 36). According to Stark and Finke (2000: 83-4), the concept of compensator was dropped because an adequate understanding of otherworldly rewards was sufficient in conceptualising religion. Also, the concept was dropped in order not to give the impression that the theory which they espouse explains everything about religion in a Marxist sense. For them, religion is not a wholly economic enterprise that a single theory explains. They insist that their model deals only with “the human side of religion” (see Stark and Finke 2000).<sup>23</sup> Stark’s theory evolved in the context of American religious history and practice. It is yet to be applied in the context of Africa. The theory may have application to the RCCG and may be relevant for the present study and the Nigerian religious practice, therefore. Perhaps, it may help to explain the rapid growth and vitality of RCCG in recent years. The use of such concepts as “religious

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<sup>23</sup> The author is aware of the debate and criticisms of this theory from scholars such as Steve Bruce (1993; 1999; 2000), Wallis and Bruce (1984) and Roland Robertson (1992). Stark keeps updating and responding to these issues as they are raised. However, his insights are useful and we intend to apply some of these to our case study.

marketplace” and “the religious economy” in this study is to be understood against the background of this theory. It emphasises the plurality of religious practice and options in an unregulated environment which forces religious organisations to operate according to the logic of a market.

### **1.5 Scope and Division of the Study**

The early studies of the AICs were motivated by theological and missiological considerations which sought to find out whether or not these African churches were Christian churches. Peel’s work is sociological while Omoyajowo’s (1982) and Kalu’s (1998, 2000) methodological approaches are both theological and historical. Hackett’s studies have been both sociological and historical while Marshall-Fratani, coming from political science, demonstrates more dependence on social scientific methods and theories. Aside from the fact that many of these previous studies on Nigerian pentecostalism, or AICs in general, are now dated or becoming so, there is none that is focused on an in-depth study of the RCCG. There is none that relates these churches to contemporary processes of globalisation. The most recent work that mentions the RCCG in the discussion of Yoruba Christianity is Peel’s *Religious Encounters and the Making of the Yoruba* (2000), and this it does in a single sentence (p. 314).

The present study, therefore, is primarily a case study of RCCG using historical and sociological approaches to provide empirical details on the interplay of local action and global processes. The study reconstructs the theologies of the church’s founder and his successor and shows how these have changed with the changing times in the country. As a study in the history of religions (*religionswissenschaft*), no attempt is made to evaluate the rightness or otherwise of the doctrines and other religious practices of the RCCG. The study is neither theological nor anti-theological, but emphasises a social-historical approach which is a description of “the human side of religion” (Stark and Finke 2000). Furthermore, the study documents the different phases of development of organisational structure in the church from the earliest time to mid-2003. It also presents details of the positioning of the RCCG in contemporary Nigerian religious scene.

Our study has its limitations too. It is not a country-wide study of pentecostalism in Nigeria. It is a study of a single church with numerous congregations in and outside Nigeria. The focus is on the history of RCCG in Nigeria and not on the many branches of the church

around the world. Even within Nigeria, it is not possible to individually study the more than five thousand parishes of the RCCG, so the study concentrates on the central doctrines, activities, institutions and principal public figures of the church as well as the events that take place at the Redemption Camp which is the local centre of the church.

The study is made up of three parts. Part 1, consisting of chapter 1, is composed of the general introduction, method and scope of the study. Part 2 is the case study, made up of a historical section and a descriptive section. The former comprises chapters 2 and 3 while the latter comprises chapters 4, 5, and 6. Chapter 2 reconstructs the biographical details of the founder of the RCCG, the Rev. Josiah Olufemi Akindayomi and the founding of the RCCG. Chapter 3 presents the biography of Josiah's successor and the processes of transfer of authority in the church. The descriptive section focuses on the organisational structure, institutions, doctrines and rituals of the RCCG. Chapter 4 presents the organisational structure of the church at the present period. It also discusses some of the para-church groups, schools, media use, finance and the place of women in the church. Chapter 5 examines the belief system while chapter 6 presents the ritual activities of the church. Part 3, which consists of chapter 7, is the theoretical reflection on our case study.

## Part 2: Case Study

### Chapter 2

#### The Redeemed Christian Church of God: Genesis and Emergence

This chapter reconstructs the early history of the RCCG. It presents (i) “covenant” as the organising metaphor of the church’s history, (ii) biographical information on the church’s founder, (iii) his conversion to Christianity, (iv) reaffiliation to the C&S movement and the establishing of *Ogo Oluwa* society; (v) secession from the C&S and the founding of RCCG, (vi) early development of RCCG, (vii) the search for external affiliation and (viii) the death of RCCG’s founder. Sources available for this reconstruction are varied. The oldest is Tijani (1985), followed by Adekola (1989), Ajayi (1997) and Ojo (1997). Other sources include one published interview of the founder’s wife and another of his deputy, the official history of the church as posted on the Internet, its constitution and the manuscript *RCCG at 50* (2002). These sources are supplemented with details from interviews of the founder’s son and an Assistant General Overseer of the church who was fourteen years in the church prior to the death of the founder and so, had eye witness account of the founder. Of the written reports, the two oldest (Tijani and Adekola) appear to be most reliable because of their archaic sources and their proximity to the events they recount. Furthermore, while these two accounts were originally written as academic work, Ajayi and Ojo’s accounts were produced as part of hagiography meant for the edification of members of the church. *RCCG at 50* replicates information from Ajayi (1997) and is only significant where it deviates from this. We shall indicate our reliance on which account as we develop the different sections and where there is discrepancy, we shall point out reasons why a particular source is preferred to others.

#### 2.1 Covenant Narrative

When asked about how the RCCG was established, the present leaders and elders of the church usually begin by citing a biblical verse:

For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice,  
and see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they

are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole world  
(Zechariah 4: 10a)<sup>24</sup>.

The genesis of the church is likened to the “day of small things”<sup>25</sup> of “the select stone” in the hands of God destined for great rejoicing at the end time. It is in the story of “small beginnings” that RCCG’s present import in the socio-cultural and religious landscape of Nigeria is anchored.

In addition to the text of “small beginnings”, another text of overarching significance that is often mentioned is “covenant”.<sup>26</sup> This concept of covenant is used to underscore the nature of the promises and agreement which God is said to have made with the founder regarding the establishment and sustenance of the RCCG. References are made to this image of “a covenant” as being the historical foundation upon which the church was erected. This “covenant reading” of the historical context of RCCG is carefully expounded by the founder’s successor and chief theologian of the RCCG, E.A. Adeboye, on whom the next chapter of this study will be devoted. Other senior pastors of the church also make frequent reference to this “covenant”, often insisting that if there is any success being experienced in the church today, “it is because of this covenant”.<sup>27</sup> For Adeboye and other leaders of the church, just as the covenant (*Berith*) Yahweh made with the children of Israel was the culmination of a new relationship between God and the children of Israel, so also the covenant between God and the founder was a landmark in the history of the RCCG and Nigeria. A recent statement of this covenant and its content put it thus:

God, like He did with Abraham, established a covenant with Rev. J. O. Akindayomi to the effect that He would meet the needs if [*sic*, of] the church in awesome way, if only members of the church would serve him faithfully and be obedient to his Word. It is upon this covenant that the Redeemed Christian Church of God was built.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>*The Holy Bible* (Authorized King James Version), Get Move International, 2000. All Bible quotations are from this edition, unless where otherwise indicated.

<sup>25</sup> For the use of this verse in RCCG’s narratives of origin, see the small pamphlet *RCCG in Prophecy* by Tony Ojo (1997) and “‘Redeemed’ in Prophecy” by J.A. Lawanson, *Redemption Light*, vol. 5, no. 10, Nov. 2000, p.9.

<sup>26</sup>This is a recurring concept in many of Pastor E.A. Adeboye’s preaching and sermons. Adeboye and many of my interviewees also made generous references to “when the Lord established his covenant with the founder...” (Personal interview with Funso Odesola, 1 June 2001, The Redemption Camp).

<sup>27</sup> Paul Bankole and Olaitan Olubiyi, “We’re Highly Favoured by God”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 5, June 2002, p. 21.

<sup>28</sup> *RCCG at 50*, p.16. There is a verbatim reproduction of this text in *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 7, August 2002, p. 7.

When RCCG leaders allude to a covenantal foundation for the church, therefore, they see themselves as the foundation of a new nation of the “redeemed” analogous to the nation of Israel liberated from the bondage and slavery of Egypt. This nucleus of a nation is the yeast that will enliven the rest of the world by spreading the word of God and preparing the world for the “end time”. Olusegun Bankole (2001: 12), a senior pastor of RCCG, draws further implications for the covenant narrative thus: “the covenant between God and his faithful servant and friend, Pa Josiah Akindayomi is at work... The church is in the forefront of God’s purpose for the establishment of his kingdom on earth”. In a related strand of thought, the covenant has been described as “Mount Sinai encounter” between God and Josiah. At that encounter, “God gave the laws that would govern the new church to Rev. Josiah Olufemi Akindayomi”. As the covenant established a new people, so it also established a “new order” which carried a vision of the enlargement of the church’s activities and presence throughout the world.<sup>29</sup>

The narrative has shown signs of expansion in such a way that the present generation of leaders in the church conceive the RCCG to be “the key vessel for the last revival” of humankind (Ojo 2001: 69). This imagery of “vessel” or “ship” of salvation is a favourite of *Aladura* groups such as the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) as Adogame (1999:147-150) has made clear. There is a difference, however. While *Aladura* groups will apply this imagery to the church as a community of the faithful, RCCG pastors apply it to their leaders such as Josiah and his successor, Enoch Adeboye. Tony Ojo (1997: 1), for example, writes that while the Bible is the documentation of the word and work of God for the benefit of humankind, so also it is necessary for pastors of the RCCG to embark on “the documentation of the mind of God in His plan for the world through the Redeemed Christian Church of God as revealed by prophecies of His anointed men, Papa Josiah Akindayomi [...] and Pastor Enoch Adeboye [...]”.<sup>30</sup> As we shall discuss in chapter 6, from the covenant narrative emerges the symbolic significance of the *name* of the church which Adeboye has insisted must never be modified in any way.

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<sup>29</sup> Wale Adeduro, “Beyond Jubilee” *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 7, August 2002, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> One is tempted to understand Tony Ojo’s assertion here as putting Josiah’s and Adeboye’s prophecies on the same pedestal with the biblical revelation. According to him, these two leaders of RCCG represent “true prophets of God that point the body of Christ [that is, the church] in the way of truth, revealing the mind of God to His own people, for where there is no vision, the people perish (Proverbs 29: 18a)” (Ojo 1997: 4).

## 2.2 The Founder: Josiah Olufemi Akindayomi

### 2.2.1 Early Life and Conversion

A group of twelve former members of the Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) church founded the RCCG.<sup>31</sup> The leader of this group was a man called Josiah Olufemi Akindayomi (hereafter Josiah), himself an established but estranged prophet of the C&S church in Ebute-Metta, a once suburban area of Lagos. His status as a prophet gave Josiah the uncontested role of “first among equals” which he consolidated over time through the performance of spiritual and leadership roles among this group. The exact date of birth of Josiah is unknown. Our sources provide two conflicting dates. Based on the programme of funeral rites of Josiah published in 1980, Tijani (1985: iii), Ajayi (1979: 15) and Babatunde (2000:11) give as date of birth of Josiah July 1905. The second date which appears in all official documents of the church such as *RCCG at 50* (p. 4) and the church’s web page, is July 1909. Of all our sources, it is *RCCG at 50* that provides an exact date of 5 July 1909. Adekola (1989) is silent on this issue. Clarifying this issue further, the son of the founder in an interview contends that the earlier date was an inadvertent error by the committee that prepared the funeral brochure of his father. Without proper investigation, this committee had published 1905 as date of birth but further historical insights by Josiah’s family and associates have settled for the later date as the accurate one.<sup>32</sup> The official date of birth of Josiah, therefore, is generally believed and accepted by members of the church to be 5 July 1909. This makes him seventy-one years old as at the time he died on 2 November 1980.

The birthplace of Josiah was Odo Jomu district of present Ondo state of Nigeria. The exact compound was later to become House number 12 on Odo Alafia Street. Young Josiah was born into the family of Eleyinmi and Olakuobi Akindolie, both of whom were farmers by occupation and adherents of *Ogun* Deity, the Yoruba *Orisa* of Iron and War (cf. Peel 2000: 107f).<sup>33</sup> Josiah bore the names Olufemi Akindolie till his baptism when he chose “Josiah”. He was later to drop Akindolie for Akindayomi. Young Josiah was brought up in the occupation and religion of his parents. Thus, he became a farmer and must have cultivated such local

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<sup>31</sup> The choice of the figure “twelve” is significant since it may have been chosen to correspond to the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels, or the twelve tribes of Israel. That all twelve initial members are male gives an added support for the linkage with biblical symbolism. Hence, “twelve” gives divine legitimation to the new group.

<sup>32</sup> Personal interview with Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, RCCG National Headquarters, Ebute-Metta, Lagos, 6 June 2001.

<sup>33</sup> Ajayi (1997:15) writes that Josiah's parents were “idol worshippers” a familiar misrepresentation of African Traditional Religion as “Idol Worship” or “Paganism”.

crops as yams and cassava or cash crops as oil palm and cocoa trees for which his people are still renowned to this day.



**Plate 1:** Reverend Josiah Olufemi Akindayomi. Source: RCCG website ([www.rccg.org](http://www.rccg.org)).

As he grew older, he became increasingly interested in the traditional art and practice of healing. He acquired this skill but there is no indication under whom he apprenticed. He became a renowned and expert herbal healer or traditional medicine man. Adekola (1989: 56) calls him “a medicine-man-herbalist” and also a *babalawo* while Tijani (1985: iii) calls him “a native doctor”.<sup>34</sup> These are the only two sources that mention Josiah’s early profession as a *babalawo*. Josiah must have achieved a somewhat quasi-official status as a ritual functionary of *Ogun*, before he became a Christian.<sup>35</sup> Adekola (1989: 56) claims that it was in “a bid to satisfy his spiritual curiosity or hunger” that Josiah delved into the art of herbal medicine. The healer is also a ritual functionary of some sort. This aspect of Josiah’s biography is not reproduced in any official church document.

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<sup>34</sup>Traditional healers and medicine-persons are generally called *babalawo*, a Yoruba word that literally means “father of concealed wisdom or knowledge/secret/mysteries”. The term is primarily used in designating professional diviners as custodians of a secret craft requiring long periods of training and apprenticeship (see Peel [1990: 342]: “Babalawo were real professionals, specialised practitioners of a skill which required intelligence and long training”). In popular usage, there is no difference between a diviner and a healer. Their skills interpenetrate at significant points (Adogame 1999: 119; Anderson 2000: 175) although among the Jos Plateau people of Nigeria the two categories are distinct even in popular usage (Danfulani 1995). However, the more restricted term “*onise-ogun*” means literally “masters of medicine”; this term is often used to designate both diviners and healers (cf. Hallen 2000: 5).

<sup>35</sup>Ordinarily, the successful *babalawo* or *onise-ogun* is a highly mobile and cosmopolitan figure whose art, knowledge, expertise and influence make a translocal personality.

In 1927 when he was already eighteen years old, Josiah felt the need to acquire some form of formal education from the Church Mission Society (CMS) mission school in Ondo town. Three of our accounts (Tijani 1985; Ajayi 1989 and *RCCG at 50*) were explicit about the reason for Josiah's involvement with CMS mission school. i) Tijani (1985: iii) writes that it was "a strong feeling of doing the will of God which drew Josiah to the CMS. ii) Adekola (1989: 56) writes that Josiah was drawn into Christianity because "traditional religion could not satisfy his spiritual yearnings". iii) In a related manner, *RCCG at 50* (p. 5) speculates that Josiah's decision to acquire western literacy may have been borne out of the desire to be christened by the CMS. The three views are actually two main reasons, viz.: a) the search for deep spirituality and b) the search for Western education. These two reasons are not opposed as one may seek education as a preliminary means of doing God's will in one's life. It was in the course of his pursuit of Western literacy that Josiah was baptised and became a member of the CMS. However, Josiah failed in becoming a fully literate<sup>36</sup> man as he soon abandoned his education project and thereafter, the CMS itself. It is not completely clear why he abandoned formal education. Nevertheless, he was able to acquire sufficient literary skill to enable him read and understand the Yoruba Bible and speak some smattering of English. Such account as this also fits well into the social theory of conversion in Africa as Peel (2000) has convincingly restated this. Like most traditional religious experts that Peel (1990) recounts their encounter with Christian evangelisers in the 19th century Yorubaland, the quest for Western education features prominently in the conversion of traditional healers and ritual elders. It is generally believed that the White man's power stemmed from his ability to read and write.<sup>37</sup>

Ajayi (1997: 64) writes that later in his life, Josiah expounded the scriptures even to university dons with such ease and groundedness that baffled many; "Yet he couldn't *read* save his Yoruba Bible which God supernaturally enabled him to comprehend" (emphasis added). Foluke Adeboye, wife of Josiah's successor, once called him "a moving concordance" who could make references and cross-references to many bible passages as he expounded the scriptures to his followers.<sup>38</sup> Kolawole Babatunde (1999: 19), a senior pastor of the church, also writes of Josiah's "smattering knowledge of English", and J.I. Olukowajo (1999: 147), another senior pastor of the church, recounts how Josiah wrote down the name of his successor

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<sup>36</sup>Literacy here is used as a Western concept which is connected with the ability to read, write and understand English as well as the ability to understand and work with numbers, otherwise known as numeracy.

<sup>37</sup> Chinua Achebe (1964 [1974]) puts it in Ezeulu's mouth that the white man has power because "he could write with his left hand" (p. 189). Hence the chief priest, Ezeulu, sent his son with the mandate to "learn and master this [White] man's knowledge...you must learn it until you can write it with your left hand" (pp. 189-190).

<sup>38</sup> Foluke Adeboye, "Forward" in Ajayi (1997: 8)

and kept it in his Bible just before he died. From all these accounts, Josiah may *only* be regarded as “non-literate” in the Western sense of lacking fluency in reading and writing English but not the Yoruba language. This point is important in putting into perspective the often mentioned “stark illiteracy” of Josiah which is used in underscoring the “miraculous” nature of what he was able to accomplish with the limitations imposed by the apparent lack of Western education.

For about four years he practised his new faith and concentrated on farming as a primary means of livelihood. About his life as member of the CMS, our sources are silent. However, he was a successful farmer.

### **2.2.2 Religious Migration: The C&S Connection**

Sometime in the 1930s, Josiah reaffiliated to the C&S movement in Ondo town. Two dates are offered by our sources. Tijani (1985: iii) proffers 1938 as the year Josiah joined the C&S; Ajayi (1997: 31), *RCCG at 50* (p. 5) offer 1931. The 1938 date of Tijani must have been the year Josiah decided to go into full ministry rather than the year of his reaffiliation from the CMS to the C&S. The consensus which is reflected in current official documents of the church insists on the 1931 date of reaffiliation (Erinoso 1999: 16; Babatunde 2000: 12).

There is only one account that reports *how*, as against *why*, Josiah reaffiliated to the C&S. The immediate context of Josiah’s reaffiliation, according to Tijani’s (1985) account, has to do with Josiah’s encounter with an elderly C&S prophetess who came to mediate in a dispute involving Josiah and one of his debtors. Josiah felt aggrieved at the old woman’s unsolicited arbitration and threatened her with a “mystical” poisonous snake. Josiah consequently put a hex on this elderly woman: through some powerful charms and invocations, he sent this poisonous snake to kill the prophetess in her home. But after some days and there was no news of the death of the prophetess, Josiah felt both disappointed and awed. Consequently, he went to the woman to enquire about what powers she had employed in overcoming his mystically powerful poisonous snake. This encounter convinced him of the power of C&S prophets and prophetesses. Thereafter, he decided to join the “Cherubim & Seraphim mission under the leadership of the said prophetess in Ondo Town” (Tijani 1985: iii-iv).

Tijani records that the first important personal prophecy that Josiah received came from this elderly prophetess of C&S who now became his religious and spiritual mentor. The content of

the prophecy included the revelation that he would be a great religious leader, establishing his church close to a stream, (pond or river) and in a compound with coconut trees. This encounter seems to have been left out of the official history<sup>39</sup> and other accounts from within the church such as *RCCG at 50* and Ajayi (1997) probably because of the use of charms and intent at hurting another person, but also the quest for “real power” as a motivating reason for Josiah’s reaffiliation. This account of Josiah’s first encounter with the C&S predates the first account from within the RCCG which is Ajayi (1997). Tijani’s account, likely to be factual, was based on oral interview with a pastor of RCCG at Ilesa, Adewale Solomon. There may be two possible reasons for the official omission of details such as Tijani’s. Firstly, leaders of the church feel uncomfortable about their *Aladura* ancestry, and would not like to acknowledge anything good coming from that source; to believe in a prophecy from a source they demonise would have meant a contradiction of some sort. Secondly, it is embarrassing that Josiah, a man considered a saint by his followers, had thought of hurting someone who did him no wrong.

Official report provides answers to why Josiah left the CMS. Josiah was “spiritually unfulfilled” and dissatisfied with the dry and formal set-up and liturgy of the Anglican Church at Ondo.<sup>40</sup> Ajayi (1997: 18), relying on interview of Josiah’s wife, quotes him after reaffiliating to the C&S as saying: “I was truly happy that at last I had found the right place to worship my God. As at that time, the Cherubim and Seraphim Church was standing alone on the word and promises of God, they weren’t even taking tablets or any drugs. If anyone got ill, we would pray for him or her and God would answer and heal the sick”. Further, Adekola (1989: 56) claimed that realising the “awkwardness, drudgery and monotony of worship in the Anglican denomination”, Josiah “joined the C&S apparently because of the charismatic qualities of Orimolade which remained indelible in his mind”. Erinoso (1999: 17) replicates Ajayi’s version verbatim. Ajayi (1997: 17) provides some details concerning why Josiah left the CMS: he “believes that the object of his worship should be able to offer him protection, healing, material security, deliverance from evil manifestations and satanic spirits”. Ajayi’s reasoning here is that Josiah could not get these things from the CMS, hence he left the church.

The official history of the RCCG, however, states that it was when Josiah joined the C&S that he started hearing some inner voice telling him: “You will be my servant”.<sup>41</sup> According to

<sup>39</sup> [http://www.rccg.org/Church\\_Ministry/Trustees/history.htm](http://www.rccg.org/Church_Ministry/Trustees/history.htm) (accessed 25.03.01).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, The significance of hearing “voices” is stressed in the Old Testament, the most important of which is Samuel’s first encounter with Yahweh when serving Eli (1Samuel 3:1-21). This encounter effectively inaugurated Samuel’s career as a prophet in Israel. The experience of Moses in the burning bush, including his hearing his

*RCCG at 50*, the C&S became like the temple and a divine soundscape within which the presence and voice of God could be heard and recognised by Josiah. Furthermore, the C&S was like the divine nursery within which he could manage divine agency. The church states that the first signs of spiritual satisfaction came to Josiah with his membership of the C&S movement where his thirst and desire to worship God deepened and found direction.<sup>42</sup>

After joining the C&S, Josiah exercised his religious gifts in the quiet town of Ondo where apparently he still worked under the old prophetess that mentored him. For seven years before 1940, he claimed to have had strong inner spiritual urges to launch out into full time ministry as an evangelist. But he felt satisfied with his new-found role as a *woli* in the town that had restored his lost renown as a famous traditional healer. He was disinclined to undue public attention, and so he ignored the spiritual promptings saying: “I had no desire to be a full time minister of God” (Ajayi 1997: 18-19). *RCCG at 50* (p. 5) likens him to Samuel in the Old Testament who could not recognise the voice of God. For ignoring the voice of God to go into full time ministry, Ajayi (1997:19-21), our only source on this call to mission, writes that Josiah was afflicted with one misfortune or the other, ranging from crop failures to hardships in other business undertakings. The final straw was a dream encounter he had with an elderly man who scratched one of his legs. On waking up in the morning, the minor dream scratch had resulted into a swollen leg and then a deep, festering sore developed. When he realised the futility in continued recalcitrance, Josiah consented to a full time ministry. However, before commencing on his more intense apostolate, he demanded for a sign that the promptings were not a delusion of the devil. For his demand, he claimed he was asked by God to read up three key verses in the Bible. According to the text, *RCCG at 50*, which significantly reproduces Ajayi (1997: 21-22), “God confirmed his call upon Josiah’s life through the scriptures in Jer 1:4-10; Is 41: 10-13; and Rom 8: 29-31. He opened his Bible and could read and understand what he read. It was a miracle for a man who knew neither how to read nor how to write”.<sup>43</sup> Official documents often emphasise the “illiteracy” of Josiah because of the tendency to show the miraculous nature of Josiah’s ability to read.

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name called from the fire, signifies the inauguration of his prophetic mission among the Israelites. Hearing the voice of the divine has played significant role in the history of Christianity from St. Paul through St. Augustine to modern evangelical Protestantism where it represents divine authorisation compelling the hearers to plunge into evangelism without further commission (see Leigh Eric Schmidt 2000).

<sup>42</sup> [http://www.rccg.org/Church\\_Ministry/Trustees/history.htm](http://www.rccg.org/Church_Ministry/Trustees/history.htm) (accessed 25.03.01)

<sup>43</sup> It is not surprising that this episode is considered a “miracle” by the followers of Josiah. Omoyajowo (1982: 141) has pointed out that “The aladura churches tend to build up miraculous and mysterious anecdotes about their members, as a manifestation of God’s intervention and power”.

Josiah's public ministry as a full-time prophet of the C&S was anchored on the revealed Bible texts that confirmed his spiritual desire and encouraged him to look forward to an unknown future. According to Ajayi (1997),<sup>44</sup> our main source for the following reconstruction of the early mission of Josiah, having been thus confirmed, Josiah received further spiritual inspiration and instructions to leave Ondo town, the place of his spiritual apprenticeship, to Ile-Ife, a distance of about sixty kilometres.<sup>45</sup> Josiah further claimed that he had explicit instructions to walk the entire distance, an instruction he readily obeyed even with a leg still burdened with a deep, festering sore. He abandoned home, kin and kindred on 10 July 1940, to accomplish this spiritual pilgrimage to Ile-Ife. He walked to Ile-Ife as penance for initially ignoring the voice of God summoning him to full time ministry. Thus, he fasted all through the duration of this journey. Our source did not specify how many days it took him to accomplish this "feat". The reasons for going to Ile-Ife are also undisclosed but being part of the package of "revealed instructions", he asked no further questions. Josiah proceeded on the journey, preaching to the people he met on his way. Ajayi (1997: 23f) records that Josiah encountered two "mysterious" incidents on this trek: i) an invisible object with a humming sound like a jet engine hovered above him as he walked; ii) a little boy in white robe encountered the weary Josiah who did not know his way around Ile-Ife town and led him to the Baba Aladura of the C&S in the town and immediately vanished from sight. The only other source with this detail is *RCCG at 50* (p. 7) which reproduces Ajayi verbatim.

The narrative of Josiah's migration from Ondo, his place of birth to Ile-Ife, the centre of the world in Yoruba cosmology is reminiscent of God's call of Abraham in the biblical book of *Genesis* (chapter 12). God, in this passage, tells Abram to "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you".<sup>46</sup> It was while Josiah was on the journey from his Ondo home to Ile-Ife that he was said to have entered into a pact with God that the present leaders of the RCCG often refer to as a history-altering covenant set to change the world through the church Josiah was to establish later. For Josiah, however, the journey was a gateway into a new spiritual epoch, for "on his way to Ile-Ife, he had some strange experiences".<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ajayi's account is based on interviews with Josiah's wife and with other individuals who knew and worked with the founder. It may, therefore, be taken as fairly reliable historically.

<sup>45</sup> Leaving Ondo town may not be totally unconnected with a search for a prophetic niche in a neutral territory, bearing in mind the Bible verse that "a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and among his own house" (Matt. 13:57b).

<sup>46</sup> Genesis 12:1 (New King James Version).

<sup>47</sup> *RCCG at 50*, p. 7

At Ile-Ife, Josiah found his way to the C&S church at Igbo-Itapa where the “*Baba Aladura*”<sup>48</sup> formally inaugurated him as a public prophet of C&S and handed him “his prophet’s hand bell” purchased from one of the markets in the town. The bell, in addition to the Bible, became the essential paraphernalia of the peripatetic prophet, which Josiah had become at Ile-Ife. To further buttress his new vocation, Ajayi (1997: 24-25) reports that Josiah, in obedience to yet another spiritual prompting, went back to Ondo to sell all his personal possessions. He used the proceeds to settle debts incurred earlier. Understanding his vocation as a call to self-deprivation and self-sacrifice, he also gave out his personal room in his father’s house, insisting he would not need it any longer as the God who called him into full time ministry would ensure that he did not lack. He set out, on 24 July 1940, for Ondo to carry out these divine biddings.<sup>49</sup> He spent five days outside Ile-Ife to travel to Ondo and carry out these charges.

*RCCG at 50* points out that there are biblical precedents for this latest action of Josiah in both the Old and New Testaments. Perhaps, the most important of these remains the account of the call of the Prophet Elisha (1kg 19:19-21), while the New Testament reinforcement could be found in the account of the rich young man who declined to follow Jesus on account of his great wealth and possession (Mat. 19:16-21). For Josiah, however, the significance of his action was to demonstrate faith and total reliance and commitment to the cause of God to supply his every need, as he would be without salary or stipend from the C&S church as a *woli*. There is a progressive internalisation of the demands of the office of *woli*, and at each point, there seems to be a prior element evident in the office of a *babalawo* that Josiah just relinquished.<sup>50</sup>

Josiah’s prophetic vocation must have been made manifest by the out-working of certain gifts and spiritual endowment. Akinyele Omoyajowo (1982: 194-5) rightly observes that in the C&S society, a prophet is revealed by his own special endowment made public through such spiritual activities as healing, seeing visions or the power of dreams and spirit-possession. The use of these gifts usually leads to a charismatic lifestyle. Josiah’s rapid rise to the rank of a *woli* and an apostle in the C&S was an indication that he possessed publicly attested charismatic gifts.

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<sup>48</sup>This title literally translates as “father of prayer” but means “spiritual father”. One *Baba Aladura* functions as a parish priest of a branch of the C&S.

<sup>49</sup> *RCCG at 50*, p. 7

<sup>50</sup>The *Babalawo* is highly mobile, as he often had to move from place to place to accomplish the demands of his office as an oracular mouthpiece of the Deity. Josiah preferred the life of a peripatetic prophet.

To complete the pilgrimage to Ile-Ife and to get a seal on his staff of office, as it were, Josiah found a young maiden as wife. In the C&S, a prophet without a wife is seen as less complete, especially when there is no obvious impediment. Josiah was encouraged by the new C&S community at Ile-Ife to get married. The woman of choice for him was called Esther; she was a member of the C&S church at Igbo-Itapa, and the daughter of Chief Falonipe Awofisan and Madam Odelaan Omilanu, both of Ile-Ife.<sup>51</sup> The marriage proceedings were initiated barely a few months after Josiah arrived at Ile-Ife, with the backing of some of the women in the church and one Prophet Aaron who was the leader of the C&S band of prophets in the town (Ajayi 1997: 31). Josiah did not provide the all-important bride-wealth for Esther. Perhaps it is because of the comfortable family into which Josiah married that he did not carry out this obligatory duty. It could as well have been that as a peripatetic prophet, Josiah was too poor to afford any bride wealth for his wife. One of our sources, *RCCG at 50* (p. 8), states that God who called him as a prophet also provided him with a wife at no cost. As Josiah was always on the move, he had to wait until he got to his next major destination, Lagos, before the marriage could be solemnised by Prophet Abraham William Onanuga, immediate successor to the founder of the C&S movement (Omoyajowo 1982: 20) and the leader of the Mount Zion C&S branch at Ebute-Metta, Lagos. This was in 1941. Ajayi (1997: 31) and *RCCG at 50* (p. 8) are historically incorrect in their claim that it was Prophet Moses Orimolade Tunolase who officiated at the wedding ceremony of Josiah and his wife. Moses Orimolade Tunolase died on 19 October 1933 (Omoyajowo 1982: 38), and could therefore not have been physically present at Josiah's wedding. In 1941, it was A. W. Onanuga who was the Baba Aladura in charge of Mount Zion C&S church, Ebute-Metta, Lagos (Omoyajowo 1982: 193).

### **2.2.3 *Egbe Ogo Oluwa: The Glory of God Fellowship***

The religiously motivated migration of Josiah finally took him to the fastest growing city in Nigeria and the commercial and industrial nerve centre of the country, Lagos. According to Josiah's son, his father chose strategically to reposition himself from the relative obscurity of a prophet's life in Ondo town or in Ile-Ife to one that was once headed by the founder of the movement: Sacred Order of the Mount Zion branch of C&S, located at Ibadan Street, Ebute-Metta.<sup>52</sup> According to the account of Adekola (1989: 57f), while working at the C&S church, Josiah lived at house number 34 along Oloto Street with his newly wedded bride. He worked

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<sup>51</sup> Pa Awofisan was the son of one Chief Lowa of Ile-Ife, Osun State. This shows that Josiah Akindayomi married into a family with some royal background. (See Wale Adeduro, "Requiem for a Fruitful Mother", *Redemption Light*, Vol. 6. no. 1, Feb. 2001, p. 34; *Courage and the Christian Woman*, March-May, 2001, p. 13).

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op. cit.*

full time at the church as a “roving evangelist”, going from house to house, in his white flowing garment characteristic of members of the C&S, preaching and praying for people.

As a preacher who had renounced a ready source of legitimate income from his church, Josiah relied solely on what meagre resource his young bride could eke out. Ajayi (1997:35) provides details that she initially worked as a market-porter (*alabaru*), and then a petty trader, selling firewood for cooking fuel purchased from a nearby saw mill at Oko Baba in Ebute-Metta.<sup>53</sup> However, as a person, Josiah's material needs were indeed minimal: a meal a day and some money for house rent. His austere and frugal lifestyle was demonstrated through his eating habit; his dinner at five O'clock in the evening was his breakfast and only meal for the day, except on Sundays when he would indulge an extra meal of pounded yam (*iyam*).<sup>54</sup> Fasting and self-imposed austerity in the use of material things became a way of shaping and defining his religious identity and office as a prophet and healer. In addition, self-abnegation or mortification was a quest for spiritual powers and potency necessary for attracting and sustaining clients who seek answers to their daily problems and anxiety.

Adekola (1989: 61) records that in the same compound where Josiah and his young bride lived, another prophet, called Taylor also lived. Moreover, just directly opposite Josiah's apartment was yet another prophet's house. This indicates the state of affairs at the time whereby a band of prophets dominated the Oloto Street of Ebute-Metta at this period and circulated freely in the neighbourhood. The religious competition which this situation engendered made Lagos a “not too friendly” environment in the early 1940s for Josiah and his young bride.<sup>55</sup>

As Josiah had worked under the tutelage of Apostle Onanuga to define his prophetic lifestyle, Adekola (1989: 57) writes that he laboured assiduously to define his religious and prophetic portfolio. He prayed for people and “miracles of healing, deliverance from satanic powers were allegedly performed” (p. 57). Josiah soon established his independent identity as a prophet who spoke the mind of God, healer of diseases and deliverer from satanic oppression, and seer of visions (Adekola 1989: 64). His clients consulted him before embarking on important journeys or commencing on huge economic project such as investment in new or risky business. His opinion was also sought in more mundane, domestic matters. In his person, he successfully combined the responsibility of ritual and symbolic authority as well as an inspired socio-

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<sup>53</sup> *RCCG at 50*, p. 9.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with the founder's son, Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op. cit.*

<sup>55</sup> *RCCG at 50*, p. 9.

political leadership that accompanies prophetic office and authority. Adekola (1989: 57f) recounts that he would usually go to the church for prayers before embarking on his preaching schedule. However, sometimes he would also choose to spend the period between 9 O'clock in the morning and 4 O'clock in the evening in prayers in his house or at the church compound. It was not long before his reputation would spread by word of mouth throughout the neighbourhood, attracting a veritable pool of admirers, clients and followers or subordinates who thronged the church to seek his moral and spiritual guidance.

According to Ajayi (1997: 35), "the anointing on the life of Prophet Josiah also began to manifest in their church in Lagos especially [in] the ministry to barren women". It was in the context of those who came to seek solutions to practical problems of life that Josiah's authority as a charismatic leader first emerged. It was through the ministry to women, especially, that Josiah's reputation and religious authority were first established and disseminated. Praying for women, particularly those in search of children became the springboard upon which Josiah launched his ministry and through which his reputation spread to the neighbourhood of Yaba and Ebute-Metta. According to Adekola (1989: 61-62), "[a]fter his clients had received answers to their problems, he would then invite them for more prayers and bible study in the evening prayer meetings".

A second strand of those who sought Josiah's services was pregnant women awaiting delivery of their babies. These women needed spiritual fortification in order to avoid birth complications or spiritual attacks during pregnancy. A third strand concerned the health and well-being of the newly born and children. According to Helen Callaway (1980: 327) who researched the C&S movement in Ibadan, the spiritual and medical attention which was given to pregnant women and children in Yoruba society has in many instances been transferred to the C&S. A prophet functions as a mediator between humans and divine power in the management of life's exigencies.

For the first group of women, he regularly prayed for them and with them for the fruits of the womb, that which primarily raised the value of a woman in patriarchal society. Reports indicate that Josiah was especially successful in this sphere as many of those who came to him for this reason had their desires met.<sup>56</sup> The achievement of this result was only a first step that

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with Mother-in-Israel, Esther Akindayomi, widow of Josiah Akindayomi, *Redemption Light* magazine, vol. 6, No. 1, Feb. 2001, pp. 6-9. This interview was first published in November 2000 edition of the magazine. Mrs. Esther A. Akindayomi died on 10 January 2001, at the age of c.85 years.

naturally leads to a second: the spiritual care for pregnant women. The church soon became a place where expectant women had deliveries of their babies. In addition to ensuring and securing the total health of mother and child, the practice of giving birth in church premises served and still serves as a strategy of escaping the high cost of visiting formal health facilities like clinics, maternity centres and hospitals. There are, however, some cases which western-trained medical practitioners consider as “hopeless” and are directly referred to prayer homes. The initial followers of Josiah were the very poor people who often lived in the back-streets of Ebute-Metta like Josiah himself, who would ordinarily prefer the services of a prophet and other church-helpers to the formal and unfamiliar settings and procedures of cosmopolitan health facility (Callaway 1980).

Josiah’s overriding interest in women and children, aside from being deeply rooted in Yoruba culture and value system as well as C&S praxis, is also anchored on his personal experience and travails. Ajayi (1997: 36) records that for four years after his wedding, Josiah and his wife did not have any child. Confirming this history of Josiah, *RCCG at 50* (p. 9) writes that it was “a case of physician heal thyself”. This was a personal encounter of the agonies of being childless in a society that places huge premium on children. However, this state of barrenness ended when the wife bore a male child. Disaster struck thirty days later when the child mysteriously died, bringing to mind the case of an *abiku*, children born only to die later.<sup>57</sup> The second birth was a male child who developed a strange illness at the age of four and died when he was twenty-five years old.<sup>58</sup> These experiences formed a personal encounter with a core aspect life’s difficulties, shaping his ministerial response and interest in women’s welfare. He was said to have performed many “miracles particularly as it concerned barrenness (*sic*). Many barren women had children after being ministered to by Papa [Josiah]”.<sup>59</sup> This facet of the church’s social face has remained a formidable aspect of the RCCG’s cultural identity even to the present moment.

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<sup>57</sup> *Abiku* is the spirit of children with spiritual pact to torment their parents with a cycle of birth and early death. The Igbo of Nigeria call these spirits *ogbanje*. As Ulli Beier (2001: 88) points out, the Yoruba cultural belief about *abiku* children is that they usually die before the age of seven; those who survive this age normally grow to adulthood. There are elaborate traditional medical procedures by herbalists and other *oseguns* to bind these children to the earth in order to end the cycle of birth and death. Sometimes “the corpse of an *abiku* may be beaten, so that when it returns it will remember the pain and be afraid to die (early again) [Beier 2001: 88]. Among pentecostals, *abikus* are regarded as the “rulers of darkness” (Kalu 2000: 123).

<sup>58</sup> *RCCG at 50*, pp. 9-10, 20. In his life time, Josiah lost six children in all, the last of which was just a few months before his own death in 1980.

<sup>59</sup> *RCCG at 50*, p. 18.

In addition to this ministry to women, Prophet Josiah established himself by doing what most prophets of the C&S church were noted for: prognostication. In this respect, C&S prophets search the will of the divine in order to guide and order human actions in the present. Omoyajowo (1982: 136) sums it up succinctly thus:

As long as man's search for security lasts, and as long as the craving for knowledge of the future endures, the phenomenon of prophesying shall be a common feature in the C&S Society; and the prophet, whatever his weaknesses, shall remain a popular man -- the more so if he also possesses the gift of speaking in tongues.

Peering into the future brought Josiah much renown. He soon became much sought after, for it is said that he made accurate predictions for people in areas such as daily business, human relations, family relations, economic and social undertakings (Adekola 1989: 57). His charismatic qualities not only consolidated his spiritual authority, he became a social and political figure in the neighbourhood, often called upon to offer spiritual insights into mundane affairs of his circle of friends and clients.

Josiah's charisma as one who could accurately prognosticate introduced some tension in his ministry at this time. Those who sought his services now started visiting his residence instead of the C&S church premises. Since he was not the only prophet in the C&S church then, the amount of attention he was receiving started raising some level of concern from some members of the church, a concern Adekola (1989: 66f) out-rightly interprets as emanating from jealousy, envy or suspicion. According to *RCCG at 50* (p. 10) "the envy of other prophets who felt too many people were going to Prophet Josiah asking him to pray for them" was at the root of the complaints.

The success that Josiah achieved in this ministry may not be unconnected with the popularity of such prominent C&S leaders (such as Moses Orimolade Tunolase and Abraham William Onanuga) who once headed the Mount Zion C&S church where Josiah worked. Ajayi (1997: 40-41) makes the claim the Onanuga "loved Prophet Josiah" and often sent the latter as his emissary to reconcile some factions within the church. Under Onanuga, Josiah became famous and had a constant stream of people around him. In order not lose his clients to other competitors, he constituted them into a quasi-formal group with routinised rituals of prayers,

bible study, deliverance services, etc. This group he called *Daily Prayer Band*.<sup>60</sup> This was in 1947, about six years of full time ministry in Lagos. This prayer band was essentially a “house fellowship group”. Members of the amorphous group were not necessarily all from the C&S; there were also those who patronised the services of the prophet as a religious functionary and authority but belonged to different religious bodies and orientations. The activities of this group comprised praying, keeping night vigils, spiritual healing, prophetic guidance and bible study.

Ajayi (1997: 40f) further reports that soon after the death of Prophet Abraham Onanuga, the head prophet at the C&S church now was one Prophet Amodu who received many complaints against the activities of Josiah. Amodu ignored most of the negative reports and complaints brought to him. The main suspicion was that Josiah was nurturing the group around him to secede from the C&S, a church that had already witnessed a proliferation of secessions before this time (Ayegboyin and Ishola 1997: 81-90).

Adekola (1989:59) records that about 10 July 1948, the Daily Prayer Group had its name changed to *Egbe Ogo Oluwa*, “the Glory of God Fellowship”. This date is taken to be the formal inauguration of the society which was done with the consent and support of the C&S leadership. As a fellowship, it attracted people who needed prayers: “People with different problems ranging from barrenness, joblessness” lack of progress in business and troubled home “had their problems solved in prayers” by Josiah (*RCCG at 50*, p.11). As the fellowship grew, so also Josiah’s influence in the C&S and in the fellowship of which he was leader.

A variant story appears in Babatunde (1999: 20) who gives the impression that the group emerged *after* Josiah had left the C&S with nine persons. According to this account, after Josiah was no longer a member of C&S, “[h]e started a house fellowship...with his wife and two others who had left the C&S. The fellowship was called ‘Ijo Ogo Oluwa’...Initially there were nine members [...]” Babatunde designs his account to show the emergence of RCCG as an independent religious movement without any connection with the C&S church rather than as a breakaway faction, excommunicated from the C&S church.<sup>61</sup> Our principal sources for this part of Josiah’s ministry (Adekola 1989:62-73; Ajayi 1997: 40-44; *RCCG at 50*: 9-14) maintain that the prayer group was formed while Josiah was still a prophet of C&S. For

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<sup>60</sup> There are parallels of this sort in the history of Christian religious movements in Nigeria. A good example is the Precious Diamond society that broke away from CMS in Lagos (see Ayegboyin and Ishola 1997: 65-69).

<sup>61</sup> Pastor Kolawole Babatunde was the administrative secretary of RCCG during the author’s field research for this study.

example, *RCCG at 50* (p. 13) writes “J. O. Akindayomi had given the name Ogo Oluwa society to the daily prayer group shortly before the body was excommunicated by the cherubim and Seraphim church”.

The adoption of formal name came after a suggestion from a member of the group (cf. Ajayi 1997: 42-43; Bankole 1999: 20). The acceptance of this suggestion signalled the effective leadership and control of Josiah who, according to Adekola (1989: 59f) gave the inauguration address in his capacity as “Apostle” and “Prophet-in-Charge” of the group. The core members of this society were: J.A. Fakunju; Matiloko; Adefunwa, Ilenusi, Mabun, J.A. Adekoya, Fadiora, Okuwobi, Fetuga, Adefeso, S.A. Olonode and S.K. Padonu. This list of names is contained in the Funeral Programme of Rev. Josiah Akindayomi (1980). There is also a corresponding list in Tijani (1985), Adekola (1989: 60), Ajayi (1997: 53), as well as the most recent church document, *RCCG at 50* (2002: 13-14).

## **2.3 From "Fellowship" to "Church"**

### **2.3.1 The Birth of RCCG**

The *Egbe Ogo Oluwa* maintained a quasi-affiliated relationship with the Mount Zion C&S Church, Ebute Metta. Although it was organised from within the church it had members who were not *bona fide* members of the church. Most of its activities took place outside the church, primarily in the residence of the chairperson of the group, Prophet Josiah. These activities included prayer meetings, night vigils, healing sessions and counselling of members with difficulties. As the society was increasing in number, so Josiah found it necessary to relocate from a small residential place to a larger one: from Oloto street to Kano Street and finally to number 122 Bola street, all in Ebute-Metta. The well-being of the society now defined his personal preferences. The search for a physical place to hold their meetings and activities was also a search for an identity for group, an identity distinct from that of the C&S. Holding their meetings outside the perimeters of C&S church effectively restricted the control of the mother-church in much the same measure as it increased the authority of Josiah as the head of the group.

The search for an independent place for worship and other activities was achieved when a member of the group, Mr. S. A. Olonade donated a piece of undeveloped property at number 9 Willoughby Street, Ebute-Metta. The acquisition and development of this property drew a line in the sand between the authority of C&S and Josiah, marking him out as one with intention to

secede from the mother church. The new place of activities was completed in 1950; Adekola (1989: 69) reports that Apostle Abraham Onanuga, the head of the C&S church at Ebute-Metta was “invited for the opening ceremony and dedication of the building” on the first Sunday in July 1950. Apostle Abraham Onanuga died in 1946 (see Omoyajowo 1982: 193). It must, therefore, have been his successor, Amodu, who performed the dedication ceremony referred to here. The society now had some officers to run its affairs: Josiah was returned as chairperson; George Fakunmoju was appointed protem secretary until such time that Matuloko was appointed permanent secretary. As a quasi-autonomous society, the members of this group intensified its activities for they have now achieved a measure of pride and identity. The religious zeal of the members resulted in a widely reported revival barely a year after it relocated to its new building, a revival that brought in more members into its fold. The prophetic authority of Josiah was confirmed within this group as many miracles were reported to have accompanied his preaching and healing ministry (Adekola 1989: 70; Ajayi 1997: 42).

Both Adekola (1989:69f) and Ajayi (1997: 40-41) report that Onanuga was kindly disposed towards Josiah’s personal ministry. However, Josiah did not find the same favour with Onanuga’s successor. There was no unanimity in his selection as Baba Aladura. Factions soon developed within the body of the Mount Zion C&S such that different individuals laid claims to the headship of the church. However, with the growth of the Glory of God Society, Josiah found himself a formidable power-broker within the C&S church. One of the contestants sought Josiah’s support, a request he declined. Ajayi (1997: 43) reports that those jostling for positions within the church soon started invoking the spirit of the late founder of the C&S movement, Prophet Moses Orimolade Tunolase, by going to his gravesite at Ojokoro cemetery to pray and call on him to settle the disagreement within the church. According to him, the burial ground visits were designed “to settle grievances and determine who will occupy what position” (Ajayi 1997: 43). Josiah was against this practice and therefore refused to participate in it. “This practice”, writes *RCCG at 50* (p. 10), “was totally unacceptable to Prophet Josiah who, through his deep study of the Bible knew that such a practice is an abomination to God”. However, Omoyajowo (1982: 38) reports that since 1934, an annual memorial service has been held at the grave site of Orimolade by the Mount Zion Ebute-Metta C&S church.

Praying at the gravesite of Moses Orimolade Tunolase (who died on 19 October 1933) was not a formal practice of the C&S, but could be seen as part of the honour accorded Orimolade as a man thought to have found favour in the sight of God. Hence, the invocation of “the God of

Moses Orimolade”. Such invocation is also common among the Celestial Church of Christ members where “the God of Oshoffa” is a favourite form of prayer (Adogame 1999: 62). This practice can be traced to such Old Testament phrases as “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” or “the God of Elijah”. Although the RCCG tries hard to distance itself and its rituals from *Aladura* practices, there are still certain continuities between what it is and does at present and its roots in Aladura Christianity. The popular invocation of “the God of Enoch Adeboye” is a clear indication of one such continuity.

In 1952 Josiah finally left the C&S church. Many reasons are given both in the official church documents and in other sources for this. Documents from the church give the impression that Josiah left the C&S of his own accord. In other words, he seceded from the C&S. For an example, the official history of the RCCG states that

In 1947, he (Josiah) started to become concerned that the church (that is, C&S) was departing from the true word of God in some of its practices. By 1952, he felt totally persuaded to leave the church.<sup>62</sup>

Similarly, Ajayi (1997: 43-44) writes that “in 1952 he (Josiah) left the Cherubim and Seraphim church”. Depending on Ajayi (1997) as source, *RCCG at 50* (p.11) writes that “he [Josiah] left Cherubim and Seraphim church in 1952”. However, Adekola (1989: 72) reports that Josiah and the group of which he was head were “excommunicated” by the C&S church. Tony Ojo (1997: 6) also writes that “Pa Akindayomi was actually sent away from Cherubim and Seraphim”.

Different reasons are given for Josiah’s departure from the C&S. Ajayi (1997: 40-44) specifies in what ways the C&S “was departing from the true word of God” by claiming that Josiah left the C&S because of the introduction of some syncretic practices into the church. He fails to specify the nature of “the syncretic practices” but defines “syncretism” as “[t]he practice of mixing witchcraft with christianity” (*sic*) (p. 40). The implication of this assertion is that the C&S was mixing witchcraft with Christianity, an allegation that may have been a later reading of the events of the period.

Joseph Erinoso (1999: 20) provides two additional reasons when he states that i) Josiah was excommunicated because he was accused of “incitement of church members against the head of the cherubim and Seraphim church”, and ii) Josiah resented the “collection of fees for

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<sup>62</sup> Information from the official website of RCCG: [http://www.rccg.org/Church\\_Ministry/Trustees/history.htm](http://www.rccg.org/Church_Ministry/Trustees/history.htm) (accessed: 25.03.01)

prayer, healing and deliverance” by the C&S. Erinoso is alone in recording this case of incitement. The allegation of “selling prayers” may not be the case as it is a normal practice for prophets to receive gifts and money from their clients and members of their congregations. Callaway (1980: 325) has investigated the activities of C&S prophets in Ibadan and came to the conclusion that a prophet’s clients part with some money for the services rendered. However, to both parties, this is not a commercial transaction for “[p]ayments are made on a voluntary basis, a shilling or two at a time”. Josiah himself received “freewill gift and money” from “people who were coming for prayers when he was in the C&S”.<sup>63</sup>

For some members of RCCG doctrinal issues were the bases of disagreement between Josiah and the C&S. According to Josiah’s son, his father

[...] left the C&S then because there was no restitution. [Furthermore], Members of the C&S would love a prophet to have many wives, and they were not ready to retribute. He (Josiah) talked to them about the necessity to change but they said no; the doctrine he was trying to bring was too tough. When he discovered they did not want to change he had to move on to establish his own group.<sup>64</sup>

Doctrinal issues may not have been the immediate cause for the expulsion of Josiah from the C&S. This may have been articulated and inserted into the narrative much later. Doctrinal matters became highlighted after the split when Josiah came under the influence of friends who were members of the Apostolic Church, Four Square Gospel Church and the Faith Tabernacle Church.<sup>65</sup>

Tony Ojo (1997: 6), another senior pastor of RCCG, writes that Josiah’s “steadfastness in his observance of holiness especially in his discouragement of the youths from going to the cemetery to pray”. *RCCG at 50* (p. 11) reports that Josiah’s opposition to “the practice of going to the burial ground to consult the dead” was the reason for his departure from the C&S. This source further reports that because Josiah opposed the consultation of spirits of the dead,

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<sup>63</sup> *RCCG at 50*, p. 13

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Deacon Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op. cit.* Restitution is an important practice within RCCG; it means giving back something for some harm caused another. In context of the above discussion, it means those with more than one wife will have to send away the other women in the house except one; adherence to strict Christian monogamy. The Biblical basis of restitution will be shown shortly.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Pastor J. A. Bolarinwa, the office of the Vice Principal (Academic), The Redeemed Christian Bible College, Redemption Camp, Lagos, on 1 June 2001. Bolarinwa is the Vice Principal (Academic) of the Redeemed Christian Bible College (RCBC) where he teaches Church History. He is also a doctoral student in Church History at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

the C&S “fought back and excommunicated him, accusing him of organising bible study outside the C&S church with the motive of stealing the church’s flock to establish his own [church]” (*RCCG at 50: 11*).

The issue of pray at the cemetery does not appear as a sufficient cause for expelling Josiah. Praying at the cemetery, as pointed out earlier, was not a new introduction in the C&S; Josiah must have been participating in it from the time he joined the C&S branch at Ebute-Metta. It is very probable that Josiah would have seceded from the C&S if the church authority had not excommunicated him. Adekola (1989: 72) came close to this conclusion when he writes that between 1951 and 1952 Josiah resisted the suggestions of some of his followers to declare the Ogo Olowa group an independent church, but was unwilling to relinquish authority over it.

The excommunication that was handed down by the C&S was on Josiah and the Glory of the Lord society. If Josiah had not been excommunicated, he would have seceded nonetheless because he had in place all the structure, physical and spiritual, to do this. The question of control is pertinent in situating the expulsion of Josiah and his group. As the group expanded and appointed officials to manage its affairs it acquired property of its own. Soon the question of who controls it inevitably became pressing for both the group and the mother-church. Having laboured and made personal sacrifices in order to organise and maintain the group, giving up control to the C&S mother-church would have amounted to a great personal loss for Josiah. He would have lost his power-base as well as all spiritual, material and symbolic privileges attached to leading the group.

By 1952 he had risen to the rank of “Elder” (*alagba*) and “Apostle” which is the highest office in the C&S hierarchy (see Omoyajowo 1982: 193). He was authoritative enough to head the group and not concede to the desire of the parent group for supervision. As a result he was “excommunicated” by the C&S church along with the *Ogo Oluwa* group. Conceivably, as a result of Josiah’s preoccupation with the affairs of *Egbe Ogo Oluwa*, he was indifferent to the goings-on within the larger church. Consequently, his excommunication in 1952 was for gross insubordination to the constituted authority of C&S and intention to nurture the Ogo Oluwa group into a full-fledged church independent of the C&S mother church. Josiah had demonstrated unwillingness to bring his group under the authority and supervision of the C&S parish. This explains why he and the group were *jointly* excommunicated.

In an interview with Olu Okeyemi, the present *Baba Aladura* of the Mount Zion C&S church from where Josiah was formally excommunicated, the church authority maintained that the issues that caused the expulsion of the Josiah were indeed “minor and negligible”. According to Okeyemi, the escalation that followed was because of the minimal level of education of both Josiah and the then leadership of the C&S church. He insists that ego, pride and personal interest were all at play then, making it difficult for minor differences to be resolved among members. Furthermore, he observes that the history of successful group disaffiliations from the C&S encouraged and reinforced clerical recalcitrance and insubordination.<sup>66</sup> Omoyajowo (1982: 82) observes that early in the history of C&S, “secession became the usual means of resolving misunderstandings among leaders, especially whenever the question of control was involved”. The control of the *Ogo Oluwa* prayer group could have been an added cause of the rift between Prophet Josiah and the C&S authority that finally culminated in excommunication for the former.

However, the C&S had read the handwriting on the wall and pre-empted such move to secede before it was fully carried out. It can therefore be rightly argued that having ceased all activities with the C&S, Josiah had to all practical purposes left the church, but since this abandonment was not formal, the church took the initiative to act formally in excommunicating him and his group. This understanding of the events reconciles the apparent divergent positions evident in our investigation. Therefore, the expulsion preceded and became the necessary condition and immediate cause for secession.

When Josiah was expelled from the C&S, he formally constituted his *Egbe Ogo Oluwa* into a church. A member of the fellowship suggested that the name of the group be changed to *Ijo Ogo Oluwa*,<sup>67</sup> meaning “God’s Glory Church” (GGC). Adekola (1989: 72) who alone records this event, reports that this suggestion was approved by Josiah after a period of fasting and prayer. This new Ijo Ogo Oluwa, however, was both like and unlike the C&S. It was like the parent church in those specific practices and teachings that Josiah had no problems with: fasting and intensive prayers, prognostications and spiritual healing practices, the use of (holy or olive) oil. Above all, it was like the C&S in the definition of Josiah’s ministry and charisma as it related to women: praying for the barren, spiritual care for the pregnant as well as spiritual attention for babies and children. These spiritual and material concerns of Josiah were carry-

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<sup>66</sup> Personal interview with *Baba Aladura* E. Olu Okeyemi, Mount Zion C&S church, Ibadan Street, Ebute-Metta, Lagos, 8 November 2002.

<sup>67</sup> Personal interview with Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op. cit.*

overs from the C&S. These concerns have remained central in the RCCG to the present day. It was unlike the parent church for the reasons that the foundation members were not all from the C&S; many came from different religious backgrounds, bringing along some practices unique to their tradition. Josiah was also under the strong external influence of friends in the Faith Tabernacle church in Nigeria

When Baba [Josiah] gave his life to Christ (that is, ceased from being a C&S prophet), he was exposed to Faith Tabernacle of U.S.A. And Faith Tabernacle and The Apostolic Faith have many things in common and because of this, you can imagine the strict nature of RCCG during his time as General Superintendent.<sup>68</sup>

Such influence was mediated through printed materials like books, pamphlets and tracts that originally went to the Apostolic Faith church in Nigeria (see Omoyajowo Jr. 1998: 67-118) and from there to Josiah. Although Josiah could not read the tracts that were in English, he had friends who were educated enough to read English. The Apostolic Faith church in Nigeria had people who were enlightened. According to a senior pastor, Josiah interacted and “rubbed minds with these people, he listened to them and was tutored in the doctrine of Faith Tabernacle and he incorporated this in his religious practice”.<sup>69</sup> From 1952 (till 1982) the new group formed by Josiah adopted the Sunday school manual of the Assemblies of God church,<sup>70</sup> an American “classical” pentecostal church that came to Nigeria in 1939.<sup>71</sup> This Assemblies of God Sunday school text was a strong source of influence and pentecostal identity for the new group as it tries to construct a different identity distinct from its Aladura roots.

There was a conscious effort for Josiah and his group to be different from the C&S, not only as a result of external influence but also as a direct consequence of the hostility directed towards him and his group from their mother-church. He discarded the white flowing robe and bell characteristic of C&S prophets; he started dressing in European-styled suits and changed his name from Josiah Olufemi Akindolie to Josiah Olufemi Akindayomi. Josiah’s son, Ifeoluwa, in an interview, claims that there was no religious significance in the change of name, for it is a cultural practice of the Ondo people to change surnames from that of the grand father to that of

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<sup>68</sup>Personal interview with Pastor J.A. Bolarinwa, *op. cit.*

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> According to Kalu (2000: 111) the Assemblies of God church first came to Nigeria through the invitation of the founder of Church of Jesus Christ (CJC), a group that broke away from Faith Tabernacle (Nigeria) in 1934 in eastern Nigeria.

<sup>71</sup> The RCCG, *Sunday School Manual*, (Lagos: The Directorate of Christian Education, 2002/2003), p. 132; Tijani 1985: 9).

their father. Furthermore, he relinquished all the titles he got from the C&S such as “elder”, “apostle” and “prophet”. He still felt the need for a title though and so adopted one: “Reverend”.<sup>72</sup> The choice of “Rev.” points to a departure from *Aladura* Christianity as a result of influences of such churches as Assemblies of God, the Four Square Gospel Church, the Faith Tabernacle Church (Nigeria) and the Apostolic Faith Church. All the pastors of RCCG were bearing this title till when Josiah died in 1980 and his successor dropped it for “pastor” as the official designation of RCCG ministers

Between 1941 and 1952, Josiah had taken three wives. He took a second wife when the first was pregnant for their second child. The second wife had abandoned him because of some domestic misunderstanding; the first wife, Esther, and the third wife (whose names have been suppressed in RCCG documents) were living with him at the time he was excommunicated. He was said to have confessed before his small congregation thus: “God spoke to me that I am the number one adulterer in this place”.<sup>73</sup> As the last element in the constitution of a new identity, he restituted; he sent away his junior wife. Josiah took the first wife away from the house and asked the younger wife to take whatever property she wanted or needed from their home and leave. As Josiah’s first wife later recounted, the younger wife “took pots, spoons, jewels, etc. The only thing was that she could not take the floor away. Papa (Josiah) was beaten afterwards (probably by those sympathetic to the restituted wife, like co-tenants and neighbours, who thought Josiah was cruel by sending his wife away in the name of religion) and we were driven away from the house”.<sup>74</sup>

Having negotiated a new identity for himself, there was an additional need to do so for the *Ogo Oluwa* society. The first step was just as natural as would have been expected. *Egbe Ogo Oluwa* became *Ijo Ogo Oluwa*; the Glory of God society became the **Church of the Glory of God (CGG)**. Adekola (1989), who is the only source mentioning CGG as an initial name of the church, further reports that it was in July 1952, after an intense prayer session, that Josiah suggested a modification of the previous name of the church to *Ijo Irapada*, meaning the **Redeemed Church (RC)**. The search for identity moved in the young church in different directions, the most important of which was the attempts at affiliating with some foreign missions. We shall discuss these attempts and how the church today has tried to weave a

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<sup>72</sup>Personal interview with Assistant General Overseer (Establishment), Pastor Michael Olufemi Ojo, RCCG HQ, Ebute-Metta, Lagos, 12 May 2001.

<sup>73</sup> *RCCG at 50*, p.12

<sup>74</sup>“Life and Times of Mama Akindayomi”, interview with Pastor (Mrs) Esther Egbedire Akindayomi, *Redemption Light*, vol. 6, no. 1, February 2001, p. 7.

narrative of divine intervention around a history of survival. But before going into that, it is important to examine how the “Redeemed Church” grew.

### **2.3.2 RC: Early Growth and Development**

A church founded by a semi-literate man, made up mainly of uneducated women and artisans, not much is documented about RC’s early growth. Records were mainly kept by the memories of principal agents most of whom are dead now. Our sources for this section, in addition to Adekola and Ajayi, are reports from Josiah’s wife, Esther Akindayomi, and Josiah’s deputy, Pastor A. H. Abiona as well as information from Ifeoluwa, Josiah’s son. Esther Akindayomi and Pastor Abiona’s reports are eye-witness accounts. Both are published interviews in *Redemption Light* magazine.<sup>75</sup> What can be confidently asserted is that for the RC, growth and stability came slowly, painfully and with a great deal of difficulty. The primary difficulty for the infant church, as Adekola (1989: 88f) observes, was its attempt to seek for members or converts from within the same neighbourhood with the C&S. Ordinarily, excommunication brought with it a form of social and religious stigma and vilification, dissuading prospective converts. Furthermore, members of the C&S actively persecuted the foundation members of this church. For many years, therefore, the church existed as a small group in a constant state of tension with its surrounding social environment dominated by such larger church as the C&S movement.

Also, the doctrines and certain practices of this young group foreclosed the prospects of large numbers of people joining it. The most socially alienating teaching and practice of this young church at this time was “restitution”. This is understood as “payment for what is damaged” (Bankole 1999: 34) which is regarded as a true sign of true repentance. The doctrine of restitution is based on the text of Exodus Chapter 22:

If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him. If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution: if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double (1-4).

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<sup>75</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 5, no. 0 Nov. 2000 and *Redemption Light*, vol. 6, no. 1, February 2001.

One area of application of this doctrine that reverberated with unpleasant social consequences was in marriage: the public renunciation of multiple or plural marriages. A man restitutes if he is married to more than one wife, and gives up his conjugal and matrimonial rights over the other women except the first wife; a woman who is not the first wife also leaves her husband and stays alone or remarries a single man later. The procedures of a legal divorce are not involved here for plural marriages are regarded as “marriages in error”.

According to Ifeoluwa, Josiah’s son, prophets in C&S are encouraged to marry more than one wife. This accounted for his father having three wives at one time in his life. After Josiah’s restitution one month after his expulsion from C&S, he urged other members of his group who were in similar matrimonial situation to follow his example or leave the fold. This also earned the group some loss of members as many people involved in plural marriages said: “This is a hard thing; how can we leave our wives” (Ajayi 1997: 48) and they went back to the C&S. It does not seem very probable, therefore, that “as from 1952 onwards [...] many converts were won” into the church as Adekola (1989: 74) claims. It was even more improbable that “[b]etween 1953 and 1954, the church grew greatly for new members from other churches -- mainly the orthodox denominations joined this new church” (*ibid.*). As the C&S breaking away from the CMS won its initial members from the fold of the CMS, so also, the RC breaking away from the C&S got its initial members from the C&S movement.

In addition to the above situation, Josiah was a complex and difficult person, according to his son. He might have been a pleasant person to be with, but he was undoubtedly a very difficult leader. He was not only a great disciplinarian. He was also authoritarian in his approach to many issues, including his family matters.<sup>76</sup> He literally scared a good number of people away from joining the church. He was said to have authorised the public flogging of some ministers for some misdemeanour (Ajayi 1997: 58). “There was the case of a worker at Ebute-Metta who impregnated his fiancée before marriage; Papa ...gave him several strokes of the cane as a form of discipline”. For two months, this same worker was subjected to other humiliating experiences such as standing outside the church building during Sunday services, suspension from workers’ group, mandatory attendance at workers’ meetings at 6.15 am on Sundays.<sup>77</sup> His peculiar way of dealing with clergy malfeasance did not make Josiah a socially attractive personality.

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<sup>76</sup>Personal interview with Deacon Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op. cit.*

<sup>77</sup> *RCCG at 50*, p. 17.

Josiah believed that as the General Superintendent of the group, he was vested with authority by the Holy Spirit “to punish pastors according to the command given by the Holy Spirit. In such circumstances, a pastor may be given a number of strokes of the cane, to sweep the whole auditorium as the case may be”.<sup>78</sup> According to Abiona who was Josiah’s deputy, during the early years of the church, Josiah’s

teachings were tough, a situation further compounded by Papa’s (Josiah’s) uncompromising stance. He was particularly hard on workers and ministers in his teachings. Some of the teachings many people found unpalatable were his instance on restitution before being allowed to go through baptism. [...] No worker was allowed to be involved in business such as selling cigarettes or beer that are at variance with the doctrines of the church.<sup>79</sup>

Esther Akindayomi, wife of Josiah, corroborates Abiona’s assertion:

When we began the gospel after our salvation, many friends and co-workers deserted us. Their main grouse was on what they perceived as the hard teachings (of Josiah). Many of them who had more than one wife was (*sic*) unwilling to carry out restitution left the fellowship.<sup>80</sup>

In the early years of the church, with doctrines that spelt harsh social consequences and some authoritarian tendencies, the church carved out an image of what Roy Wallis (1984) characterises as “world rejecting religious movement”. The church (i) segregated women from men, (ii) insisted that men must never shake hands with women, (iii) a man must not sit on a chair just vacated by a woman (because the chair could instigate impure thoughts), (iv) forbade a woman from using chemicals to change the style of her hair to create curls or visit the salon, (v) forbade a woman from riding on a motor cycle. It does not appear likely that a church with these features appealed to many people. Furthermore, a church that did not clap hands during worship services or use musical instruments, and also insisted that members must cry during prayers was not a particularly attractive place for many city dwellers. A church that was nicknamed *Ijo elekun*, the weeping church, could not have been the favourite of many city people.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Adeola Akinremi, “Some Old Landmarks”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no.7, August 2002, p. 36.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Pastor A.H. Abiona, *Redemption Light*, vol.5, no.10, Nov. 2000, p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> Esther Akindayomi, interview, *Redemption Light*, vol.5, no.10, Nov. 2000, p. 7.

<sup>81</sup> Adeola Akinremi, *op. cit.*, pp. 33 & 36.

The cumulative effect of all this is that, eight years after its inception, the RC had less than a hundred persons at its 1960 convention!<sup>82</sup>

The young church expanded, however, slowly, gradually and steadily but never by a dramatic conversion of large numbers of persons at any congress, revival or crusade. The same social networking through which Josiah initially gathered a small group of people around himself was put to use: people who had made contact with the church in the context of their socio-religious searching brought their spouses and friends (Tijani 1985). Even as he left the C&S, the same category of people “who daily thronged his house in search of solutions to situations and circumstances” formed the majority in his new church.<sup>83</sup> Esther Akindayomi, Josiah’s spouse, had to train as *agbebi* or *iya-abiyamo*,<sup>84</sup> a local midwife, to assist in the delivery processes of pregnant women. This was a means of helping in Josiah’s ministry to women and a strategy for bringing and keeping people in the church. In the words of Esther Akindayomi, an eye-witness, growth of the church was slow:

As time went on, with the help of the Holy Spirit coupled with a lot of outside crusades, visitation, and house-to-house evangelism, the Lord began to gather souls for His church.<sup>85</sup>

The role of Josiah’s wife as a traditional birth attendant (TBA) is very significant in the ministry of the husband. The TBA is a form of traditional profession for some mature women who live in rural areas where modern health clinics are not easily available. Even in some places where these clinics are available, some local women prefer to seek the assistance of these TBAs for so many reasons such as the high cost of healthcare delivery, the unfamiliar circumstances of modern health clinic and the impersonality of the staff of such clinics. Above all, TBAs that function within religious institutions such as the C&S provide a more holistic approach to healthcare because they recognise the spiritual basis of certain forces, like witchcraft, which they pray against as they facilitate birth deliveries. Every C&S church has a women’s delivery room attached to it where pregnant women give birth to their babies in the presence of other mature women to help and pray for safety of both mother and child. Mrs

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<sup>82</sup>The entire “crowd” at the 1960 convention of the church was made up of thirty-six men, twenty-five women and thirty-six children and infants (those under 12 years of age). It was not all members of the church that were present at the 1960 convention, but most came. See the photograph of convention participants in *Redemption Light*, vol. 5, no.10, Nov. 2000, p. 7.

<sup>83</sup> Olaitan Olubiyi, “The Search for Identity and the Perfect Name”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 7, August 2002, p. 7

<sup>84</sup> Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA). The first case of child delivery by Mrs Akindayomi was in 1946, *Redemption Light*, vol. 6, no. 1, February 2001, p.32.

<sup>85</sup> Esther Akindayomi, *op. cit.*, p.7

Akindayomi's duties as a TBA complemented Josiah's ministry but also helped in bringing and keeping men in the church whose wives had been delivered of their babies in circumstances that they regarded as miraculous (Callaway 1980).

### 2.3.3 International Affiliation

There are three sources which mention RCCG's affiliation with an external group. The first is and oldest is Adekola (1989), the second is Abiona (Josiah's deputy) and lastly, *RCCG at 50*, which reproduces Abiona. The last reproduces the second which is an extensive interview published in *Redemption Light*. While the Adekola had access to some of the correspondences between the RCCG and the external body concerning the affiliation, Pastor Abiona was a primary player in the negotiations, an eye-witness. The reconstruction that follows is based on these two sources and other supplementary information from interviews and discussions with pastors conducted during field work.

The hostility of the C&S society and the undisguised suspicion and high-handedness of the colonial administration towards new religious groups at this time in Nigeria made the quest for overseas affiliation the only way out of the vulnerable situation that a group like the RC found itself in. Furthermore, the prestige and security such relationship brought was highly desired in order to establish the new group on a firm footing. Olubiyi, a senior pastor of RCCG and managing editor of *Redemption Light*, notes that "In the 1950s, it was fashionable, among newly established local churches, to align with European or North American churches to allow for growth opportunity and expansion".<sup>86</sup> It was for sheer survival and other pragmatic reasons which the context of colonial control foisted on some religious groups, particularly those founded by Nigerians. A clear example is the case of the emergence Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) in the 1930s which Tuner (1979: 126) reports "met increasing opposition [from the colonial government] and once again looked for help from a Western pentecostal church".

With a sizeable number of the first batch of converts, and some form of administrative and policy machinery put in place, the RC sought affiliation with The Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM). The AFM was the largest of the "classical" or "mission" pentecostal churches in South Africa and was founded by John G. Lake and Thomas Hezmalhalch, two North American missionaries who came to South Africa from Asuza Street in 1908 (see

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<sup>86</sup> Olaitan Olubiyi, *op. cit.*, p. 7

Anderson 1999; 2000).<sup>87</sup> It was mainly a White congregation church with “mission churches” or “daughter churches” (black churches) totally separated from the White “mother church”.

Adekola (1989) who is the only source of information on the search for affiliation, reports that in consequence of this desire to be affiliated to an overseas church, the young church in 1954 changed its name to the *Redeemed Apostolic Church (RAC)* in accordance with the recommendation of a five-man ad hoc committee set up under the leadership of Josiah.<sup>88</sup> The significance of this choice of name is underscored by Anderson’s (2000: 60) explanation that

In the early days of the Pentecostal movement, the words “Apostolic Faith” (or church) were universally used to refer to the new Pentecostal movement, the word “Pentecostal” only being used later.

Pastor T. Osunkeye was mandated (in 1954) by this committee to explore this possibility of affiliation with a foreign mission. Consequently, he made contact in writing with one Arthur Groth of California in the United States of America. It was Groth who directed Osunkeye to seek affiliation with AFM of South Africa for effective administrative convenience since the latter is within the continent of Africa.

The correspondences and negotiations between RAC and AFM culminated in the visit of one Mr. Billingham, a missionary from AFM to RAC at no. 9, Willoughby Street, Lagos in 1955. The purpose of the visit was to specify the terms of the affiliation. Inspection and negotiation with the young church continued until early in 1956 when the two parties signed the deed of the union. In accordance with this arrangement, the RAC yet again changed its name to reflect this union: **Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (Nigeria Branch)**. According to one of the only two mentions of this name in any extent RCCG document, *RCCG at 50* cryptically writes, “[t]he time came for the new church to have a name and it was called the Apostolic Faith of South Africa. [...] After sometime, probably after learning that Nigeria is not in the Southern Africa, the name was now changed to the Apostolic Faith of West Africa” (p. 14).

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<sup>87</sup> J.G.Lake was born on March 18, 1870 in Ontario, Canada while T. Hezmalhalch, who was to become the first president and chairman of AFM of South Africa on 27 May 1908, was born on 5 October 1847 in Paterson, New Jersey. (Lake was to become the second president of AFM on November 18, 1910). Both arrived in South Africa in the company of eleven other people on 14 May 1908, and held the first service in Johannesburg on 25 May 1908, a date that is now accepted as the official founding date of the AFM. The name “APOSTOLIC Faith Mission” is traced to Charles Parham, a pentecostal pioneer from Topeka, Kansas. <http://www.afm-ags.org/intro.html> (accessed 06.02.2003).

<sup>88</sup> Other members of the committee were Fakunmoju, S.K. Padonu, S.A. Olonade, and Fetuga, (Adekola 1989: 75).

Olubiyi claims that “the first attempt at giving the church a name gave rise to its being called the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, Nigeria Branch Headquarter”.<sup>89</sup>

With the affiliation to AFM and change of name came enhanced political, social and religious status of the young church, a missionary, one Rev. Klem, was seconded to Akindayomi to assist him to nurture the young church. Adekola (1989: 79) who was himself once a senior pastor of RCCG reports that the presence of Rev. Klem attracted more people to the church because they “realised that ...the new organisation had overseas affiliation and that the church was probably backed by the colonial administration”. However, Pastor J. H. Abiona claims that “Apart from the name [of the church] there were no concrete decision on alliance, mergers or sponsorships between the church and the ‘white men’ [meaning the AFM] who would just visit and worship with us once in a while”.<sup>90</sup> If there were no alliance or merger, the Nigerian group would not have changed its name to reflect a subordinate position to AFM. Furthermore, if there were no sponsorship, it would not have been necessary for any AFM missionary to visit the “Nigeria Branch Headquarter”.

There is yet another version of the quest for affiliation. A slight variation in this narrative claims that the South African church (AFM) initiated the move for affiliation with Josiah’s church. Babatunde (1999: 20) who was the former administrative secretary of RCCG writes in this respect, “Then came some White men. They had heard about Pa Akindayomi’s ministry and were interested in a merger of both ministries. By the time they laid down their agendas, he (Josiah) became convinced that the proposed merger was not of God”. However, this is highly unlikely judging by the meagre numerical strength of the RCCG then. Besides, Adekola writing as a senior pastor of the RCCG was unambiguous that the Nigerian group had everything to gain and not the South African Mission. The merger actually took place. For the church, the open acceptance of this fact may be considered to undermine the account of divine selection of the church’s name and the covenant which is said to have been established between God and Josiah. *RCCG at 50* (p. 15) reports that God gave Josiah a set of instructions some of which are (i) the church “must not merge with any foreign or overseas’ church”, and (ii) the church “must not copy other churches in the world”, (iii) God alone will direct the church”, (iv) God told Josiah that church the “would go round the world”.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Olaitan Olubiyi, *op. cit.*, p. 7

<sup>90</sup> J.H. Abiona, interview, *Redemption Light*, vol.7, no.7, August 2002, p. 7.

<sup>91</sup> After 1960, there seems to be no further need for any such relationship as the social and political situation which might have made it expedient no longer existed. And the pressure and hostility from the C&S might have relaxed with time.

Nevertheless, the church later changed its name from Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa, Nigeria Branch, to **Apostolic Faith Mission of West Africa (AFMWA)**. This new name was a reflection of a measure of autonomy granted it by the AFM. It also indicates a geographical scope that the leaders of the Nigerian church had conceived as the primary field of activity of their organisation. The period between 1956 and 1960 served to consolidate the church administratively and increase the numerical base. The relationship and union with the AFM was terminated just as soon as Nigeria gained political independence from Britain in 1960, as the new state severed all diplomatic links with the apartheid regime in South Africa.

## **2.4 Independence and identity**

### **2.4.1 A New Name**

With the severance of links with AFM, the Nigerian group was yet again in need of a new name, a new identity. The leaders considered retrieving or reverting to one of its earlier names. From the Redeemed church, it was only a short step from the final name the church adopted: **The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)**. This last name is believed to have been revealed to Josiah in a vision where he was instructed by God to memorise and meticulously copy out the English letters, as he was not literate in English.<sup>92</sup> He obeyed and later showed the scribbled letterings to S.A. Olonade, a learned member of his group, who interpreted it as the name of the church.<sup>93</sup>

The founder and Late General Superintendent of the church saw in a vision the items “The Redeemed Christian Church of God” which he copied meticulously being an illiterate<sup>94</sup> and which was later given meaning to by the literate person he showed it to (Ojo 1997: 5-6).

This narration, missing in the two oldest records on RCCG (Tijani 1985; Adekola 1989), underscores the claim of divine origin of the RCCG and the nature of the “covenant” God is said to have contracted with Josiah. The historicity of this event cannot be ascertained, as there is no indication of when or where this vision occurred. Regarding the medium of transmission of this name, *RCCG at 50* (p.15) says:

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<sup>92</sup> There is a parallel in the history of the Celestial Church of Christ concerning how God divinely revealed the name of the church to one Alexander Yanga, who was undergoing spiritual healing under Samuel Oschoffa (Adogame 1999: 25).

<sup>93</sup> Olaitan Olubiyi, “RCCG: A Vision Alive”. *Redemption Light*, vol. 5, no. 10, November 2000.

<sup>94</sup> The emphasis on Josiah’s “illiteracy” here functions to buttress the alleged miraculous and divine origin of RCCG. Based on this, some officials of the RCCG are insistent that God founded the church through the instrumentality of Josiah.

It is curious that God did not reveal this name to him [Josiah] in his native Yoruba language which he would have been able to understand easily. Instead, He chose to communicate with an uneducated man in English so that no one would question the originality and the authenticity of the name or even doubt the truthfulness of the vision.

The church has maintained this name since the 1960s.

A formal constitution for the church was only drawn up after the period of affiliation with AFM. Drawing up a constitution was part of the requirements to formally register the church as a corporate body with the Nigerian government and get legal approval for its activities in the country.<sup>95</sup> In the Constitution of the church titled *Memorandum and Article of Association of the Redeemed Christian Church of God*, the church adopts as its motto: “Jesus Christ the same Yesterday, and Today, and for Ever”.<sup>96</sup> Expectedly, the text of this constitution bears strong resemblances to that of the AFM.<sup>97</sup> This legal document specifies the name of the church as “The Redeemed Christian Church of God”<sup>98</sup> and identifies twelve objectives for the establishment of the group. The first and most important of these states that the church is established:

To evangelise the world in the name of Jesus Christ and to propagate the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Art. 1. 3a).

The second objective states in a similar vein that the church functions:

To convert the heathen and pagan to the Chrsitian (*sic*) faith and to establish Churches and Missions throughout the world (Art. 1. 3b).

These two objectives of the church point unmistakeably to the global scope and aspirations of the founding father(s). The church believes that the global nature of its mission was part of the covenant God made with Josiah in the latter’s call to mission. The RCCG has a mission statement, which is an elaboration of the objectives contained in the constitution. The mission statement available on the church’s web site, identifies five goals for the members of the

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<sup>95</sup>In Nigeria, it is the legal responsibility of the Corporate Affairs Commission, which functions as an arm of the Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs, to register and incorporate religious bodies, groups and organisations, and issue them “Certificate of Incorporation”.

<sup>96</sup>This motto is from Hebrews 13:8. The New American Bible translation reads, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

<sup>97</sup> See <http://www.havenofrost.co.za/constitution.php> (accessed 07.02.2003).

<sup>98</sup>This Constitution of the Church, made up of only 15 pages, is neither dated nor signed. All attempts to get the date of incorporation of the church did not yield fruit. However, this document existed during the life time of the Josiah Akindayomi as his son attested to: “[...] it was in the 1970s that they began to consider the prospect of registering it (RCCG) with the Nigerian government.” (Personal interview with Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op. cit.*).

church, namely, (i) to make heaven; (ii) to take as many people as possible to heaven; (iii) to make holiness a lifestyle as a condition for making heaven; (iv) to plant churches within five minutes' walking distance in every city and town of developing countries; and within five minutes' driving distance in every city and town of developed countries; and (v) to pursue these goals until "every nation in the world is reached for Jesus Christ our Lord".<sup>99</sup> The fourth statement is clearly from Josiah's successor.

For the first two decades, the church was mainly in Lagos and other Yoruba towns. Outside Ebute-Metta, the church opened a parish at Somolu, Lagos. Then a branch was established in Ondo, Josiah's hometown, and Osogbo (Babatunde 1999: 21). It was from Osogbo that the church extended its branch to Ilesa (Tijani 1985).<sup>100</sup> These were the first set of RCCG parishes outside Lagos. In the first twenty-eight years of its existence, the RCCG had only thirty-nine branches, all in the Yoruba-speaking southwest of Nigeria with none outside the country.<sup>101</sup> Maximum number of participants at the church's annual convention all through the 1970s never exceeded a thousand.<sup>102</sup>

In the decade between 1970 and 1980, the church spread through small fellowships (house cells, in most cases), especially after the conversion of the church's highest profiled member, Enoch Adejare Adeboye, in 1973. At the University of Lagos, for instance, Adeboye started the first fellowship of the church there comprising of his personal staff: secretary, driver, cleaner, messenger, and himself as head. Fellowships as these soon grew to incorporate other teaching and non-teaching members of staff of the different institutions. Many of these fellowships were based on university campuses in the southwest of Nigeria: University of Lagos, University of Ilorin and University of Ibadan.<sup>103</sup> The thirty-nine parishes in 1980 were more or less Yoruba parishes where the primary mode of communication was the Yoruba

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<sup>99</sup> [http://www.rccg.org/Church\\_ministry/Mission\\_Statement/mission\\_statement.htm](http://www.rccg.org/Church_ministry/Mission_Statement/mission_statement.htm), (accessed 29.11.02).

<sup>100</sup> There is an ongoing project in the RCCG under the supervision of Pastor Patrick Uponi, information and statistics officer in the Directorate of Missions, to gather the history of the RCCG in each state of Nigeria. At the time of field research for this study, no such information exists (Personal communication with Patrick Uponi, Redemption Camp, Nigeria, 5 May 2001). See also Patrick Uponi, "Possessing the World: So Far So Good", *The Catalyst: A Missions Magazine*, vol. 1, no.1, pp. 4-5.

<sup>101</sup> Missions Weekend brochure, June 15 -18, 2000, p.3

<sup>102</sup> Personal interview with Assistant Pastor S. Tai Adetoye, RCCG National HQ, Ebute-Metta, Lagos, 12 May 2001.

<sup>103</sup> It was through Adeboye that the RCCG penetrated the university communities in Nigeria. Many of those involved in these fellowships were university lecturers and other educated non-academic members of staff. The meetings took place in Professor Fola Aboaba's apartments every Monday. Later the meeting was relocated to the Chapel of the Resurrection of the University of Ibadan. Professor Uche Charles Isiugo-Abanihe and Professor Fola Aboaba were part of this early campus fellowships that had Adeboye as its driving force (Personal communication with Professor C. U. Isiugo-Abanihe, University of Ibadan, 15 May 2001. [More on Adeboye in the next chapter]).

language. More than three-quarters of these parishes were concentrated in Lagos metropolis where there was a programme of translation from the vernacular to English. In an interview with a senior pastor of the church, the RCCG, he said, “was basically a Yoruba church ...a tribal kind of church”.<sup>104</sup> This described the situation before the expansion of the church that started in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

#### **2.4.2 The Death of Josiah Akindayomi**

One of the visions that is recounted that Josiah had early in his ministry was that he would “preach the word of God in the Whiteman’s land” (Babatunde 1999: 19). This vision appeared unrealistic judging by the standards of the church and Josiah's inability to speak fluent English. He knew it was about time the vision was realised when in 1973, a young university professor joined his church. Josiah made him his official translator and interpreter from the vernacular into English. This interpreter soon became his eyes and window to the outside world. Josiah first visited the “Whiteman’s land” on 28 June 1975, and again was in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the United States of America, in 1979. He established contacts which led to his ordination of an Indian-American, Stephen Rathod, as pastor at the RCCG national headquarters in Lagos in 1980.<sup>105</sup> This was a couple of months before Josiah died on 2 November 1980 after 28 years of leadership of the RCCG.

In addition to travelling to the US in 1975, Ajayi (1997: 83) reports that Josiah also went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and other sacred sites in Israel in the same year. As a church founder, he had a special garb called “Jerusalem Pilgrim’s outfit” which he wore during these events. Ajayi (1997: 92) further records that Josiah had an audience with the Pope during this same pilgrimage. *RCCG at 50* (p. 24) is the only other source that mentions the Jerusalem pilgrimage but omits the bit on Josiah’s audience with the Pope.

However, before Josiah died, he tried to put his house and church in order, and so prevent what might precipitate confusion in his absence. He took his wife, Esther Akindayomi, to a spot at the Atan cemetery where he wished to be his gravesite. He confided in his interpreter his choice of a successor; he had earlier done this during their second trip to the United States of

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<sup>104</sup>Personal interview with Pastor Johnson Funso Odesola, The Redeemed Christian Fellowship (RCF) National Secretariat, The Redemption Camp, 13 May 2001. Pastor Odesola is a provincial pastor and National co-ordinator of the RCF. RCCG as a “tribal church” can be compared to the concept of a “tribal/clan religion” which may be understood as a religion whose priorities are shaped by cultural/tribal grouping and sentiments, (Guinness 1983:142).

<sup>105</sup>Personal interview with Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op.cit.*

America, but urged secrecy on all present at the occasion. The secrecy was necessary judging that such a choice could have generated strong disapproval, rebellion and confusion because Josiah's choice was only six years old as a member of the church and four years as an ordained minister of the church in 1979. Moreover, there were still alive some of the original twelve members of *Egbe Ogo Oluwa* from 1952.

Josiah had also recorded into an audio tape what amounted to his official Will, indicating once more his choice of a successor and how the little property he had would be distributed among his children.<sup>106</sup> When he became ill with “cough and general body weakness”, he knew the end was near. He directed that a letter of forgiveness be written to one Pastor T. Oshokoya, a one-time leader of the Apostolic Faith Church (AFC) who, sometime in the mid-1950s, caused some tracts of the AFC that Josiah had reprinted without the church’s permission to be seized and destroyed. The letter was considered a form of restitution for the protracted anger, resentment and embarrassment that the destruction of the tracts caused Josiah.<sup>107</sup> Josiah also directed that all the branches of the church observe 2 November as “Thanksgiving Celebration Day”. This date fell on a Sunday. He died about 04.30hours that day, but not without making one final, decisive point about his successor: About an hour before his death he indicated to the only pastor<sup>108</sup> in his room that

the name of the pastor to take over from him as leader of this church was written on a paper inside the Bible in one of the cupboards in his room and warned that the home of anyone who was against the choice of the successor would be destroyed (Olukowajo 1999: 146).<sup>109</sup>

The imprecation contained in the last part of this statement is considered important in curtailing the level of anger and rebellion such choice would generate among his followers and assistants. From a Christian point of view, it may appear uncharitable but it is markedly similar to imprecations attached to traditional covenants and oaths in Yoruba traditional. The news of his death reached the branches of his church as the “Thanksgiving Celebration” was going on. He was buried on 6 December 1980 according to the specific instructions he laid down before his death, in his special Jerusalem Pilgrim’s outfit. This brought to a fitting close the first

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *RCCG at 50*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>108</sup> Josiah had sent away all the people, including his wife and the wife of the young pastor chosen to succeed him. These were keeping vigil in his room. When they had left he asked that Pastor J.I. Olukowajo be sent for this special revelation.

<sup>109</sup> Pastor Olukowajo is much revered in the RCCG today for being the carrier of this special information from Josiah.

charismatic period in the history of RCCG and a transition from an old paradigm to a new and pragmatic one.

## Chapter 3

### RCCG: Routinisation and Recharismatisation

This chapter examines the process of transfer of leadership from Josiah to a successor, Enoch Adejare Adeboye<sup>110</sup>. It discusses (i) the imageries in which such transfer of leadership is couched, (ii) the administrative set up of the church at the exit of Josiah; (iii) the actual process of transfer of leadership; (iv) and its consequence; (v) biographical information on the successor; (vi) the continuity and discontinuity between Josiah and his successor; and (vii) the nature of routinisation and recharismatisation that took place in RCCG. Our sources of information for the present task are varied: (i) Ajayi (1997); (ii) *RCCG at 50*; (iii) the constitution of the church; (iv) Babatunde (1999); and Ojo (2001). In addition to these, autobiographical information from Adeboye's sermons, details from *Redemption Light*; and significantly, interviews of Adeboye's associates and top-ranking lieutenants will fill in what may be missing in the historical sources. The oldest records available on RCCG such as Tijani (1985) and Adekola (1989) are poignantly silent on how a successor to Josiah emerged. While the former did not mention the name of Adeboye at all, the latter skipped any discussion of leadership transfer in the church, making mention only that "the present General Overseer Pastor E. A. Adeboye [...] assumed this office [of General Overseer] since January 1981" (Adekola 1989: 283).

#### 3.1 Metaphors of Succession

Two significant imageries form the hub around which the narratives of succession in the RCCG revolve. The first narrative is summarised succinctly by the statement: "Moses is dead, Joshua arise".<sup>111</sup> Elaborating on this theme, Babatunde<sup>112</sup> (1999: 23) writes:

"Moses is dead, Joshua arise" seemed to be the word from the Lord to the young inexperienced servant (Adeboye). He was to be Joshua, to lead the Redeemed Christian Church of God into the promised land. Moses [that is, Josiah] had received the plan from the Lord but Joshua his assistant who had faithfully served him would be the one that will be given the battle strategy.

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<sup>110</sup> For ease of reference and consistency, Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye will be referred to in this discussion simply as Adeboye except where full designation is required by the context.

<sup>111</sup> This statement is an apparent paraphrase of the Book of Joshua 1: 2 ("Moses my servant is dead; now, [Joshua] therefore arise...").

<sup>112</sup> Pastor Kolawole Babatunde was the former Administrative Secretary of RCCG.

Babatunde's (1999: 23) choice of the phrase "battle strategy" aptly captured the leadership tussles in the RCCG after the death of Josiah as we shall come to examine shortly.

It is in the image of Josiah as Moses and Adeboye as Joshua that the narratives of succession are couched. According to some of our sources, Moses got the vision, but Joshua carried out the task ahead. But unlike Joshua's ascendancy in the Bible, Adeboye's did not take place without tussles, acrimony and schism in the church. As one senior pastor summarised the events of the period, "[w]hen the baton of leadership changed the church was shaken to its foundation, but God proved that He is the founder of the church".<sup>113</sup> However, the image of "Moses" has come to inform the extended meaning of "a spiritual leader" which the RCCG has adopted in the training of young leaders: According to Wisdom Nenty (1999: 23), an official of RCCG, "[a] spiritual leader is anyone empowered by the Holy Spirit to lead people from sinful life to righteousness, from bondage to freedom, from affliction to liberty, from sickness to divine health, from sorrow and shame to joy, from anxiety and worries to peace and happiness and from hell to heaven" (Nenty 1999: 1). He cites Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha as spiritual leaders of their people in much the same way that Josiah and Adeboye are regarded as spiritual leaders of their own people of today.<sup>114</sup>

A second imagery within RCCG leadership narratives is derived from the transfer of prophetic authority from Elijah to Elisha: "The mantle of Elijah fell on Elisha for the task ahead" (Babatunde 1999: 23). Ordinarily, a mantle among the Yoruba is a loose sleeveless cloak or garment, usually made from hand woven material, designed for covering the body especially during sleep at night. The metaphor of "mantle" is pervasive in the RCCG narratives of succession. This idea underscores the legitimate transfer of responsibilities and leadership as well as the establishment of precedence, which is the basis of an evolving tradition of succession within the church. The allusion to Elijah and Elisha by Babatunde above is a summary of the events recorded in 2 Kings 2: 9-15. Adeboye himself is fascinated with the image and personality of Elisha: "I told God I want a double portion of the power of Elisha [...] add everything together and double it again!"<sup>115</sup>

The metaphor of Elijah and Elisha puts Josiah and Adeboye in the lineage of prophets. According to Tony Ojo (1997: 19) "a lineage of true prophets (from the late founder, Papa

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<sup>113</sup> Wale Adeduro, *op. cit.*, p. 6

<sup>114</sup> Wisdom Nenty is the Travelling Secretary of Christ the Redeemer's Ministry and an Assistant Pastor in RCCG.

<sup>115</sup> E.A. Adeboye, "For the Youth", text of sermon preached at the Holy Ghost Service, 4 May 2001, the Redemption Camp.

Josiah Akindayomi, to the present General Overseer, Pastor Adeboye) runs through the Redeemed Christian Church of God [which] leaves no one in doubt that God is there and that He has chosen to put the honour of His name on this church”.

### **3.2 The Structure of RCCG in 1980 and Succession Throes**

#### **3.2.1 The Dilemmas of an Innovator**

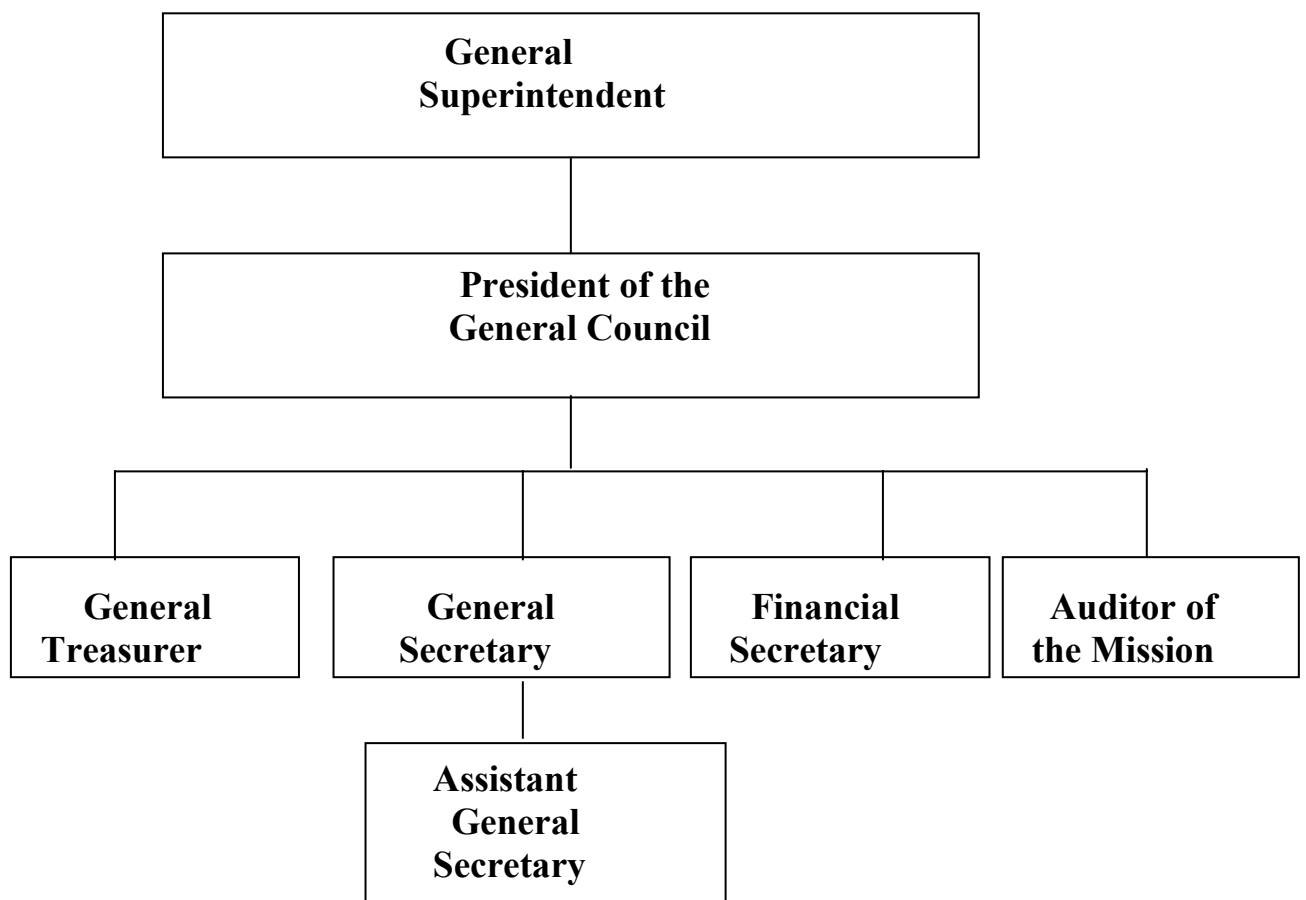
Principal sources for this section are based on i) the constitution of the church, ii) Ajayi (1997), iii) *RCCG at 50*; and iv) some autobiographical information from Adeboye’s sermons. The events surrounding the transfer of authority from Josiah to Adeboye were described by a senior pastor as “the most difficult period in the church’s history”.<sup>116</sup> Part of the difficulties of this period was that the church already had a constitution by the time Josiah died. The administrative structure of the church was clearly stated in its constitution. This structure comprised of seven levels of hierarchically ordered offices. Article 18 of the Constitution articulates these different offices and the functions attached to them. At the zenith of the administrative pinnacle was the General Superintendent (GS) and founder who was the chief officer of the mission.<sup>117</sup> He was to hold office for life. The GS was also the President of the General Council. He was followed in rank by the General Secretary, and his assistant, then followed by the General Treasurer, the Financial Secretary and the Auditor of the mission (see figure 3.1). These administrative officers see to the smooth running of the affairs of three principal organs of the church, viz.: The Executive Council (EC), the General Council (GC), and the Parish Council (PC) (Article 17a, b, c; fig. 3.2). The EC was made up of the principal officers of the church; the GC comprised the principal officers and all the ordained ministers of the church; and the PC was the principal officers at the parish level.

These organs expanded with time to six hierarchically ordered bodies with the Supreme Council at the apex, followed by the Committee of Elders, then the Council of Ministers, and the General Council, which is followed by the Parish Committee, and lastly the Assembly of the faithful. This later structure is represented in figure 3.3 below.

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<sup>116</sup>In a personal communication with Pastor Olaitan Olubiyi, the managing editor of *Redemption Light*, the church shies away from the events of this period, not wanting to give any authoritative historical details and not encouraging any of the pastors to write anything critical about this “most difficult period in the history of the church”. Part of the reason for this position is for the church leadership to appear charitable even to those who made trouble with the church then and left the fold because of perceived injustice and apparent undermining of due constitutional process in the ascendancy of Adeboye (06.07.01).

<sup>117</sup> Josiah’s official title was General Superintendent.



**Figure 3.1:** Administrative Officers of RCCG as enshrined in the constitution of the church.

At the time Josiah died in 1980, the church was maintaining the last administrative machinery. According to the constitution, “[t]he founder of the mission”<sup>118</sup> had unlimited powers to appoint or remove any officer as the Holy Spirit directed him. As it turned out, the role given to the Holy Spirit determined the importance attached to the constitution as the framework for organising a transfer of authority. The Constitution of the church clearly stipulates that in the event of the death of the General Superintendent, another

shall be elected by the General Council at their annual meeting by a simple majority vote of those present and entitled to vote (Article 18.a.ii).

As Josiah became old and physically weak some his associates looked upon this provision of the constitution as a platform for contesting the topmost office in the church. Based on information from Josiah’s wife, Ajayi (1997: 81) reports there were “some in-fighting among his [Josiah’s] ministers on who would succeed him”. In order to forestall such in-fighting, it is said that Josiah informed his ministers that his successor would not be elected as the constitution stipulated but selected by the promptings of the Holy Spirit.<sup>119</sup> According to the founder’s son, Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, the constitution of the church was actually crafted by some of the learned members of the church who had ambitions to succeed Josiah.<sup>120</sup> The point may be that Josiah never understood whatever provisions were contained in the constitution. A senior pastor reports that before the demise of Josiah, “he made it clear that this church is ruled by the Bible, by the Holy Spirit”<sup>121</sup>. Confirming the above assertion, Adeboye, credits Josiah as informing him that

the Bible, my son, the Bible is your constitution; [...] the one we wrote down, that one is for the government but the real constitution [of the RCCG] is the Bible!<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> This is the special title given to Josiah in the Constitution of the church.

<sup>119</sup> Personal interview with Assistant General Overseer (Establishment), Pastor Michael Olufemi Ojo, RCCG National Headquarters, Ebute-Metta, Lagos, 12 June 2001. Pastor Ojo joined RCCG in 1966 and personally worked with Josiah for fourteen years before the latter’s death.

<sup>120</sup> Personal interview with Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op. cit.*

<sup>121</sup> Personal interview with Ezekiel A. Odeyemi, RCCG National Headquarters, Ebute-Metta, Lagos, 4 June 2001. Pastor Odeyemi is the provincial pastor of HQ's Province 1 and the co-ordinator of all Headquarters' provincial churches.

<sup>122</sup> Pastor E.A. Adeboye, "When the Heavens Open", text of sermon preached at the monthly Holy Ghost Service, Redemption Camp, 42 Km Lagos - Ibadan Expressway, 5 January, 2001.

Ajayi (1997: 81) reports that some years before he died, Josiah pronounced that none of them would succeed him as leader of RCCG: “The leader of this church for tomorrow is not yet among us”. *RCCG at 50* (p. 33) records that long before the demise of Josiah, “the Lord revealed to him by His spirit the man who would take over the leadership of the church from him”. According to Josiah’s son, sometime before 1973, his father told his congregation that God had revealed to him the physical characteristics of the person to succeed him: his would-be successor would be as tall and lanky as himself and if this successor should wear his suit there would be no need for adjustment, for the suit would fit perfectly.<sup>123</sup> Josiah’s son-in-law and an Assistant General Overseer of the church confirms the above position when he says,

He (Josiah) gave such a vivid description of his successor declaring that they would be [of] the same height and that even the clothes he put on will fit the leader of tomorrow without any reduction.<sup>124</sup>

Among other features of this would-be successor, Josiah is reported as emphasising that his successor would be “a man of books”. This was taken to mean that the would-be successor would be learned and educated according to Western style of learning. So, Ojo (2001: 8-9) reported that the first day this “man of books” attended the church service where Josiah was preaching, he (Josiah) “received inspiration that the fellow had come” and announced same to his startled congregation. Ajayi (1997: 81-2), reporting the same incident writes,

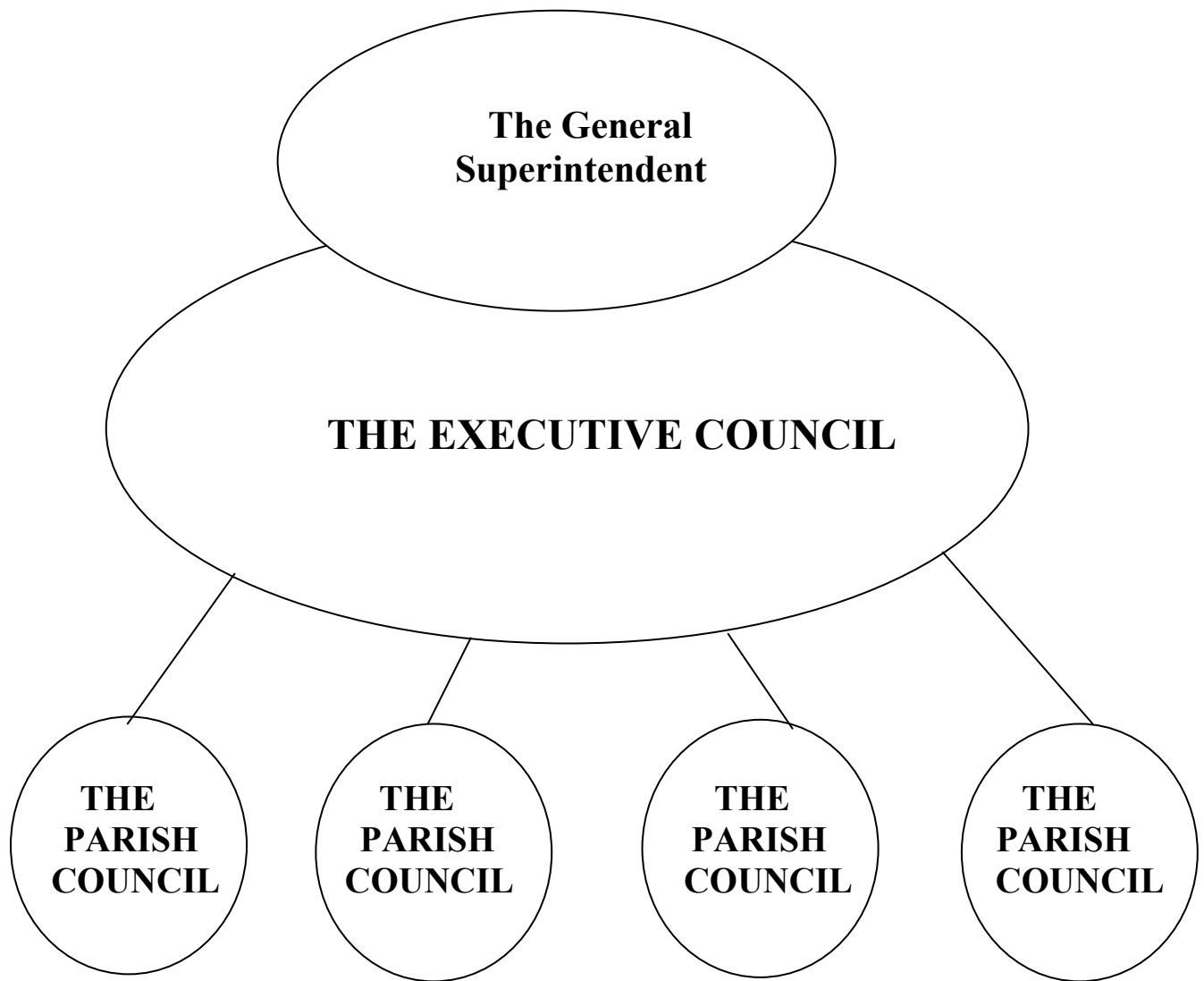
The very first time Dr. E.A. Adeboye and his family entered into the Redeemed Christian Church of God in 1973, God informed Rev. J.O. Akindayomi that his successor was around. This made Papa<sup>125</sup> to do something which was not too commonly done by him. After the service he visited the home of Dr and Mrs E.A Adeboye.

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<sup>123</sup>Personal interview with Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op. cit.*

<sup>124</sup>Interview with Pastor J. A.O. Akindele, *Redemption Light*, vol. 6, no. 1, Feb. 2001, p. 32. Akindele is the son-in-law to Josiah, and also Assistant General Overseer (missions).

<sup>125</sup>Papa translates the Yoruba word “*Baba*”, the former being a fond-word much like the English word, Daddy (which is a fond-word for father). Those who knew him before his death fondly refer to Josiah as Baba or Papa or Daddy. This word and its equivalents also call to mind “Abba Father” phrase in the New Testament as Jesus’ favourite invocation of God as His father. Peel (2000:72) writes that the concept of *Baba* among the Yoruba is a terminology of male dominance and “the keystone of a deeply patriarchal culture” According to him, “*Baba* carried connotations of priority, dominance, leadership, or superior efficacy in any sphere, human or otherwise”. Increasingly, however, Adeboye is being referred to as “Baba” by his pastors and followers.



**Figure 3.2:** Principal Administrative Organs of RCCG during the leadership of the founder.

Two years after Adeboye became a member of the RCCG, he was ordained a pastor. It is reported that during the ceremony, Josiah indicated that his successor was among the five candidates he was about to ordain.<sup>126</sup> After the ordination, Adeboye was brought closer to the inner workings of the church in addition to his position as translator to Josiah. Ajayi (1997: 84) reported that Josiah received a divine revelation during his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1975 to the effect that his “home calling” was imminent and so should proceed to put in place structures for the transfer of power. Amplifying on information from Ajayi (1997), *RCCG at 50* (p. 21) states, during the 1975 Jerusalem pilgrimage, Josiah “had gone up to the Mount of Transfiguration...when God told him ‘start tidying things up, Dr. E. A. Adeboye, the leader of tomorrow will be taking over soon’”. Consequently, Ajayi (1997: 84) states that “[b]etween 1978 and 1980 Pastor E.A. Adeboye received several tutorials from Rev. J. O. Akindayomi with increasing frequency as Papa’s departure time neared”.

The familiarity which developed between Josiah and the Adeboyes became a cause of concern to many older pastors of the church. Adekola(1989: 86) cites one Pastor I.B. Akinlembola who joined RCCG in mid-1950s, and rose to the post of Assistant General Superintendent, as one of those who were uncomfortable about Josiah’s relationship with Adeboye. Consequently, Akinlembola seceded from the church in 1974 to establish his own church, *Elim Gospel Church*, in Ibadan because he felt Josiah had literally handed the church over to E.A. Adeboye, who was just a new convert. In 1974 Adeboye was only a year old in the church, untested and inexperienced; a youth barely passed thirty years old. He was only a church-worker and *not* yet a pastor. Reporting the secession of Akinlembola, *RCCG at 50* (p.17) claims that Akinlembola seceded because he embezzled money and was confronted with the accusation at an all pastors’ meeting.

In addition to bringing Adeboye closer to himself, Josiah took four decisive steps in order to realise his will about a successor. i) A senior pastor reports that Josiah prepared a “written will”.<sup>127</sup> Significantly, this is the only mention of a written will. Josiah must have had someone to write out this legal document because of the technical nature of wills. It is doubtful if he could have used the services of a notary. ii) Josiah’s son, Ifeoluwa, reports that his father tape recorded his intentions for the church and who was to succeed him as leader.<sup>128</sup> iii) Finally another senior pastor records that Josiah wrote out the name of his successor and hid it in his

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<sup>126</sup>Personal interview with AGO Michael O. Ojo, RCCG National HQ, Ebute-Metta, Lagos, 12 June 2001.

<sup>127</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Ezekiel A. Odeyemi, *op. cit.*

<sup>128</sup>.Personal interview with Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op.cit.*).

Yoruba Bible, revealing this to just one person who was present when he died.<sup>129</sup> iv) Josiah also confided in his son-in-law, Pastor Akindele, who he (Josiah) intended to succeed him. Josiah's widow affirmed that

The Lord's choice (of a successor to Josiah) was written down and given to one Pastor who is an in-law to Papa with a firm instruction not to allow his wife or any other person [to] see the paper. The written document had the names of each of the senior Pastors and their roles/positions indicated.<sup>130</sup>

According to a senior pastor, the significance of all the above measures, particularly the tape-recording of his will and last intentions on an audio tape was to make sure that no one doubted the authenticity of what he desired for his church. Since he did not rely so much on the written constitution of the church, he might have feared the possibility of someone thwarting and tampering with his written will.<sup>131</sup> *RCCG at 50* (p. 21) says that Josiah placed a curse on anyone who would stand in the way of his wish or cause dissension. Such a person "would be removed by God". After the death of Josiah, there erupted strong tussle for the headship of the church, his widow played important role in insisting on some of these measures Josiah put in place before his demise. According to Mrs Esther Akindayomi, she constantly reminded Pastor Akindele, Josiah's son-in-law: "[a]re you not the one papa told who his successor would be?"<sup>132</sup> *RCCG at 50* (pp. 21-22) also reports that during a trip to the United States, Josiah in the company of five others one of whom was Adeboye, revealed after a long prayer session in their hotel room that his successor would be his young interpreter. After the revelation, "[a]ll those present were sworn to secrecy no [*sic*, not] to utter a word about this revelation. It was there that papa first prayed for Adeboye as his successor".

Aside from the measures Josiah was putting in place for a successful transfer of leadership, some of our sources say that God was also preparing the would-be successor for the task of leading the church. Tony Ojo (1997: 11), who is a senior pastor of RCCG and Adeboye's personal secretary between 1998 and 2000, reports an encounter his boss once had:

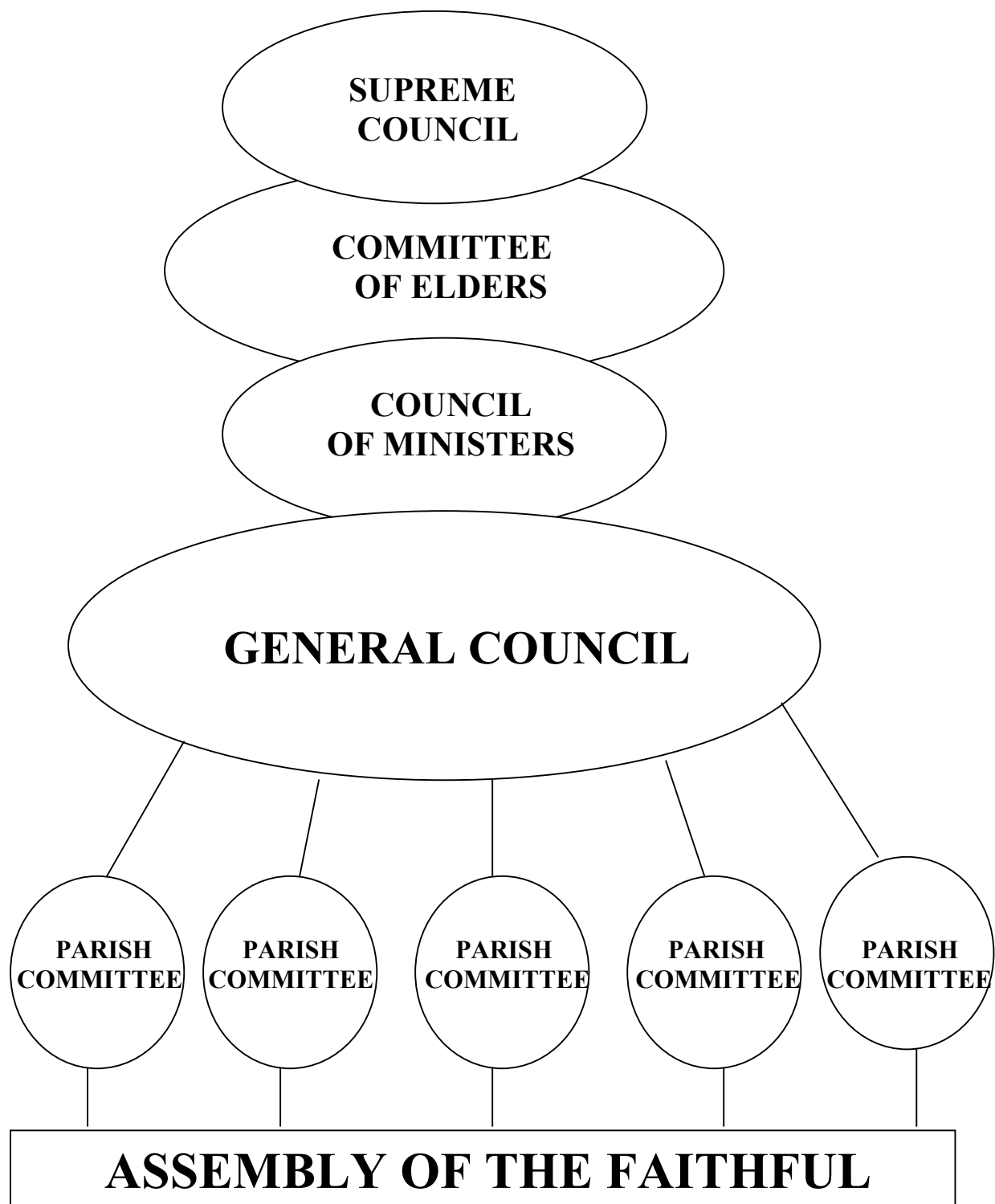
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<sup>129</sup>Pastor J.I. Olukowajo was the only person present when Josiah died, 30 minutes after informing him of where to find the name of his intended successor, (Bankole 1999: 144-147).

<sup>130</sup>Esther Akindayomi, Interview, *Redemption Light*, vol.6, no.1, Feb. 2001, p.9

<sup>131</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Ezekiel A. Odeyemi, *op. cit.*

<sup>132</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 6, no.1, Feb. 2001, p. 32.



**Figure 3.3:** Expanded Administrative Organs of RCCG before 1990.

[...] there was a day as a local boy I went into the bush to ease myself and suddenly somebody started talking to me, ‘suppose Papa should die today who do you think will take over [?]’ and I said there is Pastor A and he said no, then I said what about Pastor B, he also said no and I said definitely it should be Pastor C and he said no. After mentioning several names...with the same negative response I said what is my own business about that anyway and then He spoke ‘what about you?’

Adeboye narrates another divine intimation concerning his role in the church. According to him,

God had already made it clear to me that the day I leave the Redeemed Christian Church of God, my first son would die. You see, I would rather take all the beating than lose my first son. Your first son is supposed to be the prime of your strength. So, it was tough, it was very challenging but I knew very well that this was not a job I applied for, knowing very well that this was not something I ever dreamt of becoming, I knew that the one who made the arrangement would see me through.<sup>133</sup>

However, according to Odeyemi,<sup>134</sup> after the death and burial of Josiah, the then Council of Ministers<sup>135</sup> held a meeting. A letter the church’s Supreme Council<sup>136</sup> indicating the choice of Josiah's successor had already been prepared and addressed to each of the ministers. This letter also contained the names of all Principal Officers of the church as selected by Josiah before his death and their posts in the church This letter was read out before the assembly of ministers, indicating that the new General Superintendent was the young, educated pastor and former translator of Josiah: Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye.

On 20 January 1981 Adeboye was prayed for and installed as the leader and successor of Josiah. Between the day Josiah died (2 November 1980) and the day Adeboye was consecrated as his successor, Pastor Joseph Abiona functioned as Acting General Superintendent. He

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<sup>133</sup> *Pastor E. A. Adeboye @ 60: Celebration of Love for God and Mankind*, (Lagos: Redemption Printing and Publishing Company, 2002), p. 23.

<sup>134</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Ezekiel A. Odeyemi, *op. cit.*

<sup>135</sup> The “Council of Ministers” comprised the members of the Supreme Council and all ordained ministers in the church.

<sup>136</sup> The Council is now defunct.

became Deputy General Overseer once Adeboye assumed office. The day Adeboye was installed he formally assumed duties as the new and second General Superintendent of the RCCG. He was later to change the name of his office and title from General Superintendent to General Overseer. He was a young man of only thirty-nine years when he assumed office, seven of these years spent as a member of RCCG, and only a meagre five years as an ordained pastor of the church.

### 3.2.2 Dissensions and Secessions

Before the death of Josiah, some of his senior pastors had already read the handwriting on the wall concerning things to come relating to the transfer of power. The rapid ascent of Adeboye to positions of power and privilege became worrying to some of the more perceptive senior pastors. A good number chose to leave the church. According to Josiah's son, Pastor I.B. Akinlembola read "the signs of the times" and seceded before Josiah died.<sup>137</sup> The interval between the death of Josiah and his burial was one of heightened contestations among ambitious senior pastors of the church who were vying for the enviable position in the church. Esther Akindayomi, the widow of Josiah, recalled the events of this period a few months before she died in January 2001:

... [T]here were contests for the position (of General Superintendent).  
In spite (*sic*) of what Papa (Josiah) said before his death, many of his  
Pastors were clearly unwilling to abide. There was serious pressures  
(*sic*) on me to take a stand different from what Papa had said.<sup>138</sup>

According to Esther Akindayomi, three basic strategies were employed by those involved in this power tussle: (i) some cajoled her, promising her a secure and prominent role within the church should she give them her support for the coveted post; (ii) some tried to bribe her with gifts and money<sup>139</sup> in order to sway her opinion and lend them her support; and (iii) some resorted to outright intimidation. Mrs. Akindayomi claimed to have turned down the numerous gifts and offers made to her by the contenders thereby incurring no obligation to reciprocate by switching allegiance.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Personal interview with Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *Op. Cit.*

<sup>138</sup> Esther Akindayomi, *op. cit.*, p.8.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, J.D.Y. Peel (2000: 86-87) notes the role and function of gifts and presents in Yoruba socio-cultural life, observing, "unreciprocated giving simply made no cultural sense" to the Yoruba. Gifts and presents were designed to cement moral and social relationship within a community but they are expected "to be returned at a later date" (p. 86).

<sup>140</sup> Esther Akindayomi, *op. cit.*

Adeboye's own testimony is pertinent here:

When I became the General Overseer of this church, there were several people who claimed that God did not choose me. They tried everything to stop me. They mocked me...<sup>141</sup>

These same people according to Ojo (2001: 55) also said that Adeboye was taking over leadership of a church that “was like a muddy dirty pool that would soon dry up”.

There are a number of reasons why some pastors dissented. (i) There were some older pastors who started the church with Josiah. They felt both betrayed and short-changed. (ii) Josiah's actions were against the written letter of the constitution. (iii) Adeboye was himself a newcomer to the church as well as a young man with little or no prior experience in church leadership and politics. According to one senior pastor, the principal complain of the senior pastors was “How can this young man who just joined the RCCG be their leader?”<sup>142</sup> According to the same pastor,

Some of the senior pastors of the church were saying that because he (Adeboye) was a PhD holder, he used his worldly wisdom to convince *Baba* (Josiah) to write in his will that he was to take over from him. These senior pastors who had been with *Baba* right from the early days of the church were saying “these academicians (*sic*), they are very clever; they know how to manoeuvre (that is, manipulate situations) to get their ways”.<sup>143</sup>

There are no written records where the details of the leadership struggle are documented. A senior pastor who insisted on anonymity proffers some details however. The leadership contest was among three principal contestants: (i) Pastor Ogedemgbe, an engineer by training, (ii) Pastor Chris Fajemiroku, a lawyer, and (iii) Pastor Adeboye, a university don. These three pastors were the first educated people that joined the church. Incidentally, it was Pastor Chris Fajemironku who first invited and encouraged the Adeboye family to join RCCG. Other interested parties in the tussle took sides with these main actors. Their activities fragmented the church and its followership. The pastors who disagreed with the proclamation of Adeboye as

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<sup>141</sup>E.A Adeboye, “Anointing for Greater Exploits in the next Millennium”, in O. Bankole, *Op. Cit.*, p.189.

<sup>142</sup>Personal interview with Pastor Michael O. Ojo, RCCG National HQ, Ebute-Meta, Lagos, 12 June 2001. Pastor Ojo is the Assistant General Overseer (AGO) in charge of Establishment matters. He was a former acting General Secretary of the RCCG and elder before his elevation to the position of AGO in 1996.

<sup>143</sup>*Ibid*

Josiah's successor took one of three actions. (i) Some seceded and established their own independent churches, (ii) others left the RCCG and joined other churches; (iii) yet others remained within the RCCG fold and gradually reconciled themselves with the prevailing circumstances. According to Adekola (1989: 112-114), among those who seceded soon after Adeboye became leader of RCCG was one Pastor S. Adenuga who left RCCG in 1981 to establish his own church, *Onward Gospel Church*, in Ibadan. This man was a major financier of the church who "felt slighted or cheated by not being put in a status that befits him" after the death of Akindayomi (p. 113).

To stem the wave of discontent, the Supreme Council,<sup>144</sup> which was the highest decision-making organ of the church, took some far-reaching decisions:

that anyone who left as a minister cannot come back. So if you have to come back at all you have to become [just] a member and begin to climb the [hierarchical] ladder again. And this was done so that there is some level of discipline in the church.<sup>145</sup>

It was said that after this decision came into effect, some of those who left sought to return to the fold but were prevented from doing so, partly to stem the tide of dissent and partly to demonstrate the power in the new victory of the church over dissenters.<sup>146</sup>

The rest of this section is based on the record of Adekola (1989) who alone provides the historical details of the basis of Adeboye's emergence as leader. Adekola (1989: 234-250) records that the emergence of Adeboye as leader of RCCG is not unconnected with the establishment of a sister organisation within the RCCG, Christ the Redeemer's Ministry (CRM). With a handful of loyal followers and admirers, Adeboye founded the CRM in 1977 as a reaction against Nigeria's bid to host the second Black Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC '77).<sup>147</sup> According to Adekola (1989: 240f), Adeboye used the CRM to organise congresses and revivals as well as cultivate strong bonds of responsibilities and loyalty among some senior pastors of the church. Although Josiah supported the activities of Adeboye and the

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<sup>144</sup> During the lifetime of Josiah the Supreme Council was made up "of not more than thirteen and not less than nine members" with the General Superintendent as chairperson. Six members of this council were *selected* by the General Superintendent while the rest were General Officers of the Mission, that is, the General Secretary, the Assistant General Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Auditor. The Supreme Council replaced the defunct "Executive Council", a name used in the Constitution of the Church (art.17b: i-v). The Governing Council, a body that is still operational at the time of this work, in turn replaced the Supreme Council.

<sup>145</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Ezekiel A. Odeyemi, *op.cit.*

<sup>146</sup> *Idem*

<sup>147</sup> A fuller discussion of the CRM and its activities comes up in chapter 4

CRM, some pastors suspected the strategies of CRM, and consequently resented the ministry. A few of these pastors even seceded from the church before the death of Josiah because of the enhanced leverage that CRM was securing for itself and its leader(s). Adekola (1989: 244) records that from the beginning there had been a growing resent to [*sic*] this movement”, and names two pastors, Igbekoyi and Nwuka who “vehemently opposed the movement for they regarded it as a schismatic movement from the RCCG”. Adekola further observes that the opposition stemmed from the perception then that Adeboye “was over-ambitious for he wanted to assume the leadership of RCCG and that he was only using the CRM as a stepping-stone” (*Ibid*).

Also, the opposition to Adeboye’s headship of the church was strong because Adeboye was only a part time pastor of the church. Older men who had worked for decades as full time pastors of the church were ill disposed to accept the headship of i) a part time pastor, ii) a relatively new comer into the church, iii) a young man of 39 years old, and iv) a outsider because of his high level of education when compared to most of the pastors who were not highly educated. According to Pastor M. O. Ojo, these pastors felt that Josiah had been unfair to them and had short-changed them in some significant respects.<sup>148</sup>

### **3.3 The successor: Enoch Adejare Adeboye**

Our primary sources of information for this section are i) Ojo (2001), ii) Adeboye’s sermons, iii) Adeboye’s books, i) details from *Redemption Light*, and v) information from interviews.

Adeboye, a native of Ifewara, a sleepy and dusty farming Ijesha/Ife border town in Osun state of Nigeria, was born on 2 March 1942, into a polygamous family.<sup>149</sup> As the only male and last child of the mother, his birth was greeted with great excitement and rejoicing. His mother was particularly fond of him, for, his birth had secured for her a lasting place and joy in her matrimonial home (Ojo 2001). The parents<sup>150</sup> of Adeboye were members of St. Stephen’s Anglican Church, Ifewara, where Adeboye was first baptised and given the name Enoch. The parents were not educated and were cocoa farmers by occupation. Adeboye’s father was poor,

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<sup>148</sup> Personal interview with Pastor M. O. Ojo, *Op. cit*.

<sup>149</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 4, no. 2, March, 1999, pp. 7; 50. While Adeboye's grandfather came from Oke-Igbo, his grandmother hailed from Ado-Ekiti, several kilometres away.

<sup>150</sup> The father of Adeboye was one of those church patrons normally called "*Baba Ijo*", father of the congregation, a sort of "church - chief" or church-elder. Although the father was poor and a polygamist, he was still respected and honoured by the Anglican community of which he played significant role as elder.

so poor he could hardly afford a pair of shoes for his son.<sup>151</sup> Ojo (2001: 62) tells us “among poor people, his (Adeboye’s) father was considered a nobody”. According to Adeboye,

my parents were poor. We had a parcel of land. As a member of a polygamous family, with several children, there was no way I could ever prosper as a farmer. There was no land even if I wanted to farm. I realised, as young as I was then (in 1955, aged 13), that God had given me an asset, that is, my brain. I never came second in class.<sup>152</sup>

Several times Adeboye’s education was interrupted so that he could work and save up some money in order to offset some cost: pay school fees, buy books, feed or buy school uniforms.<sup>153</sup> Adeboye himself would fetch and sell firewood in order to take care of part of his education.



**Plate 2:** *Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye.* Source: RCCG website ([www.rccg.org](http://www.rccg.org)).

Adeboye’s father was a music lover and passed on this passion to his son who eventually became a member of the Anglican Church choir in his hometown. Adeboye attended St Stephen’s Primary School, Ifewara, and proceeded to Ilesha Grammar School, Ilesha, between

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<sup>151</sup>In a tape-recorded sermon, E.A. Adeboye disclosed that the most important piece of property his father could purchase before his death was an umbrella, a feat that was greeted with celebration and feasting in his household. He also said that his first pair of shoes was bought when he was already eighteen years old.

<sup>152</sup>Pastor E. A. Adeboye, *Victory: The Decision is Yours*, Lagos: CRM’s Book Ministry, 1997, (first published in 1984), p. 18. All the books and booklets published by Adeboye were done by the sister organisation of RCCG, the Christ Redeemer’s Ministry (CRM). He is the life patron of the CRM. The full bibliography of any book cited for the first time is given in the footnote.

<sup>153</sup>See, “Pastor Adeboye: A Unique Achiever”, *The Achievers' World* magazine, (Lagos) vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 43, 47-48.

1956 and December 1960.<sup>154</sup> While in secondary school, his father died just before he could finish the five-year programme. Completing the programme became difficult. According to his own account, he persevered knowing that “the only way out of poverty for me was through education” since “there was no way I could prosper as a farmer”.<sup>155</sup> The mother, forbidden by tradition to move out of the house for three months after the death of the husband, sold out all what they had in order for the young Adeboye to complete his secondary education. “God brought my uncle to render some assistance in my fourth year” in the secondary school. He achieved his ambition of completing secondary school with the moral support of “my good principal” who convinced young Adeboye’s mother not to withdraw him from school because “I was doing very well in all my examinations, [and] it would be crazy for me not to go into fifth form”.<sup>156</sup>

As a result of the role his mother played in his education, he acknowledges that of both parents, she had the greater influence on him. “I have said it again and again, I keep saying it until it will sink: I am what I am today by the grace of God and by the prayers of my mother. Whenever I satisfy my mother, she would say, ‘you this child, you will call one person and two hundred will answer [you]’. Today, if I say ‘Pastor, come!’ I know that more than two hundred will come running”.<sup>157</sup>

After completing his secondary education, Adeboye proceeded to the then newly established University of Nigeria, Nsukka, for his university education in Applied Mathematics. However, the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) cut his expectations short, as he was to leave Eastern Nigeria in 1966, where the fighting was going on, for the University of Ife, Ile-Ife, to complete the programme.<sup>158</sup> Adeboye explains how he survived in the university thus: “In the University, I had no money to buy text-books but I had friends who had books. I deliberately became friendly with them so I could get their books to read. At the end of four rough years, I got my degree”.<sup>159</sup> By the end of 1967, at the age of 25, he graduated with a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree in Mathematics.

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<sup>154</sup> According to a secondary school classmate of Adeboye, the leadership qualities of Adeboye was spotted early in his life when he was appointed a class prefect for his class in 1960 because he (Adeboye) was a well-rounded student socially and academically. See Tunde Olojo, “Enoch Our Old Classmate”, *Redemption Light*, March 2002, p. 8).

<sup>155</sup> Adeboye, *Victory*, *op. cit.*, pp. 19, 18.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.* p.20

<sup>157</sup> Adeboye, “Children Only”, sermon at the Holy Ghost Service, April 5, 2002, Redemption Camp, Ogun State, Nigeria.

<sup>158</sup> See *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no.1, p. 8.

<sup>159</sup> Adeboye, *Victory: The Decision is Yours*, *op. cit.*, p. 21

After obtaining his Bachelor's degree, Adeboye spent some time as a school teacher. He taught, first at Ifetedo Primary School, and then at Local Authority (L.A.) Modern School, Oke-Igbo, Ondo town. He also taught at Ondo Boys High School, Ondo and at Oke-Igbo/Ifetedo Grammar School, Oke-Igbo, before moving to Lagos Anglican Girls Grammar School, Surulere, Lagos. It was from here that he moved over to the University of Lagos for his post-graduate studies, having narrowly lost an opportunity to secure a Commonwealth scholarship to study outside the country. He completed his Master of Science degree and commenced a doctoral programme in the same university. His doctoral thesis was on hydrodynamics. According to his testimony, the dissertation was brilliantly written such that he was exempted from the necessary viva voce, "I had finished my (PhD) thesis and submitted. The external examiner approved it and said there was no need to examine me orally. My supervisors said this was against tradition. The external examiner stood his ground until my supervisors succumbed".<sup>160</sup> After his graduate programme, he was employed to lecture in the same Department of Mathematics of the university.

As a young man, Adeboye claims to have been deeply immoral. He confesses, that "I had so many girlfriends; I did not even know the number at a stage".<sup>161</sup> In addition to this situation, he was into the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Adeboye further reports on himself thus: "I once told my friends that if I were Jesus Christ, I would not have saved Adeboye. I was very rotten before I became born-again. In those days, in the university, we use [*sic*] to mock Jesus Christ. We said all kinds of rubbish about Him".<sup>162</sup>

Adeboye has been married to Foluke Adenike Adeyokunnu, who was a teacher by profession and a native of Ilesha, Osun state of Nigeria, since 17 December 1967. Born in 1948, Foluke was raised in a large family of nine siblings by a father who was a prominent Methodist catechist.<sup>163</sup> She attended United Missionaries College, Ibadan, where she was a Sunday school superintendent before her marriage to Adeboye.<sup>164</sup> The marital union between Adeboye and Foluke has produced five children, the first three of these being delivered through caesarean sessions. The third child, a girl, was born with unstable health condition that troubled the family greatly and indirectly led to the conversion of Adeboye before the child

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<sup>160</sup> Adeboye, *The Holy Spirit in the Life of Peter*, Lagos: The CRM 1999, p. 36

<sup>161</sup> Adeboye, "God of Miracles", sermon delivered at the Holy Ghost service, November 2, 2001, Redemption Camp, Ogun State, Nigeria.

<sup>162</sup> Adeboye, *I Know Who I Am*, Lagos: CRM 1994, p. 9

<sup>163</sup> See Peel (1983:117) for details on Foluke's father.

<sup>164</sup> *Courage and the Christian Woman* (official RCCG women's magazine), March–May 2001, p. 15. Mrs. Adeboye served in the RCCG choir for fifteen years, in addition to her responsibility as a Sunday school teacher.

died. There are now three male children and an only daughter. His eldest son, Adeolu, born in 1968 and a graduate of computer engineering became born again in 1984 and is now a deacon in the RCCG pastoring a branch church in London.<sup>165</sup> The three caesarean births predated Adeboye's elevation as the General Overseer of RCCG. That his wife could have two normal delivery sessions against the advice of medical practitioners is attributed to the "miraculous work of God" (Erinoso 1999: 24; Ojo 2001: 36). This divine favour shown to the Adeboyes was believed to have been mediated by the leader-founder of the church, Josiah Akindayomi.



**Plate 3:** *Pastor (Mrs) Foluke Adenike Adeboye.* Source: RCCG website ([www.rccg.org](http://www.rccg.org)).

Concerning the ill health of his daughter, Adeboye reports how he spent a considerable chunk of his income as a young university lecturer in "settling medical bills" in hospitals. Also he was in the habit of visiting prayer houses and Muslim *alfas* and *imams* as well as traditional medical practitioners, buying victims for sacrifices and offering payments for services of these health professionals (Erinoso 1999: 11). The huge investment in this area did not yield any success.

According to Ojo (2001: 14), in 1973 the Adeboyes were invited by one Chris Fajemirokun, a maternal uncle of Adeboye and also a pastor of RCCG, to attend the services of the church and seek the answers to the family's health worries in the context of a holiness preacher who was also an instrument in the hand of God. Agreeing reluctantly to this invitation, Adeboye allowed his wife to start attending the service of the RCCG four weeks before he joined her with the

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<sup>165</sup>In a sermon delivered at the Holy Ghost Service of 7 September 2001, Adeboye confirmed that his first son is a deacon in RCCG. This was against the background of media reports that his son was not a member of the church. See Adeolu Adeboye's testimony in *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 2, March 2002, p. 37.

hope and expectation that the health problems of his family will be put to rest permanently.<sup>166</sup> During an evening service of the church on 29 July 1973, after about two months of attendance of RCCG services, he answered the altar call “to give his life to Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour”, a call made by Josiah himself. On this day, Adeboye recalled, he realised that he knew many mathematical formulae but not one for eternal life.

Something overwhelmed me that night, that I was close to hell and did not know it. I suddenly realised it is possible to have all the PhDs. in the world and still be on the losing side. I know all kinds of formulas but I did not know the one for eternal life.<sup>167</sup>

Adeboye often dramatises how he wept profusely at the altar at the realisation of the futility of life (without Christ) and how close he was to perdition, almost earning for himself the unenviable post of “Chairman” in hell. Twenty-eight years after this event, he recounts some of the thoughts that assailed him as he first encountered the RCCG:

Years ago when I came to the Redeemed Christian Church of God, when a problem pushed me to the church and I came expecting because they told me [...] “Your prayers will be answered immediately!” ...And so I came. And when I came, the building was a ramshackle one and I was a lecturer in the university. We used to go to the Cathedral! And I only entered the place because the problem that was bigger than I was pushing me. And instead of them dealing with my problem, they started asking me...to confess my sins -- me to confess my sins! Me to forsake my sins! These ignorant people! I mean you could just have a look at them and you know that all of them are ignorant! They don’t know philosophy. They don’t know sociology. They don’t know psychology! They don’t know all the “ogies”! And they were now talking to me, a lecturer in the University, asking me to repent of my sins! I said “It’s not your fault, it is what brought me that brought me otherwise what will I be doing in the company of ignorant people like these?”<sup>168</sup>

Nevertheless, the issue did not rest there, the self-interrogation continued to the point of resolution in the form of a decision:

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<sup>166</sup> Mrs Foluke Adeboye, cited in Bankole (1999: 75).

<sup>167</sup> Adeboye, *The Water and the Fire*, Lagos: CRM 1998 [1999], p.34.

<sup>168</sup> E.A. Adeboye, "The Turning Point", text of sermon delivered at the monthly Holy Ghost Service at the Redemption Camp, km 42 Lagos - Ibadan Expressway, 5 October 2001.

Suddenly it clicked in my mind. What is wrong with you? [he asked himself] These people are not asking you for money! If they had asked for money, I would have given them. They asked you to surrender to your Maker.... They asked you to confess your sin and repent! That day I surrendered. The Almighty God washed me in His blood. I became a brand new creature. That was the turning point in my own life.<sup>169</sup>

Looking back at his “rotten” and wayward life, he says, “God looked at us and amongst us He decided to choose me. He has chosen me for a purpose.”<sup>170</sup> His experience of salvation has become one of the reasons why Adeboye has made “praises” a central element in his theology: “I have been singing praises to God since I got born again. This is because I knew how close I was to hell before He rescued me”.<sup>171</sup>

After his public declaration of accepting Christ as his Lord and Saviour, Adeboye was handed over to Pastor A. A. Aderibigbe<sup>172</sup> as his Sunday school teacher who taught him the doctrines and liturgy of the RCCG. As an educated and enthusiastic young man, it is relatively easy for Adeboye to grasp what was being taught him. After undergoing the obligatory believers' baptismal classes,<sup>173</sup> he was baptised by immersion in September 1973, a step that paved the way for him to become a “church-worker”.<sup>174</sup>

After experiencing this “turning point” in his life, the first set of people Adeboye brought under his influence was his personal staff at the University of Lagos: his secretary, driver, office cleaner and messenger. He soon formed a fellowship with these people gradually enlarged to involve many other workers in the university (Ojo 2001: 21). He was ordained a deacon after a while and, noticing his zeal and mastery of English language, he was made an official interpreter and translator of Josiah. This was a position of power, influence and intimacy for Adeboye who soon endeared himself to Josiah by discharging his responsibility to the mission conscientiously. Undertaking the pastoral training of Adeboye himself, Josiah

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<sup>169</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> Adeboye, *I Know Who I Am*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>171</sup> Adeboye @ 60: *Celebration of Love for God and Mankind*, (Lagos: Redemption Printing and Publishing Company, 2002), p. 21.

<sup>172</sup> Pastor A. A. Aderibigbe is, at the time of field research, a member of RCCG Governing Council, the highest decision making body of the church. In August 2002 he became the Assistant General Overseer in charge of Family Affairs.

<sup>173</sup> New converts are taught during this period the fundamental beliefs of the Bible and of the RCCG that has now been codified in a twenty-four page booklet titled the *Baptismal Manual: Illustrating the Fundamental Beliefs in the Bible*. (1998) published by The Directorate of Christian Education of the church

<sup>174</sup> According to the *Workers-in-Training Manual* (1998) of the RCCG, “a worker in the Redeemed Christian Church of God is any child of God who, on the recommendation of the local Pastor, had been set aside for special services in the house of God. Included in this category are members of the choir, the ushers, the Sunday school teachers and children (*sic*) teachers etc.”(p. 3).

ordained the young university lecturer a pastor on 14 September 1975, barely twenty-six months after his “turning point” experience. As a part-time pastor of the church, he served as a parish pastor of a branch of the church in Ilorin, Kwara state in 1979.<sup>175</sup>

Two years after his ordination, Adeboye established the first branch of the RCCG in his hometown of Ifewara. With a membership of just six people, mainly from, or linked to, the Adeboye family, the Ifewara parish of RCCG started off in a cocoa warehouse which Adeboye had paid fifteen years rent in advance.<sup>176</sup> This particular branch of the church was dedicated by Josiah himself, indicating the close bond developing between Adeboye and the founder of the mission. It was through the evangelistic zeal of Adeboye that the RCCG expanded in that area of south-west Nigeria.<sup>177</sup>

He entered into full-time ministry when he became over-all head of the church after the death of Akindayomi. On assumption of the headship of RCCG, Adeboye was initially unsure what to do with the job. According to his own reminiscences, “when God called me into full time ministry [in 1981], I was sceptical. I told God I would work with him but I would like to retain my job as a lecturer, at least to be able to feed my family. I said he should deposit a lot of money in my bank account as a guarantee”.<sup>178</sup> However, he resigned his appointment as a lecturer at the University of Ilorin, where he had transferred his services in 1979 from the University of Lagos. He relocated to Lagos in 1981 with his family, and first settled in a one-room apartment in Josiah’s personal house. In 1983 the family again moved to a “boys’ quarters”<sup>179</sup> hurriedly constructed and donated by some Bible study leaders of the church. The Adeboye family lived here for two years before relocating to the Redemption Camp on 1 October 1985, a site that serves also as the international headquarters of the church.

### **3.4 From Josiah to Adeboye**

#### **3.4.1 Continuity and Discontinuity**

Having considered both the biographies of Josiah and Adeboye, this section draws out certain strands of continuity and discontinuity between both leaders. In the beginning, the RCCG was an *Aladura* movement and not a pentecostal church. Perhaps the *Aladura* churches could be

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<sup>175</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 5, June 2002, p. 30.

<sup>176</sup> *The Achievers' World*, vol.1, no. 4, p. 47.

<sup>177</sup> Olaitan Olubiyi, “Growing Bigger Each Day: The Story of the RCCG in Ifewara”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 4, no. 2, (March 1999), pp. 6-7

<sup>178</sup> Adeboye, *Child of Destiny*, Lagos: The CRM, 1992, p. 24.

<sup>179</sup> This is the term used in Nigeria for the house-helpers’ living quarters.

characterised as proto-pentecostal: though they were imbued with the “pentecostal impulse”, this never became a defining feature. This pentecostal impulse Peel (2000: 314) terms “original Aladura hallmarks” and enumerates them to include tarrying for the Holy Spirit, speaking with tongues, concern for effective prayer and visionary guidance as well as liturgical spontaneity and African styled music. The Aladura spirituality, as we shall argue, provided the RCCG with the spiritual infrastructure with which or against which it fashioned its practices, services and identity. Both the C&S and the RCCG that disaffiliated from it shared the same worldview, with the former providing congregational infrastructure for the latter. It was the C&S that provided the context for Josiah to recognise and define his charismata and also harness the initial members of his *Ogo Oluwa* prayer band. The concerns of the C&S were, and still are, those that the RCCG has continued to preoccupy itself with. These concerns include those of taming malign forces and the baleful activities of witches and sorcerers, the search for “fruits of the womb”, spiritual care of pregnant women and children. *RCCG at 50* (p. 18) claims that Josiah had “the gift of working miracles particularly as it concerned barrenness [*sic*]. Many baren [*sic*] women had children after being ministered to by Papa [Josiah].” In these specific concerns we clearly observe continuity between the practices of C&S and RCCG as well as between the ministry of Josiah and that of Adeboye.

Similarly, the creation of a prayer camp by Adeboye which is regarded as a pre-eminent sacred site where God is present illustrates a form of continuity with the traditional African notion that associates spiritual power with physical places and objects. While Josiah developed an authoritarian personality as a prophet, Adeboye has constructed a public image as the oracle of God and figure of power, attracting overwhelming reverence from his followers. As Josiah was the bearer of covenant from God, Adeboye is a bearer of the word of God, the physical voice of God among human beings. There is a strong continuity between the two figures that goes beyond casual resemblances. In the church, there is a deliberate intention to cultivate the sense of such continuity so as to create precedence and a sacred tradition as the metaphors of succession with which we started this chapter. The church constructs a linkage of Josiah as Moses (and Elijah) and Adeboye as Joshua (and Elisha) thereby claiming the existence of a continuity with both leaders.

A hallmark of Aladura Christianity is the quest for effective prayer. Often an intense prayer life is combined with ritual elements in the effort to assuage life’s pains and maximise life force. According to a senior pastor of RCCG, Bolarinwa, Josiah imbibed this interiorisation of the

spiritual life through prayer. Bolarinwa further pinpoints the theme and practice of “spiritual warfare” through prayer and fasting as one that Josiah carried over from his sojourn in the C&S.<sup>180</sup> A member of the church in the days of Josiah comments that soon after the sermon, “the whole congregation is [*sic*] thrown into endless praying hours in which individuals now determine the time to leave the church after satisfaction. We prayed as if our lives depended on it”.<sup>181</sup> There is an evident continuity between the life of prayer of Josiah and Adeboye.

Josiah is generally acclaimed as a healer and miracle-worker. Adekola (1989: 61) writes that Josiah demonstrated “outstanding qualities of a... healer”. “The gift of healing was also evident in his [Josiah’s] ministry” (*RCCG at 50*: 18). It was this character of Josiah as a healer and miracle-worker that first attracted Adeboye to the church. Adeboye himself is popularly regarded as a miracle-worker. Tony Ojo (2001: 162-173) records what he claimed to be fifteen clear cases of miracles according to those who benefited from them. This is perhaps the pre-eminent characterisation of his ministry and partly accounts for the popularity which he has brought to the church. In these features of Josiah and Adeboye, there is a clear continuity.

Both leaders are also recognised as prophets, and oracles of God. Both Adekola (1989: 64) and *RCCG at 50* (p. 18) write about “visions and prophecies” as features that mark the ministry of Josiah. A feature of his preaching is the pronouncements he makes concerning the life of some members of the audience. Such pronouncements, called “revelation knowledge” in the church are popularly anticipated by his audiences who are eager to know what course God wants them to take. If Josiah’s visions and prophecies concerned his small band of followers, Adeboye’s have a wider scope as he often speaks concerning the nation and the world. At the beginning of each year, Adeboye’s prophecies are posted on the church’s web site ([www.rccg.org](http://www.rccg.org)) for global consumption.

Josiah is also attributed with “great skills in administration” (*RCCG at 50*: 18). As Ifeoluwa, his son, would attest, for heading the church for twenty-eight years and handing over to a candidate of his choice are accounted as part of leadership charisma.<sup>182</sup> The formation of the CRM and the manner in which it was inserted into the RCCG as well as how it was used in organising congresses and fighting for the headship of the church, all show that Adeboye has great skills in human management. *RCCG at 50* (p. 35) cites him as saying “I had done a little

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<sup>180</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Bolarinwa, *op. cit.*

<sup>181</sup> Adeola Akinremi, *op. cit.*, p. 33

<sup>182</sup> Personal interview with Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op. cit.*

human management because of the rapid promotion which God gave me [in the university system]. I had to act for my head [of department] while he was away and I had found out that the most difficult living beings to handle are human beings”. Much of Adeboye’s skill in human management will become clear in the next chapter when we discuss the administrative setup of the church which he pioneered immediately after his assumption of office.

The continuity that exists between C&S and RCCG as well as between Josiah and Adeboye notwithstanding, there is also a range of discontinuities. If what distinguishes Pentecostalism is a penchant and voracious appetite for external borrowing, what marks the *Aladura* movement is deep cultural sensitivity and local context (Peel 1968b, a; Omoyajowo 1982; Adogame 1999). Today, the RCCG is in the forefront of (neo-)pentecostal churches in Nigeria. This mutation is the out-working of the visions and charisma of Adeboye, whose leadership of the church acted as a catalyst for change for both the church and a new evolving urban religious culture in Nigeria.

The transformation of RCCG is as a direct consequence of the transformation of Adeboye. Josiah preached in Yoruba, the vernacular language of his people and of everyday life, which indicated his rootedness in Yoruba culture and worldview. For five years or so Adeboye translated Josiah’s sermons from the vernacular into English, the language of global exchanges and flows. Adeboye, on the other hand, preaches in English, the vernacular of global culture indicating how orientated he is towards the global dimension of life. Because Adeboye preaches in English, his sermons are available to people all over the world. Brought up in modern education and cultivating an intellectual orientation in one of the most abstract and global sciences, Adeboye appropriated a kind of “global consciousness” (Robertson 1992) early even before joining the RCCG. One of his strategies of success has been reasserting local and vernacular resources within the context of increasing globalisation.

The movement that was led by Josiah stressed a puritanical personal ethic, a retreat from the world and its material allurements and fashions, emphasising healing and prayer protection. After 1980, however, the RCCG gradually underwent far-reaching transformations that were distinct from the previous twenty-eight years of its existence in terms of theology, structure and ethos. Adeboye represents a new paradigm leader of a transformed RCCG. He is the foremost figure in the reconfiguration of the boundary between pentecostalism as a popular religion and elitist religiosity in Nigeria. Drawing on his background as a university professor

of mathematics, Adeboye made Pentecostalism relevant to the educated and the non-educated, the rich and the poor alike.

Introducing young university-educated pastors within the fold made the RCCG attractive to the young and upwardly mobile section of the population. Combining this feature with a doctrinal emphasis on prosperity and wealth at a time when the social, economic and political circumstances of Nigerians, especially among those living in urban centres, deteriorated rapidly made the movement even more appealing. There was a clear shift in thematic salience, which we will describe more fully in the next three chapters of this study, which radically altered the internal dynamics of the church and how it is positioned in relation to the larger Nigerian society and the world. The gravitation away from strict holiness teachings and practices to prosperity, the drift from salvation to deliverance and miracles was a renegotiation of cultural as well as social relevance.

The shift in doctrinal emphasis played a significant role in the process of transformation of RCCG. Moreover, there was a shift in cultural and liturgical style of the church pioneered by Adeboye. The incorporation of cultural items such as *ewi*<sup>183</sup> and *oriki*, the increased use of anointing oil and prayer clothes, all marked the new order designed by Adeboye. Such shift was made evident in certain programmes of the church, like the Holy Ghost Service, which helped to galvanise a religious mass mobilisation in Nigeria. Being able to mobilise resources from diverse sections of the society has been one of Adeboye's outstanding hallmarks.

Adeboye did not simply routinise the charismata of his predecessor. He claimed an original vision which transcended that of Josiah. It is in consequence of this that he overwrote some of the policies of Josiah, introducing changes that directly ran counter to policies of the church before he became leader. The introduction of musical equipment, the ordination of women as ministers, and the collection of money as offering during worship services are some of the areas of discontinuities between Adeboye and Josiah. Also, the aligning of the church with economic and political institutions in the country which Adeboye initiated were changes that his predecessor, who isolated the church from political and economic involvement, would have disagreed with. The discussions that follow in chapters 4, 5 and 6 provide details on the

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<sup>183</sup> *Ewi* is a Yoruba traditional ritual and poetic performance that involves the chanting with the accompaniment of musical instruments of the praises, virtues and values of a deity. Adeboye has successfully transposed this ritual practice from its original ritual space of traditional worship into pentecostal praise and worship service. A fuller description of how he does this is provided in chapter 6.

charismata of Adeboye which also show these discontinuities and indicate the degree in which Adeboye's vision and charismata go beyond the routinisation of Josiah's charismata.

### **3.4.2 Adeboye: Routinisation or Recharismatisation?**

When Josiah claimed leadership of the band of twelve religionists who formed the nucleus of *Egbe Ogo Oluwa* back in early 1950s, he did so by appealing to divine authority, this time his prophetic function as “the formulator and speaker of orientations” (Fabian 1971: 6). He had claimed a vision and a covenant with God, of being appointed by divine mandate to lead and guide the group. Already a prophet and an Apostle of C&S, his followers acquiesced in his claims to religious authority, recognising the charisma of prophecy, healing, visions and dream with which he bolstered and entrenched his claims. These powerful personal qualities became the rallying point of his public ministry, attracting and endearing him to people. For new religious groups “to get started requires a founder able to attract others, to convince them to accept a new truth” (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 356). For Weber (1996: 37) “a religious community arises in connection with a prophetic movement as a result of routinization (Veralltäglichung)”. This is the process “whereby either the prophet himself or his disciples secure the permanence of his preaching and the congregation's distribution of grace”. It was around the orb of these personal qualities taken as gifts of grace that Josiah's charismatic authority revolved. These gifts of grace functioned in a two-fold way as grounds for attracting and maintaining people around him, and for legitimating his leadership position.

While Weber used the concept of charisma to capture the social sources of legitimacy of authority, we use the concept of charismatisation as a process which implies the recognition and acceptance of this legitimacy among followers of a charismatic leader. Charismatisation is a process of stamping of one's charisma as a strategy of leadership on members of a group. Because charismatic authority is inherently unstable, a process of routinisation is needed to provide secure anchor for the exercise of authority and legitimacy as well as its perpetuation. This means that the leader's personal authority is vested on his representatives and officials in such a manner that they now share in the aura of his or her office. Routinisation also implies a transformation of charismatic authority to either legal-rational or traditional authority or a combination of both following Weber's theory of authority (Weber 1947). Ordinarily according to Weber's conceptualisation, institutionalisation of charisma follows at the death or “disappearance” of the founder. Organisations, whether religious or secular, are driven by two broad objectives, viz.: an orderly pursuit of goals and a desire for self-perpetuation. These

goals determine the structures of organisation and the strategies for the pursuit of the goals. The way charisma is routinised and institutionalised influences how these organisational objectives are pursued.

In the case of the RCCG, the process of routinisation of charisma started with little notice. One important step that signalled this process was the drafting of a constitution, which stipulated an ordered way in which leadership offices were to be distributed and power transferred from one person to another. The constitution also specified the responsibilities and the means of carrying them out by officers of the church. The rapid ascendancy of Adeboye illustrates part of this process: ordination as pastor two years after conversion and subsequent appointment as official translator of Josiah were processes designed for him to share in the charisma of the founder. The special interest Josiah took in Adeboye and the personal tutoring which the former gave the latter were active parts of the process of routinisation. More importantly, intertwined in this process is another: institutionalisation of charisma. Weber (1968: 55) assumes that this process commences *after* the death of the founder/leader of a group, “with the disappearance of the personal charismatic leader”. However, in the case of the RCCG, the process started in the lifetime of Josiah. The founder himself initiated the process, knowing what could have happened if he had failed to do so. All the measures he took such as writing his will and tape-recording it were steps towards achieving routinisation.

As we pointed out above, Josiah made several pronouncements concerning the nature of his successor. The basis of such pronouncements, according to our sources, is prophecy and vision, which Josiah adduced as his source of knowledge and authority in subverting the constitutional provisions for leadership succession.<sup>184</sup> For five years and in various forms Josiah prepared the minds of his followers for what was to come: for institutionalisation of charismatic authority. Finally, he prepared a written will that sealed his choice of a successor as the choice of the Holy Spirit. This forms a further appeal to divine sanction as the basis of his authority and power. Such an appeal that subverted the constitution of the church effectively truncated the routinisation process and opened up another period for the recharismatisation of the movement.

The choice of Adeboye by Josiah as successor fits in well with one of Weber’s “principal possible types of solution” to “the problem of succession” which arises as a result of “the

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<sup>184</sup> Personal interview with Pastor M.O. (AGO Establishment), *op. cit.*; Personal interview with Pastor Ezekiel A. Odeyemi, *op. cit.*

disappearance of the personal charismatic leader” (Weber 1968: 55). This problem is met “[b]y the designation on the part of the original charismatic leader of his own successor and his recognition on the part of the followers” (*ibid.*). However, in the case of the RCCG, Adeboye often unequivocally asserts his independent authority vested on him directly by God rather than by Josiah. Replete in his sermons and books is the statement, “when God appointed me head of the church...he did not console anyone”. While for Weber (1968: 55) “legitimacy is acquired through the act of designation” by the original charismatic leader, Adeboye appeals to God and not to Josiah for his source of legitimacy. Herein lies his authority to commence a process of “refounding” of the RCCG.<sup>185</sup> It is this process of refounding which we have differently characterised as recharismatisation.

The transfer of authority to Adeboye not only signified an attempt at institutionalisation of authority based on visions and prophecy, it brought about a recharismatisation of the movement. By claiming an independent source of authority, Adeboye was able to introduce policies and practices that were contrary to his predecessor’s. The RCCG is one clear example of Michael A. Toth’s *Theory of the Two Charismas* (1981). According to Toth (1981: ix)

revolutionary movements which receive their initial impetus from the sudden and dramatic appearance of a charismatic leader achieve tenure and sustain accomplishment through the appearance of a *second* charismatic leader who emerges from within the movement itself and who succeeds the founder (emphasis in original).

Adeboye represents the second charisma that has precipitated a radically altered worldview for members of the church. Between Josiah and Adeboye, the latter embodies and radiates an *enhanced charisma* rather than a declining charisma as Toth expects of the second charismatic leader. Routinisation is a process that is on going rather than a static, finished state of affairs. In the case of RCCG, both routinisation and recharismatisation are processes proceeding apace even in the present moment of second, more enhanced charisma.

Adeboye effectively moved the RCCG from its local embeddedness to the global arena, his own spiritual gifts and insights superseding and transcending those of his predecessor and spiritual mentor. He claimed an original vision, a spiritual insight and charismata for himself,

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<sup>185</sup> RCCG could be characterised as undergoing a process of “double founding”, one by the original founder, Josiah, and the other by Adeboye, Josiah’s successor. Thanks for Prof. Christoph Bochinger for suggesting the “double founding” phrase. (Personal Communication)

which formed the basis upon which he commenced certain programmes in the church as well as reversing some of the policies of Josiah. Such policies and practices include the use of musical equipment and the ordination of women as pastors, the monetisation of the church, extensive bureaucratisation of the church. Furthermore, he inaugurated a new relationship between the church and political and economic institutions in the country. In preparing and choosing Adeboye as successor, Josiah accomplished one thing: he entrenched the role of visions and prophecy in the complex processes of routinisation and institutionalisation of his charisma as well as ignited a more profound process of recharismatisation. Through this second process, Adeboye effectively reoriented the church, altered its self-understanding and identity, widened its scope of operations in such ways that were Josiah to visit his church now, he would, according to Ifeoluwa his son, hardly recognise that this was the group he founded and led for twenty-eight years.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Personal interview with Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op. cit.*

## Chapter 4

### RCCG: Organisational Structure and Institutions

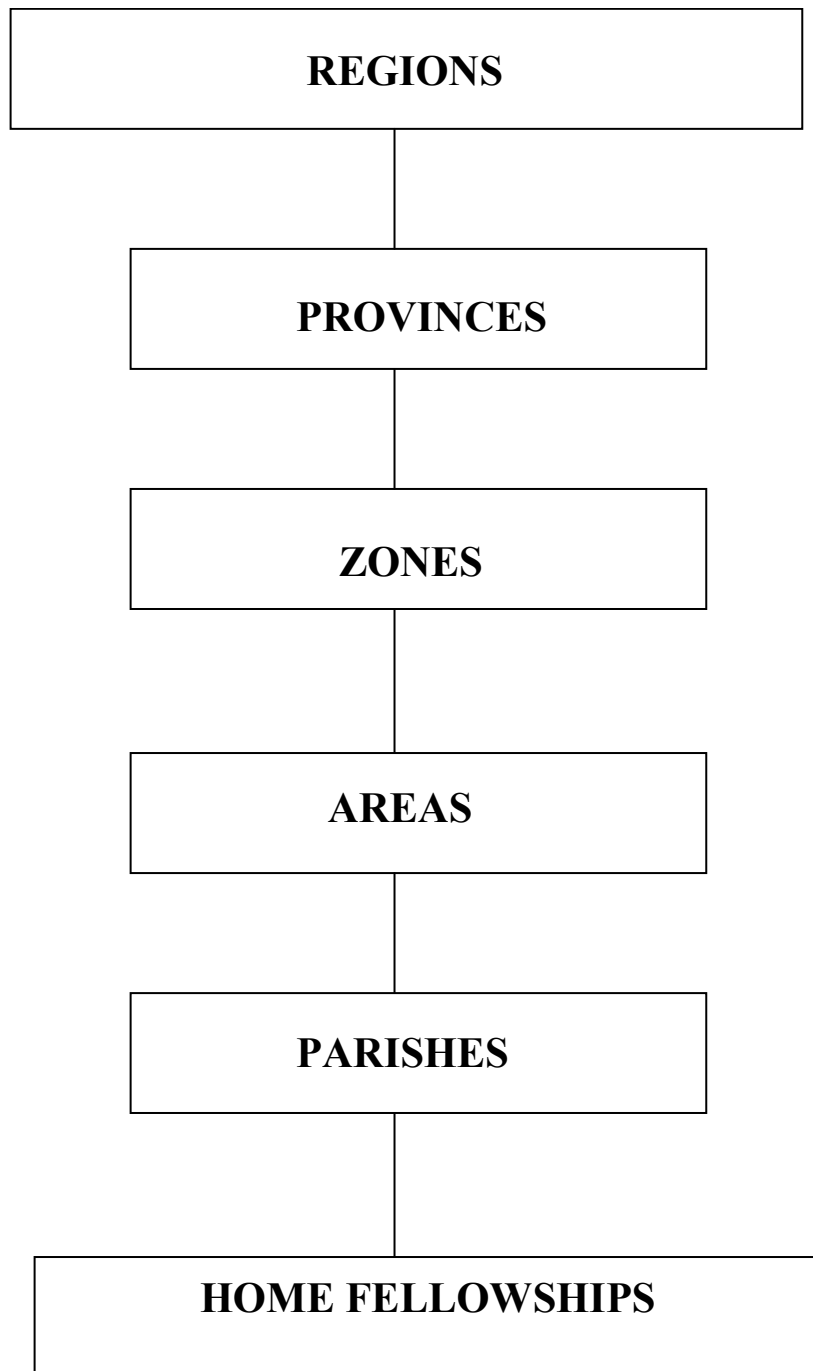
In the previous chapter we discussed the structure of leadership with the RCCG during the time of its founder. The present chapter describes the organisational structure of the church at its present state. It discusses the main administrative blocs or zones in the church, the principal officers and the hierarchical arrangement in the church. In addition, the chapter discusses some parachurch organisations and some educational institutions in the church. Lastly, the chapter presents three significant structures of mobilisation in the church: the role of the media, finances and women in the present dispensation in the RCCG. Our primary sources of data are i) interviews, ii) informal discussions with RCCG leaders and members, iii) RCCG manuals, iv) Adeboye's sermons and books, v) church magazines, vi) RCCG Annual Reports, vii) *RCCG at 50*, and Ojo 1997; 2001.

#### 4.1 Structural Configuration

The structure of authority in the RCCG is complex. There are many units of administration with varying concentrations of power. The overall leader of the RCCG is formally called the General Overseer (GO), and his<sup>187</sup> office recognised as the Office of the General Overseer. The title of GO replaced that of General Superintendent, a change that was introduced by Adeboye when he took over the leadership of the church. The church maintains two headquarters, one national while the other international. The office of the GO straddles both. The national headquarters is housed in the sprawling Lagos suburb of Ebute-Metta, where the church first relocated from its initial place of worship in 1952. This church property has been renovated a number of times and accommodates a maternity, an auditorium, a bookshop and an office complex for top officials of the church and some of its para-ministries. The International headquarters, however, is at the more than ten square kilometre expanse of land in Loburo, Ogun state, where the Redemption Camp of the church is constructed, in addition to a range of office and accommodation facilities. The General Overseer maintains two offices, one at the national headquarters and the other at the international headquarters.

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<sup>187</sup>The use of masculine pronoun here is deliberate since it does not appear feasible for a female to occupy this office. According to a high-ranking official of the church, there is nothing God cannot do concerning the appointment of a female leader for the RCCG, but "if I am to say my own mind: it is not possible" (Personal interview with AGO Pastor M. O. Ojo, *op. cit.*).



**Figure 4.1** The Six Administrative Blocs of RCCG Nigeria

Under the Office of the GO, there are six administrative blocs attached to the national headquarters. These blocs are from below:

- Fellowships;
- Parishes;
- Areas;
- Zones;
- Provinces; and
- Regions (figure 4.1).

From the base, the structure thins as it goes up, forming a pyramid. As figure 4.2 indicates, this pyramid of units illustrates the trickle down configuration of power in the church with most power and privileges concentrated on the top of the structure.

The national headquarters supervises all the branches of the church in Nigeria. These branches amount to more than five thousand local communities of worshippers. Beginning from 4 August 2002, these local communities are grouped into five administrative blocs called **Regions**. These regions are i) Lagos, ii) Oyo, iii) Kwara, iv) East, and v) North. Figure 4.3 illustrates these five regions. Lagos region comprised all the churches in the geopolitical area of Lagos state. Oyo region consists of the congregations in Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ogun and Ekiti states of Nigeria; with regional headquarters at Ile-Ife in Osun state. Kwara region encompasses the branches in Kwara, Kogi, Edo, and Delta states with headquarters Ilorin, the political capital of Kwara state. Eastern region covers the states of eastern Nigeria, with its headquarter situated at Enugu.<sup>188</sup> Lastly, the northern region comprised all northern states<sup>189</sup> except Kwara and Kogi states that already are part of Kwara region.<sup>190</sup>

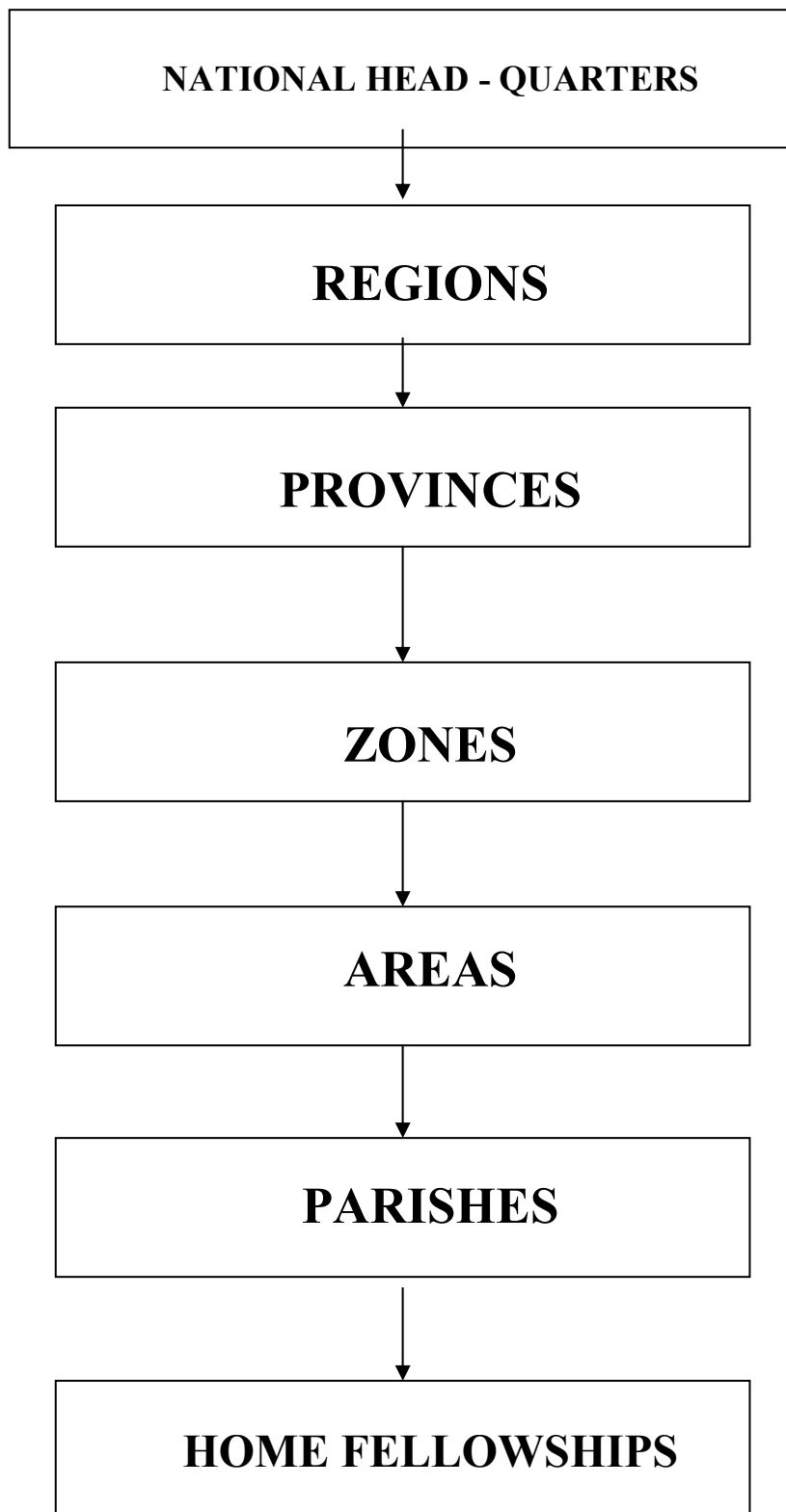
Below the unit of regions, there are **Provinces**. Each region comprises a number of provinces. Lagos region, for example, has eleven provinces. The term province replaced the previous terminology of “state” which was a source of confusion because of the use of the term as a geopolitical designation in Nigeria. Announcing the switch from state-tier administrative units to province-tier structure at the end of the ministers’ conference on 4 August 2002, Adeboye

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<sup>188</sup> The nine geopolitical states that make up Eastern region of RCCG are Abia, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bayelsa, Cross River, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo and Rivers.

<sup>189</sup> The geopolitical states making up Northern region are as follows: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara.

<sup>190</sup> This regional structure of administration graphically illustrates the geographical spread and strength of the RCCG. While the southwest of Nigeria has three regions, the southeast and the north have a region a piece, indicating that in these latter regions the church has not made great inroad.



**Figure 4.2:** Trickle down Administrative power structure in RCCG

adduced as reason for the change the political connotations of state, arguing that “province” is a biblical concept unlike “state”. There were thirty-four administrative provinces in RCCG by the end of July 2001. Just the next month, August 2001, the figure climbed to forty-six.<sup>191</sup> Of these, eleven were concentrated in Lagos state alone.<sup>192</sup> Thus, as at November 2002, there were forty-six provinces of RCCG in Nigeria.<sup>193</sup> As a sign of further expansion, by August 2003, five more provinces were created, three of these in Lagos and two in the eastern part of the country (Bayelsa and Cross River Provinces). These new additions bring the number of provinces in Lagos to fourteen while the number for the entire country stands at fifty-one.<sup>194</sup>

The next administrative unit is the **Zones**. A province is a collection of “zones”, say between three and seven. Thus, a zone is a smaller unit of administration than a province. A zone, in turn, consists of a narrower structure of administration called **Areas**. An area comprises smaller units or communities called parishes. The size of an area is determined by the strength and sizes of the parishes constituting it. A **Parish** is a collection of yet smaller units called **Home Fellowships**, a modified terminology for “house cells/fellowship”. The home fellowship is the smallest unit of administration in the church.

Attached to the national headquarters are two important **Directorates**. These are the Directorate of Missions and the Directorate of Christian Education (DCE). Both were established in 1992. While the former is in charge of the missions’ activities of the church, the latter is part of the training arm of the church, organising Sunday schools, home fellowships, bible studies centres as well as providing publications in these spheres of church activities. The directorates do not belong to any province or zone but to the entire church and their activities are to service the needs of the national church as a whole.

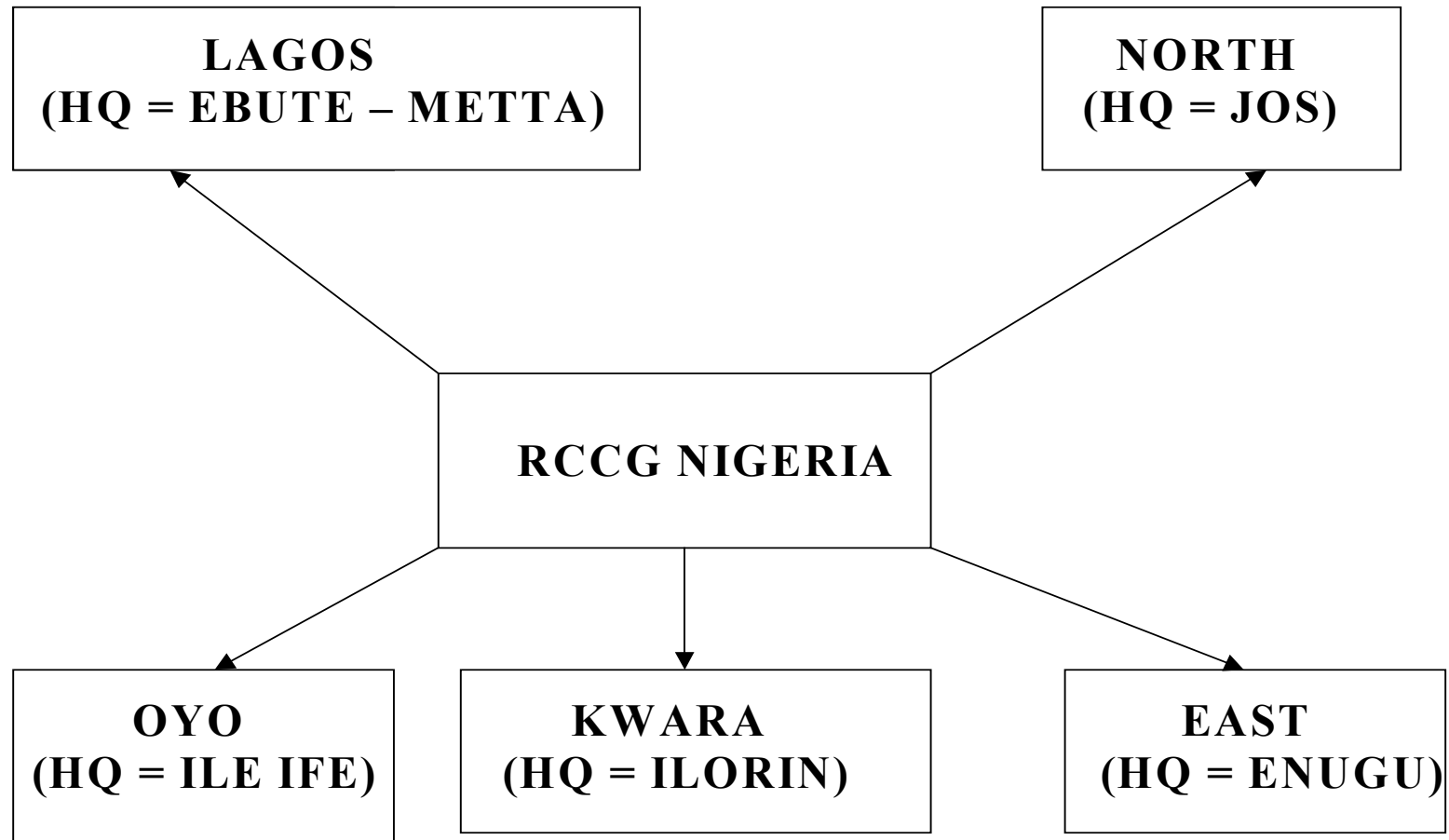
The structure at the international headquarters of the RCCG is much simpler than at the national headquarters. The GO co-ordinates all activities involving foreign missions outside Africa through what is now called the **International Office** (figure 4.4). The GO commissioned Pastor Ayo Adeleye to set up the International HQ in 1996. Headed by Adeleye, the activities of the International Office are not clearly delineated, according to Adeleye’s deputy. The most

<sup>191</sup>The comprehensive list of these administrative units is contained in *Redemption Light*, vol. 6. no. 8, September 2001, pp. 1 and 35.

<sup>192</sup>The RCCG *Year 2001 Annual Report*

<sup>193</sup> The second field work for this research ended in November 2002. It does not appear likely that more provinces will be created before the next annual convention of the church in August 2003.

<sup>194</sup> The complete list of provinces with names of the provincial pastors and their assistants is found in *Redemption Light*, vol. 8, no. 8, September 2003, pp. 2 & 9.



**Figure 4.3:** The Five Regions of RCCG in Nigeria.

important function of this office is the collection and distribution of mails and correspondences to foreign missions of the church. An officer is permanently assigned this responsibility.<sup>9</sup> This official is the channel of communication between RCCG pastors outside Africa and the office of the General Overseer.<sup>10</sup>

Other branches of the church in Africa are grouped into **regions**, each headed by a regional coordinator. These regions are not to be confused with the national regions in Nigeria, for they do not represent the same reality. While the former can be fruitfully compared to a diocese, the latter resembles an archdiocese in Catholic ecclesiastical organisation. There are seven such regions so far: i) West Coast I<sup>11</sup>; ii) West Coast II<sup>12</sup>; iii) Cameroon; iv) Ethiopia; v) East Africa<sup>13</sup>; vi) South Africa II<sup>14</sup> and vii) South Africa.

The church runs an initiative called **Africa Mission**, with the wife of the GO, Pastor (Mrs) Folu Adeboye, as the head. In 1996, Mrs Adeboye set up Africa Missions Committee with three chapters in Abuja (Nigeria), the United Kingdom and North America. This committee, of which she is the patron, assists in planting churches in African countries, training pastors and missionaries for new churches in Africa and establishing RCCG schools in these African communities. The missions were administratively coordinated between the Assistant General Overseer (Missions) and Mrs Adeboye. Following the new changes just introduced, Africa Missions is effectively under the control of Mrs Adeboye, while the entire RCCG Overseas (RCCG Europe, RCCG North America [RCCGNA]) is under the General Overseer and head of missions.<sup>15</sup>

## 4.2 Hierarchy of Authority

The effective organisation of the RCCG and the need to accommodate rapid proliferation of parishes are part of the reasons for the division of the church into sub-units with visible officials in charge. In order to appreciate how much the RCCG has changed internally in respect to its organisational structure, it is important to recall the hierarchical structure prior to 1990. Adekola

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<sup>9</sup>As at the time of fieldwork, the officer in charge of this responsibility is Pastor (Mrs) Bankole.

<sup>10</sup>Personal interview with Assistant Pastor S. Tai. Adetoye, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup>Made up of Ghana, Togo, Burkina Faso, Mali and Benin Republic.

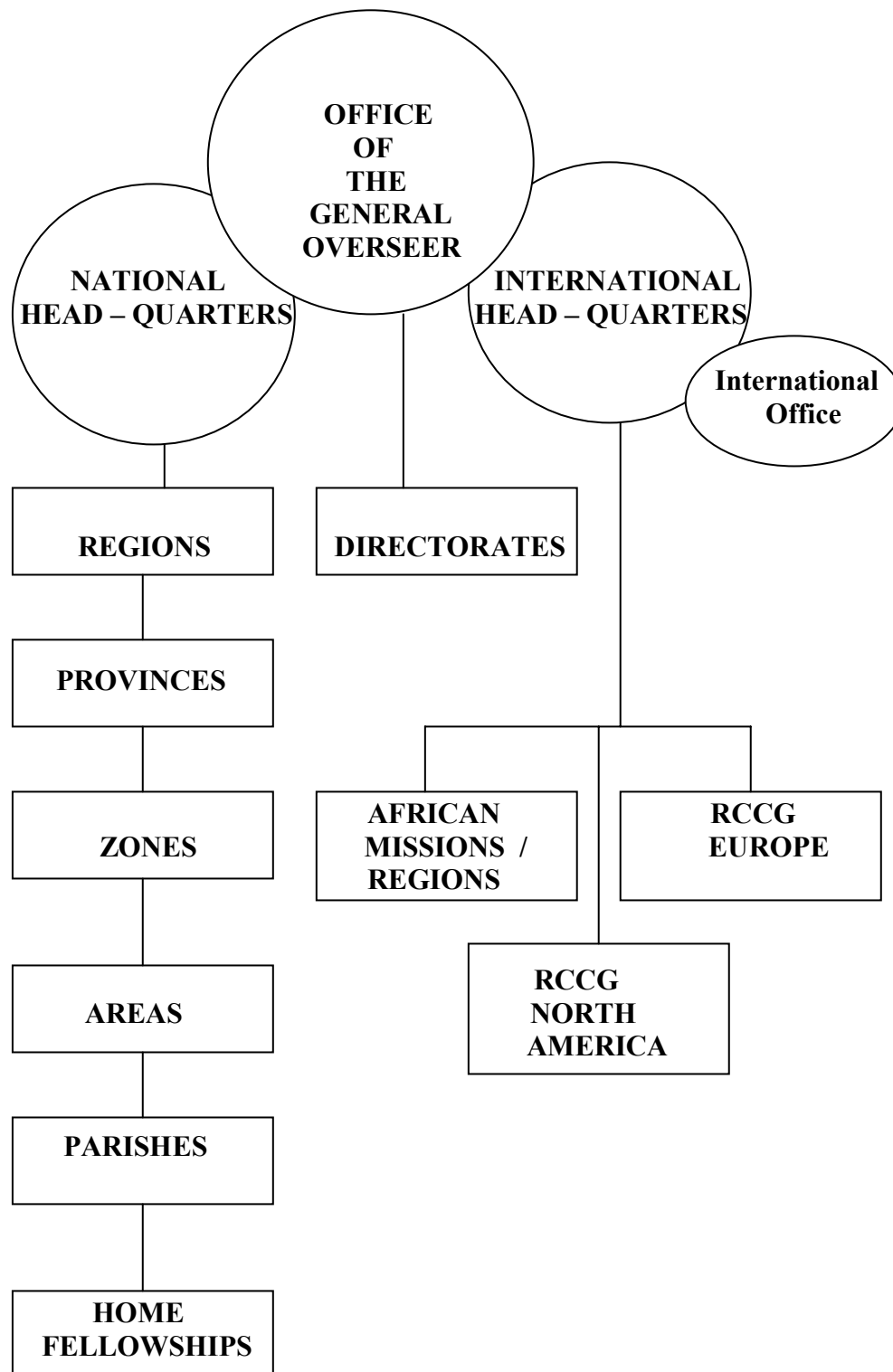
<sup>12</sup>Comprising Cote D'Ivoire, Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

<sup>13</sup>Comprising Congo, Mozambique, Zambia and Kenya.

<sup>14</sup>South Africa, Swaziland, Namibia, Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Botswana.

<sup>15</sup>It is becoming increasingly evident that even in the spread of RCCG to other African countries Muslim Africa has demonstrated its resistance to pentecostalism. On the global arena, the Middle East has effectively checkmated the so-called pentecostalist wave of conversions, providing a significant dint on the global face of pentecostalism. Often scholars of pentecostalism fail to reckon with this power of the negative.

(1989: 284), writing just before this time, presents a form of pyramidal structure of authority in the church. He notes that there were only six zones in the church, four of which were located in the Yoruba-speaking south-west, one in the mid-west and eastern parts of the country, while the



*Figure 4.4:* Structural Organisation of RCCG

remaining was in the south-north and northern areas of Nigeria.<sup>16</sup> There were ten categories of leaders in the hierarchy of the church then. These were the General Overseer, an Assistant General Overseer, a general secretary, a treasurer, zonal pastors and area pastors. Others were parish pastors, assistant pastors (or deacons), workers, and the chorister. These leaders presided over the laity and those yet to be baptised (figure 4.5).

The present arrangement of the church, however, has witnessed the creation of new offices, especially in the middle and near the top of the hierarchy. Such offices include that of a Deputy General Overseer, an expansion of the office of Assistant General Overseer to three and then to six in 2002, a distinct office of Mother-in-Israel for the General Overseer's wife, an office of Regional Coordinators, the office of provincial (formerly, state) pastors and distinct office of deacons as different from Assistant pastors (see figure 4.6 below).

### **4.3 Principal Officers of RCCG and Their Duties**

#### **i) The General Overseer (GO).**

At the apex of the church is the GO, whose position “is sacrosanct for he is regarded as God’s representative whose authority is supreme, his orders final and his power and supremacy are considered next to Jesus Christ” (Adekola 1989: 283). As the title indicates, he is generally overseeing the affairs of the church, both spiritual and temporal. He reports to no one (except God). The constitution of church (art. 8a) calls him “the chief Officer of the Mission” and specifies his responsibilities to include the provision of spiritual welfare and direction of the mission; the discipline of ministers, clergy and laity; the propagation of the gospel as well as the ordination of ministers. This post is filled by nomination and proclamation: the incumbent selects a successor before he dies. After the death of the former, the latter is proclaimed as the new leader and prayed for by the pastors of the church. Consequently, in the RCCG “there is nothing like democracy; the church is autocratic, that is why discipline is maintained”.<sup>17</sup> Since he is neither voted into office nor nominated by anyone he cannot be removed from. Therefore, he holds office for life unlike the other pastors who must retire at the age of seventy.<sup>18</sup> He is the physical channel of grace and divine ordinance for the church.<sup>19</sup> He is the physical oracle of the divine; he articulates doctrines and initiates orientations. He is the bridge between his followers and God; “the God we see now”, as one pastor puts it.

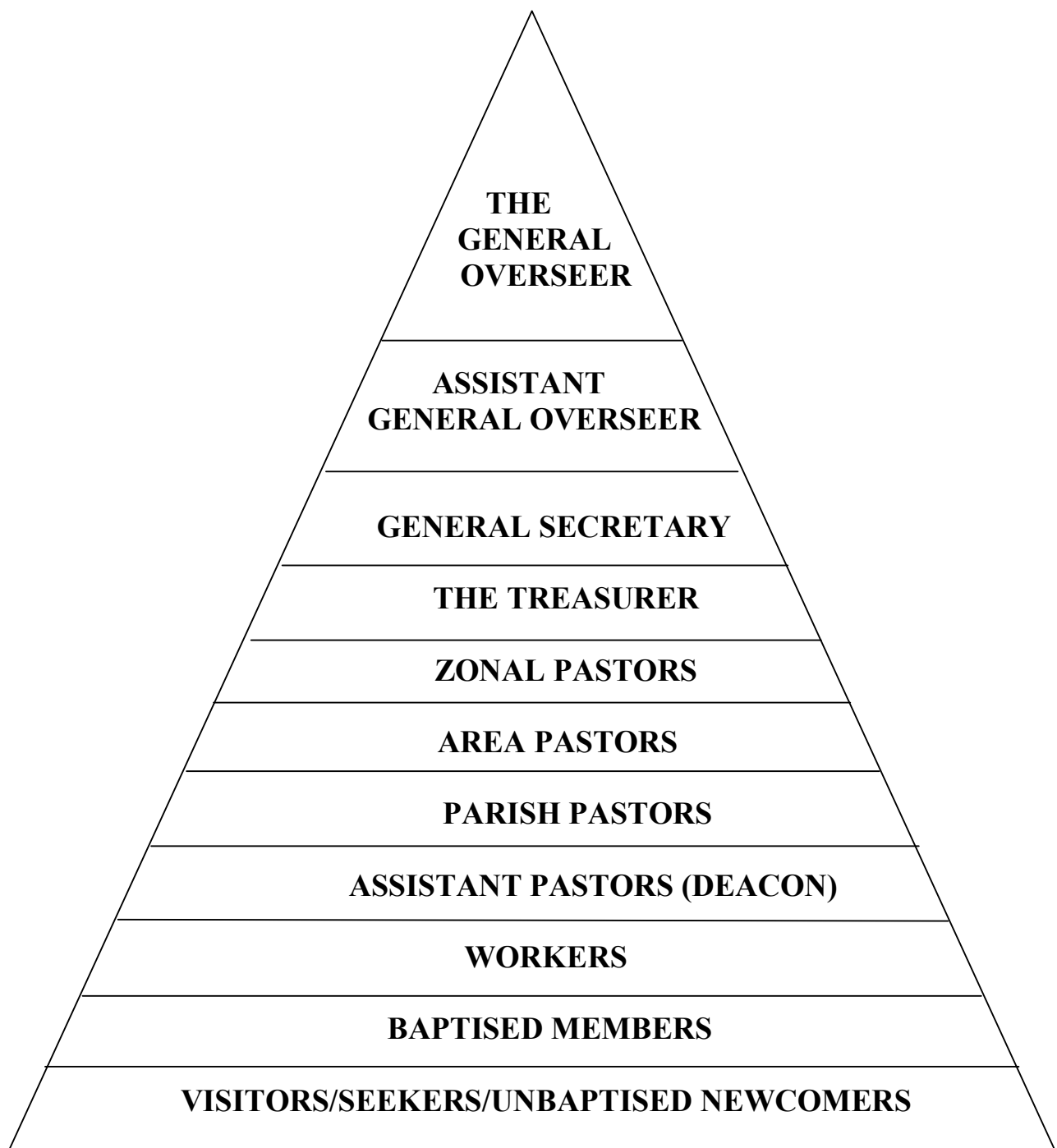
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<sup>16</sup> The six zones of the church were Lagos, Oyo, Ondo, Ogun, Bendel-Eastern and Kwara-Northern.

<sup>17</sup>Personal interview with AGO Pastor M. O. Ojo, *op. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> The constitution only grants the privilege of holding office for life to the founder of the mission.

<sup>19</sup>Personal interview with Pastor T. S. Adetoye, *op. cit.*



**Figure 4.5: PYRAMID OF AUTHORITY IN RCCG PRIOR TO 1990**  
[Adopted from Adekola 1989: 284]

## ii) The Governing Council

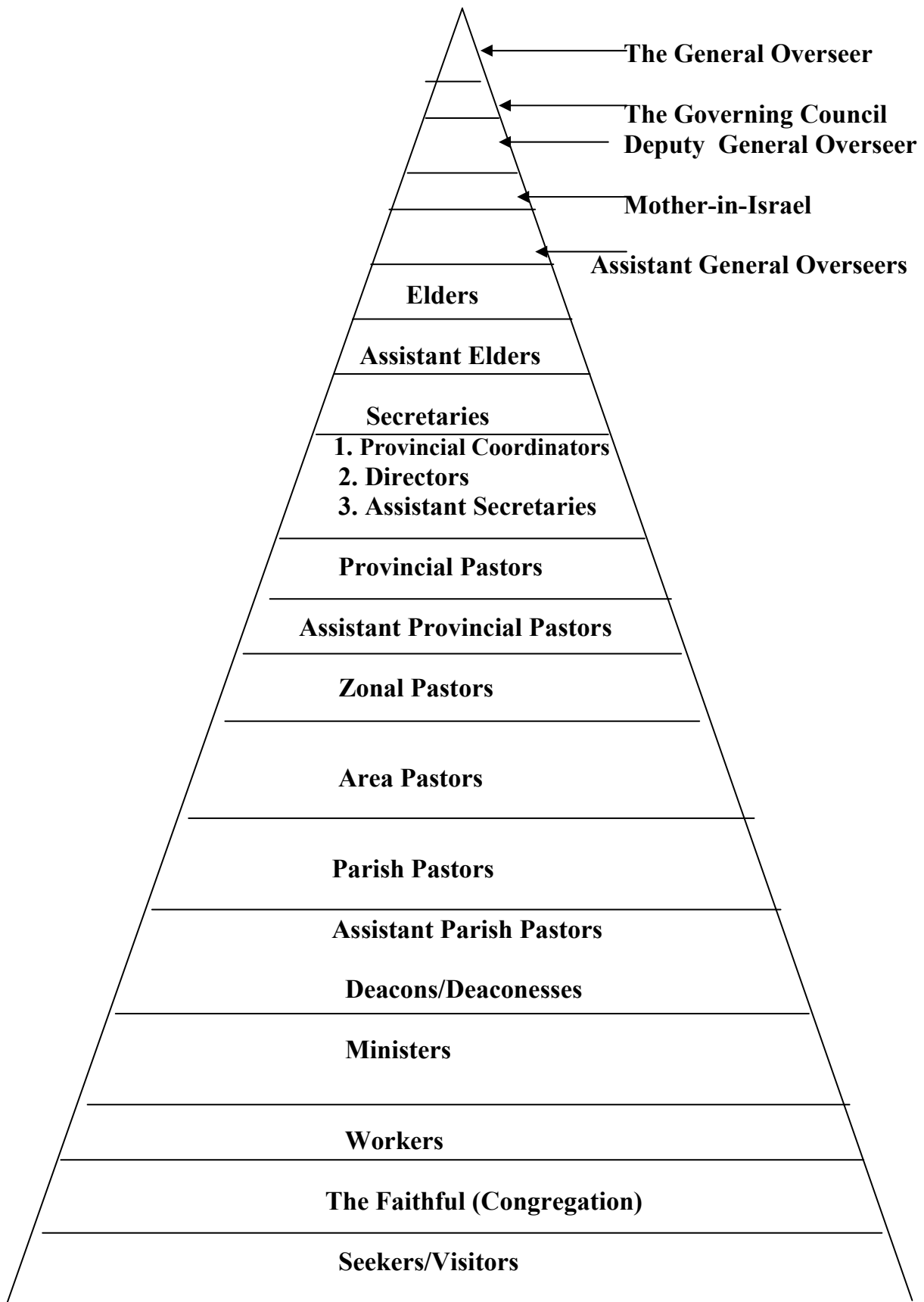
Next to the GO's office is the Governing Council (GC). This is a body of seven most senior pastors who form the highest decision-making body in the church. It functions as advisory committee on important matters such as doctrine, discipline, acquisition of property and senior appointments. The group also discusses important revelation from God through the GO before it is made public.<sup>20</sup> The body is always chaired in its sessions by the GO. Before 4 August 2002, the GC was made up of the GO, the three Assistant General Overseers, the National treasurer, the national secretary and one other elder of the church. After this date, the GC is composed of the GO and all six AGOs. There are differences in opinion concerning who is next to the GO. Some pastors believe that the Deputy General Overseer (DGO) is; others think it is the Governing Council since this is the highest-ranking body. Whichever is the case, the office of the DGO has not been functional for some time now.



**Plate 4**

*The Seven Wise Men: RCCG Governing Council as constituted in 2003.* Source: [www.rccg.org](http://www.rccg.org) (From top L to R: Pastor M.O. Ojo [AGO Church Growth]; D. A. Ilori [Special Duties]; P.O. Ojo [Research planning & Education]; A. A. Adeirbigbe [Family Affairs]; D. O. Otegbade [Finance]; J. A. O. Akindele [Administrative Personnel]; Centre: E. A. Adeboye [GO & Head of Mission].

<sup>20</sup>Personal interview with AGO M. O. Ojo, *op. cit.*



**Figure 4.6: Present Structure of Authority in the RCCG**

**iii) The Deputy General Overseer:** The Deputy General Overseer (DGO), an office that has remained vacant for many years since the last occupant retired, follows the Governing Council. The DGO is appointed into office by the GO, and reports to him. His responsibilities are such as the GO may assign him, including representing him at certain occasions and functions. The former can act in the capacity of the latter, but cannot ordain pastors (although the GO's wife can). The duties and responsibilities of the DGO are not spelt out in any text; however, whenever there is a DGO in office, his functions are defined through functioning, almost on an *ad hoc* basis. The office of the DGO is vacant now because the Holy Spirit is yet to mandate the GO to appoint a suitable candidate to fill this position.

The first, and so far only, occupant of the office of DGO was Pastor J.A. Abiona. He was Josiah's Assistant before Adeboye assumed leadership. During the crisis of succession that engulfed the church at the death of Josiah, Abiona played a significant role in the accession of Adeboye to the headship of the church. Thereafter, the office of Assistant General Superintendent was scrapped and replaced with that of Assistant General Overseer in 1981. In August 1997, Abiona was elevated to the position of Deputy General Overseer.<sup>21</sup> This new office was designed to accommodate Abiona within the new power structure that emerged from the ashes of the old. Since the office is practically redundant with the emergence of the powerful office of "Mother-in-Israel", it is not likely that any one will be appointed to replace the last occupant.

#### **iv) The Mother-in –Israel**

The DGO is followed by the Mother-in-Israel, a post that was created after Adeboye became leader. This title is drawn from the Old Testament book of Judges 5:7, which described Deborah as "a mother in Israel". This title was converted into an ecclesiastical office by pioneers of the Aladura Movement in Nigeria.<sup>22</sup> According to Adeboye who established this office, Deborah is recognised as "a mobiliser of warriors and a spiritual warrior" herself.<sup>23</sup> This office originally had dual occupants, the wife of Josiah and the wife of Adeboye. When the former died in 2001, there remains now one occupant, the wife of the incumbent leader. The wife of the GO can only occupy this post; hence, the occupant is there for life. And because there are specific responsibilities that the incumbent can perform which no one else except the GO can, in practice, it is a more powerful position than all other offices except the office of the GO.

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<sup>21</sup> See *A New Song*: Brochure of 2003 RCCG Holy Ghost Congress, p. 7

<sup>22</sup> See Omoyajowo 1982: 194f.

<sup>23</sup> Adeboye, *Arresting the Arrested*, Lagos: CRM, 1996, p. 33.

The office coordinates all the activities of women groups in the church, working through the wives of provincial pastors down to the grassroots level. This responsibility she carries out through working with the wives of principal officers of the church, notably, the wives of the Assistant General Overseers, wives of provincial, area, and parish pastors. In addition to working to bring up the female members of the church, the Mother-in-Israel works as the co-ordinator of the Directorate of Teens and Children's Education. This directorate supervises all children's programmes and outreaches in the church. It also produces and supplies teaching materials and aids for children.<sup>24</sup> It is the responsibility of this arm of the church to organise what is now called the "junior church", the teenage sector of the RCCG that caters for the interest of teenagers, such as their education and proper upbringing.<sup>25</sup>

Under this office also is Christ the Redeemer's School Movement (CRSM). The CRSM is an organ of the RCCG whose primary function is the supervision and monitoring of all nursery, primary and secondary schools of the church. The church operates more than thirty nursery/primary schools and seven secondary schools and colleges.<sup>26</sup> The CRSM formulates "church-wide policy for the administration of schools"; and also regulates the activities of the schools such as school uniforms for pupils, fees, curriculum, and the collection of a specified amount of money annually for the development of projects of schools operated by RCCG. The CRSM also ensures that there is adequate technical support for the schools such as library materials and teaching aids.<sup>27</sup>

The Mother-in-Israel is fondly called "Mummy GO" (as the husband, the GO, is called Daddy GO). Such designations indicate direct equivalents, and point to the unique power and administrative authority of wives of church leaders. Following this model of administration, there is an equivalent office at all levels of administration for the wife of the pastor occupying that office. For example, the wife of a provincial pastor is the "provincial mummy" (since her husband is the "provincial daddy"). In the context in which they are employed in the RCCG, they neither translate nor mean "father" or "mother" as biological concepts. Their meaning and

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<sup>24</sup> Personal Interview with Pastor David Kwesi Duncan, Office of the Directorate of Teens and Children, Redemption Camp, 31 May 2001. Pastor Duncan, a Ghanaian and former member of Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA), joined the RCCG in 1980 and is now the Head of Department at the Directorate of Teens and Children.

<sup>25</sup> See *The Heritage*, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 12. *The Heritage* is a publication of the Directorate of Teens and Children's Education of RCCG.

<sup>26</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 8, no. 4, May 2003, p. 19.

<sup>27</sup> *Redeemer's Scorecard*, vol. 1, no. 1, August 2000, pp. 1 & 3. This is the Newsletter of the CRSM. The maiden issue contains the CRSM school policy for the year 2000, see also "CRSM: A Legacy that Speaks", *Redemption Light*, vol. 8, no. 3, April 2003, p. 40.

significance change according to the context in which they are used. Commenting on the use of the fond-name, “daddy” by his followers, Adeboye had this to say:

Somebody asked me why I allow members of my congregation to call me “Daddy”. I said I did not like it because it makes me feel old. However, when they call me “Daddy”, they are putting into operation a certain law that they have learnt. When your father blesses you, you are blessed. ...This is because a daddy’s blessing is fully recognized by God and He gives it His total backing.<sup>28</sup>

It may, therefore, appear that daddy and mummy, as familial categories of designation, invoke divine authorisation.

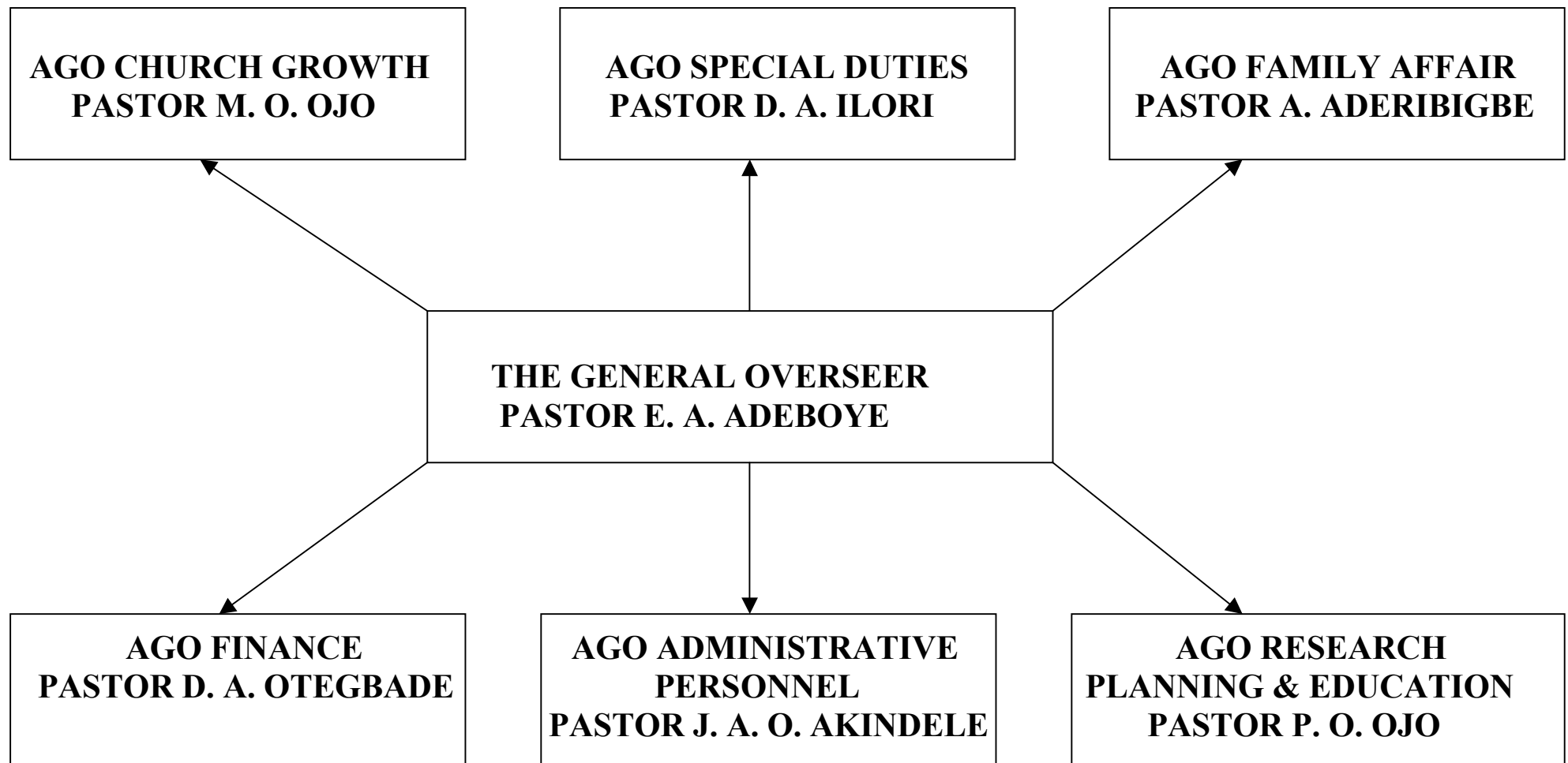
#### **v) Assistant General Overseers**

The multiple offices of the Assistant General Overseers (AGOs), which come next to that of the Mother-in Israel, evolved in two distinct stages. The first stage was the creation, in 1996, of the offices of three AGOs in charge of three different spheres of church administration. They were i) AGO in charge of Establishment (personnel and national staff), ii) AGO Training and, iii) Missions. Of the three, the office in charge of establishment was the most senior, followed by that of Missions. Prior to 1996, there was one AGO, who was later elevated to DGO. The AGOs were appointed by the GO; the three incumbents were the first set to be in the office. The second stage of evolution was the expansion of the offices from three to six. This took place on 4 August 2002.

With this expansion, the responsibilities and designated offices also changed. i) The AGO previously in charge of establishment matters is now in charge of Church Growth; ii) the AGO responsible for training in the mission was moved to a new portfolio of Special Duties, iii) while the former AGO for Missions is now in charge of Administrative Personnel. Furthermore, the three new AGOs elevated in the second stage of evolution were distributed to newly created portfolios, viz.: a) the national treasurer of the mission became AGO finance; the remaining two members of the Governing Council became b) AGO in charge of Research Planning and Education and, c) AGO for Family Affairs (figure 4.7). As the names of their offices indicate, the six AGOs represent a huge organisational bureaucracy. Their activities as members of the

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<sup>28</sup> E. A. Adeboye, *How to Turn your Austerity to Prosperity*, (Lagos: The CRM, 1989), p. 23.



**Figure 4.7: The Six Assistant-General Overseers (AGOs) and their Portfolios.**

Governing Council are distinct and separate from the responsibilities as AGOs. They coordinate different spheres of church life and administrative machinery. If we recall that their wives also are “mummy AGOs”, having corresponding responsibilities for organising and coordinating women in the church, then the emerging administrative scenario becomes complex.

#### vi) **Regional Coordinators**

There is a coordinator in charge of each of the five regions of the church in Nigeria. When these regions came into existence in 2002, five out of the six AGOs were immediately installed as regional coordinators. Their functions could be compared with the responsibilities of archbishops who regulate and monitor the activities and functions of bishops within an ecclesiastical province. The emerging scenario looks thus: the AGOs, (with the exception of one who functions in only two distinct capacities), function in three distinct capacities: (i) as members of the Governing Council, (ii) as AGOs with specific portfolios in the church, and (iii) as regional coordinators.<sup>29</sup>

#### vii) **National Elders**

Next on the heel of the AGOs is the position of National Elders; these are former provincial pastors who now function in a special capacity as carriers and teachers of the church’s doctrines, investigators and reconcilers in cases of frictions and conflicts between pastors or in parishes. According to Bolarinwa, to be appointed an elder, one must have distinguished oneself as “a pastor of integrity, maintaining church orthodoxy, and purity of doctrine and practice. To be one you must have passed through the hierarchy of local power structure of the church”.<sup>30</sup> Going through the church’s local power structure is designed for a prospective member to acquire experience and maturity in church politics and administration.<sup>31</sup> Elders are required to have attained the mandatory chronological age of sixty years before their appointment.<sup>32</sup> There appears, however, to be a shift in the adherence to some of the criteria. Adeboye’s recent comments reflect a new strand of thinking concerning who becomes an elder. According to him, “God revealed to me that you do not have to become old to be an elder. You do not have to be a pastor to be called an Elder”.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> In August 2003, Adeboye announced the appointment of five “**Regional Evangelists**” for the church in Nigeria, whose responsibilities are to organise crusades and revival programmes across the nation. These Regional Evangelists are also Provincial Pastors: Pastor J.T. Kalejaiyi (Region 1 [Lagos]); Pastor E.A. Odeyemi (Region 2 [South West]); Pastor Femi Agboola (Region 3 [Kwara, Kogi, Delta, Edo]); Pastor Olusola Adeyeye (Region 4 [Eastern Region]); and Pastor G. Kuo (Region 5 [Northern Region]).

<sup>30</sup> Personal interview with Pastor J.A. Bolarinwa, Redemption Camp, *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> Personal interview with AGO Pastor M. O. Ojo, *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Ezekiel O. Odeyemi, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> Adeboye, *Our Dominion Crowns and Sceptre*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

These senior officials “are not only entrusted with the task of moving round the parishes to impart unto the brethren the doctrines of the church [...] the team is also entrusted with the responsibility of mediating in the issues which may threaten the peace and the effective work of ministry in any unit of the church” (Ojo 2001: 115). National elders and their assistants who are their immediate subordinates constitute a kind of religious quality circle team, ensuring standard control as well as making recommendations to the GO and the Governing Council on diverse issues relating to church administration and improvement of church practice. As routinisers of doctrines and rituals, they enforce doctrinal orthodoxy. Functioning as gate keepers, they are important agents in the process of standardisation and routinisation of doctrines and rituals. They represent trouble-shooters in the church, controlling sectarian ambitions and forestalling heresies and schisms.

#### **viii) Secretaries/Provincial Coordinators/Directors**

The next cadre of officials is the Secretaries whose responsibilities are the supervision of house fellowships and the monitoring of parish level activities. High on the list of parish activities which Secretaries supervise and monitor are tithe collections and attendance. In the past, elders, assistant elders, secretaries and assistant secretaries reported to the GO through the AGO in charge of Establishment. In the new administrative regime, these officers report to the AGO in charge of Church Growth. They can as well report directly to the GO since such bypass is increasingly becoming a feature of the new arrangement in the church.

On the same hierarchical level as Secretaries are the directors of church parastatals<sup>34</sup> and provincial co-ordinators. Two important church parastatals are the Directorate of Christian Education (DCE) and the Directorate of Missions. The former used to be under the AGO (training) but now under AGO Research Planning and Education. It is in charge of the organisation and equipping of Sunday schools, home fellowships, bible study centres, publications and literature evangelism. The latter, established by Dr Toyin Ogundipe, an ophthalmologist and female pastor is now under the AGO (Church Growth).<sup>35</sup> It is involved in mission field mobilisation, training, research, documentation and information, welfare (finance) of missionaries, supervision and administration of mission field.<sup>36</sup> The third directorate is that of Teens and Children which is under the Mother-in-Israel, Pastor (Mrs) Folu Adeboye. The entire

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<sup>34</sup> The designation of a church organ as parastatal is a direct carry over from civil administration vocabulary. In Nigeria, a parastatal is a government-run utility company responsible for the provision of social services such as energy, water and telecommunications. Its use by RCCG indicates that the church is conscious of how society is ordered and sometimes borrows from such socio-political arrangement.

<sup>35</sup> It was previously under AGO in charge of Missions. Since the General Overseer doubles as Chief of Mission, his office may as well coordinate the activities of this directorate.

<sup>36</sup> Personal interview with Pastor ‘Delana Adeleye-Olusae, *op. cit.*

nursery/ crèche and primary schools fall under this unit of the church. A number of provincial administrative units form a cluster under a co-ordinator. Also belonging to this middle-ranking category of officials are the Assistant Secretaries who are delegated to represent the secretaries in specific responsibilities.

#### **ix) Provincial Pastors, Zonal Pastors and Area Pastors**

The national RCCG is grouped into administrative provinces, formerly called “states”, under provincial pastors. These pastors form the next category of officials. According to a senior official of the church, the provincial pastors occupy offices that are equivalent to those of bishops in other comparable religious organisations where such designation is available.<sup>37</sup> (There are no bishops or archbishop in the RCCG.) Provincial pastors in the past dispensation reported directly to the GO and did not go through the AGOs. However, with the regional coordinators now in place, they will have to pass through these more senior officers who are directly in charge of their activities in order to get to the GO.

Provincial pastors are appointed by the GO. They coordinate the activities of all the parishes under their jurisdiction, functioning as channels of communication to the GO through the regional coordinators. Moneys collected as tithes, gifts and offerings during weekly Digging Deep and Faith Clinic sessions are remitted to the headquarters of the church from the parishes through the provincial pastors. Assistant provincial pastors who assist and report to the provincial pastors follow provincial pastors. Next to this level of responsibility is the zonal pastor who is in charge of a group of “areas”, another geo-religious unit comprising a number of parishes, usually seven or more. The areas, headed by Area Pastors, are individually constituted by a number of parishes, headed by parish pastors who are assisted by Assistant pastors.

#### **x) Pastors, Assistant Pastors and Deacons/Deaconesses/Ministers**

Pastors are those who have been fully ordained as such. These may be full time or part time pastors. The functions and responsibilities of pastors and assistant pastors could be the same in the sense that both could be put in charge of parishes. This, however, does not mean they are ranked the same in the hierarchy of the church. Sometimes it is the case that deacons or assistant pastors are in full charge of parishes. In that case, they are recognised and treated as parish pastors even when they are yet to be ordained pastors. Parish pastors report to their Area pastors,

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<sup>37</sup>Personal interview with AGO (Establishment) Pastor M. O. Ojo, *op. cit.*

while the latter report to the Zonal pastors. As is the case with all the other positions discussed so far, the Zonal and Area pastors are appointed into their respective offices.

Below the Assistant Pastors are deacons and deaconesses who are higher in rank than ministers and workers. Ministers are those who lead such group as the choir and a worker is a baptised member of the church belonging to one of the special groups such as usher or the choir. At the base of the pyramid are the faithful or baptised members of the congregation who represent the largest bulk in the church. Seekers represent those who patronise the church activities but are not yet baptised according to the prescriptions of the church. For those in the category of seekers, doctrinal teaching for about six months precedes baptism. During the time of Josiah, deacons were also called assistant pastors and there were no deaconesses. However, following the expansion of the church in the 1990s, the office of assistant pastor was created distinct from that of a deacon. This was in order to check frequent clashes among church workers who were then generally called “assistant pastors”, a rank in the church hierarchy that became bloated when there was a heightened aspiration of many people to become church leaders.<sup>38</sup>

#### **4.4 Prerequisites for Ordination**

Ordination in RCCG is a highly cherished and sought after event. There is a professional class of pastors who are often recruited from the laity. In theory everyone is capable of becoming a pastor; members of the laity are indeed encouraged to aspire to be one. However, over the years the processes of becoming a pastor have increasingly become complex, lengthy (and difficult in some cases). After baptism, the convert enrolls in *workers-in-training* class. This training equips the believer for volunteer work in the new community. At this point one may choose to become an usher, church cleaner, traffic control worker (popularly called Holy Police in RCCG), counsellor, church chorister, etc. It is only a *church worker* who becomes a *minister*. To become a minister means being in charge of a department in the church, say, the choir or the ushers. Church ministers are generally encouraged to seek ordination into one of the many cadres of ordained ministry, as a way of deepening and demonstrating commitment to both God and the church. A minister is expected to begin climbing the hierarchical ladder first by seeking ordination to the diaconate. In order to be eligible, however, such a candidate must first function faithfully as church worker. For one to become a deacon/deaconess s/he “must be a worker in the church for at least five years”.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Personal interview with Pastor S. T. Adetoye, *op. cit.*

<sup>39</sup>Personal interview with Pastor 'Delana Adeleye-Olusae, *op. cit.*

In addition to the five years' waiting period as a worker before elevation to the rank of a deacon, other strictures are in place to control the pace of ascent and also improve training for personnel. In the past, people became pastors of local parishes as a result of spiritual fervour and a demonstration of dedication to the vision of Josiah. There was no formal training for ordination. Although the Constitution prescribed a formal training for its officers (art. 25a), this was largely ignored in line with what was obtained in other Aladura churches at this time.

A deacon/deaconess is expected to satisfy certain conditions as a prerequisite for ordination as an assistant pastor. Candidates for assistant pastorship

must be pastoring a parish with a reasonable number in attendance...about a hundred or a hundred and twenty adults. He must have not less than ten to fifteen thousand naira monthly as tithe collection. We use those things to calculate if he is really worth being ordained or being put in position of spiritual, organisational and leadership responsibility in the church.<sup>40</sup>

In addition, the candidate must secure a recommendation from his/her provincial pastor through the area and zonal pastors. There are, however, waivers for the wives of senior pastors (or other special cases or candidates) who may be ordained assistant pastors without satisfying all these conditions. For example, spouses of serving pastors need not be pastoring parishes in order to be ordained.

An assistant pastor remains in that position for at least five years "with real achievements". Such achievements include the demonstration of enhanced productivity in terms of tithes and attendants. Furthermore, the candidate must have passed through the mandatory training at the Redeemed Christian Bible College (RCBC). This last condition came into effect in 2001.<sup>41</sup> The above requirements are only necessary but not sufficient conditions for ordination, for there are other factors that are considered during screening for ordination.<sup>42</sup> Those who are assistant pastors on a part-time basis could remain on this rung for not less than eight years.<sup>43</sup>

Fulfilling these conditions does not earn an aspirant automatic ordination. There are some conditions that may bring about denial of ordination. Such conditions include (i) a drop in the level of moneys collected as tithes; (ii) a decline in the number of church attendants (which is

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<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup>Personal interview with Pastor Bolarinwa, *op. cit.*

<sup>42</sup>Personal interview with Pastor 'Delana Adeleye-Olusae, *op. cit.*

<sup>43</sup>*Redemption Light*, Vol. 6, No. 8, September 2001, p. 17.

different from and higher than membership); (iii) petition against a candidate by a church member.

The Constitution empowers only one officer to ordain other ministers. That officer is the head of mission, that is, the GO. Although the GO's deputy or assistants cannot ordain ministers, the mother-in-Israel can. One pastor reports that she has ordained other ministers in some African missions.<sup>44</sup> It is possible in theory, however, for the GO to delegate this constitutional and divine prerogative to his deputy or any of his assistants but there has been no such instance so far. Probably, Adeboye is reluctant to share his charisma of pre-eminence in setting out church rules and doctrine for fear of internal challenge or rebellion. The time it takes for a newly baptised candidate with pastoral ambition to become a fully ordained pastor has been lengthened from two years (as in the case of Adeboye himself) to at least fifteen years or more.<sup>45</sup> This strategy effectively ensures that full pastors are on the average thirty-five years and above.

#### **4.5 Diversification of Parishes**

The RCCG is not a monolithic organisation; it is internally variegated, especially in the nature and composition of parishes. The credit goes to the new leadership of Adeboye that recognised the need to shift the holiness emphasis that has predominated in the church during the leadership of Josiah. Travelling to the United States and Asia exposed him to different models of church organisation. For example, *RCCG at 50* (p. 43) reports that in 1983 he travelled to Yoggi Cho's church in South Korea. There, he encountered a new method for micro-church organisation: the home cell concept. Yoggi Cho had already adopted this concept with great results. On his return to Nigeria, Adeboye adopted this home cell or house fellowship model of organisation. This model stimulated church growth as many house fellowships soon became full-fledged parishes of the church.

The church that Adeboye inherited was dull, much like "a muddy pool of water" as his critics called it. For him, there must be a reason why the church was so described by some of his fellow pastors. According to Pastor M. O. Ojo, comparing certain features of RCCG with other fast-growing churches in Nigeria and elsewhere, he reached a conclusion that the mode of worship of

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<sup>44</sup> Personal interview with Pastor S. T. Adetoye, *op. cit.*

<sup>45</sup>It is important to point out that Adeboye, with the level of his education at the point of joining the church, might have obtained (or merited) some waivers from other candidates who did not have such education. He was thus ordained a pastor within two years of his baptism by immersion in the church. For details, see chapter three.

the church and the locations of parishes (in the back streets of urban ghettos) were militating against the growth.<sup>46</sup>

#### 4.5.1 The Classical Parishes

The classical parish is a designation of all those parishes which existed during the time of Josiah up to 1988. The “classical parishes” are almost like a pietist movement; women are not allowed to wear trousers, earrings or face make-ups and they must cover their hair during fellowship. Women could be in the choir, but they could not lead the group or any other intra-church group. “In those days, if you were not wearing the proper garment, even if you were not born again, we would ask you to go out”.<sup>47</sup> Electronic instruments, drums and bands were banned “because we felt drums were found in brothels and hotels”.<sup>48</sup> These were regarded as instruments of the world which the devil used in ensnaring people to hell. Importantly, services were conducted in Yoruba, and sometimes translated into English. Virtually all the members of the Classical parishes were Yoruba. The classical parishes emphasised holiness, separatedness and ostensibly teach doctrines that are against prosperity and modern education. The search for prosperity and wealth was seen “as lusting after the things of this world”.<sup>49</sup>

In addition, women were not allowed to visit the salons for perming their hair. They were not also allowed to ride on motor-cycles, for this is unworthy of a “Christian sister”. These practices were considered unchristian and worldly. Worship sessions were marked by its seriousness, with “worshippers wrapped ... in tears, groaning in prayer”.<sup>50</sup> The weekly crying service sessions earned the classical parish churches the nickname of “*Ijo elekun*”, meaning, the weeping church. Another significant feature of the pre-1980 RCCG was the church’s attitude to money: there was no collection of offering during services. The leader-founder of the church believed that “money should not separate people from God” and thus took no collections from his followers.<sup>51</sup>

In the past, such posture essentially alienated the youth; hence, the church became “a church of elderly people, a bundle of people who were in the main illiterates, people who were not educated

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<sup>46</sup> Personal interview with AGO Pastor Ojo, *op. cit.*

<sup>47</sup> Personal interview with Assistant General Overseer (Establishment) Pastor M. O. Ojo, *op. cit.*

<sup>48</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Funso Johnson Funso Odesola, *op. cit.* Pastor Odesola was the provincial pastor of Ogun State and Co-ordinator of Redeemed Christian Fellowship (RCF). He has since August 2001 been redeployed to South Africa on foreign mission.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Adeola Akinremi, “Some Old Landmarks”, *Redemption Light* magazine, Vol. 7, no. 7, August 2002, p. 33. (The Redemption Light is the official monthly magazine of the RCCG.)

<sup>51</sup> *Idem.*

in a modern way.”<sup>52</sup> The classical strand of parishes still exists in the church at the time of this research. They are struggling to adjust to impact from outside and at the same time hold fast to what their members consider to be the unchanging truth of Christian life as embodied in Josiah’s vision and teaching.

#### 4.5.2 The Model Parishes

More than half a decade after becoming head of RCCG, Adeboye observed that the church had not grown as he expected. He noticed that other churches such as Deeper Life Bible Church (DLBC) were indeed flourishing and experiencing rapid growth. Based on his observations that these churches established their congregations with flamboyance and in highbrow areas of the cities where upwardly mobile people could easily identify and associate with them, Adeboye, in 1988, permitted the creation of the first of what he calls “the model parishes”.<sup>53</sup> It is significant that the creation of this type of parish was a product of careful observation of social trends among flourishing churches at the time. Investigating the reasons for the growth and apparent success of other churches brought about the realisation that the RCCG could be flourishing if it could introduce some form of change and flexibility in its rigid, pietistic parish structure.<sup>54</sup>

He [Adeboye] looked around and saw some churches that were growing and as a researcher, a question would come to his mind; why are these churches growing at this rate? He discovered that the churches were pastured by young men whom you can describe as young urbane professionals. Apart from that, the churches were beautiful and some actually looked like five star hotels, and the kind of people who throng [*sic*] these places are [*sic*] people who would not go to conventional churches. The pastors gave them good music and worship after which the word would come. He now thought that if we should replicate these factors, we should be able to attract these [elite, professional] people...<sup>55</sup>

Consequently, the model parishes were introduced to accommodate urban structures of life, interaction and sociality. A senior pastor reasoned that, “the vision of the model churches was to reach the younger folk, graduates, upwardly mobile executives, which the old folks [that is, the

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Personal interview AGO Pastor M. O. Ojo, *op. cit.*

<sup>54</sup> Personal interview with AGO Pastor M. O. Ojo, *op. cit.*

<sup>55</sup> Pastor E.A. Odeyemi, “Age will not Affect his Passion for Souls”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no.2, March 2002, p.7.

Classical parishes] could not have done due to a lot of limitations”.<sup>56</sup> According to *RCCG at 50* (p. 44), the model parishes explicitly and unabashedly targeted a specific stratum of society: the young intellectuals, high society women, top government officials, military officers, successful executives, academics and university students.

There are no restrictions as to who becomes a member of a model parish, unlike the rigid conditions of membership which existed in the classical parishes; women are also allowed to dress as they seem good with all possible facial make-ups that one would want. Prospective members were instructed “to come as you are, for the Lord will touch you as we minister to you. Let them come to Jesus as they are. Whatever the painting on their heads or faces or on their hair; whatever the disposition or garments they are putting on. At the end of the day when God is through with them, their lives would be changed rather than say they should not enter the church”.<sup>57</sup> The Model parishes permitted all the things that were outlawed in the Classical parishes, in addition to being located at such strategic places as hotels, cinema halls, highbrow city centres and other places where “worldly people” are found. Services are mainly in English and not translated into Yoruba. While classical parishes emphasise holiness, Model parishes emphasise prosperity, flaunt images of wealth and modernity as an index of grace and salvation.

Special efforts are made to appeal to the youth and lure them into the church rather than preach at them in a condemnatory fashion. According to one of the pioneer pastors of the model parish scheme, the strategy of taking the church to the marketplace was “responsible for the breakthrough and success that we are experiencing in the church today”.<sup>58</sup>

The first three pioneer pastors of the model parish movement were educated and articulated young pastors of the church. They were Tunde Bakare, a lawyer, who was put in charge of the model parish situated at Ladipo Oluwale Street, Ikeja, Lagos, which was established in May 1988; Pastor Tony Rapu, Medical doctor, was in charge of the third model parish established at Apapa on 5 May 1991 and Adetola, banker, was in charge of the second parish established in 1989 at Alexander road, Ikoyi.<sup>59</sup> One year after the first church was established, the pastor, Tunde

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<sup>56</sup> Pastor Pitán Adeboye “No Contest between Classical and Model Parishes”, *Lifeway*, vol. no.3, August – September 2001, p.23. Pastor Pitán is no relation of Pastor Enoch Adeboye; while the latter hails from Osun state, the former is from Kwara state.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Pastor M. O. Ojo, *op. cit.*

<sup>58</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Ezekiel Odeyemi, *op. cit.*

<sup>59</sup> It was not possible to interview these pioneer pastors for various reasons. Tunde Bakare had some serious troubles with the federal government of Nigeria during our field work. He was summons to Abuja because of a prophecy he

Bakare, seceded from the RCCG. He appropriated the parish as his personal church and renamed as *Latter Rain Assembly*. He has since remained one of the most vocal critics of Adeboye and the RCCG. The parish he was in charge was however, reconstituted under Pastor Dave Okunade and Pastor Ezekiel A. Adeyemi and nurtured to maturity.<sup>60</sup>

Pastor Adetola, now deceased, worked hard to bring his parish to levels that permitted it to establish other “daughter model parishes” within and outside the country. These parishes form what is called “Victoria Island/Ikoyi Family” of RCCG congregations. They now constitute what the church administratively calls Headquarters Province IV with over two hundred parishes. The third experimental model parish, the Apapa Family, suffered a similar fate to Ikeja family when its pioneer pastor, Tony Rapu, seceded from the RCCG in 1997. Before he left, this particular family of model churches made the most progress and witnessed the largest expansion in the RCCG, forming two administrative provinces of the church, called Headquarters IIIA and IIIB, with well over three hundred daughter-parishes in and outside Nigeria.

The two types of parishes discussed above were made up of almost mutually exclusive cohorts, exhibiting contrasting characteristics. While one has the professional and educated class as its constituency, and therefore flamboyant, with upwardly mobile arrowheads, the other was conservative, inward looking and clearly otherworldly. With university-educated professionals as pastors, model parishes conducted services in English without any translation, while, as we have pointed out, classical parishes conducted services in Yoruba (with English translation in some cases). The pastors of classical parishes were less educated and cared less about this really, since education was looked down upon as mundane search and lust. Unlike the classical parishes that represent an apocalyptical movement, the model parishes represent a pragmatic movement, having in its fold quality people who are “the movers and shakers” of the society, well-heeled, charismatic leaders whose strengths are in organisation, application of resources and presentation of marketable spiritual packages. To them, the world no longer presents itself as a “valley of tears” but an environment full of positive challenges and opportunities, knowing the rules of which provides a passport to success. In this type of parishes are resources, influence, education and opportunity.

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made concerning a possible military take over of government. Tony Rapu was away out of the country at about the same time. Pastor Adetola was already dead during the study.

<sup>60</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Ezekiel Odeyemi. *Op. cit.*

It was only naturally inevitable that there should be mutual suspicion and friction with both groups coming together for the yearly convention of the church. During this period, both groups were required to worship and celebrate together as *one church* rather than as *two groups* in one church. As both parties have powerful representatives up in the echelons of the hierarchy of the church, the ensuing acrimony was loudly orchestrated, showing all the features of theological warfare. In the middle of the 1990s, the tension simmering between the different members of the two strands of parishes came to a head and became an open issue. The model parishes claimed and boasted of being responsible for turning the fortunes of the church around, of being progressive and outward looking; in other words, of being modern and global in both content and outlook. The church acknowledges this fact: “[t]here is no doubt that the model church vision has been the most effective stimulus to the growth of RCCG”.<sup>61</sup> Because they controlled the wealthy and influential members of the church, the model parishes were responsible for bringing in more money into the coffers of the church than all the classical parishes put together. They thus exercised liberties that their counterparts considered excessive worldliness and a compromise to the holiness tradition of the church. They called the classical parishes local, parochial, backward, nostalgic, reactionary and poor. The members of the classical parishes were enraged about this and they, in turn, claimed to be keeping the original vision of the founder, remaining faithful to the founding inspiration, biblically grounded and warding off worldly temptations from creeping into the church.

#### 4.5.3 The Unity Parishes

Afraid that the resistance mounting against the model parish movement would splinter the church irreconcilably, Adeboye sought a reconciliation of the parties already on a warpath. The financial power of the model parishes made them very vocal and recalcitrant, reinterpreting doctrines and practices of the church to suit present social and economic circumstances of their members. The classical parishes also felt they were on a “just war” to reclaim the pristine righteousness of the church seen to be eroding through the rapacious influence of the model parishes.<sup>62</sup> As a result of this squabble, the leader of the church initiated a third strand of parishes, the **Unity Parishes**, which consciously combine the characteristics of the first two strands of parishes, creating what may, in the long run, be a harmony in the midst of diversity. The name given to this new strand of parishes in itself signifies the initial disunity and disharmony between the first two strands of parishes. Such disunity bordered on identity crisis among members of the classical parishes. According to a senior pastor who was brought up in a classical parish and now heads one, by

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<sup>61</sup> *RCCG at 50*, p. 46.

<sup>62</sup> *RCCG at 50.*, p. 45

combining the essential features of the first two strands of parishes, the Unity parishes sought to generate elements of identity to which the classical and model parishes could jointly lay legitimate claim.<sup>63</sup> The vision of the Unity parishes is to generate a new blend of parishes which is neither classical nor model but “a fusion of what is best in the classical and model families’ parishes”.<sup>64</sup>

During the Holy Ghost Service of December 1996, Adeboye requested the Area pastors in Lagos to supply two prayer warriors each to meet at the Redemption camp on January 1 1997. From this pool, sixty were selected to form the nucleus of the Unity parish movement in the church. A senior pastor, Ayo Adedoye, was appointed to coordinate both the new group and the fresh vision. The reason for the choice of the “prayer warriors” was that the squabble between the classical and model parishes was the result of the work of the devil designed to destabilise and undermine the social and theological integrity of the entire church. Consequently, the prayer force of the church is the best equipped sector to do battle against the devil. It was also believed that it was this arm of the church which could successfully nurture and spread the new idea of unity parishes without compromising it. From the camp, the unity brand of parishes spread outward, first to Lagos and latter to other parts of the country.<sup>65</sup> The first Unity parish started in January 1997 at the new auditorium of Redemption Camp. Its first action was to put in place a structure of Sunday school that was bedrock upon which the new vision of educating and propagating a unified church was based. The Sunday school became the structure, vehicle and channel of dissemination of the vision and idea of a new strand of parishes with a unique character that are neither classical nor model in their outlook and practices.

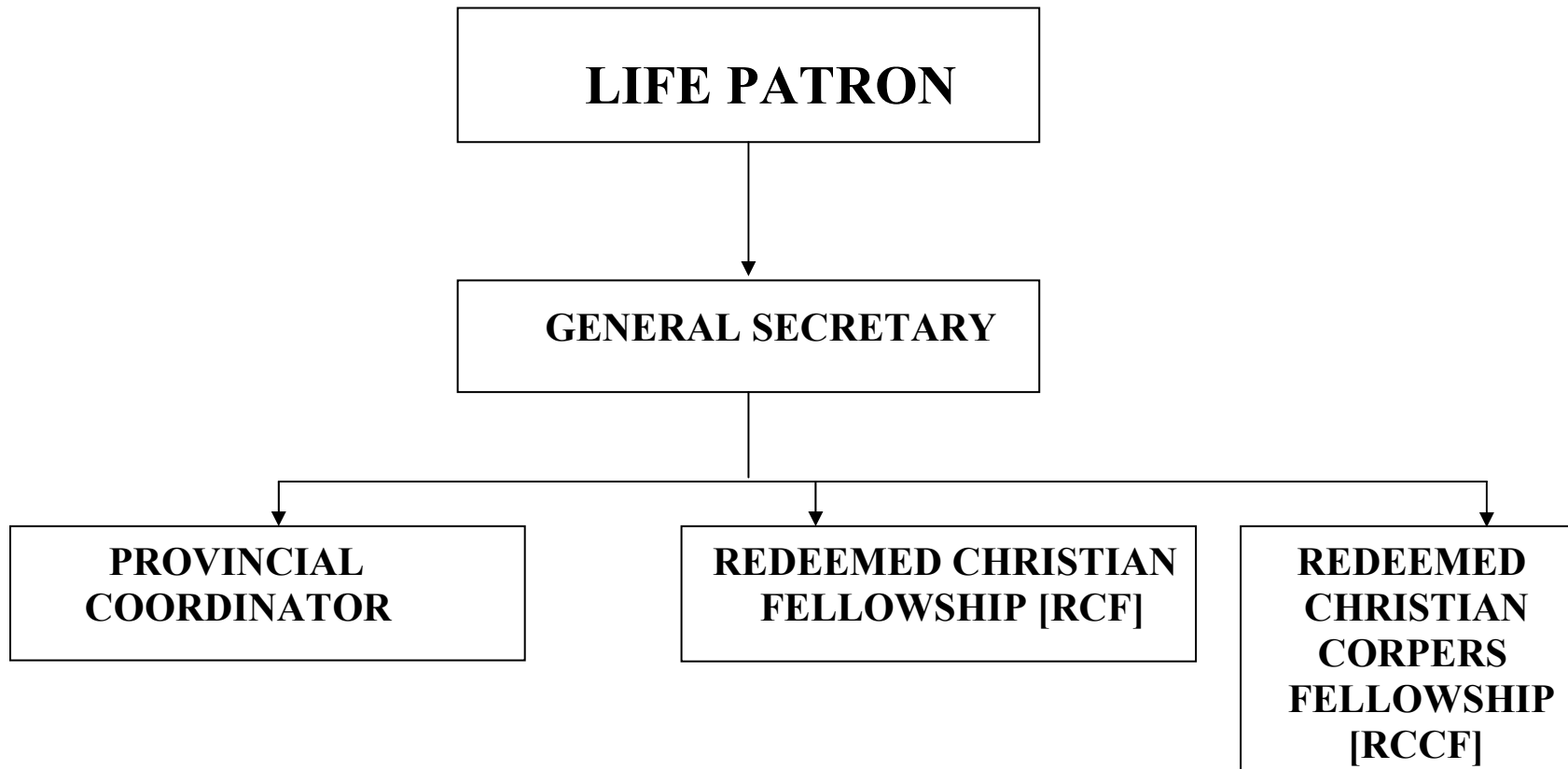
Since it is the logic of Unity parishes to harmonise and articulate a balance between the classical and model parishes, the first Unity parish started with an English language Sunday school. However, the second month of its existence witnessed the establishment of three additional English language Sunday school classes and one Yoruba language Sunday school class, all existing within a single church. Thus, two years after its inception, this structure of a church with five classes of Sunday school was maintained, nurtured and exported to other provinces of the RCCG as an ecclesiastical arrangement to be fostered for the total growth and expansion of the church. Above all, it was and still is, the arrowhead for harmony and a new socio-theological

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<sup>63</sup> Personal interview with Pastor J. A. Bolarinwa, *op. cit.*

<sup>64</sup> *RCCG at 50*, p. 48.

<sup>65</sup> *Sunday School Manual*, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-141.



**Figure 4.8:** Structural Blocs of the Christ the Redeemer's Ministries (CRM).

identity for the church where no sector could claim neither financial nor theological/spiritual superiority over another.

Eighteen months after its inception, the first unity parish was relocated to Onipanu, Lagos, where it was christened House of Praise for All Nations, a name that reflects the idea, vision and intention behind its creation. In January 1999, Adeboye inaugurated it as a full-fledged parish of the church. The Unity family of parishes now constitute sixteen parishes in all as at August 2002. These parishes are sometimes collectively treated as a province with Pastor Ayo Adedoye as the provincial pastor.<sup>66</sup> If the classical parishes represent “the old order” and the model parishes represent “the new order”, the unity parishes are “the mixed order”. The three strands of parishes are still in existence at the time of this research.

#### **4.6 Ministries and Parachurch Groups**

In this section we shall discuss the most influential of parachurch groups in the RCCG, namely: (i) Christ the Redeemer’s Ministries (CRM); (ii) the Redeemed Christian Fellowship (RCF); (iii) Christ the Redeemer’s Friend Universal, and (iv) the Redeemed Programme Action Committee (RAPAC).

##### **4.6.1 Christ the Redeemer's Ministry (CRM)**

The CRM is the most important and influential parachurch group in the RCCG. It is through this ministry that the first set of educate elite of the church was recruited. Central to the changes brought about in RCCG is the CRM, which has been characterised as a core “change agent of the church” saddled with the responsibility of introducing “new operational modalities into the church”.<sup>67</sup> It represents the evangelistic arm of RCCG, executing the church’s revival and proselytising programmes. According to Ojo (1997:10), the CRM is the training arm of the mission, which “was started for the purpose of gaining the world for Christ”. Such programmes that have made the CRM a popular name among RCCG members include church planting, establishment of study centres, missions and students’ outreaches and student fellowships within tertiary institutions in Nigeria.<sup>68</sup> The CRM is “the umbrella body for anything evangelical in the church”.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> See *Redemption Light*, vol. 8, no. 8, September 2003, p. 9

<sup>67</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Funso Odesola, *op. cit.*

<sup>68</sup> CRM branches within tertiary institutions in Nigeria are called Redeemed Christian Fellowship (RCF), which comprises students, lecturers and other categories of university employees.

<sup>69</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Ezekiel O. Odeyemi, *op. cit.* Pastor Odeyemi has been the General Secretary of CRM since 1988.

According to the General Secretary of CRM, the ministry started in April 1977 as a reaction to the decision of the government of Nigeria to host the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC).<sup>70</sup> For the regime of General Yakubu Gowon which hosted the festivities, FESTAC events were an opportunity for black peoples in Africa and in the Black Diaspora to identify with their roots and their artistic and cultural heritage, traditional religions. A repertoire of cultural values and norms featured during the festivities. The events included traditional music, drama, art, and oral literature; these received national and international attention.<sup>71</sup> The modernisation agenda of the government became construed by some religious groups as a retrogressive programme designed by the devil and hatched in Lagos. Pentecostalist pastors, especially those in the holiness tradition, were in the forefront of such scathing denigration.

The RCCG belonged in the holiness tradition, and from within it came the urge to show publicly some reaction to the cultural extravaganza. According to Ojo (2001: 22), this event was “spiritually perceived as the bane of Nigerian society today”, because “the gods and goddesses of many lands were celebrated with funfair in our land, and devils were exalted with the wealth that the Almighty God gave unto the land. [...]” Adekola (1989: 238) perceives the events as “the revival of gods or divinities worshipped by the forbears (*sic*) of the black race”. Consequently, some “believers (in RCCG) then thought: if we were hosting the whole world to come and worship the devil, Christians should also do something to worship God”.<sup>72</sup>

Among those Christians who set out to “do something to worship God” was Adeboye, who was then an exuberant and zealous young pastor and lecturer at the University of Ilorin. Adekola (1989: 236) recounts how Adeboye conceived the idea of holding a parallel congress of Christians at the same time as the FESTAC events, discussing this with one Chief S. O. Ogedengbe<sup>73</sup> and Pastor D. B. Akande. He found support for his ideas and secured permission from Josiah to hold a congress. It was scheduled for January 1977 but could not hold until April

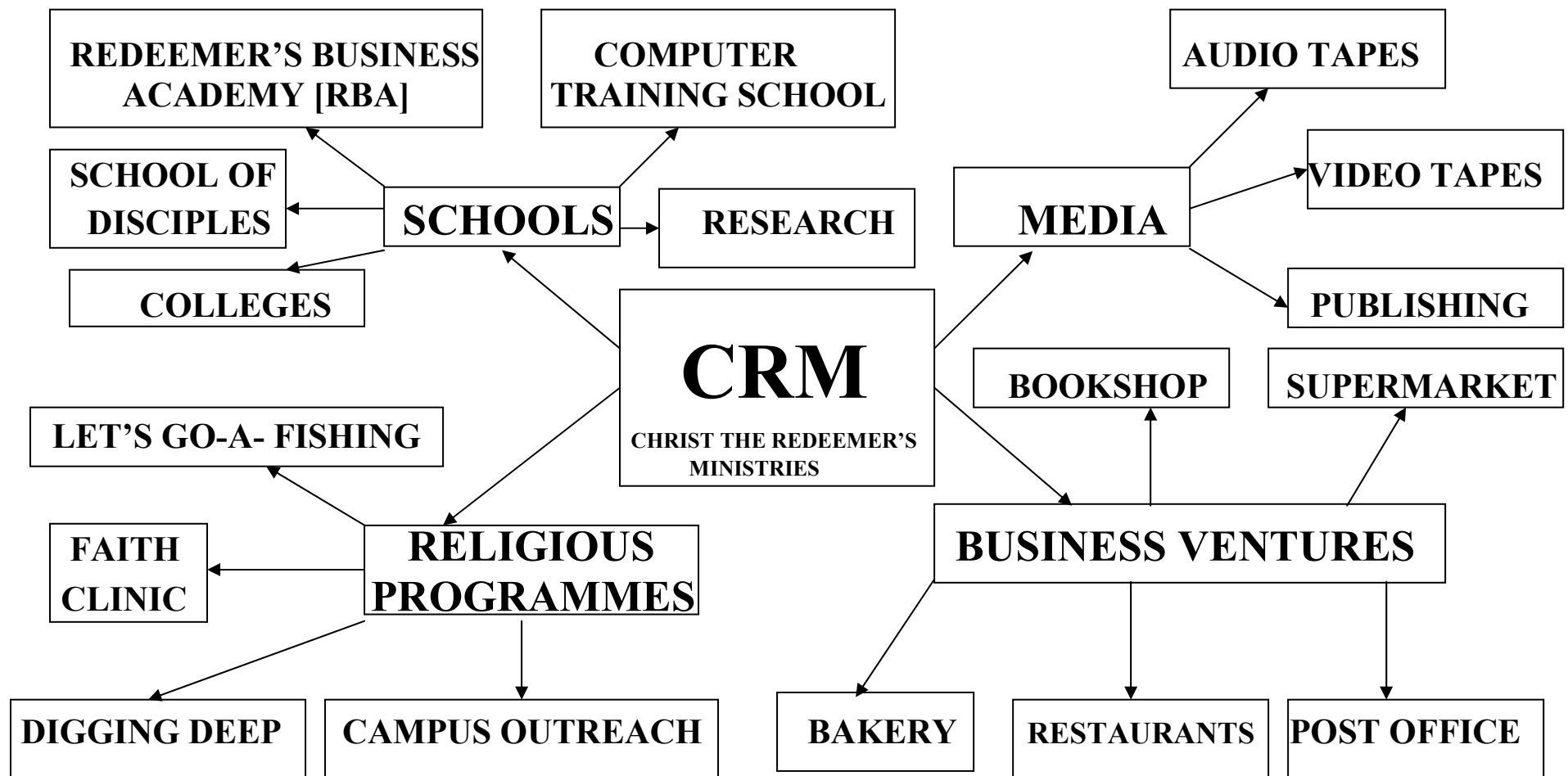
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<sup>70</sup>The First World Black and African Festival took place in Dakar, Senegal, in 1968. The second, originally billed for Algiers, Algeria, was taken over by the government of General Gowon of Nigeria because it was thought that the country had more resources (mainly from crude oil) (Erinoso 1999: 32). Eghosa Osaghae (1998: 78) has argued that the economic problems of Nigeria in the 1980s onward originated partly from the “profligate spending on prestige projects” such as the FESTAC '77 events.

<sup>71</sup>Summaries of the events and how they relate to African Traditional Religions may be found in the series, *Nigeria Since Independence: The First 25 Years*, vols. VII (*Culture*) and IX (*Religion*), Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Limited, 1989.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup>Chief Ogedengbe was an elder of the church and a prominent lawyer by profession (See Peel 1983: 253-4).



**Fig 4.9: Activities of the Christ the Redeemer's Ministries.**

because of operational difficulties, which had to do with securing a work-free period within the official academic calendar of higher institutions (since Adeboye was a university lecturer). Besides this, the Nigerian government unilaterally postponed the initial date of commencement of FESTAC, a decision that affected other counter-events billed to correspond with it (see Ekeh and Ashiwaju 1989: 262-3). The congress finally held during the Easter vacation, between 7 and 11 April 1977 at Ilesha Grammar School.

Although the initial activities of the group is traced to April 1977, according to the General Secretary,<sup>74</sup> it was not until 26 January 1980 that the group acquired a formal status with the name “Christ the Redeemer’s Ministry” (Adekola 1989: 243). The body was registered in 1985 with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) of Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs as a moral and legal body. As a registered entity, the CRM had Pastor Adeboye as National Co-ordinator and Pastor D. Kuo as Secretary, and a board of three trustees: S. O. Ogedengbe, S. A. Ayodele and J. I. Olukowajo<sup>75</sup> (Adekola 1989: 244). The CRM has as its motto, “Holiness, Faith and Love”, and its national secretariat is situated in the expansive Redemption Camp in Ogun State, with a zonal office in Ibadan, Oyo State.<sup>76</sup>

Emerging from its crisis of origin, the CRM became a sister organisation to RCCG, independent but intricately a formidable arm of the church. The relationship between both organisations is described thus: “Just as we can explain the Trinity, where the members of the Godhead are co-equal, so also the CRM and the RCCG are. They could be taken as a single entity that requires a single analysis”.<sup>77</sup> As a way of resolving the imbroglios surrounding its emergence and initial activities, a division of responsibilities was devised by which CRM would function as the evangelistic arm of the church, organising congresses, crusades, seminars and youth outreaches while RCCG would function of a full-fledged church. The reason for this specialisation is not far fetched, since the privileged position of Adeboye resulting from his education and his experiences in the tertiary education system in Nigeria made him a favourite speaker during these evangelistic events. Today, both organisations are given equal priority with the CRM representing the personal vision and mission of Adeboye.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Personal interview with Pastor Ezekiel O. Odeyemi, *op. cit.*

<sup>75</sup>J. I. Olukowajo was the pastor who witnessed the death of Josiah and who received the instruction concerning where to find the name of the latter's successor.

<sup>76</sup>*International Directory of the RCCG*, 3rd ed. (2000-2001), Lagos: Directorate of Missions, RCCG, p. 11.

<sup>77</sup>Personal interview with Pastor Johnson Funso Odesola, *op. cit.*

<sup>78</sup>It was very likely that the CRM would have metamorphosized into a full-fledged church if Adeboye had failed in his bid for he leadership of RCCG.

Some of the very significant programmes that CRM initiated but are now interwoven with RCCG activities are *Digging Deep* and *Faith Clinic*. The former is an in-depth bible study, held every Tuesday in every parish of the church, while the latter is a healing-deliverance service, which holds on Thursdays. Offerings and donations are taken during these services which do not go to the coffers of the RCCG but to the purse of CRM through the parish pastors of the RCCG parishes who remit the fund to the area pastors, who in turn pass it on to the General Secretary of the CRM.<sup>79</sup> In addition to these two programmes, the CRM organises what it calls *Let's-Go-A-Fishing*, which takes place during Easter and Christmas periods each year. It is a grass-roots programme aimed at church planting or revitalisation of fledgling parishes.<sup>80</sup>

Adekola (1989: 263-5) traces the origins of *Digging Deep* and *Faith Clinic* to the period in the late 1970s when the founder of Deeper Life Bible church, W.F Kumuyi, was holding bible study classes at the Ebute-Metta church compound of RCCG. His teaching sessions were lively and attracted many people including RCCG youth. When Kumuyi relocated his classes away from the church premises, many young people from RCCG reaffiliated and went with him to inaugurate his new church. Defection from the church was fast reducing the number of the members drastically. To stem this tide “the executive committee of RCCG in a meeting decided that something must be done to make the youth ...busy”, introducing as a result the Faith Clinic and Digging Deep under the auspices of the CRM “to replace the periods of Kumuyi’s programmes on Mondays and Thursdays” (Adekola 1989: 265).

There is however a second narrative of the origin of Faith Clinic contained in the account of Tony Ojo (1997: 6-7) According to him, Adeboye received a prophecy in 1980 while attending the Annual Kenneth Hagin Convention in Tulsa, USA, where someone proclaimed that “there is somebody here from a foreign land that God is going to start something through him in his parlour and that thing will be very big”. Adeboye claimed this “revelation knowledge” as referring to him. Faith Clinic started in 1982 when Adeboye had already become the General Overseer of RCCG.

The CRM functions both as the evangelical arm of the church and its business arm. The CRM goes into the business of generating revenue for the church and creating employment opportunities for its members. The underlying reason for this is the church’s strong conviction that poverty militates against the spread of the good news. This sister organisation of the RCCG

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<sup>79</sup>Personal interview with Pastor S. T. Adetoye, *op. cit.*

<sup>80</sup>Personal interview with Pastor M. O. Ojo, *op. cit.*

is the sole publisher of all the books of the GO; it is also in the forefront of marketing audio-visuals of RCCG programmes. Each month, several thousands of these items are sold directly to the final consumers. Through the efforts of CRM and its very influential financiers, companies such as banks and insurances firms, and security companies are floated to handle business transactions of members and groups within the church. A pastor argued that the part of the reason for the economic involvement of the CRM is “to prevent the money of the righteous from going to the wicked”.<sup>81</sup> More details on the business institutions of RCCG are provided below.

As figure 4.9 indicates, the CRM has increasingly moved into purely non-religious spheres as the RCCG expands and there are less of congresses and seminars to organise or there are other groups within the church who are organising these. This may be the practical meaning and usefulness of adopting “ministries” instead of the singular. The organisation runs, in addition to the media enterprises enumerated above, such economic ventures as restaurants and bakery for the thousands of people that patronise RCCG events, especially at the Redemption Camp. Furthermore, the CRM manages a computer training school, a handful of secondary schools, colleges and a business academy. Redeemer’s Business Academy (RBA) is the leadership and management-training facility set up by the CRM “to declare the Lordship of Jesus Christ over every sphere of life particularly the marketplace. The commandment to be fruitful and live in dominion on earth includes the business sector”.<sup>82</sup>

#### **4.6.2 The Redeemed Christian Fellowship (RCF)**

The university campus was the first arena that Adeboye demonstrated his zeal after his “born again” experience. Soon after his affiliation to RCCG,

I decided to start a fellowship with my secretary, typist, messenger and cleaner. I realised I already had a church. Soon other people joined us, my office became too small and we had to move into a lecture room. Before the University authorities cancelled this lunch-hour fellowship programme, you would not find any typist, messenger or secretary at their posts between one and 1.30pm every afternoon. They would all be at the programme.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> He also pointed out that different parachurch groups such as the Africa Mission under Mrs Adeboye are getting into business ventures, e.g. Block industry, in order to directly raise funds for evangelism and training of missionaries rather than burden the members of the church with endless request for donations (Personal communication with Pastor Harry Samuel, the Redemption Camp, 06.08.02)

<sup>82</sup> *International Directory of the RCCG*, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>83</sup> Adeboye, “Anointing for greater Exploits in the next Millennium”, in Olusegun Bankole, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

The proscription of the lunch-hour fellowship by the University authority did not occasion the demise of the fellowship; it was transformed into a more standard Campus Fellowship under the auspices of CRM. The Redeemed Christian Fellowship (RCF) is the arm of CRM in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It is regarded as an *interdenominational* group registered as an “arm of Christ the Redeemer’s Ministries on Campus” (CRMC).<sup>84</sup> According to its national coordinator, Funso Odesola, Adeboye inaugurated it on the Saturday following the Holy Ghost Service in September 1988. On this occasion, the General Overseer of RCCG addressed eighteen university students and encouraged them to initiate fellowships in their respective institutions.<sup>85</sup> This event was the beginning of the RCF

As a result of the transitory nature of students in higher institutions who graduate and leave after about four years of studies, it is indeed difficult to establish full-fledged ministries or branches of churches in these institutions. Because these institutions also go on vacations that may last for about three months at a time in some cases, rigid parish structures are deemed unsuitable for them. Therefore, the fellowship structure, with its fluid and flexible format is recognised as fitting to the sometimes-fragile environment in which students live and study.

In terms of organisation, campus fellowship groups with up to a hundred registered members are recognised as RCF, while those with fewer members are called “Campus House Fellowships”. All tertiary institutions in the country are divided into four zones according to geographical location, viz.: North, East, West and Middle Belt. The RCF has branches in over ninety campuses of higher institutions in the country.<sup>86</sup> The zones are headed by a zonal leader who reports to a national coordinator. The zonal leaders manage activities in their zones and submit monthly reports to the national coordinator. Apart from the usual Sunday worship services of RCFs on the campuses, they also organise such programmes as career, marriage and counselling seminars, outreaches, drama and “any other programme”.<sup>87</sup> The national co-ordinator claims that the RCF has been instrumental in redirecting and waning university students from “campus secret cults” (CSCs) activities on campus, rehabilitating and providing them a safe haven to exercise and cultivate their skills and talents in constructive ways.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *The Constitution of the RCF*, p.1

<sup>85</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Johnson Funso Odesola, *op. cit.*

<sup>86</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Ezekiel O. Odeyemi, *op. cit.*

<sup>87</sup> *The Constitution of the RCF*, article 13, p. 20. This provision is an indication of the flexibility of the organisation in terms of activities.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* Also see, Leke Johnson, “Jesus Delivered me from Drug and Cultism”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 10, November 2002, p. 21-23

The RCF is the seedbed for the recruitment of educated clergy for the RCCG. Students are given a foretaste of what it means to lead a religious group, its responsibilities and benefits. When members of RCF graduate, they are expected to join Redeemed Christian Corpsers Fellowship (RCCF) as they embark on the compulsory one-year National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) scheme.<sup>89</sup> The mission zeal cultivated during student days is sustained and sometimes transformed into full-fledged RCCG missions and parishes through the RCCF. The establishment of RCCG parishes in northern and eastern Nigeria was a direct effort of some members of RCCF.<sup>90</sup> Specifically, the congregations of RCCG established in Zamfara, Bauchi, and Niger states were the work of RCCF members on NYSC programme in these areas.

#### **4.6.3 Christ the Redeemer's Friends Universal (CRFU)**

When members of RCCF finish their national service, they are expected to be received into another organisation that will continue to nurture and harness their spiritual and material resources for the growth and wellbeing of the church. Established by Adeboye on 7 January 1990, the CRFU is a service arm of the CRM. Conceived as an *interdenominational* organisation, the CRFU membership is narrow and elitist in orientation although it claims to embrace all persons “who are born again and profess the Lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ”. The members must not be less than eighteen years old with an academic qualification of at least a National Certificate of Education (NCE) or not less than thirty years of age with at least an NCE qualification or “without any educational qualification at all but who have distinguished themselves in their career or profession”.<sup>91</sup> Its primary aim is to generate financial resources from the very rich in society who are interested in sponsoring RCCG activities. Each member on or before 28 February each year must pay, in addition to the above stated criteria for membership, an annual membership fee of two thousand naira.<sup>92</sup> From its criteria of membership, the poor, the unemployed and students are effectively excluded from this association.

The CRFU is organised in chapters, each consisting of not less than twenty persons. Each chapter is mandated to organise at least two outreaches each year, remit to the national secretariat the sum

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<sup>89</sup>The NYSC scheme was introduced in 1973 by the Gen. Yakubu Gowon's military regime “under which graduates of universities and polytechnics (and for a time, graduates of colleges of education) did a compulsory one year of national service outside their states of origin to further national integration” (Osaghae 1998: 78). It was part of the administration's efforts toward national development and post-war reconciliation. The scheme is sustained by every administration in Nigeria since then.

<sup>90</sup>Personal interview with Pastor Funso Odesola, *op. cit.*

<sup>91</sup>CRFU Rules and Regulation, clause 3, (p.3).

<sup>92</sup>Information culled from a flier titled “CRFU: Reaching the People in Upper Echelons of Society for Christ”. The flier was sent to me by post in a letter by the former National President of the CRFU, Pastor S. ‘Biya Owolabi (November 11, 2001).

of fifty thousand naira, send an annual report to the national secretariat and participate in annual convention of the RCCG. Members are also expected to pay a monthly due of two hundred naira, half of which amount is “to be kept with the local chapter while half (N100.00) should be sent to the National Secretariat to support our extensive national programmes aimed at improving our national profile and funding our numerous proposed projects”.<sup>93</sup> The CRFU claims to have a national membership of about half a million. The evangelistic target of the CRFU for the year 2002 is focused on “bringing 100,000 VIPs (Very Important Personalities) to the Lord by August 2002”.<sup>94</sup>

At the national level, Adeboye is the Life Patron who has the final say in matters of discipline among members of the group. There is also a national executive council made up of a chairperson (president, who is usually a pastor of RCCG), a vice chairperson, a secretary general and an assistant, and a treasurer. Others include a financial secretary, a publicity secretary, a prayer secretary and some *ex-officio* members. Local chapters are usually organised at state levels, consisting of “House-fellowship units”.<sup>95</sup> Such networking of members from the smallest possible units to the national level makes for effective control and mobilisation.

The CRFU recruits members for the RCCG and for itself through outreaches, but more importantly through specific targets of those in society who are financially comfortable. The group has a responsibility to proselytise “the people in the upper echelons of society for Christ”.<sup>96</sup> According to a memorandum from the national chairman to all members of the national executive, and dated 13 August 2001, the association is determined to achieve its evangelistic target of winning a large number of quality people for Christ. In order to realise this objective, the president of the group directs that local

chapter executives (of CRFU) should immediately compile a list of VIPs in their localities as well as a list of names and addresses of all professionals: lawyers, bankers, accountants, (medical) doctors, architects, engineers, pharmacists, estate & land surveyors, academics, etc. in their localities. This list should be comprehensive, i.e. it should

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<sup>93</sup>From an internal Memorandum from the National Chairman to all members of the National Executive, dated 13 August 2001. (I am grateful to Pastor S. ‘Biyi Owolabi who sent a copy of this memo to me). The memo also reminds members that although an amount is specified, members are “encouraged to make generous offerings to the Ministry”, stating that “it is hoped that members of the national and chapter executives will lead the way in sowing and blessing the Ministry with substantial financial blessings”.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup>CRFU: *Rules and Regulations*, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-7.

<sup>96</sup>CRFU flier, no date but collected in Lagos in July 2001.

contain names from both the public sector as well as the private sector....If we really take time out to prepare this list, we would find [that] the list contains the names of practically everybody who is anybody in Nigeria who is not yet saved.<sup>97</sup>

The group is to pray for the salvation of these people and their joining the CRFU. In addition to this high stake proselytisation, “all graduates of tertiary institutions” in Nigeria who are RCCG or RCF members “should immediately join the CRFU”.<sup>98</sup> In this way, a steady supply of personnel, sponsors and financiers of RCCG activities is sustained. Such strategy as this “targets those people in positions of authority who invariably are rich and affluent” (Bankole 1999: 62). These “rich and affluent” people are then transformed into carriers of ideas and church planters.

The emphasis of CRFU on the rich in society is because of the influence they wield in the environment.

In the world of today, sophisticated crimes abound, mostly masterminded and carried out by professionals in every industry. Doctors are still carrying out abortions. Bankers continue to wreak havoc in the banking industry. Accountants continue to present false statements of accounts of companies. Journalists continue to lie on paper. The decay in the world at large today can be placed squarely in the courts of the high in the society (Bankole 1999: 63).

#### **4.6.4 The Redeemed AIDS Programme Action Committee (RAPAC)**

The RCCG is also in the group of churches that lay claim to the leaders’ miraculous ability to heal HIV/AIDS infection. According to Adeboye,

God is our personal Doctor. His promise is that provided we stay close to Him, and listen to His commandments and do whatever He asks us to do, He will bring no sickness upon us. [...] As a matter of fact, if there is something that is damaged in your body, He has spare parts in heaven to

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<sup>97</sup> Memorandum from the National chairperson of CRFU to all local chapter leaders, titled *Meeting our Evangelistic Target*, 13 August 2001. I am grateful to Pastor S. ‘Biya Owolabi, former President of CRFU, who made the document available to me.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* The memo also reminds members that although an amount of money is specified, members are “encouraged to make generous offerings to the Ministry”, stating further that “it is hoped that members of the national and chapter executives will lead the way in sowing and blessing the Ministry with substantial financial blessings”.

make a replacement. He would do this again and again, anytime you need it.<sup>99</sup>

Teaching such as the above is bolstered by testimonies such as the one from one Miss Adebisi Adeola Davies, who says: “I was diagnosed as being HIV positive. I came to the Redemption Camp, I was prayed for and a later test proved negative. I was also healed of a four-year-old attack of diabetes”.<sup>100</sup>

In addition to the many testimonies from votaries claiming to have been miraculously cured of the infection at the Redemption Camp, the RCCG set up the Redeemed AIDS Programme Action Committee (RAPAC) to offer concrete help and information to people who may be living with the burden of the disease. Established in 1998 and headed from its inception by a qualified nurse and pastor, RAPAC “was RCCG’s response to the influx into the church of people who were looking for miraculous cure for HIV/AIDS”.<sup>101</sup> This parachurch arm of RCCG is the voice of Adeboye in “bringing succour” to people living a desperate life and searching for a desperate solution to one of the world’s dreaded health problems. Through its programmes, RAPAC coordinates the church’s efforts in catering “for people who are living with HIV and for people who are not yet infected. The programme of RAPAC is created to create awareness within the church, to let members know that HIV is very real and it is not a respecter of anybody whether or not you are a Christian”.<sup>102</sup>

This social service arm of RCCG works in concert with such international non-governmental organisations as the International Red Cross, Family Health International (FHI) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Through these organisations, RAPAC secures funding for its activities and programmes in the church. These programmes are not limited to church members alone, but to anyone requesting help and assistance. The church, through the office of the General Overseer, provides additional funding and administrative support for RAPAC’s programmes. RAPAC has in its employ seven staff members in addition to

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<sup>99</sup> Adeboye, “Thou Shall not be Afraid”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 4, May 2002, p.11.

<sup>100</sup> Adeola’s claim is published in RCCG magazine, *Redemption Testimonies*, October 2000, p. 7.

<sup>101</sup> Personal interview with Pastor (Mrs) Laide Adenuga, Coordinator and director of RAPAC, RAPAC office, International Office Complex, Redemption Camp, 11 August 2002. Mrs Adenuga became a member of RCCG in 1980 and was a foundation member of the first Model Parish in 1988. She trained as a nurse in Nigeria and in the United States of America. She later joined the United Nations and worked in the African Refugee Programme, visiting such countries as Rwanda and Ethiopia before Adeboye drafted her to head RAPAC in 1998.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

the director.<sup>103</sup> The RCCG is not responsible for the salaries of these workers. From the funding it receives from other agencies, RAPAC pays salaries and keeps its office and activities running.

Of the many activities of RAPAC, perhaps the most important is the dedication in training Peer Health Educators (PHE). These are people selected from their natural groupings and trained to train others in their own group. The RCCG recognises five different natural groups in the church, viz.: (i) the elders, (ii) married men and women, (iii) singles/youth, (iv) the teenagers and (v) the children. From these different groups, RAPAC selects people it trains on HIV/AIDS awareness and sends back to their group so they can teach others what they have learnt in RAPAC courses and programmes. Already, more than two thousand PHEs have been trained and released to their natural group by RAPAC. The core of the teaching includes AIDS education in general and how to live a sound Christian lifestyle as well as care-giving to HIV/AIDS sufferers. Furthermore, RAPAC has designed an AIDS education curriculum to be incorporated into the teaching scheme of the church's Bible school as part of the training of pastors of the church who must now know how to handle cases of HIV/AIDS that are brought to them in their pastoral activities.

Designing a comprehensive action plan for tackling the pandemic of HIV/AIDS, RAPAC also educates parents on what it calls "parents-child communication". "The training concerns how parents should start training their children about sex education from home. We teach the children sex education. We teach the teenagers and youth and empower them to say 'no' to sex".<sup>104</sup> In addition to training and empowering parents and children, RAPAC has a well-thought out programme for sensitising and training pastors, ministers and counsellors in the church. This programme is called Inter-Personal Counselling and Communication (IPCC). The IPCC programme trains those in leadership roles in the church on the skills necessary in "handling HIV/AIDS counselling, action and care-giving to those living with HIV/AIDS"<sup>105</sup>. According to its director, RAPAC also aims at "empowering pastors to be able to preach about AIDS/HIV from the pulpit and not be shy or ashamed about it".<sup>106</sup>

Making RCCG group of schools its primary targets, RAPAC staff visit these educational facilities and provide them with pastoral counselling tapes that discuss strategies for containing

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<sup>103</sup> RAPAC staff consists of three programme officers, two counsellors, one office cleaner, a typist/secretary and a director.

<sup>104</sup> Personal interview with Pastor (Mrs) Laide Adenuga, *op. cit.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Laide Adenuga, "Fighting the AIDS Scourge in Jesus Name", *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 4, May 2002, pp. 22-27.

the HIV/AIDS spread. RAPAC uses drama and other forms of popular culture in its drive to inculcate an ever-present consciousness of HIV/AIDS among school children and students of RCCG secondary and tertiary institutions. Through these tapes and dramas, RAPAC teaches pastors and members of the church as well as students and pupils of RCCG schools “to be able to recognise simple symptoms of HIV/AIDS, to be able to talk about it intelligently even from the pulpit. Rather than stigmatise people with HIV/AIDS, pastors and other church leaders should talk about it so that people (with HIV/AIDS) should be shown love”.<sup>107</sup>

In addition to the above methods, RAPAC also provides condoms to people who visit its stand or office for counselling at the Redemption Camp. This practice hinges on the assumption that moral teaching alone cannot reform risky sexual behaviours among sexually active young people.<sup>108</sup> Although the church does not actively promote the use of condom among the youth, RAPAC officials believe that “if you have to tell people not to have sex, there should be other ways of avoiding risky behaviour without feeling guilty”. Condom use, which forms part of RAPAC’s family planning strategy, is encouraged among married people. Also, for people who are already infected with HIV, the church

encourages the use of condom in order to prevent reinfection. During our trainings, we do condom demonstration; we train all of them (that is, pastors, laity and students) about condom use because no matter how you go about it, there is no shying away from it. We teach them but we tell them, ‘it is not for you to use’. We tell them the ills about it. It is not hundred percent safe. At the same time, we tell them to depend more on their ability and will to abstain from sex, which they can actually do rather than looking for short cuts of easing off sexual pressures.<sup>109</sup>

Through posters, media advertisement, and banners, RAPAC conducts a quiet public campaign on “safe sex” practices and reorientation.<sup>110</sup> In the interim, however, the church remains for many poor and sick people a bastion of hope, succour, consolation and faith in the face of dread, pain and desperation. To many infected people rejected, stigmatised and shunned by friends and peers, colleagues and family, the church is the last hope of succour and acceptance.

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Some RCCG pastors have publicly identified themselves as HIV-positive and a few have AIDS, according to RAPAC director. One such HIV-positive pastor who is also a medical doctor works actively with RAPAC in disseminating information about the HIV/AIDS, often citing his case as a testimony from which others can learn.

<sup>109</sup> Personal interview with Pastor (Mrs) Laide Adenuga, *op. cit.*

<sup>110</sup> See RAPAC advert in *Redemption Light*, vol. 6, no. 8, September 2001, p. 22.

## 4.7 RCCG Educational Institutions

RCCG operates many schools. The church has put in place infrastructure for the National Universities Commission (NUC) to give approval for its university, named Redeemer's University for Nations (RUN). The RCCG University, when it is operational, will be the highest educational institution in the church. The institution is set to commence its academic programme and first students' intake by October 2003. According to Afolagbade Aboaba, a pastor and retired professor of Agricultural Engineering from the University of Ibadan, RUN will commence activities at the Redemption Camp, which will serve as its temporary site before relocating to its permanent site at Ede in Osun state. With the motto, "Run with the Vision", RUN expected to teach both religious and non-religious courses as well as admit both members of RCCG and non-members.<sup>111</sup> The university is expected to have five colleges, twelve faculties, sixty-two departments, ninety-two undergraduate courses and over a hundred post-graduate programmes.<sup>112</sup>

### 4.7.1 Redeemed Christian Bible College (RCBC)

The constitution of RCCG stipulates that

The mission shall run a Bible school for the training of Officers of the Mission. No Officer of the Mission shall hold office without having first attended a course of the Bible School except by dispensation of the General Superintendent (art. 25, par. a).

Three institutions in the RCCG cater for the spiritual development of both the clergy and the laity. Of these, the RCBC is arguably the most important for the entire organisation. It is at RCBC that the clergy are trained for the task of pastoring. RCBC was established in June 1980 as the training arm of the RCCG, having its first campus at the national headquarters of the church at Ebute-Metta, Lagos. The first principal of the school was Pastor Samuel Adetunji Awobajo.<sup>113</sup> Although established during the leadership of Josiah, RCBC was the brainchild of Adeboye whose education and influence over Josiah inspired changes even before he became leader of the church. The institution was originally founded "to train the existing pastors who rose through the

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<sup>111</sup> Personal interview with Professor Afolagbade Aboaba, RCCG Redemption Parish Office, Victoria Island, Lagos, 9 November 2002. Prof. Aboaba functions as the Co-ordinator of the Redeemer's University for Nations. The 70 years old Aboaba retired as a professor in 1992 and was ordained a pastor of RCCG in 1996. In addition to his responsibilities as a pastor, special assistant to the General Overseer and co-ordinator of RUN, he is also the chairman of Global Bank Plc and Associated Industries Limited (see *Redemption Light* vol. 8, no. 3, April 2003, p. 25).

<sup>112</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 8, no. 4, May 2003, p.21.

<sup>113</sup> Pastor S.A. Awobajo died in 2001, (See *Redemption Light*, Vol. 6, no.5, June 2001, p. 27)

rank and file of the church hierarchy without theological grounding”.<sup>114</sup> The Bible school was initially a sort of spiritual training facility rather than a theological college, concentrating on Sunday school organisation, spirituality and preaching. The first sets of students were drawn from the rank of full pastors of the RCCG.<sup>115</sup>

The early pastors of the church had no formal theological training before their ordination as pastors. Adeboye redesigned the RCBC when he became the head of the church to offer courses in Yoruba for these senior pastors who were not properly grounded in English. Teaching theology and other Bible courses in Yoruba was one of the strategies through which Adeboye demonstrated a general tolerance of the less educated cadre of pastors in the church. “This was a way of identifying with them and showing to them that the authority [of the church] was not interested in sacking them [the uneducated pastors] but wanted to carry them along”.<sup>116</sup> Through the same scheme, he sought and achieved acceptance from those pastors who were apprehensive of this elevation as head of the church.

With time the curriculum of the school was expanded to reflect more theological courses such as Christology, comparative religion and pastoral theology. According to the Vice Principal (academic) of the RCBC, these courses are taught more as spirituality than pure academic disciplines. This expansion of teaching courses also involved an expansion of the school. With the acquisition of the Redemption Camp in Ogun state, the school was relocated to this venue in 1983.<sup>117</sup> At the moment, the school teaches about forty-five courses for diploma and certificate programmes. Some of the courses are in Women in Leadership, Vision and Mandate, Authority and Submission. To stress its sectarian foundation, non-graduates of the school cannot become lecturers in the school, although it is in principle open to non-RCCG candidates.<sup>118</sup> In light of the expansion that the church is experiencing, the school’s goals have been modified to include the training of “ministers all over the world to cope with the Redeemed Christian Church of God's global spread” (Bankole 1999: 59).

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<sup>114</sup>Personal Interview with Pastor J. A. Bolarinwa, op. cit. Pastor Bolarinwa is the Vice Principal (Academic) of the RCBC at the time of field research.

<sup>115</sup>The General Overseer of RCCG is the chairperson, Board of Governors of RCBC, the Assistant General Overseer (Training) is the Principal). There are two vice principals, one for academic matters, the other for administrative issues. There is also a registrar. Satellite campuses have co-ordinators in charge of them.

<sup>116</sup> *RCCG at 50*, p. 37.

<sup>117</sup>Adekola (1989: 311) writes that the RCBC moved to the Redemption Camp in 1984, but oral and historical evidence contradicts this. See also Bankole (1999: 58).

<sup>118</sup>Pastor Adeboye and his wife are now alumni of the school, setting the example for other senior pastors of the church to embrace theological education.

Although efforts are made to keep up with the influx of candidates, since going through the school's programme is now a prerequisite for ordination in the church, standards are difficult to sustain. The sceptical attitude of some old pastors still persists, while the school shuns scholars trained in secular institutions. Thus, the curriculum of the school consists of sixty percent spirituality and forty percent academic learning; its orientation remains "devotional, functional and utilitarian".<sup>119</sup>

The objective of the school to supply spiritual and leadership work force for the church to sustain its rapid expansion has necessitated the decentralisation of its facilities, with more than 200 campuses in Nigeria alone, and in such countries as Israel, Zambia, Kenya, Cote D'Ivoire, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Ghana and Togo.<sup>120</sup> Such expansion has helped to consolidate the church's presence and influence in far-flung areas as well as form a secure financial base for the administration of the church.<sup>121</sup> On 8 August 2001, during the church's annual convention, 3,664 students were turned out as graduates by the RCBC.<sup>122</sup>

The school also runs what it calls post-graduate programmes that involve more advanced form of bible studies. Affiliate institutes or campuses outside the camp run some of these programmes. The Apapa model family under Pastor Tony Rapu established the first of such postgraduate campus in 1994. Consistent with the intrachurch competition among different parishes and parachurch groups in the RCCG that has marked the development of certain programmes in the church, in 1995, the Ikeja model family also established a campus of RCBC for postgraduate programmes. These first campuses sparked off a rash of postgraduate campuses in other parts of the country. Graduates of these postgraduate campuses of RCBC are the arrowhead for the establishment of RCCG parishes in different parts of the country and the world.

#### **4.7.2 School of Disciple (SOD)**

While the RCBC trains the clergy of the church, the School of Disciples caters for the in-depth training of the laity into formidable disciples for the propagation of Christianity and RCCG spirituality. The objective of the SOD is to fashion out of members of the church disciples who

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<sup>119</sup>Personal interview with Pastor J. A. Bolarinwa, *op. cit.*

<sup>120</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 6, No. 8, September 2001, p. 17.

<sup>121</sup> Some of the diploma programmes of the main campus of the school cost as little as four thousand naira (N4,000.00) for tuition (ca. €40.00), but candidates will also procure learning aids for each of forty-five courses for fifty naira. Different campuses, especially those outside the country have their own differential billing systems. With about fifteen thousand naira, an eighteen-month full-time programme on the main campus is guaranteed.

<sup>122</sup> This number far exceeds what any university in Nigeria can achieve in terms of graduating honours student in one year. Graduates of RCBC are not equivalent to university graduates in the country.

are ready and willing to endure all forms of hardship and deprivation for the sake of their faith. As the CRFU constitutes elite proselytiser, so the SOD forms its grassroots equivalent. Established on 25 January 1985, under the auspices of the CRM, the SOD

is a school for the people who want to have an in-depth knowledge about God and how to serve Him in their generation...it is basically open to all people: illiterates, literates (*sic*), men and women, including children who can read and write, who can understand what they are reading and also can express themselves in writing. It is a school where you never graduate.<sup>123</sup>

Initially co-ordinated by the Training Bureau of RCCG, it is “a school where Christians of all denominations learn how to be a (*sic*) true and genuine Disciple of Jesus Christ, how to use the word of God in the Bible for daily living, and how to study to show oneself approved unto God”.<sup>124</sup>

There are three theoretical aspects of the programmes of SOD in addition to a practical bit: manual labour. The theory consists of such lessons geared toward three core themes, viz.: know yourself; know your enemy; and know your weapons of warfare.<sup>125</sup> The first theme teaches candidates about self-understanding and self-discipline in light of bible principles; the second concerns understanding one's spiritual and metaphysical enemies, the enemies' weapons and strategies of warfare; and the third teaches candidates the resources, spiritual and material, that should constitute their own weapons, strategies, and means of doing battle against the enemy(ies). One weapon that is taught students of the SOD is noise; it is believed that when the Christian makes joyful noise during prayer or praise to God, the devil flees.

These programmes of the SOD are divided into three unequal parts. The first part is the elementary stage, which lasts for three years; the second is the intermediate stage, which also lasts for three years, and the last is the advanced stage, which lasts for four years. The successful completion of each stage carries with it a certificate of Basic Course Participation.<sup>126</sup> The last certificate qualifies its holder to teach in any SOD anywhere in the country (but not at RCBC). The impact of the SOD in the expansion of RCCG is seen in part of the requirements for

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<sup>123</sup>Personal interview with Pastor Funso Odesola, *op. cit.*

<sup>124</sup> Graduation Brochure of School of Disciples 2000/2001 set.

<sup>125</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup>Bankole (1999: 45). These certificates awarded at the end of the programme constitute a material incentive for the candidates, especially in a society and culture that has come to embrace credentialism. Pentecostal pastors advertise these certificates and the titles that are often attached to them as a form of confidence boosting device. For many, it now constitutes a measure of spiritual maturity.

examination: a candidate is required to bring into the RCCG at least five converts each year. At the end of any stage of the programme, a candidate is expected to successfully proselytise a minimum of fifteen persons; these replace the outgoing candidate in the SOD programme. The elucidation of the strategies of proselytisation form part of theory and teaching of SOD, which is expected to be demonstrated by candidates as an aspect of the practical dimension of the programme. The other aspect of the practical assessment is manual labour. This may involve cleaning toilets at the Redemption Camp, grass cutting and so on. At the end of the complete tripartite programme, graduates, now called disciples, are expected to go and reproduce themselves by each establishing a School of Disciples Centre or by teaching others, spreading the ideology of discipleship and proselytisation.<sup>127</sup> SOD programmes are mandatory for anyone who intends to be a worker in the RCCG. Moreover, since going through the workers' class is a prerequisite for aspiring to any other position, including being a pastor, the SOD occupies a strategic position in the organisation of RCCG.

#### **4.7.3 The Redeemed Christian School of Missions (RESCOM)**

With the establishment of the Directorate of Missions in 1992, the RESCOM was established in 1993 through the initial efforts of Christ the Redeemer's Welfare Services (CRWS).<sup>128</sup> RESCOM took off with an initial in-take of three candidates, according to Pastor J. A. Adebisi, the principal of the school and an Area pastor.<sup>129</sup> Before the founding of RESCOM, the church only had mission agencies, which were responsible for training missionaries for mission work. Establishing RESCOM was designed to define and prioritise missionary work within and outside the country. Its focus is to train candidates for trans-cultural missionary activities. The school had its temporary campus at the International Headquarters of the church and only moved to its permanent campus in 2000. The school now shares the same site as the church's proposed Redeemer's University for all Nations at Ede in Osun State.

It is an interdenominational school, which admits any adult Christian (not less than eighteen years of age) who "is born again with evidence of speaking in tongues and accepts the standard biblical doctrines".<sup>130</sup> Other criteria for admission include two years' experience as a church worker, recommendations from candidate's pastor or head of department in the church and a pre-admission test. Located at Ede, in Osun state of Nigeria, RESCOM has slightly more than 500 student missionaries.

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<sup>127</sup>Bankole (1999: 46).

<sup>128</sup> Olaitan Olubiyi, "A Mission school on Solid Rock", *Redemption Light*, vol. 6, no. 4, May 2001, p. 17

<sup>129</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>130</sup>Personal interview with Pastor 'Delana Adeleye-Olusae, *op. cit.*

The RESCOM's programmes last for one year, leading to the award of a diploma.<sup>131</sup> However, some short course of three months duration are often organised for church leaders, pastors and church-workers that lead to the award of a *Certificate in Missions*. These categories of church leaders need thorough grounding in spiritual development, acquisition of cross-cultural skills necessary for the missionary enterprise as well as living in unfamiliar environment.<sup>132</sup> In this respect, Pastor Adebisi summarises the primary objective of RESCOM thus: the “major aim of all the courses is to inculcate into the students a deep mission orientation and an adequate understanding of the nature of the work ahead of them.”<sup>133</sup>

## 4.8 Media, Money and Women

### 4.8.1 The RCCG and Electronic Media Use

RCCG uses different media for the dissemination of its message. It uses the print medium of newspapers, magazines, posters and handbill. In addition, it uses electronic media of audio tapes, video cassettes, radio, television and the Internet. The tape ministry of CRM is only one of the eight different tape ministries in the RCCG dedicated to the duplication and mass marketing of Adeboye's sermons. Others include Word and Sound Ministry; Bread of Life; Dominion Tape Ministry; Friendship Tapes; Friends Universal Tape Ministries; Africa Mission Tapes and Salvation Tapes. All these ministries receive Redemption Television Ministry (RTVM) a copy of the master tape of each sermon less than five minutes after the preaching.<sup>134</sup> With their fast dubbing machines, these tapes are duplicated and made ready for public purchase just before the end of the service. Collectively, more than two hundred thousand copies of audio cassettes of a single sermon are sold each month in Nigeria.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, master tapes are also provided for congregations abroad for them to duplicate and sell to their members. It is estimated that each month close to half a million copies of these tapes are sold outside Nigeria.

In addition to the mass production of audio tapes, the RTVM records and produces video tapes of all the services officiated by Adeboye. These tapes are produced in three formats, VHS and

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<sup>131</sup>The tuition for this one-year programme is eleven thousand, nine hundred and fifty naira (N11, 950.00). Source: *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup>RCCG: *International Directory*, op. cit., p. 15

<sup>133</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 6, no. 4, May 2001, p. 17

<sup>134</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Shyngle I. J. Wigwe, Redemption Television Ministry (RTVM) Office, Redemption Camp, 6 August 2002. Pastor is a retired Director-General of Nigerian Televisions Authority (NTA), and an Assistant Elder of RCCG. He is the Director of RTM. He had served in the Nigeria Army as an electrical engineer (which has been his profession) and in different positions in the broadcasting industry in Nigeria before reaffiliating to the RCCG in 1988 through “request and pressure on the part of my wife”.

<sup>135</sup> Personal interview with Bayo Olubanjo Head of Dominion Tapes, Redemption Camp, 8 May 2001.

Video Compact Disks (VCDs) and Digital Compact Discs (DVDs). The sole distributor of these media products is Transerve Nigeria Limited (TNL), a company established by the church dedicated to the sole marketing of these items. Part of the responsibilities of TNL is to mass produce and distribute these tapes, VCDs and DVDs all through the country and establish connections and networks with other firms, private entrepreneurs, churches and parachurch groups (such as the CRM) for marketing them abroad.<sup>136</sup> TNL also markets other products (home video films, musical tapes, imported video tapes of American pentecostal pastors) from other churches and independent marketers. In 2002, TNL controls close to forty percent of the video market in Nigeria; it is the main importer of empty audio and video tapes from Singapore, China and South Korea and Hong Kong.<sup>137</sup>

Working with a staff of about twenty persons all of whom are members of RCCG, RTVM also edits Adeboye's messages on video and arranges with state and independent television stations in the country for their broadcast. There are over twenty-eight television channels, one of which is a satellite channel,<sup>138</sup> according to the head of the unit, which are broadcasting two slots of thirty minutes each week. The church believes that through this television ministry the message of Adeboye "can get to every nook and corner of this country for the salvation of souls". Therefore it finds justification for the huge investment of well "over eight million naira each quarter of broadcasting season" for airing Adeboye's messages in television stations in the country.<sup>139</sup>

As the church is expanding so also it is expanding and evolving more innovative media use, setting trends for other Nigerian religious communities to emulate. It is the only religious organisation in the country which has acquired an Outside Broadcasting Van (OBV) dedicated specifically for the electronic dissemination of its religious programmes and activities. Just before the 2002 Holy Ghost Congress held in December, the church announced the procurement of the OBV for the sum of two hundred thousand British pounds sterling, and equivalent of forty-two million naira. According to the British engineers from Studio 55, London who accompanied the vehicle to Nigeria, Andrew and Jon Watkins, the OBV, which is installed with four-camera equipment, is designed to produce high quality broadcast of sound and images for global distribution. This equipment made it possible for all the leader's sermons and teachings to be

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<sup>136</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Cyprian Orakpo, Managing Director of Transerve Nigeria Limited, TNL office, 3A Toyin street, Ikeja, Lagos, 26 June 2001.

<sup>137</sup> Personal communication with Delight Ifezue, a marketing representative of TNL at the Redemption Camp, 6 September

<sup>138</sup> African Independent Television (AIT)

<sup>139</sup> Personal interview with Pastor S. I. J Wigwe, *op. cit.*

transmitted live during the congress by two translocal media organisations: the Dallas-based Christian Radio Network and the Lagos-based Minaj International Broadcasting (MBI) television station.<sup>140</sup>

Arguably the RCCG has the finest Internet website among Nigerian pentecostal churches. According to the church, just as early Christians recognised the potentials of the printing press and seized the initiative and the Bible became the first book out of the press, “the Internet is offering an equally powerful opportunity to Christians” today.<sup>141</sup> The activities and performances that occur on this site illustrate poignantly how cyberspace has been reconstituted as ritual space where members of the church narrate their testimonies, attend bible study (Digging Deep) and engage in religious chat among other activities. Managed by a pastor of the church based in Houston, Texas,<sup>142</sup> in the United States, the RCCG Internet project offers members of the church such facilities as email, spiritual chat room, and online bible studies. In addition, individuals can post their testimonies; make purchases in a department store where spiritual resource texts (books of the leader of the church and audio-visual tapes and texts of sermons) are available. There is as well a directory of the church’s parishes in Nigeria and outside the country. The Internet serves as a spreadsheet for the church’s activities, a strategy of webcasting its activities, inviting web visitors and surfers to participate or send in enquiries concerning what they view.<sup>143</sup> In addition to advertising its upcoming programmes, the Internet serves the RCCG as an important source of soliciting for fund from both members and non-members alike.<sup>144</sup>

As the church is expanding, so also its Internet facility is growing. More possibilities are being developed and explored for the RCCG cyber church.<sup>145</sup> According to the chairperson of Board of Co-ordinators of RCCG North America, (RCCGNA) Pastor James Fadele, the co-ordinator of Information and Information systems in RCCGNA, Pastor Niran Fafowora, is saddled with the responsibility of enhancing the use of information technologies in the entire network of RCCG. Pastor Niran Fafowora is working towards the creation of a system by which any part of the church “should be able to hook-up or link up with the General Overseer for conferences or teachings or church services or crusades – anywhere in the world live. Very soon, we should be

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<sup>140</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 12, January 2003, p. 20.

<sup>141</sup> “Internet and Christians”, *Breakthrough News*, vol. 2, no. 1, August 2001, p. 18.

<sup>142</sup> Pastor Solomon Onita is in charge of the RCCG Internet project. He works under Pastor Niran Fafowora, Co-ordinator of Information and Information systems in the RCCG North America (RCCGNA).

<sup>143</sup> See, [http://www.rccg.org/Holy\\_Ghost\\_Congress/holy\\_ghost-congress\\_2002.htm](http://www.rccg.org/Holy_Ghost_Congress/holy_ghost-congress_2002.htm) [accesses 29.11.02].

<sup>144</sup> See for example, [http://www.rccg.org/Resource\\_Form/immediate\\_requirements.htm](http://www.rccg.org/Resource_Form/immediate_requirements.htm) [accessed 29.11.02].

<sup>145</sup> In Nigeria, the church has intensified its drive towards exploring the possibilities of what it terms “the eChurch” through conferences and seminars.

able to hold Bible study live, by the grace of God, anywhere in the world, with the General Overseer”.<sup>146</sup> Pastor Fadele’s desire has already become reality as Pastor Fafowora provides an update: “My department makes it possible for world congress and other important programmes (of the church) to be viewed live through the Internet”. RCCGNA has already in place “a fairly good Internet conferencing but is yet to develop video conferencing”.<sup>147</sup>

The Dallas, Texas-based RCCG Internet Project is not the only Internet programme the church is involved with. The church is also developing the most complicated and comprehensive Internet network called RCCG Internet Strategy (RCCGINTSTRAT). Through Geoff Tompkins who is a United Kingdom-based Internet project consultant, the church has already established a business relationship with Newleaf.net in the UK to host the complex website which will develop a dynamic link whereby every parish in Nigeria is electronically connected to one another and every principal officer of the church in Nigeria is linked to his immediate subordinate and superior through the Internet. It is hoped that these linkages will enhance a dynamic flow of information. In addition to this, RCCGINTSTRAT will host every single event of any particular parish so that individuals anywhere in the world will have access and be acquainted with what is happening even in the remotest part of Nigeria. As a proselytising strategy, this electronic linkage will be developed to carry information such as telephone numbers of any church, the address(es) and other possible contacts of a church, and details of how to locate the nearest RCCG congregation from any point in Nigeria. Furthermore, it will carry programme of activities of each church thereby linking the people with the local congregations. At the cost of a meagre \$300 a year, each parish in Nigeria will benefit from the above measures as well as have access to “unlimited space, unlimited e-mail, 3 pop, 3 mailboxes, domain name registration and hosting”.<sup>148</sup>

The availability of online counselling and bible studies underscores the crucial roles of cybercultural religiosity for members of the church scattered all over the world. Moreover, digital communication offers the church a competitive advantage in the scramble for resources such as finance, membership, social prestige and technocultural imagination (Bell and Kennedy 2000). The church mediates a collective identity of an up-to-date and modern community of believers. The RCCG runs a twenty-four hour satellite television station, coordinated by its communications department known as **RCCG CommCentre**. This centre provides services and consultancy to the

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<sup>146</sup> Pastor James Fadele, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 5, June 2002, p. 22.

<sup>147</sup> Email communication from Pastor Olaniran Fafowora, 27 February 2003.

<sup>148</sup> Geoff Tompkins, “My Vision for RCCG Internet Strategy”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 12, January 2003, p. 24

church and the different parishes in communication matters. Furthermore, it is in the process of linking RCCG parishes all over Nigeria into one single private network accessible to all RCCG parishes worldwide. The centre presents itself thus:

As a ministry, we are constantly seeking new, innovative and creative ways of using information and communications technology in the service of the Lord. We therefore take active interest in reaching people both in cyberspace in the spirit and on terra firma in the flesh lending concrete support to missionary endeavours of all kinds.<sup>149</sup>

In its mission statement, the CommCentre states, *inter alia*, that its mission is to “carry the Word of God by cybermedia to all men, of all races, in all places” and to “enlighten the Body [of Christ] by providing guided access to global sources of information”. Summarising, the operators of centre boasts “We shall therefore remain online until Jesus comes”.<sup>150</sup>

#### **4.8.2 Sources and Organisation of Finances**

Among the aspects of RCCG that underwent radical transformation with the ascendancy of Adeboye was the church’s orientation towards material wealth of which money was a central ingredient. During the leadership of Josiah, the church’s perspective on the material world was one of distance and suspicion. Another significant feature of the pre-Adeboye RCCG was the absence of offertory or collection of money during services.

However, as Adeboye became head of the church, he was confronted with this dire and stark situation of the church. In 1981, the total income of the church was about six thousand naira,<sup>151</sup> and with about forty people on its payroll, it was difficult for it to meet its financial obligations.<sup>152</sup> Consequently, he started a series of profound teachings on the nature of material blessings that could accrue to the believer who gives his all to God through His ministers.

Teaching has taught the people to give and the more they give the more they see the result of giving in their lives. It is like the Israelites who gave in the wilderness when they were building the Tabernacle; they

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<sup>149</sup> [http://rl.rccg.org/about\\_us\\_text.htm](http://rl.rccg.org/about_us_text.htm) (accessed 16.01.03).

<sup>150</sup> [http://rl.rccg.org/mission\\_statement.htm](http://rl.rccg.org/mission_statement.htm) (accessed 16.01.03).

<sup>151</sup> This translates to about €60.00 today although the value of the naira in 1981 was stronger than the United States of America dollar.

<sup>152</sup> Adeboye, *The Holy Spirit in the Life of Peter*, Pt 1, *op. cit.*, p.62.

gave because they saw the result of their giving on a daily basis. They have to be begged to stop giving.<sup>153</sup>

Adeboye also introduced the taking of offerings during bible studies, choir practice and other main services of the church. In addition to the normal Sunday service collection, the church has instituted the first Sunday of each month as “Thanksgiving Sunday” which attracts a thanksgiving offering in each parish of the church. It is possible to take offerings more than once during a particular service. Whatever moneys that are collected in parishes are split into two unequal parts, the greater of which is sent through the Area pastor to the zonal pastor, who in turn sends it through the provincial pastor to the national headquarters of the church. The second part of the money is kept at the local parish for the running of the church there. Other Sundays of the month have what is called “Sunday love offering”. A larger percentage of this offering, together with the normal, routine Sunday offering, is sent to the headquarters of the church, while the remaining is kept at the parish for the maintenance of the local church.

A primary source of income for the RCCG is through tithe collection. High-ranking officials are appointed in the RCCG to ensure that tithes are properly collected at the parish level and properly accounted for and remitted to the national headquarters.<sup>154</sup> The emphasis placed on tithe in RCCG is explicitly stated as a central pillar of the church’s “fundamental beliefs”: “regular payment of tithe and offering is obligatory...Tithes and offerings must be paid on every income e.g. salary, profit from business transactions, gifts, etc.

For special projects in the church such as the construction of buildings, “we tell parishioners to give us money”.<sup>155</sup> In addition to the compulsory levies for such projects, pledges and donations are solicited from church members and sometimes from the public through such medium as the Internet. All the above methods of generating revenue constitute the *ordinary means* of raising funds in the RCCG.

In the past, parishioners were saddled with the responsibility for sponsoring such events of the church’s convention where members of parishes were asked to contribute specific amounts of money for the events. The practice has just been discontinued on the directives of Adeboye who

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<sup>153</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Adetoye, *op. cit.*

<sup>154</sup> A list of prospective candidates for ordination pasted at the Redemption Camp in May and June 2001 indicated the average amount of money each candidate brings in as tithe collection. This figure was tabulated against the number of members in her/his congregation. A drop in either figure is a sufficient condition for denial of ordination.

<sup>155</sup> Personal interview with Adetoye, *op. cit.*

shoulders the financial responsibilities of holding such mega-events through the moneys he receives from captains of industries and companies who make generous donations with the anticipation of using the events to show case their products and services. Those who make “impressive donations”, according to a pastor of the church, are, in many cases not necessarily members of the church; some are not even Christians but Muslims.<sup>156</sup> In addition to such donations are also such marketing strategies for the church’s big events. In 1997 when the church held Lekki ’97, local broadcasting companies could not compete with the Pat Robertson-owned Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) for live coverage.<sup>157</sup> The latter purchased the sole right to cover the events for a huge sum of money. These two methods constitute *extra-ordinary means* of raising funds in the church.

The amount of moneys that accrues to parishes, as tithes, donations and offerings remain one visible way of assessing and measuring the productivity and progressiveness of a pastor. As one senior pastor puts it, a pastor's “productivity must be measurable and progressive”.<sup>158</sup> The measurable factors are tithes, attendance and the number of church-workers. Adekola (1989: 291), himself a senior pastor of RCCG at the time, writing over a decade ago about the role of finance in RCCG complains:

religion has been commercialised today and people no longer heed the warning of Jesus that 'you cannot serve God and mammon' again. To exonerate the church under study (that is, the RCCG) from this cankerworm is to be grossly unfair both to scholarship and justice.

Through different means the RCCG raises fund for diverse projects and clergy remuneration. As one of the pastors rightly says, “RCCG is one of the richest churches in Nigeria today.”<sup>159</sup> Another senior pastor says “a church that could not raise four hundred naira twenty years ago is now budgeting and spending four hundred million naira for a programme of three days”.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Two examples cited by the pastor are Sir Michael Otedola, a Catholic knight and Alhaji Buba Maruwa, a retired General in the army. Both men once were governors of Lagos state.

<sup>157</sup> On CBN strategies of mixing business and the bible, see Daniel Roth, “Pat Robertson’s Quest for Eternal Life”, *Fortune* magazine (Europe edition), no 12, July 2002, pp.53-60.

<sup>158</sup> Personal interview with Pastor 'Delana Adeleye-Olusae, RCCG Headquarters, Ebute-Metta, Lagos, 14 May 2001. Adeleye-Olusae is the Assistant Director of Missions at the RCCG national headquarters.

<sup>159</sup> Pastor Joel Oke, “Tragedies of the Mission Opportunities”, *Catalyst* magazine vol. 1, no., 3 (October 2002), p. 27.

<sup>160</sup> Personal interview with pastor Ezekiel A. Odeyemi, RCCG national HQ, Ebute-Metta, Lagos, 4 June 2001.

### 4.8.3 Male Voices; Female Faces: Women in RCCG

Women were never mentioned by name as those who emerged as Josiah's lieutenants. Considering that Josiah apprenticed under a C&S prophetess in Ondo before migrating to Ile-Ife, it is important to stress the role of the often unnamed female helpers in the early ministry of Josiah and in the RCCG as a whole.<sup>161</sup> During the time of Josiah, women were not elevated to any post by ordination. There were no women pastors or heads of parachurch groups.

However, times changed and a new era was inaugurated with the appointment of Adeboye as leader. He introduced the ordination of women as deacons and assistant pastors and then pastors. He finds justification of the innovation in the bible. Jesus, through his death made it possible for gentiles and women "to go to the very throne of grace", allowing the latter to "go beyond the court of women" in the Jewish temple. Adeboye cites the text of Galatians 3: 28: "There is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus".<sup>162</sup> Elsewhere, he cites extensive examples of women who were used by God in both the Old and New Testaments, such as Deborah, Miriam, Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary. He regards the ministry of prophets and prophetess as higher than that of teacher in the five-fold ministry as defined by Paul. He then asks rhetorically,

if a woman can rise to the grade of a prophetess, is it not funny to say she cannot be a teacher or a pastor (since the Office of a prophetess is higher than that of a teacher)?<sup>163</sup>

The position of Mother-in-Israel is not a position any woman in the church can legitimately aspire to; in the end, these women are compensated with assistant pastorship and deaconess' position. The highest-ranking woman in the RCCG, other than the wife of the General Overseer, is Toyin Ogundipe. She is an ophthalmologist by profession and the director of the Directorate of

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<sup>161</sup> Statistical evidence from RCCG magazine, *Redemption Testimonies*, shows a preponderance of women over men on such issue as giving public testimonies for favours received from God through the ministration of Adeboye. In one edition of *Redemption Testimonies*, (October 2001), of the 59 testimonies assembled, 41 (69.4%) are from women while 18 (30.6%) are from men. Of the 41 female testimonies, 15 deal with the childbirth, restoration of a child's health or restoration/replacement of reproductive organs such as wombs or cycles such as menstruation. This pattern is generally reproduced in other editions of the magazine as well as those who come up with their story during the monthly Holy Ghost Service. There is also a discernible pattern in the issues treated by men and women's testimonies. For women, the main topics of testimonies are deliverance from witchcraft attack, receiving the fruit of the womb, or recovering from ailment connected with the reproductive capacities, finding a husband, or the stabilisation of a tottering marriage or family. For men, promotion at workplace, finding employment, passing a difficult professional exam or recovering one's health predominant. These testimonies are also found on the church's website, [www.rccg.org/testimony/index.htm](http://www.rccg.org/testimony/index.htm). (accessed 12.04.03).

<sup>162</sup> Adeboye, *Heaven*, (Lagos: CRM, 1996), p. 25.

<sup>163</sup> Adeboye, *To Obey is better than Sacrifice*, (Lagos: CRM, 1997), pp. 14-15.

Missions. Her rank is a step higher than a provincial pastor's but her case is unique. She did not ascend the hierarchy through the ranks. She literally established the directorate, funding it with her private money and was rewarded with the directorship. Consequently, she does not fit a test case of female empowerment within the church.<sup>164</sup> There is only one female provincial pastor out of fifty-one in Nigeria as at the end of August 2003.<sup>165</sup> There are some women pastors who occupy strategic positions in the church. These include the wives of senior pastors such as the Assistant General Overseers. Others include the director of RAPAC and the pastor in the International Office.

Adekola (1989: 295) records that the dignity with which the RCCG holds women and their role in the church is seen from a church regulation that the wives of full-time pastors are prohibited from engaging in secular employment. Fixed and regular stipends are given to them for their upkeep. The wives of pastors are encouraged to become deaconesses or assistant pastors. The higher the husband is in the hierarchy, the stronger the pull for the wife to assume some position lower than her husband's in the hierarchy. For example, the wives of area pastors are usually ordained assistant pastors.<sup>166</sup>

#### 4.9 Economic Institutions

It is traditional for Christian groups to establish schools and hospitals and clinic as a way of making their presence felt in a particular society. The RCCG runs a maternity centre which was established in 1962 as an arm of the church that takes care of birth deliveries but also generates finances for the church (*RCCG at 50*: 129-130). With its HQ at Ebute-Metta, Lagos, this outfit operates in several states of the country with many branches in Lagos alone. The wife of Josiah was in charge until she retired and later died. Then the unit has been headed by the wife of a senior pastor, usually an AGO. Often, hospitals, maternities, clinics and schools are regarded more as social institutions than economic ventures. Although they provide familiar environments for church members to access modern health and education facilities, they constitute strong economic arms of the church.

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<sup>164</sup>During the field research, each time I asked top officials of the church about the highest-ranking female in the church, Pastor (Mrs) Diola Mensah was mentioned, indicating that the positions of Mother-In-Israel and Pastor (Mrs) Toyin Ogundipe were peculiar cases that most women in the church need not look up to for emulation.

<sup>165</sup>Pastor (Mrs) Diola Mensah became a provincial pastor in August 2001. Prior to this time, she was an Assistant provincial pastor. Of the fifty-one Assistant Provincial Pastors (APP), there is only one female, Pastor (Mrs) Tayo Adetola of Lagos Province (See the complete list of provincial pastors and their assistants in *Redemption Light*, vol.8, no. 8, September 2003, p. 2).

<sup>166</sup>Personal interview with Assistant Pastor S. T. Adetoye, *op. cit.*

As some of the activities of the CRM described above indicate, the RCCG has gradually but steadily gone beyond the provision of social infrastructure such as schools and health care facilities. In recent times, the RCCG moved directly and explicitly into economic engagements that are primarily directed towards the generation of profit. This expansion of the activities of the church into the purely economic sphere is part of the innovations and visions of Josiah's successor. These new economic structures of the church are collectively regarded as "the tree of life for the [economic] healing of the nations" (Rev. 22: 2). This is the motto of the church's Zion Needs Management Limited, a body that manages some of its business firms.<sup>167</sup>

The RCCG is involved in economic mobilisation of its members. As a result, the church has in place a number of two important business schools which are devoted to the training of both members and non-members of the church in business management. The first school is the Redeemer's Business Academy (RBA) which operates under the auspices of the CRM (see figure 4.9 above). The RBA is regarded as the "Biblical management training arm" of the church dedicated to "declare the Lordship of Jesus Christ over every sphere of life particularly the marketplace".<sup>168</sup> The church claims that part of the rationale for establishing this business school is that the commandment given in Genesis to be fruitful and live in dominion on earth includes the business sector. Consequently, the RBA is designed to equip Born Again men and women to bring effective witness of Christ in their business and daily work. The RBA trains both church and non-church personnel; its activities extend to the West African sub-region where its staff goes to train candidates through formal courses and seminars.

Located in Lagos, the commercial capital of Nigeria, the RBA runs short-term courses with such titles as "Leading a business for Christ"; "Conducting Meetings"; "Entrepreneurial skill Development"; "Stress Management"; "Turning Failure to success"; "Management the workforce in Ministry" and "Building and Managing Resources for Christ". In addition to these, the school runs a consultancy for companies and businesses outfits.<sup>169</sup>

A second business school of the RCCG, and by far more important than the RBS, is the International Bible Institute and Leadership Training School (IBI&LTS). Located at the highbrow Ikoyi area of Lagos, the IBI&LTS was established in 1994 by the RCCG, when, according to the church, it became obvious to the leadership that i) "God had ordained to use

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<sup>167</sup> See *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 4, May 2002, p. 19.

<sup>168</sup> *RCCG International Directory*, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>169</sup> *Idem*.

Nigeria in particular, and Africa in general as instruments to launch His end-time revival of mankind in the whole universe”; ii) God had positioned the church “to spearhead this revival across the globe”.<sup>170</sup> Hence, the school was founded to fill “the need to train and equip the right leaders/ministers for this great assignment”. With the above vision in mind, the school is saddled with the responsibilities of: i) producing a crop of local professionals “with an international flavour”; ii) to teach these professional about the “deeper things of the word of God”; iii) equip them with broad leadership skills for the purpose of urban and international missions; and iv) to prepare them for exercising influence beyond the pulpit context.<sup>171</sup> The overall purpose, according to the church, is for God to use this elite group to effect spiritual and economic transformation of the society.<sup>172</sup>

The institute runs a wide range of courses. Some of these are: Ministerial ethics, Stewardship, Urban and International missions, theocracy and Government, principles of Administration, Church/Basic accounting principles, Social Reformation, Biblical economics, Nigerian legal system and Management information. These courses run for a ten month period with lectures two days in week (weekends) at the end of which a postgraduate diploma is warded to candidates. In addition, a four-month certificate programme in Bible Leadership Studies/Theology is available for people who desire this. Candidates for admission must possess a first degree or its equivalent but waivers are often granted for people lacking this basic requirement. The school boasts of high level lecturers, including pastor Adeboye; many of these lecturers have Masters in business Administration (MBA) from Nigerian universities.<sup>173</sup> In 2001, the church claimed to have trained more than 7000 ministers within the church all over Nigeria. Some of the schools mobile teachers travel to other West African countries (Ghana, Togo and Cote D’Ivoire) to train church personnel. Through the IBI&LTS, the RCCG disseminates its ideas about “biblical economics” geared towards the production of “well-rounded, well-equipped, efficient and effective ministers/leaders in the body of Christ and in various areas of human endeavour”.<sup>174</sup>

In addition to these two main business schools of the church, there are numerous other small “business academies” and forums established by parishes of the RCCG to teach members and

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<sup>170</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 4, May 2002, p. 20.

<sup>171</sup> *RCCG International Directory*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>172</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 4, May 2002, p. 20.

<sup>173</sup> Personal interview with Pastor ‘Delana Adeleye-Olusae, *op. cit.* Pastor Adeleye-Olusae, a former banker, has an MBA and an MA in church Administration from Evangelical theological seminary, Jos, Nigeria. He is the Assistant director of the Directorate of Missions, as well as a programme designer, the treasurer and supervisor at both the RBA and the IBI&LTS.

<sup>174</sup> *International Directory of RCCG*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2000 - 2001, Lagos: The Directory of Missions, p. 21.

other Born Again Christians how to conduct and regulate their mundane activities, especially those that relate to economic practices. Attendance at these business schools attracts a fee. These schools teach church members about “strategies for a successful business”. The members are taught to tend, keep and guard their businesses on five grounds, viz.: i) packaging a proposal, ii) being positive on projects by believing and trusting God to deliver, iii) ensuring security of office by sanctifying it, iv) having a good corporate image,<sup>175</sup> and finally v) releasing finances with the name of Jesus. “A businessman who wants to be successful must not be without prayer and fasting. He should be able to fix a daily appointment with God and keep it and must learn to praise God in everything. [...] With these strategies, a businessman will always be victorious in business”.<sup>176</sup>

Part of the reason for getting involved in economic mobilisation is the church’s concern for members’ economic welfare. According to the church, it recognises that “widespread poverty within the body of Christ also affects the gospel as well as the economic, social and political role and significance of the church”.<sup>177</sup> Consequently, Adeboye established Jubilee Development Foundation (JDF) in 2002, the year of the church’s jubilee celebration, in order to enlighten and mobilise its members for economic empowerment and development.<sup>178</sup> This programme was launched in the all parishes of the church on Sunday 10 November 2002. This foundation is set up “because the church has an enduring concern and a continuing interest in the overall development and welfare of people and society: spiritual, economic, educational, social and emotional. To reconcile the interest of the church in people’s economic development and its spiritual concern, the church set up the Jubilee Cooperative Society (JCS) under the JDF and registered it with the federal ministry of Agriculture as a cooperative and thrift society. Designed exclusively for its members and ministers (who are i) credible, ii) pay their tithes regularly, and iii) desire divine prosperity), the JCS is regarded as a “divine initiative” which intends

using the church (parishes) as a springboard of operation. Through this means vast economic resources can be built up under this scheme with which so much can be done, meaningfully and professionally to improve

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<sup>175</sup> One example of having a good corporate image is not to wear traditional attires during business hours and dressing better than the unbeliever who is also a businessperson.

<sup>176</sup> Pastor Ogba Omagbemi, “Strategies for a Successful Business”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 4, no.2, March 1999, p. 41.

<sup>177</sup> “Cooperation: The Key to Every One’s Welfare”, RCCG Welfare Weekend brochure (Thursday 7–Sunday 10 November 2002), p. 8

<sup>178</sup> Personal interview with Akin Akinwande, member of RCCG and JDF project, Redemption Camp, 6 September 2002.

the lot of the ever-growing body of Christ, majority of who are families with the scourge of poverty.<sup>179</sup>

The objectives of the JDF are itemised as follows: i) the eradication of poverty in the church; ii) the promotion of education, training and human development; iii) the ensuring of availability of capital for viable “projects of credible brethren”; and iv) assisting the wealthy to continue to prosper.<sup>180</sup> Church members are advised to be part of the scheme because it is part of the “law of harvest”: “When you minister to someone’s needs, God will also send someone to minister to your needs”.<sup>181</sup> The JDF is seen by the church leadership as “a catalyst for the prosperity of all members” of the church.<sup>182</sup> Resources available to JCS will be channelled to equity stocks and other fiscal managements that will yield dividends for members who may also be entitled to soft loans for setting up personal businesses.

The church, in addition to the above structures of economic empowerment, has also established business ventures and companies that generate finances for her within the larger society. These companies constitute a distinct layer of structure within the organisation of the church. The RCCG operates or is in partnership with four community banks, viz.: i) Haggai Community Bank Limited;<sup>183</sup> ii) New Life Community Bank limited; iii) Ore-Ofe Community Bank limited; and iv) Sunrise Community Bank Limited. The managements of these banks believe in the prosperity of the church and work to help RCCG parishes “attract worshippers” into their folds.<sup>184</sup> Haggai Community Bank is arguably the strongest community bank with the largest assets base in Nigeria. The bank writes in its manifesto that “we are on a God-given mission to finance God-given dreams/vision of individuals and corporate institutions. We are resolute in our determination to bring them to manifestation to the glory of God”.<sup>185</sup> This bank also runs a business school, called Haggai Business School (HBS) located at the Bode Thomas (Surulere) commercial area of Lagos. According to the church, because “[g]lobal business values have failed” the Christian in achieving plenty, there is need for a “Christian business School”.<sup>186</sup> This institute offers training in talent trading, “Foundation to Christian Business”, “Leadership in the

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<sup>179</sup> “Cooperation...”, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16

<sup>181</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>182</sup> *Cooperation, op. cit.* p. 1

<sup>183</sup> The choice of name is based on Haggai 2:7 “And I will shake all the nations and the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord Almighty”, (*The New American Bible* translation, 1970).

<sup>184</sup> The chairman of Sunrise Community Bank is RCCG Pastor S. Biyi Owolabi, the past president of CRFU, see “Community Bank Teams up with churches for souls”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 8, no. 5, June 2003, p. 28.

<sup>185</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 2, March 2002, p. 21.

<sup>186</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 10, November 2002, p. 23

Marketplace” and the Business School Ministry (BSM) for churches. The HBS premises its activities with the question “What would Jesus do if He were to run your business?”<sup>187</sup> The responsibility of the school is to provide valid answers to this question such as creating God’s kingdom values and principles for modern business. In addition to the banks, the church runs an insurance company, Mutual Assurances Limited with headquarters in Lagos and branches all over the country.

There are also smaller firms such Covenant Guaranty Trucks Limited, a company that markets popular brands of used trucks and their spare parts which Adeboye instructed to be established in 1999.<sup>188</sup> Earlier, the church has established Sharon Consultancy and Research Management (SCRM), a firm that claims to be a team of “multi-disciplinary professional committed to mobilising capital, technology and management resources for economic progress” of members of the church and the larger society.<sup>189</sup> There are two security firms in the church: i) Dominion Guards, and ii) Prime Guards Nigeria Limited. The Dominion Guards was established in 1994 by one of the wealthiest of RCCG parishes in Lagos with the help of an Assistant Commissioner of Police who was also an assistant pastor of the church. The firm now supplies security personnel to companies and firms within and outside Lagos on a commercial basis.<sup>190</sup> The Prime Guards claims to be “a realistic attempt by a Christian [firm] to check the rapid decay in the security service industry [in Nigeria]”.<sup>191</sup> The company boasts of using “a combination of both spiritual and physical measures to achieve the tenets of security”.<sup>192</sup>

As we have discussed in the section on media use, the RCCG is fully involved in media businesses which include the importation of blank audio and video tapes, marketing of audio and video tapes of songs, sermons and films from the church and publication of books and magazines. These and other forms of strictly entrepreneurial engagements provide diverse sources of revenues for the church as well as employment for its members.

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<sup>187</sup>*Idem.*

<sup>188</sup> See *Redemption Light*, vol. 4, no. 2, p. 24.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>190</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Femi Akintemi, Iyagunku Police Station, Ibadan, 23 May 2001. Pastor Akintemi was an Assistant Commissioner of Police at the time of interview and the trainer of members of the Dominion Guards.

<sup>191</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 6, no. 6, July 2001, p.35.

<sup>192</sup> *Idem.*

## Chapter 5

### The Universe of Beliefs

The present chapter discusses the principal doctrines of the RCCG as they are taught at the present time. Since the founder of the church left no written records of his sermons or teachings, it is difficult to retrieve what he might have taught his followers. Our sources for the discussion are varied: i) doctrinal manuals of the church, ii) books and sermons of the present leader of the church, iii) interviews of pastors and other leaders in the church, iv) the constitution of the church, v) RCCG at 50, vi) Erinoso (1999), vii) Ojo (2001), and viii) *Redemption Light*.

#### 5.1 Doctrinal Orientations

The basic doctrines of the RCCG are articulated in a twenty-four page booklet titled *RCCG: Our Fundamental Beliefs in the Bible* (hereafter referred to as *FBB*).<sup>193</sup> This text contains forty-two articles of faith, beginning with belief in the authority of the Old and New Testaments of the bible to the sacredness of Sunday, the Lord's Day. These articles of faith constitute also what the church calls *Baptismal Manual*, an edited version of the fundamental beliefs containing forty-one propositions.<sup>194</sup> This manual is the instructional handbook for new converts and affiliates who are instructed in these doctrines for the first six months of their life in the church, after which they are eligible for baptism by immersion. The importance of this text is that it serves the purpose of a catechism book for the catechumenate. It also serves to standardise doctrine in the whole church, including branches outside the country. Some congregations of RCCG in Europe and North America have this text verbatim on the different websites where it is simply titled "Beliefs", deleting such other words as "fundamental" and "in the Bible".<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup>It is not clear when this text was first prepared but the reprinted version of it, published by the National Headquarters of the church, is dated June 1999. All references to this text are indicated as *FBB*, followed by the number of the article since they are all numbered from 1 to 42.

<sup>194</sup>*The RCCG: Baptismal Manual*, (Abeokuta: The Directorate of Christian Education, 2001). Omitted from this document is *FBB* article 31: The Dedicated Christian (The dedicated Christian would avoid foolish talking or jesting; he or she would not wear clothing of the opposite sex; marriage would be esteemed [as] honorable in all respects in the life of the dedicated Christian, and he or she would be a hearer as well a doer of the Word of God at all times).

<sup>195</sup> See, for example, RCCG Victory Assembly, which is in the United Kingdom, <http://www.victory-assembly.org/beliefs.htm> (accessed 12.06.02).

In addition to these texts of explicit statement of beliefs are the teachings of Adeboye which constitute doctrinal statements and biblical exegesis. Since he is accorded the formal status of the divine in human form “whose authority is supreme, his orders final and his power and supremacy considered next to Jesus Christ” (Adekola 1989: 283), his word is doctrine. Confirming such perception, one of the Assistant General Overseers says, “Adeboye is the God we now see in human flesh; what he tells us we take as coming from God directly. We do not argue with it”. To many of his followers, therefore, his words are *ipsissima verba Christi*: the exact words of Christ. As the text of the FBB is catechism-like, (short, terse sentences with numerous biblical verses as supporting texts), the sermons serve to explicate, illustrate and apply the doctrinal aphorism.

## 5.2 Follow Your Leader

In RCCG, a theory of leadership was evolved early in the wake of the church’s expansion. Different cadres and strata within the church differently represent this theory. Among the laity, it is known as “Follow Your Leader” (FYL) and among the elite members, it is known as “mentoring”. FYL simply means what it says: walk in the footsteps of the person who is spiritually in charge of you in the hierarchy of authority in the church. Based on II Timothy 2:2, the doctrines of FYL insist that the best way to build a formidable discipleship is to inculcate strong values of followership.<sup>196</sup> A mentor is thus one who guides, advises, moulds, inspires and challenges and corrects as well as serves as a spiritual model. FYL further teaches that in the bible Paul was Timothy’s mentor as Mark was to Barnabas and Moses was to Joshua, just as Elijah was to Elisha. According to a senior pastor of the church, a disciple is a disciplined follower of a leader.<sup>197</sup> Following one’s leader is a sure way of rising to a position of leadership for the follower. Church officials are thus instructed not only to bring up a mass of followers, but also to train up disciplined leaders who, with time, will assume positions of leadership.<sup>198</sup>

This doctrine evolved as one of the ways of inculcating a loyal followership around Adeboye, especially after the bitter leadership tussle of the early 1980s. The perception then was to construct an image of an acceptable leader whose life would represent “an epistle for men to

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<sup>196</sup> “The things you have heard from me through many witnesses you must hand on to trustworthy men who will be able to teach others” (II Timothy 2:2, New American Bible translation).

<sup>197</sup> Pastor E. A. Odeyemi, “Discipline: Key to your Destiny”, *Redemption Light*, Vol. 7, No. 4, May 2002, p. 13.

<sup>198</sup> There are some buildings at the Redemption camp with the bold inscription “Follow Your Leader”. Some other buildings are actually called “Follow Your Leader”.

read and copy”, a “man of the clock worthy of emulation”.<sup>199</sup> Among RCCG ministers, this doctrine is emphatically propagated: “Our ministers everywhere in the world must see the General Overseer as a role model and copy him”.<sup>200</sup> FYL is not only a theory of action; it is also a practice and policy recommendation. For the church, this is the concept for a leader’s reproduction of him/herself in his followers.

The doctrine of FYL manifests in the RCCG in a variety of forms. Since it is a significant leadership practice for leaders to teach by example, Adeboye has reiterated the need for his pastors to emulate his personal lifestyle, and live out the deep spiritual insights that permeate his teachings. The essence of the frequent testimonies which lace his sermons culled from his personal experiences is for his audiences to see how far they could go if they should follow his example. “My life is a proof of the fact that God can lift up a man from the dungeon and cause him to sit among princes. I came from a background of nothing, raised in a church that was almost nothing. But then I am what I am today by the grace of God.”<sup>201</sup> The doctrine of FYL also manifests in the copying and imitation of Adeboye by his pastors, who now often wear the same style of safari suit that is a feature of his dress code. In addition, the tambourine as his most favoured musical instrument is also a popular item among his pastors.

As simply as this theory appears, it has been a hotbed of controversy in the church. Some senior members of the church have argued that such a theory encourages blind imitation of people who are uncritically taken as models for upcoming Christians. They insisted that since Jesus Christ is the supreme model for the Christian, the emphasis often placed on the following one’s leader produces an undesirable consequence such as personality worship. According to a middle-aged female informant,<sup>202</sup> the controversy, which brewed over the doctrines and practices of FYL, led to many people leaving the church in the early 1990s. Those who decamped felt they were Christians primarily to follow Christ not a human leader, for the theory of FYL was fraught with dangers of stifling creativity and genuine innovativeness as well as the freedom of the Spirit which liberates and enlarges a believer’s horizon and activities. The problem of FYL notwithstanding, the doctrine was construed to generate a community identity for the members of the church and a special position for its leader(s). It

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<sup>199</sup> Olaitan Olubiyi, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 4, April 2002, p.21

<sup>200</sup> Pastor James Fadele, *Redemption Light*, vol.7, no. 5, June 2002, p. 22. Pastor Fadele is the Chairman Board of Coordinators, RCCGNA.

<sup>201</sup> Adeboye, cited in *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 3, p. 22

<sup>202</sup> My informant holds a Master’s degree in Public Administration and works with a University Teaching Hospital. She has been a member of RCCG since childhood. She is 31 years old.

was also designed to foster a loyal followership as well as perpetuate a leader's ideas and ideals. Some of these ideas in RCCG are expressed in form of doctrines which we are going to delve into in the following sections.

### **5.3 Principal Doctrines**

#### **5.3.1 On Being a Christian**

According to FBB, a Christian is recognised as one who has repented of one's sins and shown godly sorrow for past sins with a decision to abstain from them, and accepting Jesus as a personal saviour and Lord. Repentance brings forth justification (or new birth) which is the first manifestation of God's grace, cleansing the believer from sins as well as entitling her/him "to stand before God as though we have never sinned".<sup>203</sup> The second accomplishment of the grace of God is sanctification, which completely frees the believer from sin and brings forth a regenerated soul. It appears from the sequence of arrangement of these propositions of belief, that after the three-fold processes of repentance, justification and sanctification, baptism follows as a symbolic gesture confirming salvation already achieved. "Every saved soul automatically qualifies for water baptism".<sup>204</sup>

Two types of baptisms are identified: i) the first is baptism by the Trinity, which is also referred to as water baptism by immersion. Water baptism is recognised as a sign and an example of true repentance, and incorporation into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. ii) The second type of baptism is that of the Holy Spirit by which "all born again souls" receive the gift of the Father, which is "God's promise to all those that the Lord shall call". For the RCCG, "[a]ny Christian who receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit must speak in tongue".<sup>205</sup> Speaking in tongues is a spiritual marker indicating that one has acquired "the passport to heaven" with the necessary visa: "If you are not born again and state specifically when you became born again, you are not going to Heaven, no matter who you are".<sup>206</sup> For the church, speaking in tongues constitutes an "initial evidence" of the baptism of the Spirit and therefore, of salvation (Odeyemi 2000: 8). The emphasis on this doctrine firmly anchors the RCCG in the pentecostalist tradition which Droogers (2001: 45) describes as "a primal or proleptic spiritual experience that fundamentally changes the parameters" of a believer's daily life.

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<sup>203</sup>FBB, Article 9.

<sup>204</sup>FBB, Article 11.

<sup>205</sup>FBB, Article 12

<sup>206</sup>E.A. Adeboye, *Heaven*, Lagos: CRM Book Ministry, 1996, p. 1

For the RCCG, the “born-again” Christians who have experienced both forms of baptism constitute the “redeemed Christians”, the saved people of this world. This category of persons constitutes “the Church of God”. The born-again souls are called the Church of God. “The Church is the assembly of the believers, the sanctified souls in Christ, those who (*sic*) we call the Holy people of God”.<sup>207</sup> This doctrinal stress on “born-again” Christians as “redeemed Christians” is an out-working of the theological implications of the name of the church. The choice of the name “The Redeemed Christian Church of God” was without theological reflection as it was claimed to be divinely revealed to Josiah by God. With the coming into the church of educated members such as Adeboye, the name became theologically laden with meanings, which led to such later refinements in doctrines such as we have been describing. Part of the theological embellishment of the name is that it is established according to God’s unfailing covenant to select “redeemed Christians” for himself for the preparation of the world for the endtime period, a reasoning that has immense sociological resonance.

The “Church of God” has two dimensions: a present form and a future one. The present form is defined as a body of believers that “is being gathered together” in this world. This body would later be called “the Church, the Body of Christ or the Bride of the Lamb”.<sup>208</sup> The first represents what is known in formal ecclesiology as “the pilgrim Church”, while the later is the “Church triumphant”. Hence, Adeboye teaches that the church is “an organism and not an organisation”.<sup>209</sup> Both dimensions of the church operate in the in-between period of the suffering of Christ and his return to reign in glory. All those who died before the suffering of Christ are effectively eliminated from the scope and influence of the church: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Elijah, Elisha and John the Baptist.<sup>210</sup> They could not be part of what was established after they had died.

Although the church is recognised as the Body of Christ, there are also human leaders who represent Christ and manage the affairs of the Church on earth. These human leaders deserve absolute obedience: “Rebellion against church ministers is against the will of God. Those who rebelled against Moses did not escape unpunished. [Therefore] the Bible teaches that we should obey our spiritual leaders and submit to them”.<sup>211</sup> Teachings as these enhance the authority of pastors of the church who often cite the Old Testament text, “If anyone rebels

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<sup>207</sup> *FBB*, article 30.

<sup>208</sup> E. A. Adeboye, *The Bride of the Lamb*, Lagos: CRM Book Ministry, 1997, p. i.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5

<sup>211</sup> *FBB*, article 19

against you and does not obey every command you give him, he shall be put to death [...]”<sup>212</sup> to bolster their unlimited authority to direct, cajole and sometimes compel members in subtle ways to submit to authority.

To become a member of the Body of Christ, “you have to become born again. You have to be sanctified and then baptised in the Holy Spirit”.<sup>213</sup> Only those who are saved between the day of Pentecost (when the Church was established) and the second coming of Jesus Christ would be part of the Body of Christ, the Church.<sup>214</sup> Although Hollenweger (1999b: 184) observes that “[t]he concept that only ‘born-again’ (people whose conversion can be checked outwardly) belong to the church, is now being eroded”, this observation cannot be asserted of the RCCG. The church’s doctrine segregates humanity into categories of *the saved* and *the unsaved*, privileging one group with a divine destiny and mission while making the other subjects for evangelisation. The primary responsibility of the church “is to spread the Gospel of Christ to all Nations”.<sup>215</sup>

The Constitution of RCCG states that

A person shall become eligible for membership of the Mission after he<sup>216</sup> shall have given evidence to a parish congregation of his conversion to the Christian Faith, and his acceptance of the doctrine of the Mission (art. 2).

After satisfying this condition, the candidate is expected to give her/his

written undertaking to be ruled and governed by the Articles and Instructions of the Mission. He shall then be required to be baptised by immersion and to be received into the fellowship of the Mission by the same congregation. He shall then be given a Baptismal or Fellowship certification in recognition therefore (art. 3).

There was no indication that the stipulation of giving a “written undertaking” was ever observed. For those who are judged as saved and who went through the baptismal class successfully, baptism takes place by immersion “in the name of the Father, the son and the

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<sup>212</sup>Joshua 1:18a New American Bible translation. This verse is cited in the *FBB* text and reinforced in Adeboye, *David*, vol. 2, Lagos: The CRM Book Ministry, 1999, pp. 87f

<sup>213</sup>E.A. Adeboye, *The Bride of the Lamb*, *op. cit.*, p. 14

<sup>214</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 26

<sup>215</sup>*FBB*, article 30

<sup>216</sup>Although the church had female members when this document was framed, it is consistent in using only masculine pronouns, indicating the gender bias, a point that reflects the Yoruba patriarchal society.

Holy Ghost”.<sup>217</sup> Pastors have the mandate to perform this ritual in their parishes but many candidates prefer to undergo the ritual during the church’s annual convention that takes place at Redemption Camp, which serves as the most sacred site for the church’s ritual performances. The choice of this site by many is informed by the desire to have Adeboye perform this ritual on them.

Ritual baptism incorporates a candidate into the Body of Christ and into RCCG. After baptism, new members are then welcomed into the congregation with the celebration and participation in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is described as “SUPPER in the evening and not as BREAKFAST or LUNCH” (emphasis in original).<sup>218</sup> Since “*Onje ale Oluwa*” is the Yoruba term for the Holy Communion, and means, “evening meal of the Lord”, it must seem especially odd for RCCG members most of whom are Yoruba, to have the ritual at any other time of the day.<sup>219</sup>

The Holy Communion may be administered by any pastor of the church but with the express permission of the General Overseer. According to Adekola (1989: 212) the format and content of the ritual of communion is culled from the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*. It follows the simple procedure of i) Praise and worship; ii) prayers; iii) more songs and hymns; iv) a bible reading, usually from New Testament; v) prayer for the sanctification of the bread and wine; vi) distribution of the bread and wine; vii) private/individual prayers; viii) songs and closing blessing. The favourite text is I Corinthians 11: 24-34. The administration of Holy Communion immediately after baptism is designed to invigorate and spiritually strengthen the new initiates as well as fortify them against malign forces and attacks.

The newly baptised are transformed into *workers-in-training* for six months during which period they are taught how to conduct their lives and affairs in the church. At the end of this period, they become full-fledged *church-workers*, a position that entitles them to join any intra-church group. They ordinarily maintain this status of workers for five years before aspiring further up the rung of leadership in the church. Workers in RCCG are those set aside for special services and responsibilities in the church. There are four main responsibilities that they must carry out: i) praying for the church, its leaders and pastors; ii) financial support for the church; and iii) demonstrate generosity towards pastors and their families, and finally, iv)

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<sup>217</sup> *FBB*, article 11

<sup>218</sup> Bankole (1999: 40). Emphasis (capitalisations) in original.

<sup>219</sup> Thanks for Professor JDY Peel for this observation (email communication, 10 June 2002).

the propagation of the gospel.<sup>220</sup> As stated in chapter four, diligently carrying out these duties could result in the promotion of a worker to the rank of assistant pastor, thereby skipping the in-between position of deacon/deaconess.<sup>221</sup>

### 5.3.2 Living as a Christian

Having become a *bona fide* member of the church, the new entrant has certain basic responsibilities to carry out in order to sustain the spiritual fervour and vigour just acquired. The first of these is ceaseless prayer. The church teaches, “we must pray only in the name of Jesus” for “[t]hose who are unable to pray annoy God”.<sup>222</sup> The believer is reminded that the apostles of Jesus put prayer first in their lives and spent much time in prayer. Thus, it is God’s plan and order that the believer prays in order “to receive all the goods He (God) has promised in his treasure for us”. The goal of spiritual activities such as praying is to aspire to become an “excellent Christian” who is filled with the Spirit and its gifts and empowered to perform works of healing, miracles and prophesying.<sup>223</sup> The bible is the cornerstone of the believer: “the difference between those who are born again and those who are not is that before you are born again you read the bible as if it is an ordinary book but the moment you become born again the bible becomes alive”.<sup>224</sup> For the church, whatever that “is not bible teaching should be ignored by all members”.<sup>225</sup>

Part of living a holy, pure life and craving to be an excellent Christian is in making restitution. Restitution is an act of restoring whatever that has been done wrong in the past to its rightful position; it may involve giving an equivalent for wrongful appropriation. For RCCG, “restitution is a sign of true repentance”; a payment for what is damaged.<sup>226</sup> Its purpose is to give the Christian a clear conscience before God and humankind. As observed in chapter 2, Josiah restituted by sending away all his wives except one, and demanded that his followers follow in his example.<sup>227</sup> For the believer who sets his/her way right with God walks hand-in-

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<sup>220</sup>RCCG: *Qualification and Code of Conduct for Workers*, Abeokuta: The Directorate of Christian Education, 1998, pp. 4-6.

<sup>221</sup>*Ibid*, p. 11. This is a strategy to engender hard work by providing incentives and props seen as a public and social demonstration of piety and spiritual growth.

<sup>222</sup>FBB, article 13

<sup>223</sup>Adeboye, *The Excellent Christian*, Lagos: CRM Book Ministry, 1993, *passim*.

<sup>224</sup>Adeboye, “The Almighty Formula”, text of sermon preached at the Holy Ghost service, Redemption Camp, 7 December 2001, [http://www.rccg.org/Holy\\_Ghost\\_Service/Monthly\\_Holy\\_Ghost%20Service/dec2001.htm](http://www.rccg.org/Holy_Ghost_Service/Monthly_Holy_Ghost%20Service/dec2001.htm) (accessed 29.03.02).

<sup>225</sup>FBB, article 27.

<sup>226</sup>FBB, article 14

<sup>227</sup>Personal Interview with Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op. cit.* See chapter 2 for details of this event.

hand with the Almighty; for him, “the impossible becomes possible, failure becomes success, sorrow becomes joy, and night becomes day”.<sup>228</sup>

The believer is expected to shun all immoral acts which include lying, fornication, adultery, tobacco smoking, stealing, cheating, making jest, cursing and swearing,<sup>229</sup> alcohol consumption and going into debt.<sup>230</sup> No one who drinks “alcohol in any form whatsoever is going” to enter heaven.<sup>231</sup> The prohibition of alcoholic beverages is anchored on the text of Proverbs 31: 4-5 which postulates thus:

It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for  
princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert  
the judgement of any of the afflicted.

Since the “born-again” are kings, queens and princes, they are to refrain from conducts contrary to the spiritual status as heirs of heaven.<sup>232</sup> “We are a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2: 9) ordained to advertise the power and glory of our father, the King of Kings”.<sup>233</sup>

On debt, the church specifies four categories, viz.: i) monetary debt; ii) debt of time; iii) debt of promise or vow, and iv) debt of not preaching the gospel. In addition to these, regular payment of tithes and offerings is obligatory, for it is God’s decree for the provision of sustenance for his ministers. Offerings and tithes “must be paid on every income e. g. salary, profit from business transactions, gifts, etc.”<sup>234</sup> The church’s Constitution specifies that members of the church “are expected to give tithes of their income towards the general purposes of the church” (art. 23; ii). Adeboye has, however, reinterpreted this provision in the light of his understanding of the scriptures and directs that revenue from tithe be exclusively devoted to the welfare of ministers of the church. For the church, tithe and tithing is so central that it is a prerequisite for entering into heaven. “You do not pay your tithe, you do not go to Heaven”.<sup>235</sup> Those who cut or jump tithes are called “children of perdition” who will end up in the devil’s house where there is a great deal of fire.<sup>236</sup> The reason why they will end up in hell

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<sup>228</sup>Adeboye, *Touch Me O Lord*, Lagos: CRM Press, n.d., p. 9

<sup>229</sup>FBB, article 17

<sup>230</sup>FBB, articles 20 and 21. But the church does not frown at the manufacture and sell of both tobacco and alcohol since some of its pastors and members are employees of these firms.

<sup>231</sup>Adeboye, *Behold He Cometh*, op cit., p. 25

<sup>232</sup>E. A. Adeboye, *Our Dominion Crowns and Sceptre: An Exposition on Believer’s Authority*, (Lagos: The CRM, 2001), pp. 2 & 17.

<sup>233</sup>Wale Adeduro, “The Royal Law”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 10, November 2002, p. 38.

<sup>234</sup>FBB, article 25

<sup>235</sup>Adeboye, *Behold He Cometh*, op cit., p.25

<sup>236</sup>Adeboye, *The Son of Perdition*, Lagos: CRM, n.d., p. 15

is that there are no robbers in heaven and cutting tithes is an act of robbery against God, the church and the ministers.<sup>237</sup>

### 5.3.3 Courtship, Family Life and Divorce

There is no reference to courtship between young people who intend to marry in the *FBB*. The church recognises marriage as “honourable in all” and further states “[a]ll members who wish to marry should do so in the church. They are not to follow the worldly pattern of drumming and dancing, drunkenness or wear clothes that bring sin”.<sup>238</sup> However, a separate manual of the church articulates its beliefs, rules and guidelines on the conduct of courtship between members.<sup>239</sup> This manual, which is a *Marriage Counselling Handbook* (hereafter referred to as MCH), represents a systematic treatise of the church on courtship, marriage, family life and divorce. A close inspection of this manual indicates that it is an expansion and update of an older, twenty-three-page text by Adeboye titled *Journey to Marriage*.<sup>240</sup> Adeboye begins his exposition of marriage by stating that “not every body will marry”, for “the one who does not marry is better than the one who does” because “those who are not married mind only the things of God, while those who are married mind the things of their husbands and their wives (1 Corinthians 7:34)”.<sup>241</sup> Although marriage is approved in the bible, Adeboye compares it to a trailer that drags a believer down and impedes the work of God.

Building on the foundation laid by *Journey to Marriage*, the MCH provides details concerning even the minute aspects of marriage such as how to recognise the right candidate for a spouse, what to wear, when to sleep during the weekend of wedding, who to put in charge of what. Commenting on the value of this manual, a senior clergy of the church writes, “it contains biblical principles and truth on major aspects of marriage”.<sup>242</sup> Recognising that the bible has no comment on marriageable age, the manual recommends that members of the church who wish to marry should be at least twenty-five years old for the man and twenty-one years old for the

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<sup>237</sup> Tithe collection is a form of taxation. However, the ministers are not accountable to the people from whose taxes they are paid their salaries. Since the church is not a democratic institution, it has no position that requires voting or being voted for, or structure that articulates the problems or opinions of the laity. The RCCG as an institution thus represents a typical case of taxation without representation.

<sup>238</sup> *FBB*, article 24

<sup>239</sup> *To Have and To Behold Forever: Marriage Counselling Handbook*, RCCG Acme Ogba, 2000. Hereafter, referred to as MCH (Marriage Counselling Handbook). I am grateful to Jaiyi Babalola who pointed my attention to this text and made a personal copy available to me.

<sup>240</sup> Adeboye, *Journey to Marriage*, Lagos: CRM Books, 1994.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1

<sup>242</sup> Pastor Pitan Adeboye “Forward” *To Have and To Behold Forever: Marriage Counselling Handbook*. Pastor Pitan Adeboye is not related to E.A. Adeboye and is the provincial pastor in charge of Headquarters 2A, Lagos (*Redemption Light*, vol. 6, no. 8, September 2001).

woman since marriage is important and should be contracted by matured men and women only. The manual specifies three dimensions to maturity: physical, spiritual and emotional.

Members of the church who are intending to marry need to be open to the leadings of the Spirit and seek the face of the Lord after considering such factors as love, compatibility, education, financial security, beauty, ethnic and family backgrounds, profession and age as they make their decision. God could communicate the right choice of partner through dreams, audible voice, visions, revelation and prophecy.<sup>243</sup> Once a clear conviction is established about choice of a partner, this should be communicated to one's pastor whose responsibility it is to inform the brother/sister concerned. The informed person will now seek a corresponding confirmation from God before consenting. Once consent is given, a courtship is formally established with the approval of the pastor.

A Christian courtship is regarded as the period spanning between when a "sister" and "brother" agree to marry each other and their wedding day.<sup>244</sup> This is a period of acquaintanceship, togetherness and mutual self-discovery. The church further recommends that though the bible did not specify the duration of courtship, no courtship should be less than six months or more than two years. Those in courtship are advised to, among other things, abstain from holding hands, touching one another carelessly, caressing, kissing, romancing and petting. Furthermore, they should not meet in isolated places where no one sees them, or "sleep together in the same room no matter the circumstances".<sup>245</sup> If during the period prescribed for courtship a partner in the relationship is persuaded to end the affair, s/he is to inform the pastor and marriage counsellor. If after due prayers and counselling and they all share the new decision with the other partner, then a formal end would be brought to the courtship period.<sup>246</sup>

If, however, the courtship is successful and a wedding is planned to consolidate the relationship, then a new phase opens up for those involved. The partners commence a marriage counselling programme in the church. This leads to a formal engagement, which involves families of both partners in the courtship. The church approves the payment of bride price or bride wealth as scriptural. This may be done with money, clothes and food.<sup>247</sup> The necessary

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<sup>243</sup> MCH, pp 5-6

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125

<sup>247</sup> Adeboye, *Journey to Marriage*, p. 16.

exchanges of gifts (excluding alcoholic beverages)<sup>248</sup> are conducted between both families according to cultural requirements. Concerning the exclusion of alcoholic drinks, Adeboye writes, “[t]he Bible says the man who gives alcohol to his neighbour is cursed and I am sure you do not want your marriage to be cursed from the very first day”.<sup>249</sup>

The church, through the pastor and counsellor, scrutinises the list of engagement items. When items considered not in consonance with church rules are found on the list, these are deleted. In addition to alcohol, (including raphia palm wine [*raphia vinifera*] and oil palm wine [*elaesis guineensis*]), live animals [goats, chicken, fish, ram], alligator pepper, honey, kola nuts (*chlorophora excelsa*), and bitter kola are prohibited by the church and are deleted from the list if found. The church regards these as sacrificial items for oblation in traditional religion. They are taboo in a Christian ceremony. During the engagement and exchange of gifts, candidates are advised to “pray against all kinds of laying of hands on (*sic*) the pretext of blessing. This is a significant gesture; it could have spiritual and physical consequences”.<sup>250</sup>

The *MCH* makes it explicit that the RCCG “recognises and accepts the three forms of legal wedding acknowledged by the law of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, namely: customary wedding, court or registry wedding (and), church wedding”.<sup>251</sup> Part of the wedding arrangements in the church entails fixing a date with the pastor as well as having a blood test to determine genotypes of the couple. While it is now obligatory among some Christian groups in Nigeria for intending marriage partners to have a HIV/AIDS test, there is no mention of this in the manual. On the Monday before the wedding, the woman subjects to a pregnancy test the result of which must be submitted to the pastor. If she is pregnant, the church wedding is cancelled; if not, the preparations continue. The day of wedding is recognised as one of the four most important days in a believer’s life; the other three are: the day of one’s birth, day of conversion and the day of death.<sup>252</sup> Of all four, it is only the day of wedding that a person can control and fix; hence, it is a significant day that marks a transition to a lifetime relationship

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<sup>248</sup>The manual prohibits such items as beer, wine, gin, whisky, brandy, champagne, stout, etc.

<sup>249</sup> Adeboye, *Journey to Marriage*, *op cit.*, p. 17. This statement is based on the text of Habakkuk 2: 15 & 16: “Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbour, pressing him to your bottle, even to make him drunk, that you may look on his nakedness! You are filled with shame instead of glory. You also –drink! And be exposed as uncircumcised! The cup of the Lord’s right hand will be turned against you, and utter shame will be on your glory”.

<sup>250</sup> *MCH*, p. 57

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid*, p. 55. The *MCH* erroneously states that “it is against the law of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to have both Registry wedding and church wedding”. In some churches in Nigeria like the Catholic Church a couple cannot be wedded in church until they have obtained a certificate from the registry stating that they have properly and legally wedded according to the laws of the land.

<sup>252</sup> Adeboye, *Journey to Marriage*, p. 22.

with another person within the community of God's people. During the wedding, the pastor uses only the Bible and not the wedding ring as a symbol of union.<sup>253</sup>

Once a marriage is correctly conducted and contracted, three significant transformations take place in the bride: i) she signs out her maiden name and assumes a new identity signified by her taking the husband's name; ii) she changes accommodation and begins to live with the new husband; and iii) there is a change in lifestyle. These changes are indicative of new status and identity that come via marriage (Odeyemi 2000: 57-58). Post-wedding reception is to be conducted in a Christian manner, with a born-again master of ceremony. Church brethren are to supervise wedding gifts, for "they must pray and sanctify the gifts with the blood of Jesus".<sup>254</sup> It is generally believed that some material gift items may be imbued with satanic spiritual forces designed to destabilise the new family, hence the prayers on the gifts to neutralise such potency. After the prayer, the brethren from the church are expected to open all wrapped gifts to ensure that nothing evil is concealed in any item.

The RCCG recognises and recommends family planning for married couples. Based on the text of Genesis 1:28 which states that "God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it..." the church reasons that "God has also given us the authority to control the situation" of human fertility and reproduction through human invention.<sup>255</sup> Couples are taught that family planning has economic, physical, spiritual, educational and social benefits. In addition, they should choose from the array of available methods which one, or set of methods, best suits their circumstances and preferences. The methods discussed include folk (coitus interruptus, post-coital douche and prolongation of lactation); traditional; natural (rhythm, total abstinence); hormone use (pills, injectibles, norplant); barrier methods (condom, fermidom<sup>256</sup>; diaphragm; virginal spermicide, IUD) and irreversible methods (vasectomy, tubal ligation). At the end of the discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of these various methods, couples are advised: "Remember that prevention of pregnancy is less traumatic and more acceptable than either an abortion or a full term pregnancy and delivery".<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>253</sup>See Adekola (1989: 213-222) for the order of wedding service. It follows precisely the established Anglican format except that the Bible replaces the ring in the ritual: "The husband then gives a new Bible to the bride and both [...] hold it together while the officiating leader reads the last vow to the couple and the husband repeats after the leader: This Bible which is the word of God I use to be engaged in marriage with you. I give myself unto you as sacrifice, and all my properties (*sic*) which I possess I will use to nurse you in the name of the Father, the son and the Holy Ghost. Amen" (p. 218).

<sup>254</sup>*MCH*, p. 61

<sup>255</sup>*MCH*, p. 97

<sup>256</sup> This is a type of female condom.

<sup>257</sup>*MCH*, p. 97.

From its inception, RCCG pastors give children special place in their programmes. According to J. H. Abiona, Josiah “had great love for children and (the) pregnant women. In fact, it was one aspect of his ministry which endeared him and the church to many people including those who were not members of the church”.<sup>258</sup> The MCH recognises children as “gifts and blessing from the Lord.”<sup>259</sup> They are the foundation for “building a godly heritage”.<sup>260</sup> Hence, “we believe that after a child is born, on the 8th day the parents should bring him/her unto the Lord for dedication unto the Lord”.<sup>261</sup> Parents are taught to bring up their children in a healthy way and in the fear of God, bringing them to church and not abandoning them to play while they (parents) attend church activities. Adeboye teaches that “children also need salvation” and so, “they should not be forbidden from attending church programmes or answering altar calls”.<sup>262</sup>

The RCCG recognises that a legal divorce means an effective dissolution of the marriage bond. Nevertheless, members are not allowed to divorce although there are scriptural grounds for such an action such as marital infidelity: “Divorce is permissible only when a life partner has committed adultery. Even then, none of them should be married to a new partner while both are yet alive”.<sup>263</sup> Elsewhere, the church states that “Jesus allowed divorce or separation hypothetically on the ground of infidelity [...]. However, the same scripture advocates love and forgiveness in all circumstances and at all times. [...] Therefore, true forgiveness means no divorce”.<sup>264</sup> After discussing all the causes and consequences of divorce, the teaching of RCCG is explicit: “Once marriage is contracted, it remains indissoluble except when one’s partner dies”.<sup>265</sup> Married couples are admonished to live with the strength and weaknesses of their partners until death do them part. Remarriage is only a privilege reserved for widows and widowers.

### 5.3.4 The Laws of Prosperity

The RCCG that Adeboye inherited was a very poor church hardly able to meet its financial obligations such as payment of salaries to its employees. One of the first challenges which confronted the leadership of Adeboye, therefore, was how to turn the poverty of the church to

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<sup>258</sup>Pastor J. H. Abiona, *op. cit.*, p. 6

<sup>259</sup>MCH, p. 80

<sup>260</sup>Bukonla Akinwande, "Children: Building a godly Heritage", *Redemption Light*, vol. 6. no. 3, April 2001, pp 5-6 & 8.

<sup>261</sup>FBB, article 41

<sup>262</sup> Adeboye, “For Children Only”, text of sermon delivered at a special Holy Ghost Service at the Redemption Camp, 6 April 2001, [http://www.rccg.org/Holy\\_Ghost\\_Service/Monthly\\_Holy\\_Ghost%20Service/apr2001.htm](http://www.rccg.org/Holy_Ghost_Service/Monthly_Holy_Ghost%20Service/apr2001.htm) (accessed 12.06.01).

<sup>263</sup>FBB., article 28

<sup>264</sup>MCH, p. 121

<sup>265</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 123

riches and prosperity. This situation of the church made the theology of prosperity an attractive option for Adeboye.

To overcome this problem of poverty in the church, the General Overseer started a series of teachings on giving of offering and people began to respond and began to prosper too. As they began to prosper, the tithes began to increase and the church began to grow. As the church experienced growth, the problem of poverty became a thing of the past (*RCCG at 50*: 38).

The above quotation shows a doctrinal shift from Josiah's teachings which did not emphasise offerings and wealth to one that made the giving of offerings a condition for members' material wellbeing. According to Pastor S. T. Adetoye, Adeboye reasoned that the church was poor because her members were poor. If the members became rich and prosperous through biblically grounded teachings on prosperity, and were taught to give generous offerings to the church, the poverty that plagued the church would be a thing of the past.<sup>266</sup> "Give and you will prosper" is not all that Adeboye teaches about prosperity. As we shall make clear shortly, Adeboye's "theology of prosperity" emerges from an examination of the texts of his sermons.

Prosperity theology, therefore, represents a situational response to specific social and economic circumstance. In this sense, it is a *situational theology*. When Adeboye teaches about prosperity, he often references his personal and family experiences, his struggles to survive as a school pupil, his father's penury and his mother's tactful art and performance of *oriki* to cajole his father to grant specific requests that involved money. Succinctly put, Adeboye "had seen the body and soul of poverty".<sup>267</sup> The dread of poverty had been a propelling force in his life as well as in his teachings.

I had a friend who was a teacher in a village school. God, in many ways was trying to tell him to leave the village he was in, for another place, but he would not listen because he liked the palm-wine in the place....They transferred him to the next town, but he preferred to stay where he was ... because he wanted access to his palm-wine....Finally, the suffering became unbearable, and he came to Lagos. Within a year,

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<sup>266</sup> Personal interview with Pastor S. T. Adetoye, *op. cit.*

<sup>267</sup> *MCH*, p. 39.

God prospered him so much that you could not recognise this fellow anymore. He had built his own house and had his own car.<sup>268</sup>

Stories such as this are replete in the sermons and books of Adeboye. That this story is culled from a text first published in 1984 shows how old (or recent?) this doctrine is in RCCG.

It is the doctrine of the RCCG that “it is God’s plan and order (that is, command) that we should pray to receive all the goods He has promised in His treasure for us”.<sup>269</sup> Unlike some other religious leaders in Nigeria who have articulated a coherent doctrine of prosperity, the RCCG’s teachings are scattered in numerous sermons of their leader. Perhaps the oldest existing text from Adeboye on the subject of prosperity is *How to turn your Austerity to Prosperity* (1989). This text, like most of the other publications of Adeboye, was originally a sermon delivered during religious activity. It is difficult to know the first time this sermon was delivered. However, its publication was at a time that the word “austerity” became familiar and notorious in Nigeria as a result of the imposition of stringent “austerity measures” by the Babangida regime instigated by the IMF (Osaghae 1995). The importance of this text is that it forms part of strategic shift in emphasis from a holiness tradition of RCCG during the regime of Josiah to a faith gospel as characterised by the teachings of Kenneth Hagin which Adeboye espouses. This early text of thirty pages clearly set the pace of latter articulations and expansions on the theme of prosperity, poverty and how to access “the surest and shortest way” to complete, supernatural prosperity.<sup>270</sup> The central ideas of this text are found elaborated upon in other publications and public deliveries of Adeboye, and so, deserve some attention here.

The conceptualisation of prosperity by Adeboye is three-dimensional: (i) material comfort and wellbeing; (ii) health and healthy living; and (iii) salvation of the soul. This tripartite conception is based on 3 John 1:2 which states *inter alia*, “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth”.<sup>271</sup> Material comfort and wellbeing is described in line with Deuteronomy 28:11 to mean “cars, houses, clothes, land, anything money can buy – material things!”<sup>272</sup> This understanding is further based on a prior reasoning that “God is not poor at all by any standard”. Furthermore, Adeboye reasons that “the closest friends of God [in the Bible] were wealthy people [...] God is the God of the rich,

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<sup>268</sup> E.A. Adeboye, *Victory: The Decision is Yours*, Lagos: CRM, 1997 (First published 1984), pp. 11-12

<sup>269</sup> *FBB*, article 13. This is the only statement of prosperity teaching in the *FBB* text.

<sup>270</sup> E. A. Adeboye, *How to turn your Austerity to Prosperity*, (Lagos: The CRM, 1989), p.26

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7

and his closest friends are very wealthy [...]. The rich are friends of the rich, and the poor are friends of the poor. Therefore God decided to befriend the rich”.<sup>273</sup> To be poor, according to this strand of thought, completely excludes one from the friendship of God since “[b]irds of the same feather flock together” and poverty is an evil as well as a curse which brings hatred and destruction in its wake.<sup>274</sup>

Adeboye further teaches that a true born-again Christian ought to be prosperous by virtue of claiming the riches of Christ:

[t]here is no reason for every [*sic*, any] true follower of Jesus Christ to die in poverty [since] Jesus Christ became poor that we might become rich. He had no house so that you can build a house and not die [as] a tenant. He had no wardrobe so that you can have a big one. He did not have a horse so that you can have a big car. Refuse to die in poverty.<sup>275</sup>

Such reasoning is simple, straightforward and attractive. It advocates that Jesus had already accomplished all that is needed to achieve the good things in this world. Through his sacrificial poverty and suffering, He has, so to speak, created “a credit account”, that we (for whom he made the sacrifice) are now free to draw upon.<sup>276</sup> Being poor therefore may be attributed to either unbelief or a curse. In an intriguing passage, Adeboye asserts unambiguously “poverty is a curse and [...] prosperity is not evil”.<sup>277</sup> This categorical assertion is elaborated upon in a kind of dialectical reasoning thus: “I am not going to die poor. You can be the richest man in this world and still get to Heaven, if you are holy. You can be the poorest man in this world, if you do not live holy, and not born again, you will be the chairman in Hell.”<sup>278</sup>

For Adeboye, poverty is a curse from the devil who is determined to fight against God through poor people.

One of the reasons the devil wants you to be poor is so that you will not be able to witness. If you are poor and you are preaching to a rich man, the rich man will say you are after his money. If you are poor and you are preaching to the poor, the poor will say if your God can supply all

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<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6

<sup>275</sup> E. A. Adeboye, *The Siege is Over*, Lagos: CRM, 1997, p. 49.

<sup>276</sup> Thanks to Prof. JYD Peel for the credit account metaphor and for pointing my attention to this interpretation of Adeboye as a significant cultural reading of the meaning of Christ's sacrifice. (Email communication, 10 June 2002).

<sup>277</sup> Adeboye, *I Know Who I am*, Lagos, CRM, 1994, p.22.

<sup>278</sup> Adeboye, *Heaven*, Lagos: CRM, 1996, p.3

his needs why has He not done your own. The Bible says, the poor man is hated by his own brothers, so if you now want to preach to your relatives, they will ask you to shut up your mouth. If you are the richest man in your family, anytime they are holding a meeting, they will wait for you. If you are the poorest in the family, even if you are the oldest, and they want to hold a meeting, and they look round and you are not around, they will continue with the meeting.<sup>279</sup>

Poverty is a curse put on some people by some other people, the devil or God Himself. A hex put on a person by another human being or Satan can be removed by invoking the name of Jesus Christ. However, a curse placed on a person by God is more difficult to remove. The first step is for the accursed fellow to repent of some past sins and wrong doings. The second step is to pay one's tithes as and when due.

The curse in your life will come to an end if you repent and do everything that the Lord asks you to do. What you have stolen from God (that is, unpaid tithes), I appeal to you, restore and He will surprise you [...] God says when you begin to pay your tithes, all the devourers that have been eating up your money and all the abortive efforts that you have been making, He will silence.<sup>280</sup>

Poverty could be a curse in a different sense. It could be as a result of the accumulation of past actions or inactions: "The present is the baby of the past; whatever is happening now is because of what happened yesterday. ...[Y]ou are suffering because of what you did yesterday; today is the result of the decisions you took yesterday [...] Today many of us are suffering because we inherited one sickness or the other; there was a problem that was in our parent that became part and parcel of us".<sup>281</sup>

The statement that "poverty is a curse" is an important marker and turning point in the history of RCCG. It could only have been made after the death of Josiah, who, himself was poor and all his followers for close to thirty years were poor. According to his son, Josiah was called a "fanatic" because of his strictness concerning the use of material things. He never preached about the acquisition of worldly things because these have the capacity to lure and tempt the

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<sup>279</sup> Adeboye, *The Holy Spirit in the Life of Peter*, Pt 1, Lagos: CRM, 1999, p. 37. Adeboye describes how he converted his immediate and extended families by using the occasion of opening his newly built house, celebrating his newly acquired car and Ph.D. degree to preach to them. A new house and a new car are manifestations of wealth and social position that enabled him to preach the gospel to his people and they listened (See Adeboye, "How I Evangelised my family", *Redemption Light*, vol. 4, No. 2, March 1999, p. 43).

<sup>280</sup> Adeboye, *How to turn your Austerity to Prosperity*, op. cit., pp. 16-17, 19.

<sup>281</sup> E. A Adeboye, "Reversing the Irreversible", *Redemption Testimonies*, no. 89, July 2002, pp. 2-3.

individual's soul away from concentrating on heavenly issues. Consequently, ostentatious dressing and glamour were shunned and strict discipline enforced. Josiah did not embark on open solicitation of money from people and whenever members brought in tithes and other offerings, "he will want to know the source of your income, what you are doing, how did you get the money before he will accept it".<sup>282</sup>

In a twenty-three page sermon titled "Keys to Prosperity",<sup>283</sup> Adeboye summarises his thinking and understanding of wealth and its relation to Christian life. By far this sermon remains his most comprehensive treatment of the subject available to the public. The discussion in what follows is based on this crucial sermon. Nowhere is "prosperity" defined, but the imageries, stories, testimonies and allusions used make the content of prosperity so vivid that a precise definition is not required. Poverty is antithetical to prosperity: "poverty is nothing to be joyful about". For Adeboye, poverty is wretchedness; both are translated by the same Yoruba word *olosi*, while "honourable", and "wealthy" have the same meaning in Yoruba. The implication may be drawn from Adeboye's linguistic analysis of *olosi* and its opposite that to be wealthy is to be honourable, and to be poor is to be dishonourable, disreputable. Adeboye supplies a biographical illustration of what he means by both poverty and prosperity:

I have tested both (poverty and prosperity). One is better than the other. For the first eighteen years of my life, I walked bare-footed. Can you imagine walking bare-footed in this muddy soil? Now I can walk in shoes! I am not going back to poverty; I have made up my mind. The Almighty God has taken the garment of suffering from me; I am not going to wear it again.<sup>284</sup>

For him, "it is the devil that has taught us that if we are rich we will not be able to serve God properly. What God says is that the love of money is the root of all evil and not that money is the root of all evil".<sup>285</sup> According to an Assistant General Overseer of the church, "There is no problem with prosperity but there is a problem with poverty... Poverty is never mentioned among the gifts of the Spirit".<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>282</sup>Personal interview with Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op. cit.*

<sup>283</sup>E. A. Adeboye, "Keys to Prosperity", text of sermon delivered at the monthly Holy Ghost service at the Redemption Camp, 6 July 2001, [http://www.rccg.org/Holy\\_Ghost\\_Service/Monthly\\_Holy\\_Ghost%20Service/jul2001.htm](http://www.rccg.org/Holy_Ghost_Service/Monthly_Holy_Ghost%20Service/jul2001.htm) (accessed 14.09.01). The author witnessed the delivery of this sermon in Nigeria.

<sup>284</sup>"Keys to Prosperity", p. 3

<sup>285</sup>Adeboye, *The Tree by the Riverside*, Lagos: CRM, 1995, p. 21.

<sup>286</sup>Pastor M. O. Ojo, "Results of High Praise s", *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 1, February 2002, p. 20.

Adeboye commenced the sermon by asking the audience rhetorically: “How many of you are here tonight who are determined to say bye-bye to poverty? Tell your neighbour (sitting next to you): ‘If you want to remain poor go and sit next to somebody else!’”<sup>287</sup> Having captured the audience’s attention, the importance of keys to such modern consumer items as cars and houses is illustrated, indicating that keys are the entry point; they are the first step to master and possession. For the born-again Christian, there are twelve keys to prosperity, all of which are found in the Bible.<sup>288</sup>

The first key is “God is sovereign”. By this Adeboye means that “God does as he pleases [...] He is the one who decides who is going to be rich and who is going to be poor”.<sup>289</sup> God’s sovereignty leads some people into wealth and others away from wealth; it is not in the capacity of mortal humans to query such selections. “Prosperity”, therefore, “is by divine decree” with God’s seal on it. God owns everything in the world and the power to distribute it as he wishes is with him too.<sup>290</sup> The second key is “the willingness to prosper”. Since humans are created with freedom of will and action, according to the Bible, it takes desiring to be rich and doing the proper things in order to be rich. It is being a born again Christian, and hearkening to the voice of the Lord, observing all his commands that bring about God’s abundance and establishment. This point leads to the third key: “being in God’s will”. Since God is sovereign, it takes being among those elected to be rich for one to be rich: unless God builds the house, the builders labour in vain.<sup>291</sup>

The fourth key is “giving”: Adeboye teaches that “[w]hen you begin to give extraordinarily, you will begin to receive extraordinarily...It is a key that opens the door of abundance. [...] When you are giving you are loading your cloud and when the cloud is full then it is going to fall down as rain [of abundance]”.<sup>292</sup> For Adeboye, this key constitutes a natural law. The law of harvest (which states that you reap what you sow) works better “when it is coupled with other laws. The best explanation to this is, if you plant in a good soil, it will germinate and produce fruits but if you add fertilizer, then the result will be better still”.<sup>293</sup> Giving should be to ministers and representatives of God.

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<sup>287</sup>“Keys to Prosperity”, p. 2

<sup>288</sup> These twelve keys have been expanded to sixty-five by 2003, See E.A. Adeboye, *Sixty-five Keys to Prosperity and Wealth*, Lagos: CRM Books, 2003.

<sup>289</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>290</sup> Adeboye, *How to turn your Austerity to Prosperity*, *op. cit.*, p. 7-9.

<sup>291</sup> Psalm 127:1

<sup>292</sup>“Keys to Prosperity”, pp. 6-7.

<sup>293</sup> Adeboye, *How to turn your Austerity to Prosperity*, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

The fifth key is “sowing”; it is related to the law of harvest. Sowing is defined as something (money) given by a Christian to a pastor for a particular purpose. “You sow specifically in order to reap specifically”. This law, for Adeboye, makes it possible for a person to practically control his/her future. “We can become the controller of the wealth of this nation if we just ...sow aggressively... sow consistently ... [and] sow as if something is wrong with us.”<sup>294</sup> The harvest is proportional to the seed cultivated.

If you want a double portion of wealth, you have to do something greater than what Solomon did. You have to give an offering the kind that you had never given before. God is a God of principles: Do what nobody had done before; He will respond by giving you something that nobody had ever got before.<sup>295</sup>

Giving is a strong theological pillar in RCCG. Adeboye aptly calls this as “the principle of nothing goes for nothing”,<sup>296</sup> which regulates certain other laws such as (i) the law of harvest; (ii) the law of unlimited returns; (iii) the law of total returns; and (iv) the law of diligence. The first law stipulates that what a person reaps as harvest is proportional to what s/he sows; in other words, you reap what you sow. The second law (of *unlimited returns*) states that if a person brings in her/his tithes, there is sure to be abundant returns on the investment. Tithe is a limited investment with unlimited returns according to divine prescription. The third law, the law of *total returns* postulates, “If you give God your all, God will give you His all”.<sup>297</sup> The *law of diligence* states that “if you want God to make you someone that will lend to nations, you have to be diligent in obeying” divine orders.<sup>298</sup>

Underlying these different laws is a fundamental prescription: the law of exchange. For Adeboye, this is a foundational understanding that captures the human - divine relationship. “Those who trade with God never lose”, he says quite often.<sup>299</sup> Those who will get blessing from God will have to go beyond ordinary giving of offering, or paying tithes. They need to “daily seek out means and opportunities” to do something special to God that will *compel* Him

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<sup>294</sup> Adeboye, “What Happens when...?” sermon preached at the Holy Ghost Service, Redemption Camp, 1 February 2002, [http://www.rccg.org/Holy\\_Ghost\\_Service/Monthly\\_Holy\\_Ghost%20Service/feb2002.htm](http://www.rccg.org/Holy_Ghost_Service/Monthly_Holy_Ghost%20Service/feb2002.htm) (accessed 06.04.02)

<sup>295</sup> Adeboye, “God of Double Portion”, sermon preached at the HGS, Redemption Camp, 1 March 2002, [http://www.rccg.org/Holy\\_Ghost\\_Service/Monthly\\_Holy\\_Ghost%20Service/mar2002.htm](http://www.rccg.org/Holy_Ghost_Service/Monthly_Holy_Ghost%20Service/mar2002.htm) (accessed 21.05.02)

<sup>296</sup> RCCG pastors, in the main, re-echo the teachings they hear from Adeboye in line with the doctrine of “Follow Your Leader”. A senior pastor of the church recently reaffirmed the doctrine of *quid pro quo* when he said, “I agree and believe that nothing goes for nothing”, (Pastor James Fadele, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 5, June 2002, p. 22)

<sup>297</sup> E. A. Adeboye, *How to turn your Austerity to Prosperity*, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

to do more than what He wanted to do for them”.<sup>300</sup> Adeboye recently demonstrated these strands of teachings when he announced that God instructed him to set up four groups of people who would carry out four different tasks for the RCCG in return for divine favours.<sup>301</sup>

- i) **Group One:** A thousand (1000) people who will be willing to fast for sixty (60) days a year for the next ten (10) years; half of this fasting period must be continuous. Reward: Any gift of the Holy Spirit they should desire such as the gift of healing, or of working miracles or of prophecy, they will get.
- ii) **Group Two:** A thousand (1000) people who will volunteer to do manual work for sixty days in a year for the next ten (10) years at the church’s Redemption Camp free of charge. Reward: God will enable them to enjoy divine health for the next ten years.
- iii) **Group Three:** A thousand (1000) people who are willing and able to give God one million naira a year for the next ten (10) years. Reward: God will begin to show them the true meaning of prosperity.
- iv) **Group Four:** A hundred (100) people who are willing and able to give ten million naira each year to the church for the next ten (10) years. Reward: God will quietly transfer the wealth of nations to them. For the different groups, no matter how hard their enemies may try, they will be alive for the next ten (10) years.<sup>302</sup>

Underpinning these diverse teachings is the neatly formulated maxim: “He who cannot be generous with money, surely will not be generous with anointing.”<sup>303</sup> Adeboye articulates three kinds of blessings which human beings receive in return for what they give to God: i) “double blessings”; ii) “compound blessing”; and iii) “concentrated blessing”. “There is only one way by which you can get this greater blessing. It is by doing something special that will move God and cause him to bless you more than he intended”.<sup>304</sup> Realising that this type of teaching is liable to abuse, Adeboye explicitly states that “anointing is not for sale” and cautions his audience to beware of those pastors who may approach them using his name to solicit for

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<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24 (Emphasis added)

<sup>301</sup> This principle of “Nothing goes for nothing” is very popular among Nigerians who use it to describe the general decadence and pervasive corruption among civil servants who demand bribes and personal gratification before carrying out their legitimate duties (cf. Osaghae 1998 *passim*).

<sup>302</sup> Adeboye, “God of Double Portion”, *op. cit.*

<sup>303</sup> Adeboye, *The Holy Spirit in the Life of Peter*, (Part 1), Lagos: CRM, 1999, p.47

<sup>304</sup> Adeboye, *How to turn your Austerity to Prosperity*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

money in exchange for some anointing oil. However, his teaching is clear that the degree of anointing one gets is correlated with the amount of money one gives. This is regulated by the law of exchange.

The sixth key is the *principle of the first fruits*. This is giving to God the first fruits of one's increase:

If you get a job, the first salary is called the first fruit. If you are a contractor, you register a company and that company gets a contract, the profit on that contract is a first fruit. Or at the beginning of the year, there is an increment on your salary--the increment on the first month is first fruit.<sup>305</sup>

The seventh key to prosperity is *hard work*. “When you ask God to prosper you, what He will do is that He will give you work to do that will bring in money”.<sup>306</sup> This key obviously softens the excess emphasis on supernatural sources of wealth, but even here, it is God that provides the work that brings in the money. “It is not so much of what you know or do that would bring prosperity. No, it is how much God helps you”.<sup>307</sup> The eighth key is “enlarge your capacity to be blessed”. This means that believers should not just be content with moderate expectations and tastes; they should imagine and expect the best possible world with the best possible material articles. The more grandeur the desires and expectations to be rich, the more encompassing God’s blessings will be. Believers should enlarge their desire and ask God to bless them in spectacular ways, so instead of the homeless to desire a one-room apartment in some low-cost residential area, they should desire and ask for a mansion in some highbrow areas of the city.<sup>308</sup>

The ninth key is the imperative to “Pray!” Since God is the one who selects those to be made prosper, it is only sensible to appeal to him to be included in the elected recipients. “Silver belongs to him (God); gold belongs to him. If you cry to him, he will do it. All you need to do is ask. That is all you need to do”.<sup>309</sup> In view of the fact that it is God “who giveth thee power to get wealth” (Deut. 8:18b), “you need connection to God who owns all things. It only takes a

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<sup>305</sup> Adeboye, “Keys to Prosperity”, p. 10

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11

<sup>307</sup> Pastor Demola Farinu “Breakthrough from Poverty”, *Redemption Light*, vol.7, no. 11, October 2002, p. 58.

<sup>308</sup> “Keys to Prosperity”, p. 12

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14

word from God, and your fortune will be completely transformed”.<sup>310</sup> A senior pastor of RCCG expands on this doctrine in this way: “When you become God’s financial covenant partner, you have sealed poverty out of your life. This is because God is a covenant keeper and He would always keep His side of the bargain”.<sup>311</sup> The construction of religious life as a bargain is deeply etched in RCCG teachings.

The tenth key is “Prepare for war”: The wealth of the wicked is laid up for the just, meaning,

Your money is in the hands of the wicked ones; they are not going to let it go gently. You are going to fight to get it; you are going to [a] war to get your blessing from the hands of those who are holding it...We are going to say since wealth belongs to my Father (God) and what belongs to my Father belongs to me, we are going to decree that money must change hands [...] Anyone trying to withhold my blessing today, Lord, set fire to his buttocks. Anyone sitting on my promotion, put fire under him.<sup>312</sup>

The ending supplications are significant because they are anchored on the traditional belief that wicked people such as witches and sorcerers have the metaphysical power to restrain one from advancing in career or in material well-being. This also links with Adeboye’s belief that “poverty is a curse” by evil people or malign spirits.<sup>313</sup>

The eleventh key to prosperity is “praise”. Praising God will facilitate the yielding of abundance by the earth and will elicit God’s blessing on the one rendering the praises. The manner in which praise-singers in Yorubaland make money out of wealthy people whose praises they publicly chant, so also one who praises God will be made wealthy by the source of all wealth. Adeboye has been successful in incorporating Yoruba traditional praise chants, *ewi*, into the formal liturgy of RCCG during the church’s annual convention.<sup>314</sup> For him, when one praises the Almighty God, he rewards the person with money and other forms of abundance: “when you praise the Almighty God, the money he is going to give you, he did not borrow it ...if you can keep praising him no matter how far down you are he will pick you up from there”.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Demola Farinu, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>311</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>312</sup> *Keys to Prosperity*, p. 15-16.

<sup>313</sup> Adeboye, *I Know who I am*, *op. cit.*, p.22.

<sup>314</sup> Some of the *ewi* chants by Adeboye are marketed in compact disc forms.

<sup>315</sup> *Keys to Prosperity*, p. 17

The twelfth and final key is “link up with the owner of all the keys”. The owner of the keys to abundant wealth is Jesus Christ. He owns and keeps the keys to “hidden riches of secret places”. Linking up with Jesus means allowing Jesus into one’s life, surrendering one’s life to him: “when you are praising God, God will force his way in (to your life). When God comes in, poverty must go out.” The best and fastest way to prosper is to be a child of God. “It is only those who surrender their lives to Jesus who will share in the money that is coming...once you have surrendered your life to him, he will begin to prosper you.”<sup>316</sup>

There is a reason why God wants to prosper his children. Divine prosperity is important and necessary because “we need money to do the work of God. We need money so that people will see us and know that God is the Great Provider”.<sup>317</sup> The symbolism of exhibiting wealth as evidence of God’s providence is seen as a form of evangelism, the advertisement of the all-sufficient nature of God, which could bring people to accept and believe in God. Thus, “if you become wealthy and you do not use the wealth for God, it can become a curse...The reason why God wants you to prosper materially is so that you will be able to do the work of God and make his covenant fulfilled.”<sup>318</sup> One other reason for being prosperous is so that the Christian would be better enabled to help other less fortunate people or those in need. By blessing others in need with one’s wealth, the recipients thank God, for if Christians let their light shine through their good works, people will bless and glorify God for making this possible.

The choice of “twelve” keys to prosperity is symbolically significant since Adeboye could have exceeded this number or stopped at a lesser number. This anchors with the symbolism of the figure twelve in the bible. For him, twelve is a symbol of divine preference and favour. The difference twelve makes is that it represents an inner ring of divine knowledge and will, where intimate secrets of God's heart are shared with the select few.<sup>319</sup> Prosperity is a secret, which God shares with a select few through the teachings and instrumentation of his ministers.

Adeboye is not unaware of the criticisms of the prevalence of prosperity doctrines among Nigerian pentecostal pastors. Some of his critics have charged that he gives the masses a form of placebos or *soothsaying* that soothes public anger, pain and despondency but does not cure

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<sup>316</sup>“Keys to Prosperity”, p. 18

<sup>317</sup>Adeboye, *The Tree by the Riverside*, op. cit, p.21.

<sup>318</sup>*Ibid*, p.23.

<sup>319</sup>See the explanation of the numbers “seventy”, “twelve”, “three” and “one” as increasing levels of spiritual appointment, promotion and intimacy between Jesus and the public (*RCCG: Workers-in-Trainer Manual*, Abeokuta: The Directorate of Christian Education, 1998), p.13

their poverty-induced circumstances.<sup>320</sup> To his critics, Adeboye says, “You can criticise me because I want to prosper, no problem! After I have prospered, you can say what you want but I am going to prosper. Adeboye refuses to die in poverty”.<sup>321</sup> For him, fear of criticism and negative public comments are the work of the devil. In order for the devil to discourage a person from becoming rich, he brings in the fear of what people would say. “You seem to have forgotten that people will say something! If you are dying in poverty, they will look at you and say, ‘where is your God’. So, if they are going to say something, it is better for them to say something good”.<sup>322</sup> One way of dealing with those who are hindrances to the prosperity of Christians is to pray for God to extirpate them from the face of the earth. “Pray that God should destroy those who have been blocking your way to prosperity. [...] Ask God to cut off the head of every Goliath on your way”.<sup>323</sup> Imprecations of this sort are a recurring feature of Adeboye’s sermons and writings, a feature that is an important component of Yoruba socio-cultural practice.

In defence of his teaching on prosperity, Adeboye writes, “Money is a defence. I always pity those who say they do not want to hear about prosperity. I pity anyone who talks about nothing but prosperity. I pity anyone who preaches on everything else and leaves out prosperity. I am going to prosper. Poverty is terrible.”<sup>324</sup> Such personal conviction and doggedness even in the face of opposition has marked his entire career as a religious leader and scholar.<sup>325</sup>

### 5.3.5 Demonology and Healing

Part of the popularity of RCCG in Nigeria is the fame of Adeboye as an instrument of deliverance from demonic possession and attacks. As a native of Ifewara, Adeboye is not an alien to the metaphysical power of malign forces, for in this small town of Osun state, “witches and wizards boast about their membership of evil group. Even diviners attest to the fact that the

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<sup>320</sup> See Obong Akpaekong, “Is Pastor Adeboye a Miracle worker? Untold Story of the Redeemed Christian Church of God”, *Newswatch* (Lagos), 20 December 1999, pp. 8-14; Geoffrey Ekenna, “Who Do They Serve? Has the Church in Nigeria Become a Lucrative Business Venture?”, *Newswatch*, (Lagos), 3 December 2001, pp. 20-37; “Traders in the Temple: Miracles on Demand”, *Africa Confidential*, vol. 43, no. 14, 12 July 2002, pp. 1-3.

<sup>321</sup> Adeboye, “Keys to Prosperity” p. 2

<sup>322</sup> Adeboye, *The Holy Spirit in the Life of Peter*, pt 1, *op cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45

<sup>324</sup> Adeboye, *Arresting the Arrester*, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>325</sup> Adeboye never engages his opponents personally or directly. Criticisms of aspects of the church’s practices or doctrines are mostly ignored. There is a conscious attempt towards not addressing issues of disagreement between the church and some of its disillusioned or break-away pastors openly. Part of the social clout of the church is in its ability to put out of circulation newspaper/magazine reports that appear unfavourable to its leaders, doctrines and practices. Not openly and publicly reacting to adverse reports and opponents seems to stem from the biblical injunction of praying for one’s enemies and not preparing to fight or kill them. Not involving in public controversies helps in not polarising the public as well as courting public sympathy as “victim” and the opponents as “aggressors”.

evil forces of his village are head above others in that domain”.<sup>326</sup> For Adeboye, God created witches and wizards for them to destroy those who are not Christians or children of God.<sup>327</sup> As a young man, he had been afflicted with the fear of dark powers and forces which were claimed to terrorise indigenes of his town. Thus, he had patronised local medicine-men who claim to prepare powerful anti-witchcraft charms in order to metaphysically protect himself from evil powers from his village. These personal experiences partly inform Adeboye’s teachings on demonology and deliverance from dark forces.<sup>328</sup>

Sickness, like poverty, is attributed to evil spirits. “We believe that there is a devil who seeks the downfall of every man. He brought sickness, sin and death unto the world”.<sup>329</sup> Witches, sorcerers and other innumerable unclean spirits are representatives and agents of the devil who governs and directs their actions. The primary duties of these spirits are to steal, kill and destroy.<sup>330</sup> These spirits bring sorrow, disease, poverty and oppression.

For Adeboye, “[t]here is no need for every [*sic*, any] true follower of Jesus Christ to die in sickness because according to 1Peter 2: 24, by his stripes we were healed. He had already paid for our healing”.<sup>331</sup> It is in the context of claiming the healing wrought by Christ that the RCCG expounds its theory of Spiritual Warfare: “a war against the devil and his agents; principalities, powers and rulers of this world and the lust of the flesh”.<sup>332</sup> Spiritual warfare is a constant theme of sermons, teachings and rituals in RCCG, a fact that connects the church to its C&S roots where the same emphasis is clearly spelt out (Peel 1968b, a; Callaway 1980; Omoyajowo 1982).<sup>333</sup> Such doctrinal emphasis may be seen as a carry-over from Aladura Christianity through Josiah to the RCCG. For Adeboye, deliverance implies warfare with three features: i) “there is someone who has been captured”; ii) “there is somebody who captured him”, and iii) “there is somebody who is coming to deliver the one who has been captured!”.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> RCCG at 50, p. 26

<sup>327</sup> E. A Adeboye, *The Hiding Place: Our Comprehensive Insurance Policy*, Lagos: CRM Books, 2001, pp. 36-7.

<sup>328</sup> Many religious leaders who tailor their ministrations towards the deliverance of witchcraft spirits claim to have had a personal experience which informs their practices. A good example of Evangelist Helen Ukpabio, President of Liberty Gospel Church, who claimed to have been dedicated to the service of Satan at the age of fourteen before her conversion in 1982, and subsequent mission to obliterate the operations of witchcraft spirits in Africa (see Ukpabio 1994; 1999).

<sup>329</sup> *FBB*, article 6

<sup>330</sup> John 10:10

<sup>331</sup> Adeboye, *The Siege is Over*, *op. cit*, p. 49

<sup>332</sup> Adeboye, *Spiritual Warfare*, Lagos: CRM, 2000 (first edition published 1994).

<sup>333</sup> Adeboye, “Victory in Spiritual Warfare”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 8, no. 1, February 2003, pp.10-11, 23;

<sup>334</sup> Adeboye, “Deliverance”, sermon delivered during Holy Ghost Service, Redemption camp, 1 June 2001.

There is a variety of methods of operation of the devil and his agents; these manifest in different forms. Adeboye elaborates on seven of these ways of spiritual attacks, the first of which is “affliction”. Spiritual affliction means that evil spirits come to trouble and to “cane” a person as they did to Saul.<sup>335</sup> The second is spiritual oppression, which means, “to sit on, hold the fellow down properly so he will not be able to move up at all”. The third manifestation is spiritual repression, which is “pushing down. As the fellow is trying to come up, the (spiritual) forces push him down”.<sup>336</sup> The difference between oppression and repression is that while in the former the victim is completely down and evil spirits exercise relative mastery, in the latter the victim is only partially down, he still has some strength and will to want to come up and out of the bondage. A fourth form is regression, that is, when evil spirits keep pushing a person backwards. Repeated spontaneous abortion is given as an example of regression, which is a demonstration of the activity of the devil whose task is to “steal, kill and destroy”. The fifth technique of the devil is identified as “distraction”. In using this strategy, the evil attack is directed at a loved one through whom an individual’s attention is diverted to something else. The sixth is “confusion”, which is the blindfolding of a person's spiritual eyes, thereby preventing or obstructing proper judgement and moral decision. Confusion manifests as indecision, frequent changes of career, trade or profession or lack of will-power to complete a chosen task. The seventh method is “obsession”, which manifests in excessive adherence to a particular habit all the time. Samson was obsessed with “strange women”; Esau, with food. The most intense demonic attack is “possession”, the complete domination of a person’s being and consciousness by evil spirits. Possession manifests with excess physical strength, a strong propensity to lie (because the devil is the father of lies) and persistent immoral or unclean thoughts. Against this range of spiritual attacks, the Christian is called upon to resist the devil.

Deliverance is, therefore, directed at setting free the Christian who may be under the authority and influence of evil spirits. The Christian is called upon to do just two things in this respect: i) submit to God, and ii) resist the devil.<sup>337</sup> The first entails putting one’s life, family and possessions under the care and protection of God, while the second entails invoking the blood of Jesus against Satan or saying simply “the Lord rebuke thee Satan”.<sup>338</sup> There is no need for shouting at the devil, casting and binding, rejecting and struggling with evil spirits, Adeboye teaches.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> 1 Sam. 16:14.

<sup>336</sup> Adeboye, “Deliverance”, *op cit.*

<sup>337</sup> Adeboye, “The Almighty Formula”, *op. cit.*, p. 18

<sup>338</sup> This is quotation from the New Testament (Jude 9).

<sup>339</sup> Adeboye, “The Almighty Formula”, *op. cit.*, p. 19

The purpose of deliverance is to free the Christian so as to be able to serve God, firstly with all s/he has and is. “All of you who have been spending your money on sickness, [...] who have been spending your money on distractions, all of you that the enemy (devil) had pushed until you became nothing, ... God will set you free so that you can serve him [by] spending [your] money in the cause of God”.<sup>340</sup> For, if one has being made healthy physically and does not use such sound health for the work of God, “it can become a curse”.<sup>341</sup> Secondly, released victims of the devil could serve God by witnessing for him, doing evangelism and by praising him. The only condition necessary for deliverance, according to Adeboye, is by becoming a born again. After this, one can then embark upon accessing divine healing: healing by faith and without medicine, for it is the Christians’ mission “not only to teach the nations, but that we should also heal the sick.”<sup>342</sup>

The RCCG teaches that divine healing can be obtained through individual prayers, group prayers, the laying of hands on the head and by the ministry of the elders “anointing the sick with prayer of faith”.<sup>343</sup>

If you are baptised in the Holy Spirit, you do not have to look for healing from outside. The healing power is already in you. The Spirit of God that is in you will quicken your mortal body. It is only the illness that you accommodate that will remain in your body [...]. The Holy Spirit and illness cannot be in your body at the same time. The Spirit of the living God is dwelling in you [...] the Spirit in you will drive out all traces of illness in your body. Sickness belongs to the devil.<sup>344</sup>

Teachings as these have results in many members of RCCG not taking medicines or visiting clinics when sickness invades their “mortal bodies”. Adeboye himself does not take medicines but does not insist that every member follow this trend, advising that it is a matter of individual faith, spiritual conviction and strength. Adeboye states, “[w]hen I became born again, I did not believe in divine healing”. After listening to a testimony by an old man of about eighty years old who received divine healing from excruciating pain in 1976, he became convinced, and since then “I have not taken any medicine because I said the God who could do it for the man

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<sup>340</sup> Adeboye, “Deliverance”, p. 10

<sup>341</sup> Adeboye, *The Tree by the Riverside*, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>342</sup> *FBB*, article 15.

<sup>343</sup> *Idem*. James 5: 14-15 states, “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him”.

<sup>344</sup> Adeboye, *I know Who I Am*, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

will do my own [healing also]!”<sup>345</sup> According to Adeboye’s assistant, “This doctrine was at the core of the church's practice during the life time of Josiah. Then those who could not take it or live by such standard would do otherwise. Akindayomi would not want any of his pastors to go to the hospitals. He would say you had rather die than do that”.<sup>346</sup>

### 5.3.6 Religious Nationalism and Political RCCG

In 1994 Adeboye wrote that there “is a demon overseeing every country. All the governments put in place are controlled by this [*sic*] demons”.<sup>347</sup> Further, he believes and teaches that the problem why “the wisdom of black men, which supersedes that of the whites, is being used destructively today is a consequence of the curse Noah pronounced” on Ham.<sup>348</sup> These were parts of his early writings during the period of political vandalisation of the Nigerian society by prolonged military rule, then headed by such men as Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sanni Abacha. It was alleged that the latter had wanted Adeboye dead (Ojo 2001).<sup>349</sup>

When Abacha suddenly died on 8 June 1998 eliciting mass jubilation on many Nigerian streets, many members of RCCG read the unfolding events as a fulfilment of a prophecy by their leader three days earlier (Erinoso 1999: 47). Shortly after the unfolding events ushered in a civilian president on 29 May 1999, there was an about-face on RCCG’s political ideas concerning the Nigerian state. Now, it is an article of faith in RCCG that “All Christians are to obey the law of the country, obey the government and (secular) authority”.<sup>350</sup> Some physical structures at the Redemption Camp of RCCG are now painted in the national colours of Nigeria, (green-white-green). This is a public statement of patriotism, a symbolic act pregnant with political meanings relating to the church’s future aspirations as a political force.

Before the elections that brought Olusegun Obasanjo to political power as an elected president of Nigeria, Adeboye had announced to all his congregations that God told him that he (God) had special “interest in the General”. This statement was interpreted to mean that Obasanjo was the candidate divinely selected to rule and redeem the country from the abyss of

<sup>345</sup> Adeboye, *The Holy Spirit in the Life of Peter*, Pt 1, *op. cit.*, p.63

<sup>346</sup> Personal Interview with AGO M. O. Ojo, *op. cit.*

<sup>347</sup> E. A. Adeboye, *Spiritual Warfare*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.5

<sup>348</sup> E. A. Adeboye, *The Excellent Christian*, *op. cit.*, p. 31. (See also Gen. 9:18-27). Adeboye believes that “[t]he curse is still working today”, see *The Making of Divine Champions*, Lagos: CRM 1998, p. 37.

<sup>349</sup> General Sanni Abacha ruled Nigeria from 7 November 1993 to 8 June 1998, when he was reported of having died, to all appearances, of cardiac arrest. Amuwo, Bach and Lebeau (2001) present the most concise and up to date assessment of Abacha's five years of tyrannical misrule in Nigeria. The reason why Abacha should want Adeboye dead is not clear. One may only infer that the latter was aware of the friendship between Obasanjo, who was in prison then, and Adeboye.

<sup>350</sup> *FBB*, article 18

economic, social and political woes. Such public announcement was an overt political statement and an act of political mobilisation for a particular candidate, urging RCCG members to vote for Obasanjo as president of Nigeria. Obasanjo, a Baptist, was arrested and jailed on 28 February 1995, by the Abacha regime for alleged coup plot. While in prison, he claimed to have become “born again” and a pastor, thereafter, he could claim of “having encountered God the way I did...Pastor Adeboye redoubles the presence of the Holy Spirit of God in such refreshing measure that keeps my faith and, therefore, confidence resolute and strong”.<sup>351</sup>

President Olusegun claims to have experienced Jesus Christ in a unique way when he was in prison during the regime of General Sanni Abacha. He has evidently made huge political capital out of this claim, rallying pentecostal leaders around him during his campaign for the office of President of Federal Republic of Nigeria. He has also started writing theological treatises applying biblical ideas to social and political reconstruction.<sup>352</sup> Pentecostal leaders have also made social and economic capital out of their association with the president, by inviting him to their religious programmes and using him for self-advertisement to lure followers who would want to belong to the "winning team", where successful people are. Obasanjo invited pastors to perform exorcism at Aso Rock, the seat of presidential power in Abuja, before he would move into it as president. He constructed a chapel at Aso Rock to which he called on Adeboye to inaugurate on 26 May 2001, an event that was scheduled to mark his second year in office as President of Nigeria. Obasanjo campaigned for a second term in office as president by first informing the nation that it was God's intention for him to remain in office. Obasanjo, who lacked a clearly delineated political constituency, has just found one among pentecostals in Nigeria.

In 2000, Obasanjo fellowshiped with Adeboye and his congregation at the International headquarters of RCCG at the Redemption Camp, claiming the honour of “the first born again Christian president” of Nigeria (Ojo 2001: 32). Again, on 24 May 2002, Obasanjo, together with many of his members of cabinet, top government officials and the senate president, Pius Anyim, participated in a special Holy Ghost service officiated by Adeboye at Abuja.<sup>353</sup> The

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<sup>351</sup>“Forward” to Ojo's (2001: 4) biography of Adeboye.

<sup>352</sup> See, for example, his recent publication, *This Animal called Man*, n.d, (but released in 2000, about a year after he assumed office as president).

<sup>353</sup> Olaitan Olubiyi, “As the wind blew over Nigeria”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 5, June 2002, pp. 24-26.

president sends “Presidential Address” to annual programmes of RCCG; he is either represented by a top federal ministry or his wife, Mrs Stella Obasanjo.<sup>354</sup>

Although Adeboye is emphatic that “God is not a democrat”<sup>355</sup>, he still insists that God gave Nigerians a democratic government. During a sermon preached at Aso Rock on 26 May 2001, he says, “at a time when we were not sure what would happen to Nigeria because we had some mad men (meaning, Abacha and his cohort) in our shop, God clinically and precisely removed the mad men without breaking our china wares”.<sup>356</sup> RCCG pastors and members insist that it was because of their prayers and fasting for the salvation of the nation that God heard the voice of the oppressed and removed the oppressors.<sup>357</sup> During the Holy Ghost Service of July 1999, Adeboye announced that, according to a revelation he had, God is aggrieved because Nigerians had refused to acknowledge him as the one who gave the nation victory over mad men and dictators. Thereafter, he instructed his followers to give thanks to God continuously for the spectacular political victory over the people’s enemies.

Adeboye’s religious nationalism extends to all aspects of national life. For all existing problems in Nigeria, he prescribes that: i) constantly and continuously thank God; ii) Nigerians should pay the vows and pledges which they made to God at the beginning of the struggle for political deliverance; and iii) call on God on the day of trouble. He further teaches that God will handle “the problem of NEPA” (energy scarcity and electricity power failure). According to him, God will handle “the escalating cost of *garri*<sup>358</sup> and other foodstuffs; and that God, who made the mouth of a fish a bank, can heal our economy. [...] We cannot solve our problems by human wisdom; not by legislation, except we go back to God”.<sup>359</sup>

The rapprochement between RCCG leadership and state political leaders envisioned a new definition of Nigeria as a sacred space with a unique and special covenant with God. For Nigeria to achieve its divine mission, all existing “curses” on the nation must be broken; and Adeboye is God’s instrument of breaking these curses: “In the mighty name of Jesus, I now pronounce that every curse on Nigeria is now broken forever”.<sup>360</sup> This declaration places

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<sup>354</sup> See “Holy Ghost Congress”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 12, January 2003, pp. 17-19, 21.

<sup>355</sup> Adeboye, *Child of Destiny*, *op. cit.*, p. 23

<sup>356</sup> Adeboye, “What Obasanjo must urgently do to succeed”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 6, no. 5, June 2001, p. 5.

<sup>357</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 4, May 2002, p. 35.

<sup>358</sup> *Garri* is granulated cassava produced through a process of grinding cassava tubers, fermentation and frying. It is a staple diet in Nigeria.

<sup>359</sup> Adeboye, “What Obasanjo Must do...”, p. 6.

<sup>360</sup> “Adeboye Declares: Curses on Nigeria Now Broken, *Redemption Light*, vol. 8, no. 5, June 2003, p. 19

RCCG and its missions at the vantage position of helping Nigeria fulfil its responsibility within God's plan for the world. Ojo (2001: 118) writes, "Adeboye's love for Nigeria can best be described as a passion". This love has necessitated his intercession on behalf of the country and her citizens. Thus, the RCCG's conception of Nigeria as a sacred space with a divine mission is couched in military metaphor: the map of Africa is likened to "a gun which, if turned at an angle, has its nozzle pointing at the rest of the world. It is believed (by RCCG leaders and members) that where the trigger of the gun is, is Nigeria, implying that Nigeria will fire the revival of the whole world" (Ojo 2001: 119). According to Adeboye, "I know RCCG has been positioned by God to pull the trigger of that gun that will shoot down all the demonic operations and activities of Satan in the lives of men in the continent of Africa and the world over" (cited in Ojo 1997: 14).

Through the actions of members of RCCG and divine intervention, "Nigeria shall be the best nation in the world". This divine transformation will be realised, according to RCCG spokespersons, not through technological prowess and scientific innovations, but "through Nigeria showing the world the way back to God" (Ojo 2001: 121). The primary instrument of divine refashioning of Nigeria is the annual event of the RCCG which comes up every December, originally tagged the Holy Ghost Festival but now renamed by Adeboye (since the 2001 edition) the Holy Ghost Congress.<sup>361</sup> Out of the dark, muddy waters of a nation and people under the curse of Ham comes hope and redemption, not just for the people of Nigeria but also for the peoples of the whole world. As RCCG is the instrument of God's mission so Nigeria becomes a messenger of God for global religious regeneration. The repositioning of Nigeria as a sacred space of intense divine action is a significant component of "the global vision of the RCCG", an integral part of which is "to reach every family in the world".<sup>362</sup> Such redefinition and the prescription of a spiritual solution to economic and political problems are not unique to RCCG as the Baha'i faith espouses similar doctrines. In the main, such strategies point to "a religious approach to globalisation" as Margit Warburg (1999: 47-56) accurately observes.

### **5.3.7 Eschatology and Parousia**

The most controversial video film ever produced in Nigeria is titled *Rapture* (Liberty Films 2002); it deals with the theme of the events of the last days, "the greatest event in human

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<sup>361</sup>More on this religious event in chapter 6.

<sup>362</sup> James Fadele, "We're Highly Favoured by God", *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 5, June 2002, p. 23.

history”.<sup>363</sup> The video recordings of Adeboye’s sermons are called “End Time Messages for the world”, signifying the understanding of the present period of human history as of special moment in the history of human salvation. These tapes that are very popular and sell over five thousand copies every month are advertised as “the undiluted Word of God for this end time”, not restricted for sale in Nigeria but for the entire world, claiming a translocal validity, for the end of the world will not be a local event. Furthermore, Adeboye’s mission and ministry are conceived as a translocal call, to generate an awareness that will herald the end of the world.<sup>364</sup>

For RCCG, death is the starting point in the discussion of the end of time. Hence, “we belief that a Christian who sleeps in the Lord is with Christ already [...]. Therefore, all members (of RCCG) should separate themselves from the things of this world related to worshipping the dead”.<sup>365</sup> At death, the born again experience “the resurrection of the spirit” by passing “from death to life”, which takes place “immediately we are entering into our heavenly home or house not made with hands”. In addition to the resurrection of the spirit, the church also believes in the resurrection of the body, which is a privilege reserved for holy people who belong to Jesus Christ. This latter form of resurrection will take place when Jesus appears in glory.<sup>366</sup>

When Jesus appears is the second coming of Jesus, the *Parousia*. The second coming of Jesus is a central thesis in the Niagara Creed of 1878, which articulated the fundamental beliefs of Christian millenarian tradition. The last of the twenty-four articles of the creed states, *inter alia*, “...the Lord Jesus will come in person to introduce the millennia age...” (Sandein 1970: 276-7). For the RCCG also, the second coming will be in material, physical form perceptible to all just as “he was seen ascending up to Heaven”. This will be in two stages: the first is the “rapture”, which will take place in the sky when the saints or the Bride of Christ will go up to meet Christ in the sky.<sup>367</sup> However, not all persons who satisfy these conditions will be raptured, for some born again Christians will, of necessity, be left behind to resist the mark of the anti-Christ. For these Christians, “it will be horrible for them while resisting the anti-Christ. They will finally end up in Heaven but they will not be part of the bride”. These, Adeboye

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<sup>363</sup> One of the recent and very popular book on this theme is by Chris Okotie, pastor-founder of Household of God, *The Last Outcast* (2001). Another pastor-founder, Movie-Evangelist Helen Ukpabio, has also produced a movie, *Rapture* (2002), in two parts and produced by Helen Ukpabio/Fred Amata, deals with the same “last days anxiety” (On Ukpabio’s movie, see *Encomium*, October 2002, pp. 36-40).

<sup>364</sup> Text on the back jacket of video tapes of Adeboye’s sermons.

<sup>365</sup> *FBB*, article 32.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid*, article 33.

<sup>367</sup> Adeboye, *Behold He Cometh*, *op cit.* p. 24.

calls “the Tribulation Saints”.<sup>368</sup> The second stage of the return of Christ is when he returns to the earth to execute judgement on sinners and the ungodly. The period in-between the two stages is called “the tribulation period”.

The execution of judgement inaugurates the millennial reign of Christ. This is the period when Christ will establish his kingdom on earth for a thousand years. This will be a period of which death, poverty and the parlous state of earthly existence will be effectively abolished. Satan who is responsible for these states of affair will be in chains. This is a period of unprecedented peace and prosperity for humankind.<sup>369</sup> For, before the end of the world finally comes, three types of judgements will have been accomplished, viz.: i) the judgement of the believers, this will take place up in the sky as rapture is taking place. After this judgement, believers will descend from the sky down to the earth with Christ; ii) the judgement of nations, this takes place during the millennial reign of Christ; and finally, iii) the judgement of the unbelievers, this is a post-millennial judgement.<sup>370</sup> This last judgement culminates into the obliteration of the present physical world and the ushering in of “a new heaven and a new earth” in which holiness will be the norm and a permanent state of existence. This is the fulfilment of the promise of God for eternal life and eternal punishment for wickedness: they will “be tormented both day and night in the presence of the holy angel(s) and the Lamb” forever.<sup>371</sup>

Some of these articles of belief are abstract and not all members of the church bother so much to understand them. These beliefs inform many of the ritual practices of the church which are very popular among the members as well as non members. It is to the ritual aspects of church life that we shall next turn in the following chapter.

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<sup>368</sup>*Idem.*

<sup>369</sup>*FBB*, article 37.

<sup>370</sup>*FBB*, article 38.

<sup>371</sup>*FBB*, article 40.

## Chapter 6

### RCCG Rituals and Religious Symbolism

This chapter concerns two sets of religious actions, i) religious symbolism and, ii) rituals. It describes present symbolic and ritual practices in the RCCG. Pentecostal Christians do not appreciate the use of the word “ritual” as a description of the mode of worship or practices emanating from their belief system. Ritual is used in this study to designate, not just worship actions guided by rubrics and formal procedures, but also patterned, repetitive practices, regular events, sets of communication and elements within a worship/ceremonious situation that believers can follow, understand and carry out either as individuals or as a group. Our major sources for this chapter are i) books and sermons of Adeboye, ii) field data from interviews, discussions and observations, iii) church manuals and magazines (*Redemption Light; Redemption Testimonies*) and, iv) Ojo (2001).

#### 6.1 Religious Symbols, Identity and Imagination

In RCCG symbols, codes, colours, and gestures constitute powerful media of instruction. Members of the church are introduced into its world of symbols during baptismal and “Workers-in-training” classes. It is at this time that converts are taught symbolic aspects of the church, such as rituals (baptism, ordination, funerals rites), colours, music, posture (kneeling, lying face down, etc). Images are significant in RCCG. Within the Redemption camp, for example, there are close to fifty outdoor billboards erected at strategic corners and along the many streets and roads, all depicting and advertising a wide range of religious ideas, beliefs, events, expectations and convictions. Some of the texts anchoring the images on the billboard clearly point to a preferred religious understanding whereby the present circumstances of the church interpret the past while at the same time pointing readers to a particular future. One billboard, for example, reads “I am in control at all time and in all places -- God”, while another reads: “Self Sufficient? Without me, you can do nothing -- God”. While the first stresses the immediacy of accessing God in the particular locale of the Redemption Camp, the second underscores the need for readers to be connected to such divine access.

##### 6.1.1 The Logo

With the assumption of office as leader of RCCG, Adeboye began refashioning a corporate image and identity for the church. This identity defines its purpose to the public and to other organisations with which it deals. In achieving this objective, a great deal of public relations

expertise was used, both within the church and outside. The way the church was seen before the early 1980s was changed to the way Adeboye would want the church to be seen. In order to achieve this transformation, one of the most important things that Adeboye did was to establish and standardise the church's logotype (logo for short): the emblem of the church as it appears on letter-head, envelopes, sign-posts, billboards, vehicles, books, stickers, posters and branch names.



**Plate 5:**        **RCCG Logo.** Photograph: Asonzeh Ukah, Lagos, Nigeria, 2002.

The logo of RCCG is a mine of symbols with deep social and spiritual significations (see Plate 5). It is an aesthetic design and shorthand of an elaborate theology that represents the meaning and aspirations of the organisation. The logo is a white dove against an emerald green background, with wings spread out, in a descending motion, encircled by the name of the church (The Redeemed Christian Church of God), which is itself enclosed in an outer ring of gold, itself in a slightly larger ring of light blue. Within the larger ring of gold are inserted two stars at equidistant positions to the dove in the middle of the circle. The descending dove is a classical Christian symbol of the Holy Spirit, recapturing especially the events of the day of Pentecost.<sup>372</sup> The dove further signifies peace and the restoration of hope reminiscent of the days after the flood that destroyed the earth in the days of Noah (Gen. 8: 8-11). The dove is a bringer of good news. The colour white evidently stands for purity and holiness. White also

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<sup>372</sup>Acts of the Apostles, 2:1-13.

stands for wholesomeness and spotlessness.<sup>373</sup> The name of the church, emblazoned in gold, represents the riches of God which, according to the covenant narrative in the church, was promised the founder of the RCCG by God: if only the leaders of the church would live in holiness and obey the voice of God, the material needs of the church will be divinely provided for (Ojo 1997). The outer ring of blue represents the church's focus on "making heaven", now a frequently used phrase of Adeboye.<sup>374</sup> The outer circle can also symbolise the domain of the church, working according to the dictates of the Holy Spirit, which is the entire universe.

Perhaps the most important feature of the logo is the circle, which according to Morgan and Welton (1992: 97) represents "one of the simplest and least confusing shapes". A circle is a "pure" sign, a symbol of perfection, wholeness, completeness and unity. For the RCCG, the unbroken line of a circle captures the roundedness of life from God and back to God. The perception of unity portrayed by the circle depicts the oneness of purpose among leaders and the led, among the pastors and their flock as well as among the members of the church and God. This reading of the logo connects neatly with the covenant narrative of the church that God will be with the church until the end of time even as it spreads to all parts of the world. The circle also symbolises cohesion. Such cohesion may involve the different aspects of church doctrines, beliefs, and practices. Additionally, it may also depict the cohesion that is believed to exist among the different parachurch groups, arms, and directorates of the church. Most importantly, it shows the cohesion that is perceived to exist between the church's beliefs and practices on the one hand and the bible on the other.<sup>375</sup>

The RCCG logo is ubiquitous. It is a marker of identity; with strong religious signification: people attribute miraculous powers to it for keeping thieves and robbers away, or protecting cars from automobile accidents. It repulses evil spirits such as witches and wizards from places and persons who carry it on their person; it also attracts blessings, miracles and prosperity. It is believed to establish "contacts" with the sacred. In these ways, the logo and the materials on which it is printed, designed or carved, serve both spiritual and social purposes. It serves as an *insurance* against the unexpected, the presence of divine grace and spiritual security and protection.

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<sup>373</sup> See Adeboye, *As Pure as Light*, *op. cit.*

<sup>374</sup> Adeboye, *Heaven*, *op. cit.*

<sup>375</sup> *FBB*, art. 1

### 6.1.2 The Name

In RCCG names are not just labels distinguishing one person or thing from another; they are carriers of divine intentions and metaphysical meanings. “[M]any problems we have today are connected to the names we bear”.<sup>376</sup> The name of RCCG has a ritual significance among the leadership of the church.<sup>377</sup> Aside from meaning the assembly of those who have been “redeemed” by God, it carries the further significance of the manifestation of divine action and intentions for the endtime. The invocation of the name, it is now popularly preached and believed, brings about miracles and divine interventions in human actions. Since it is believed that it was divinely revealed to Josiah, there is a standing rule that the addition of “worldwide” or “International” must not be used to alter it in any form, for example. As Ojo (1997: 6) puts it, Adeboye has insisted that “no modifier like ‘International’ or ‘Worldwide’ should be added to the name, because it is not a fabrication of man”. Adeboye declared to his ministers that the name of the church as given by God is perfect and must remain so, for whatever God does is complete and perfect; nothing can be added to it and nothing can be taken away from it.<sup>378</sup> Furthermore, all branches of the church have this name (and its logo) on every official document or advertising sign post or billboards, and may only secondarily add a sub-title distinguishing one parish from another, such as “RCCG: Freedom Parish”. The name has accumulated layers of meanings, awe, reverence and emotional attachment. It is now a ritual symbol full of special meanings and significations. The religious narratives which have been attached to it make it a medium of knowledge about the history of the church.

### 6.1.3 Colours and Flags

Colours are important religious symbols as pointed out in the discussion of the logo. The RCCG has its own colours, and these are three: white, green<sup>379</sup> and blue. The first, as we have pointed out above, signify purity and holiness. In Christian contexts, it often connotes the sacred. Green and blue are generally colours of the sky and vegetation respectively. However, for RCCG, these colours are overlaid with secondary meanings. Green signifies aliveness, growth and nourishment. Green is also a favourite colour for the country as it is the

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<sup>376</sup> E. A. Adeboye, “Reversing the Irreversible”, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>377</sup> According to Adeboye, God revealed to him that “beginning from now [March 2003], the church shall also be known as the Church of Distinctions”, (*Redemption Light*, vol. 8, no. 3, April 2003, p. 21).

<sup>378</sup> Adeboye, cited in Olaitan Olubiyi, “The Search for Identity and the Perfect Name”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 7, August 2002, p. 36.

<sup>379</sup> Green is the official colour of Islam also (See Hadar 1993).

predominant colour in the nation's flag.<sup>380</sup> Important documents of the nation usually carry a cover of green such as international travelling passport. The official car of the leader is painted in deep green colour, an army colour in Nigeria that may as well carry the connotation of a military General in God's army: "There is no civilian in the kingdom of God. Anybody truly in the kingdom of God is a soldier. The bible says we must put on the whole armour of God. Soldiers wear armours. Our commander-in-chief is Jesus Christ".<sup>381</sup> This point is reiterated elsewhere thus: "we are an army of occupation. No Christian is a civilian. We are soldiers of the cross".<sup>382</sup>

Blue<sup>383</sup> represents aesthetics of the sky, heavenly focus and the journey towards heaven. In popular imagination, it is the colour of love and serenity or coolness. It could also connote mysteriousness and unfathomability as in the "deep blue sea". It is sometimes used in signifying nobility, royalty and aristocracy. In RCCG context, therefore, it can be associated with the mysteriousness of the love of God for human beings. Often, however, it is applied to the "royal priesthood" of Christians (1 Peter 2: 9).<sup>384</sup> In the RCCG, it carries this specific sense. Furthermore, it may mean the mysteriousness of God's covenant with Josiah which is regarded as the foundation of the church.

Another important symbol at the Redemption Camp is the presence of national flags. Just at the entrance to the Camp, during major events, are arranged the national flags of every country in which there is a congregation of the church. There are therefore more than eighty of such flags hoisted and flying in full mast, all constituting a forest of colours. Flanking both sides of the altar upon which Adeboye preaches are displayed a set of fourteen flags in short masts. Watching this dizzying sight gives an impression of a "United Nations' Church", a church with a global outreach, the coming together of diverse cultures and peoples. The different flags also indicate that the church has conquered the local as well as trans-local environments. As Adeboye himself affirms, the flag is a symbol of territorial dominion.<sup>385</sup> The church through this statement beckons those still outside its influence to come and be part of the victorious march to heaven through the super high way of the nations of the world. It is

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<sup>380</sup> Anyone familiar with Nigeria's national football teams will notice the use and function of the colour green as a state symbol of strength, vigour and youthful energy.

<sup>381</sup> E. A. Adeboye, *God the Holy Spirit*. Lagos: CRM, 1997, p. 116.

<sup>382</sup> E.A. Adeboye, "Occupy till I Come", *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 5, p. 10.

<sup>383</sup> Blue also has the ambiguous meaning of "depression" as in "feeling blue" or "a blue day". In informal contexts, it could be used to depict offensive and explicit sexual (pornographic) materials such as films and books.

<sup>384</sup> Wale Adeduro, "The Royal Law", *op. cit.*

<sup>385</sup> Adeboye, *Our Dominion Crowns*, *op. cit.*, p. 26

as well a political statement that other nations are physically represented in the particular sacred space of the camp, a miniature heaven, and a paradise in microcosm. The symbol of flags demonstrates the church's global identity and intention.

#### **6.1.4 Figures and Numbers**

Some numbers carry some spiritual significance in RCCG. In structuring its hierarchy, the church insists that because Jesus chose seventy apostles from five hundred brethren, and twelve from the seventy, three from the twelve and finally one (the beloved apostle) from the three, its leaders are selected from among many members of the church. "Five hundred is represented with the biggest circle; inside it is the circle of seventy, inside this is the circle of twelve, then three and lastly the circle of one."<sup>386</sup> Besides these numbers, Adeboye has his favourite figures that are replete in his sermons: there are twelve keys to divine prosperity; there are seven forms of satanic possession. While twelve may indicate some form of completeness as Jesus chose twelve apostles and there are twelve tribes in Israel, seven is an odd number and represents some form of negative experience in human life. Hence, the seven ways in which Satan attacks humans.

Other numbers that have emerged from an analysis of Adeboye's sermons and practices are significant: every Holy Ghost Service he conducts will be remembered for ten years; God needs a thousand people to fast for sixty days each year for ten years; another one thousand people to work in the Camp for sixty days each year for ten years; yet another one thousand people to give the church a million naira each year for ten years; and lastly, a hundred people to give the church ten million naira each year for ten years.<sup>387</sup> The primary reward for all these categories of people is that they will be alive for the next ten years (which is a necessary condition for fulfilling their pledges). The figures of ten, hundred and a thousand are significant because they are even numbers and indicate wholeness or wholesomeness, perfection. If we multiply ten by hundred, the result is a thousand, the culmen of spiritual perfection; and a million is a thousand multiplied by itself, a symbol of human perfection and divine selection. Through these numbers and other ritual practices and teachings, Adeboye is carrying out a massive religious mobilisation that aims at fostering allegiance to the RCCG as a place where people receive their due rewards for investing in God and his ministers.

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<sup>386</sup>RCCG: *Workers-in-Training Manual*, *op. cit.*, p.13

<sup>387</sup>Adeboye, "God of Double Portion", *op. cit.* See chapter 5.3.5 for details of this.

## 6.2 Ritual World

In the ritual world of the RCCG, one can identify at least five different dimensions of rituals: i) ritual persons or specialists; ii) ritual objects; iii) ritual events/occasions; iv) ritual time; and v) ritual place/space. In our presentation of the hierarchy of RCCG in chapter 4, we discussed the different classes of pastors, beginning with unordained ministers up to the General Overseer who is at the apex of the organisation. All of these are ritual specialists of different categories, with specific ritual responsibilities, guided by specific codes of conduct as well as rewards.

### 6.2.1 Ritual Objects

In this section, we shall discuss three types of ritual objects which occupy important place in the ritual world of RCCG, viz.: i) the bible, ii) the photographs of Adeboye, and iii) olive oil and prayer cloth. These items play significant roles in the spiritual life of members of the church, in how they understand themselves and in how they make sense of their daily lives as Nigerian Christians.

**i) The Bible:** The most important ritual object among members of RCCG is the bible. It is not simply a record of God's words and dealings with humanity, but alive with the presence and potency of God. It is a sacred text so important that it is a norm *not* to carry it as one would any other books. In the RCCG, the bible is carried in a special pouch, usually made of leather or a variant material with a handle. The practice of carrying the bible in a pouch is to preserve it from being damaged either by rain or carelessly falling to the ground or damage from frequent handling. It is also to show that the bible is a special book in a class of its own.

Almost every policy or practice of the church or of its members is traced to the bible. The bible constitutes the basis or justification for action. It is not only the record of divine revelation; the material in which this revelation is documented is regarded as a carrier of the sacred, with powers to bring about miracles, to protect, to guide and to prosper people. The bible has an additional importance for RCCG: it serves as the church's operative constitution. The common belief that the bible is written by divine inspiration informs the claim of the church that all its actions and practices are guided and guaranteed by the Holy Spirit: No member of the Governing Council is elected. The claim is that whenever anyone is to be admitted to the council, it will be through the leading of the Holy Spirit ministering to any, or

some or all of the members at a time.<sup>388</sup> Thus, there are no votes or casting of lots to approve any programme or to select anybody to a position. Selection of leaders rather than their election is a process employed by the various units and levels of authority in the church (Ojo 1997: 12).

The bible represents a ritual object the presence of which validates liturgical practices and actions. It is revered, carried as a token of the sacred imbued with divine power to protect and guide. The bigger the bible and the more elaborate the pouch, the more it is physically visible and recognised as a sign of social piety. Because the bible and its pouch are usually in high demand, there are numerous stands at the Redemption Camp where both the bible and the pouch are sold to the public or visitors. As result of the spiritual and social significance accorded the bible in RCCG, it costs more to buy it here than elsewhere. Social and spiritual importance has come to be attached to the material value of the sacred text, hence its relatively high cost.

**ii) Photographs of Adeboye:** Second only to the bible in terms of ubiquity is the photograph of Adeboye. The colour photograph of Adeboye plays a significant role in the spiritual and social aesthetics of RCCG. His photographs and those of his wife adorn the walls of virtually every single room at the Redemption Camp or the National Headquarters at Ebute-Metta, Lagos. These images are seen hanging on walls of supermarkets and shops within the Redemption Camp as well as in the cars of pastors and followers. Almost every edition of the church's numerous magazines carries these pictures as cover photographs. In one edition of the church's *Redemption Light* (vol. 5, no., 12 January 2002), there were twelve different photographs of Adeboye. In another edition (vol. 7, no. 2, March 2002), there were fifty-one photographs in the 66-page magazine. In yet another edition (vol. 8, no. 2, March 2003), there were thirty-eight of these different photographs while the August 2003 edition carries thirty-nine colour photographs of the leader.

In addition, calendars and almanacs produced by different parishes or parachurch groups inevitably carry these images. These pictures are gazed at with awe, reverence, inspiration and adoration. Such overwhelming saturation of the public and spiritual spaces of RCCG with particular images of their leaders, who are mainly males and their wives, indicates the power of images in the "communication between human and divine realms in an economy of

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<sup>388</sup> Personal interview with AGO Pastor M. O. Ojo, *op. cit.*

ritualized exchange” (Morgan and Promey 2001: 2). The images that are publicly displayed with pride and passion help in the establishment of social allegiances; they also reinforce a common understanding of the pre-eminent place of such personalities. They also help in the creation of special religious experiences for members who always have to look at the images as part of their religious practice. In the manner in which the images of admired personalities are displayed and revered openly, they constitute strong sources of emotional, mental, psychic, spiritual and social stimulation to members of RCCG.<sup>389</sup> Because Adeboye is perceived as a special channel of grace and miracle, these images demonstrate particular ways of envisioning spiritual agency and potency.

**iii) Olive Oil and Prayer Cloth:** Two other ritual materials in the RCCG are the olive oil and prayer cloth or handkerchief. While the olive oil represents “anointing oil”, the prayer cloth represents “anointed handkerchief”. There is an elaborate teaching on “anointing” in Adeboye’s sermons. There is only one reference to “anointing” in the church’s *Fundamental Beliefs in the Bible*: “We believe in the laying on of hands and anointing the sick on the head in the name of the Lord and that prayer of faith shall save the person”.<sup>390</sup> Such methods as sanctification of water for the sick to drink, candles, special washing in flowing streams, use of the cross (or crucifix) are declared unbiblical and “all those using the above materials for healing shall perish with them”.<sup>391</sup> This indirectly refers to the *Aladura* churches. The text does not identify the material with which the sick is anointed, and olive oil is not mentioned as part of the anathemised materials.<sup>392</sup> Adeboye calls anointing “Heaven’s electricity” which flows through a material channel; he believes to have the power to regulate such anointing.<sup>393</sup>

However, the practice appears to have more force than doctrine, so, it is the practice in the church that olive oil is submitted by members who label the containers of oil with their names for identification. These objects are prayed over by Adeboye. The objects are submitted directly to the leader’s office, since he alone exercises the spiritual prerogative of praying over them through which they become imbued with divine grace and power. The prayers are usually said over the objects in private and later handed back to their owners. Sometimes, however, the congregation is asked to raise their handkerchiefs and oil during the Holy Ghost

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<sup>389</sup> During the Ministers’ Conference that ended on 4 August 2002, Adeboye cautioned his ministers about the public display of his photographs on posters, billboards and other public spaces. Such caution is recognition of a certain degree of excesses.

<sup>390</sup> *FBB*, article 23.

<sup>391</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>392</sup> Olive oil as material for anointing the sick is nowhere mentioned in the New Testament.

<sup>393</sup> Adeboye, *Deep Calleth unto Deep*, Lagos; CRM Press, pp. 5-6

Service for blessing. This appears to be the only time ritual objects are publicly prayed over or consecrated. In both instances, however, only Adeboye who has the spiritual power or anointing could endow these objects with sacred power and significance.

In a dramatic demonstration of the nature and uses of anointing, Adeboye recently declared that God instructed him to wear three shirts at the same time for an undisclosed number of days and nights so that some of his own anointing would be transferred onto the shirts. God further directed him that on the first night of wearing these shirts, he should remove one of them, fold it in a particular way, place it in a basin, and fill the basin with oil. The oil will be the transmitting medium of the anointing in the shirt to every one in the congregation who comes in contact with it.

When you touch the oil, you will touch your head, you will touch your mouth and then you will rub the remainder on the palm of your hand. The one on your head is going to take care of every yoke in your body. The one in your mouth is going to ensure that the prayers you pray tonight will all be answered. And the one on your hand is going to ensure the beginning of your prosperity.<sup>394</sup>

The use of olive oil as ritual object is not new in RCCG. It is a point of continuity between RCCG and the C&S, which is more renowned for the use of such ritual objects. In RCCG, the sacred oil is used in a number of ways and for a number of purposes: i) it could be mixed with water and ingested as remedy for physical ailments or prophylactic; ii) it is used in protecting material possessions such as cars, bags, electronics, and other household belongings from either theft; iii) it could serve as protection from evil spirits and iv) not infrequently, it is applied to the body where there is pain or “dis-ease”; v) it is believed to attract good fortune. According to Josiah’s son, his father used olive oil and distributed some bottles of it to his children and pastors. The oil served as substitute for medicines, which they refrained from using.<sup>395</sup> It is an act that represents the sacramental ingestion of the holy, the sacred and the powerful.

I had malaria fever sometimes in 1999. I was given blood transfusion, which affected my spine and my right leg swelled. [...] During the Special Holy Ghost Service last year (March 2001), my husband brought me [to the Redemption Camp]. When the people

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<sup>394</sup>Adeboye, “God of Double Portion”, sermon preached at the HGS, Redemption Camp, 1 March 2002.

<sup>395</sup>Personal interview with Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op. cit.*

who could not walk were asked to be brought forward, I was taken to the altar and I was anointed. I have been walking since then to the glory of God.<sup>396</sup>

A senior pastor of the church claimed that the use of olive oil is biblical and not necessarily a carry over from the C&S. Moreover, it is not all ritual practices of the C&S that are unbiblical. However, he concludes, “the use of oil in the past was not as rampant as we are using it today”.<sup>397</sup>

Much like olive oil, prayer cloths are pervasive pentecostal practice in Nigeria and elsewhere.<sup>398</sup> In the RCCG prayer cloths are mainly white handkerchiefs, which are either prayed over by Adeboye or anointed with sacred oil already blessed by Adeboye (cf. Ojo 2001: 78). Its main theological justification is in the biblical text of Acts 19: 11-12. This bible text states: “And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the disease departed from them, and evil spirits went out of them”. Adeboye cites this text to backup the practice, commenting further that: “It is possible for a man’s anointing to be so saturated that people carry part of it about in pieces of clothes (*sic*) to place it on someone who is sick in some other place and the sickness will go”.<sup>399</sup> In addition to this is the text of 2Kings 2:14: “And he (Elisha) took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said Where is the Lord God of Elijah? And when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over”.

There are countless testimonies of followers of Adeboye to the effect that devotional cloths bring about healing, or expel evil spirits, bring about good business fortune and give protection from robbers and road accidents.

I asked God for complete success in my MBBS [Masters in Banking and Business Studies] exams. I also prayed and read with an *anointed hankie* (handkerchief). To His glory, I passed all my

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<sup>396</sup> Mrs. Abiodun Diyan, *Redemption Testimonies*, no. 74, April 2001, p.16

<sup>397</sup> Personal interview with Pastor J. A. Bolarinwa, *op. cit.* Some members of church complain that such indiscriminate use and reliance on ritual objects is transforming the objects into folk magical practice.

<sup>398</sup> R. Marie Griffith, “Material Devotion: Pentecostal Prayer Cloths”, *Material History of American Religion Project*, <http://www.materialreligion.org/journal/handerkerchief.html> (Accessed 08.05.02).

<sup>399</sup> Adeboye, Interview, *Newswatch* (Lagos), vol. 30, no 24, 22 December 1999, p. 12.

courses, including the one I thought I would fail (emphasis added).<sup>400</sup>

It is also a common practice for followers to send these anointed cloths and the anointing (olive) oil to friends and relations outside the country for use as sacramental object of divine favour and grace. These handkerchiefs are ordinary articles of use, mainly made of cotton, often in Taiwan, Hong Kong or China, which have been ritualised and thought to be holy but also carry sacred power to influence human actions and destiny in mysterious ways. Because of their ritual purposes, white handkerchiefs are in high demand within the Redemption Camp, and they are more costly to buy here than outside the camp. There are stocks of these items in many of the supermarkets which the CRM operates within the Redemption Camp.

Underpinning the demand and use of ritual objects in RCCG is the perception of Adeboye as a holy man of God who is: i) a channel of grace, ii) a healer, and iii) a miracle worker. Whatever he touches or what carries his voice, images, stories is also considered media of divine intervention. For example, the audio-visuals of the programmes of the church are advertised as imbued with spiritual power to minister miracles, healing and prosperity. They are “points of contact” with the channel of divine grace, who is the church leader.<sup>401</sup>

I was on the verge of committing suicide in 1997 when there came a prophecy through the man of God, Pastor E. A. Adeboye, and all that was troubling me ...disappeared.<sup>402</sup> I had a peculiar ailment... I came with two of my sisters to the Redemption Camp to pray. I promised that if the God of Pastor E. A. Adeboye could heal me, I would testify. To His own glory, I have been completely healed.<sup>403</sup>

The church’s numerous magazines, tambourines and devotional books are thought to be vehicles of leader’s anointing, material carriers of immaterial power. As many followers seek these devotional objects especially during moments of crises, such as ill health, bereavement, hazardous journey, going for important job interviews, etc., their presence in itself is an indicator of life’s precariousness, existential desperation to regain control of one’s life or some friends’ or relations’ stable living. A senior pastor of the church who preferred not to be

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<sup>400</sup> Kolajo Adenike, *Redemption Testimonies*, no. 68, October 2000, p. 9.

<sup>401</sup> According to Tosin Onayiga, “You can use these tapes to pray for prosperity, security, survival of the family, unity of church, peace and progress in Nigerian (*sic*) and miracles, signs and wonders”, “Bringing Lekki Into Your Home”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 4, no. 2, March 1999, p.54.

<sup>402</sup> Samuel Idowu, *Redemption Testimonies*, no. 74, April 2001, p. 13.

<sup>403</sup> Mrs. Oyeyemi, *Redemption Light*, no. 74, April 2001, p. 16

identified by name reasoned that ordinarily Adeboye would not want people to use these items but he is often pressured by those who believe in him and as a compassionate person who does not want his followers to suffer, he obliges them. This pastor conceives the anointing oil and prayer cloths as symbols of Adeboye's compassion and kindness towards Nigerians. For people who carry these items around, they represent the presence of the divine in life's journey. They also form social commentary on the state of social life in Nigeria with the near-collapse of basic social infrastructure such as health facility, productive working and academic environments.

### **6.2.2 Ritual Events**

As an activist religion, there are many ritual events in RCCG. These events are characterised by a degree of regularity and repetition. They occur at fixed moments in the week, month or year. There are other events, which, though not occurring at fixed moments, constitute both spiritual and social markers: child dedication, marriage, baptism, and funerals.

In our presentation in chapter 4, we discussed two of weekly events in RCCG: Digging Deep and Faith Clinic. The former is a weekly bible study programme, while the latter is a deliverance/healing/prosperity programme. Since it is not necessary to go into details concerning all these events, (partly because some are dealt with elsewhere<sup>404</sup> and partly because there is nothing new about some, being almost the same standard pentecostal practice familiar with most people), we shall only hint at some while providing details for a few considered strategic events in the global aspirations of the RCCG. This latter category of events has played important roles in making the church known both in and outside Nigeria. The growing popularity of RCCG may be partly attributed to six ritual events, viz.: i) Annual Convention; ii) Holy Ghost Service; iii) Holy Ghost Congress; iv) Campus Holy Ghost Service; v) Divine Encounter; and vi) Ministers' Conference. The ritual world of RCCG revolves around these hubs of activities, which necessarily involve the active participation of Adeboye himself. These activities largely account for his emergence into national limelight less than two decades ago.

All these ritual events (except Campus Holy Ghost Service that is a variant of Holy Ghost Service) are regular, repetitive ritual performances. Adeboye often insists that active

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<sup>404</sup> Adekola (1989:200-227) provides description of regular Sunday worship, Holy Communion Service, Baptismal and Marriage ceremonies, ordination, foundation-laying events and funerals. These are adaptations from other pentecostal churches and from the Anglican Book of Common Prayers.

participation will ensure that the memory of the event lasts a lifetime.<sup>405</sup> In this section, we shall discuss the six important RCCG ritual events listed above.

#### **6.2.2.1 Annual Convention**

The singular most important event in the liturgical calendar of RCCG is the Annual Convention. It is part of the constitutional provision for running the church: “There shall be a convention of the whole body of the Mission once in each year” (art. 16: i). The constitution also provides a framework for the activities of the convention thus, “The purpose of the Annual Convention shall be to provide an opportunity to members to join in acts of worship and witness for the Mission and to disseminate information amongst the members” (art.16: iii).

The convention, which holds for about one week in the first two weeks in August, brings to a close the church’s liturgical year and inaugurates a new one.<sup>406</sup> It was previously held at the National Headquarters of the church at Ebute-Metta, Lagos, but was moved to the Redemption Camp since 1983. The new location provides better accommodation and auditorium facilities for participants and visitors. The convention is a period of anniversary, commemorating the establishment of the church. As a period of stock taking in the church, it is marked by submission of reports on the missions, assessment and evaluation of church projects and activities. Above all it is the celebration of the successes of the church. When the reports are handed in and examined by certain committees of the church, a fresh mission strategy can then be put forward for leaders of the church for the following church year. In recent years, the shuffling of posts, responsibilities and positions in the church as well as the creation of new administrative units and posts have marked the annual convention.

Before the ordination of Adeboye as pastor in the RCCG, the convention had a format different from what it now is. According to the Assistant General Overseer in charge of Research, Planning and Education, Pastor P. Olu Ojo, who has witnessed almost all the Annual Conventions of the church to date, before 1976, the convention was always in two

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<sup>405</sup> During the March 2002 Holy Ghost Service, Adeboye told his audience, “I say in March we have special Holy Ghost Service (HGS), but the one of this year is going to be an extra ordinary special Holy Ghost Service. It is the kind of HGS that you see probably once in ten years. That is why I know that tonight somebody is going to receive a blessing that he will still be talking about for the next ten years”, (“God of Double Anointing”, *op. cit.*).

<sup>406</sup> The church year effectively ends at the end of July while the new one starts with the convention. Its duration was previously for ten days but that has been slashed to seven days in recent times. In the past, the convention was held mainly at the end of July (Adekola 1989: 227).

parts: morning and afternoon sessions, with the afternoon left free for participants to take care of some private businesses. This format changed in 1976 when Adeboye, with the permission of Josiah, repackaged the convention. It now took the form of seminars, talks, bible studies, melody hour, service of songs, and bible quiz among the different provinces of the church, and film shows. In addition to this obvious expansion of the programmes of the convention there was the introduction of a theme for each year. “The purpose of the themes was to focus each year’s gathering on an important issue in the heavenly race”.<sup>407</sup> The theme of 1976 convention was “The Way to Heaven”; that of 2002 was “The King is Coming”, while that of 2003 which held between 4 – 10 August was “The Almighty”.<sup>408</sup>

There are important events that take place during the convention aside from the regular worship and praise services. These include the graduation ceremony of the church’s Bible school (RCBC), ordinations to different rungs of church, and appointments to new posts. The convention has been expanding in scope as the church experiences expansion. For example, during the 1981 convention only five pastors were ordained compared to 211 candidates that were ordained full pastor in 2001, in addition to 4,560 candidates elevated to the positions of deacons/deaconesses. Furthermore, during the 2002 convention, more than 7,000 workers of the church were ordained deacons/deaconesses while 300 full pastors were also ordained.<sup>409</sup> In a similar manner, during the 2003 convention, more than 7,000 workers of the church were ordained deacon/deaconesses; 720 deacons/deaconesses were ordained Assistant Pastors while 361 Assistant pastors were ordained full pastors.<sup>410</sup>

The annual convention is one moment when Adeboye performs as an artiste: he renders the traditional Yoruba praise chant, *ewi*. During this performance, he renders his own poetry into songs in praise of God. The themes of the songs are mainly culled from biblical stories of miracles, God’s faithfulness and compassion. The *ewi* performance has a fixed date during the convention week. It always takes place during the “Service of Songs” which falls on the fourth day (Thursday) of the convention week. The Service of Songs begins with different parishes and provinces of the church coming on stage to perform highly choreographed songs and dance dramas. There is a diverse display of cultural performances such as songs in the

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<sup>407</sup> Pastor P. Olu Ojo, “RCCG at 50”, *Redemption News*, vol. 3, no. 1, p. 8.

<sup>408</sup> See The 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention of RCCG Programme of events.

<sup>409</sup> See “Golden Jubilee Convention: A miracle-filled Affair”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 8, September 2002, pp. 6, 18.

<sup>410</sup> See Olaitan Olubiyi *et al.*, “Convention 2003: So Glorious, So Powerful”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 8, no. 8, September 2003, pp. 19-20.

vernacular and traditional attire. The high point of these cultural renditions is the emergence of Adeboye and his *ewi* choral group made up of two sub-groups of sixteen elderly women of between the ages of forty-five and fifty-five years and fourteen men of between thirty-two and forty-five years of age.<sup>411</sup> The women, clad in traditional *iro* and *buba* with *gele* and *ipele* made of *aso oke* material,<sup>412</sup> form two concentric circles of eight women in the background with a microphone in the centre of the centre. The men also form two similar circles of seven men with a microphone in the middle of each circle. To complete the formation, a young man who acts as a backup vocal singer stands alone about a metre and a half behind Adeboye with a microphone in his hand.

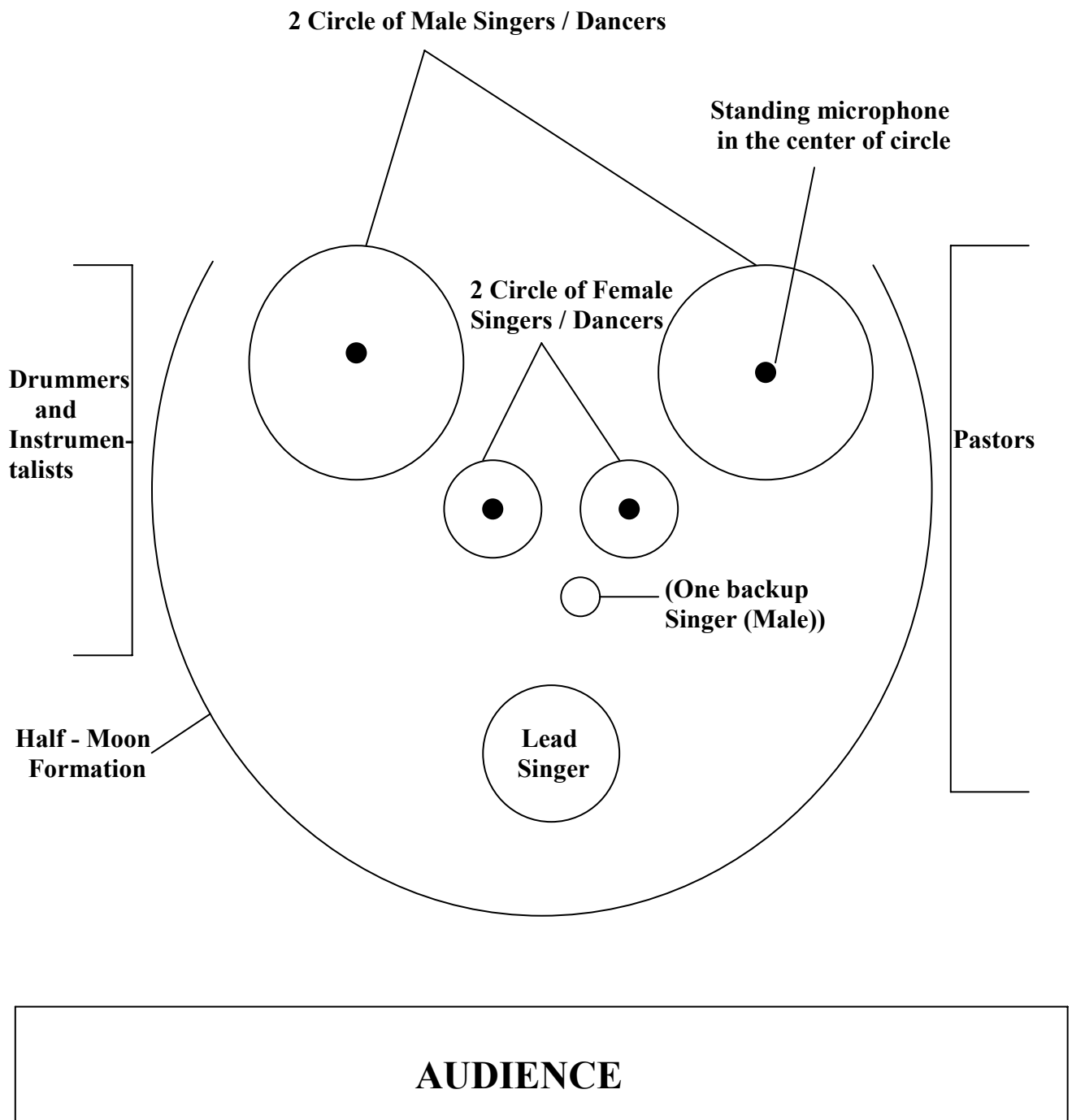
Clad in white *kaftan*, a long-flowing traditional attire of expensive lace material, and a matching *sokoto* trousers (without the *agbada*), the two male sub-groups chant the choruses as they move slowly round a microphone stationed in the middle of a circle. In addition to the two male sub-groups, a man who sings the background vocals and harmony stands directly behind the lead singer all through the performance. Adeboye, wearing three-piece traditional attire made up of white *agbada* upon a *kaftan* with a *sokoto* trouser to match,<sup>413</sup> both made from the same expensive lace material, stands in front of the smaller groups. He holds a tambourine in his right hand and the hand-written lyrics of the *ewi* in his left and chants in the vernacular to the accompaniment of both electronic and traditional musical instruments such as the saxophone, the guitars, the *dundun* and the *cong-cong* (see figure 6.1). The group files into the stage, with Adeboye taking the rear, straight from a hall specially designated for the use of pastors and situated just in front of Adeboye's office. This hall is called the "Prayer Arena". They move to the stage that is regarded as the holiest physical location in the auditorium and assume positions in sub-groups. When all the members of the group have

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<sup>411</sup> The *ewi* performance described here was performed on 8 August 2002 from 4 pm local time to 6.25 pm. The women in the *ewi* choral group are much older than the men partly because of the belief that these post-menopause women would not constitute sensuous distractions during the public performance of the *ewi* and also, being wives of elderly senior pastors of the church, they are prayer warriors whose supplications would bring about the occurrence of miracles during the occasion. The male members of the group are pastors diligently selected by the General Overseer himself.

<sup>412</sup> These are culture specific pieces of attire of the Yoruba. The *iro* is the wrapper while the *buba* is a sort of loose long sleeve blouse; the *gele* is the traditional headgear or head scarf and the *ipele* is a smaller wrapper tied upon the larger (*iro*) piece. While the *iro* and the *buba* are made of the same material, the *gele* and the *ipele* are made of the same *aso oke*, a delicate, multi-coloured, hand-woven material.

<sup>413</sup> The material from which Adeboye's clothing is designed is different from those of his choral group. It is more expensive and complete, lacking only the cap. This marks him out symbolically as leader and head of the group. The structural arrangement of the choral group also indicates the symbolic configuration of power and authority in the church as well as in the *ewi* choral group. Dancing in circles indicates a complete harmony between the members of the church and the supernatural to whom praise and honour are rendered during such performance.



**Figure 6.1: Structural Formation of Adeboye's *Ewi* Choral Group.**

assumed their proper position, and the instruments quickly tested, the lead singer signals he is about to commence performance. With the instrumentalists on a different stage, Adeboye intones the chorus which is picked up by the back-up singers. As the lead-singer, Adeboye's tone and voice, his clothing for the occasion and his every gesture, his swinging from side to side, tell the audience how to feel, what to feel and what to expect during the event. He chants a verse which lasts for about four minutes and his backup groups repeat the chorus. As the performance is going on, a large number of accredited journalists and press photographers keep clicking their cameras. The performance lasts for about sixty minutes. When it is ended, the performers file out in the same order as they came in, the only difference is that Adeboye's wife, Folu, who does not participate in the performance, joins her husband at the rear as he descends the stage and heads for the Prayer Arena.

Each performance of *ewi* is recorded in compact disc, video and audio cassettes formats for wider dissemination. Although the RCCG has branches in many countries of the world, the performance of *ewi* in Yoruba language is a clear indication that it is a locally grounded global religious enterprise. Its ritual and cultural underpinnings are not only Yoruba, its public representation and image management is thoroughly rooted in Yoruba worldview. The place of *ewi* in RCCG ritual confirms the argument of Oyèróké Olájubù (2001: 173-180) that the influence of Yoruba command language permeates the prayer, music and worship styles of Yoruba Christian groups.

The convention is preceded by massive media advertisement by individuals, parishes, companies and corporation bodies. Sophisticated outdoor billboards are erected on highways, posters are printed and pasted and both newspaper or magazine space and air -time are bought to announce the coming events. Through these different forms of advertisements, the public is urged to come and participate in the festival and harvest of miracles, which will take place during the convention. The public relations arm of the church is headed by a retired chairperson of Nigerian Breweries, Assistant Elder Felix Ohiweri, who is arguably the country's best corporate marketer. Through his efforts, different media organisations give the events sufficient attention. In addition, he liaises with other corporate bodies that would intent to use the opportunity to market their wares and services in exchange for donations to the church. Thus, although the convention is a time for church members to come together and participate in church activities as stipulated in the church's constitution, the public is also invited and allowed to be part of the events.

Like other popular programmes in the church, large parishes, provinces and other international branches of the church have cloned conventions. Large provinces also hold their respective conventions as well as other parachurch groups within a province or parish. All international conventions of RCCG branches are presided over by Adeboye in person. In line with the doctrine and policy of decentralisation that he has started to implement in recent years, the annual convention of the church at some future date is being proposed to hold in a location (yet to be specified at the time of field work) in the northern part of the country.<sup>412</sup>

The annual convention is a capital intensive programme. During the 2001 convention, Adeboye promised to feed the gathered crowd and his pastors free of charge. According to Pastor (Mrs) Adeboye (whose office co-ordinated the feeding arrangement), the church spent about forty million naira in executing the free feeding programme during this event. For the 2002 convention, the church claimed to have spent one hundred million naira for providing free food and hospitality for its members.<sup>413</sup> The annual convention and the resources needed for its successful hosting are expanding. Such expansion is, in like manner, witnessed in the number of contending business firms and economic actors who scramble to use the occasion to display and sell their products and services. While there was only one bank, City Express Bank plc, operating on the camp during the 2001 convention, a second bank, Global Bank plc, just opened a permanent branch a few days before the commencement of the 2002 convention.<sup>414</sup> While hitherto Procter & Gamble Limited and Coca-Cola Company have dominated public relations (PR) marketing at the camp, Unilever Plc made a strong self-assertion through PR marketing during the 2002 convention.<sup>415</sup>

#### **6.2.2.2 Holy Ghost Service (HGS)**

The most popular single ritual of RCCG is the Holy Ghost Service (HGS). It is advertised as “an interdenominational miracle service”.<sup>416</sup> This is an all-night monthly programme of prayers and vigil that attracts close to three hundred thousand people to the Redemption Camp of the church. The HGS started in March 1986 with about 2,000 people in attendance as a

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<sup>412</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 5, June 2002, p. 33

<sup>413</sup> Interview with Pastor (Mrs) Folu Adeboye, *Fifty Years of the RCCG*, Video Documentary produced by The Redemption Television Ministry (RTVM), August 2002.

<sup>414</sup> The chairman of Global Bank Plc is Professor Afolagbade Aboaba, a pastor and special assistant to the General Overseer of RCCG.

<sup>415</sup> Procter & Gamble is the sole importer and distributor of *Ariel* detergent and other household goods; Unilever is the largest conglomerate in the manufacture of domestic consumables, including the popular *Omo* brand of detergent. Felix Ohiweri, a national elder of the RCCG, is the present chairman, Board of Directors, of Unilever Plc and New Nigeria Bank Plc as well as the Pro-chancellor of the University of Ibadan at the time of this study.

<sup>416</sup> *RCCG at 50*, p. 42.

divine birthday gift to Adeboye (Bankole 1999: 26). “God said the General Overseer should ask for something for his birthday and he said he wanted all those who were sick to be healed and God said he should gather them somewhere for such a massive healing” (Ojo 1997: 10). This revelation to Adeboye while he was in London. It is also claimed that the name “Holy Ghost Service” was revealed to Adeboye in a dream, indicating that the service is not a human invention or design but a ritual instituted by God for the dispensation of miracles, healings and prosperity.<sup>417</sup> This event, which was initially an annual event, soon became popular for many reasons resulting in its conversion to a monthly programme. According to Adeboye, when people clamoured to have the event on a monthly basis, he sought God’s opinion on the matter and received divine approval to hold it every month.<sup>418</sup> Although it is a programme that takes place every first Friday of the month, that of the month of March is usually tagged an “extra special Holy Ghost Service” because this is the month of Adeboye’s birthday anniversary, when he told God he “wanted every member of my congregation to have a miracle”.<sup>419</sup> Because the March edition is special, it runs for three days. In practice, every HGS is said to be a “special” event for the organisers because it is construed as moment of divine intervention, when heaven opens and God manifests himself through a shower of blessings and miracles.

The HGS is not a single religious event; it is a complex of activities, some religious, some social and others strictly economic. Analysed broadly, the HGS consists of two days’ of religious activities, viz.: i) Praise Night, and ii) Holy Ghost Night. Both sets of activities take place at the Redemption Camp ground of the RCCG.

### **i) Praise Night**

Praise Night begins on the Thursday preceding the first Friday of each month. This event is specifically for the youth who begin to throng the Camp from mid-morning. By evening there are about two thousand young people, predominantly young women (who constitute between 60 and 70 percent), who converge at the large auditorium of the church. The events of the evening may be regarded as a prayerful prelude and preparation for the success of the HGS proper the day after. It is a night of carnival of songs as the youth choir mounts its band and sings praises, mainly choruses of all sorts to the accompaniment of huge electronic equipment

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<sup>417</sup> Adeboye, *Fifty Years of the RCCG*, a documentary video, produced and directed by Bayo Ogunsanya, 98 min; RTVM 2002.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>419</sup> Adeboye, “God of Double Portion”, *op. cit.*

such as amplifiers, loud speakers, and electronic guitars, the key board and microphones. There are also a few traditional musical instruments like *dundun*, the Yoruba talking drum. Almost all the participants in this event carry personal musical instruments, namely tambourines, rattling sticks or whistles.

The singing and dancing begins about 19.00 hours (local time) and reaches a crescendo about mid-night when the youth “make loud noise for joy” by uncontrolled display of energy and exuberance which sometimes involves lifting plastic chairs into the air and running about with them in the auditorium. At all moments those with their musical instruments use these: the rattling noise of the tambourines and the hooting sounds of the whistles. Those without instruments shout at the top of their voices for as long as they are capable. At about 02 hours in the morning, a senior pastor of the church comes on stage to address the youth and admonish them briefly before Adeboye comes around an hour later to bless the congregation. As he leaves, the praise carnival begins to wind down to a diminuendo and the crowd peters out to find a sleeping point somewhere in the Camp.

## **ii) Holy Ghost Night (HGN)**

The HGN begins at 19.00 hours the evening after the Praise Night. This event is advertised by the church as a miracle event, “Be available for a miracle: attend the monthly Holy Ghost Service”,<sup>420</sup> “Miracles! They happen at the monthly Holy Ghost Services”.<sup>421</sup> From the early hours of the day, busloads of people begin to arrive at the venue. These people come from all over the country and some from the West African sub-region. As the day wears out, so the camp is turned to a beehive of activities, with ushers and technicians ensuring that all is set for the commencement of the main event. An event that has regularly held on a particular day of the month, particular place in the country, officiated by one particular person has acquired a hallowed tradition that deserves to be described in some details.

The event commences with a long session of worship and praise songs rendered by various choir groups in the church, some in special uniforms, all singing to the accompaniment of heavy electronic equipment. After about two hours, the first sermon is delivered in English by a senior pastor of the church with simultaneous translation into Yoruba. This sermon is a prelude for the main sermon of the night to come later. At the end of the sermon, there is more

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<sup>420</sup>Adeboye, *Victory: The Decision is Yours*, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>421</sup>Adeboye, *The Tree by the Riverside*, op. cit., p. 31.

singing or drama sessions and sketches, usually by youth drama groups from different parishes in the church.

Meanwhile, earlier in the evening, at 17.00 hours, all the pastors of the church converge at the “Prayer Arena”. While here, Adeboye conducts a prayer meeting with them, a meeting that involves songs, prayers, and exhortation. He discusses with them and intimates them about relevant new developments in the church. This meeting lasts for two hours, at the end of which the pastors file out in twos straight to the main auditorium for the main event of the night. As they walk into the auditorium, they first surround the main altar or stage where Adeboye would be preaching, facing inward. In this circular formation, the pastors pray for about fifteen minutes, spiritually securing and fortifying the area against negative spiritual forces before the coming of Adeboye.

This gesture is very significant in RCCG. It is both physical and spiritual posture of battle undergirded by RCCG’s self-perception as an object of envy and jealousy among other less popular pentecostal churches/pastors or even the devil. Some of the pastors believe that some other less favoured church leaders would want to bring down the fortunes of the church by metaphysical means, for example, through casting spells on the stage upon which Adeboye delivers his sermons and miracles. If such spells are not quickly neutralised through the rituals of exorcism and intensive spiritual fortification, which the pastors come in to perform before taking their seats, the events of the evening may be scuttled or become less effective. Moreover, malign forces and spirits such as witches and wizards who feel the negative impact of Adeboye’s “anointing” and foray into their domain may as well invade the stage in order to neutralise the powers of Adeboye. Adeboye has had occasions to inform his audience during the HGN that there were people in the congregation who only came to test his spiritual authority and power.

The Lord says there’s someone here tonight who says he’s coming to find out how powerful Pastor Adeboye is. [...] Adeboye has no power but he has a father that is Almighty....In order that they may not bury you on Monday, I ask you to come out now: to come and pray and ask my father to forgive you.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>422</sup>Adeboye, “Deliverance Night”, HGS, 1 June 2001. After this announcement, the congregation was instructed to close their eyes “so we don’t embarrass whoever the fellow is. Let’s give the fellow an opportunity to be saved.” The three video cameras on stage for the night were also switched off and not record what was to happen. Adeboye then said he would count to ten and if the fellow failed to come out there would be disaster

After this military gesture, the pastors take their places at the left hand side of the stage. Adeboye and a few top-ranking pastors (mainly Assistant General Overseers) are driven into the auditorium through a driveway that leads directly to the back of the stage at 22.00 hours. He walks up to the stage and delivers the main sermon of the night, which lasts close to three hours on the average. He begins by chanting the *oriki* praise of God's name, an exercise that lasts for about twenty to thirty minutes. Thereafter, he tells the congregation to "shake hands with one or two people and tell them: 'Welcome to miracles'. Say it as if you mean it".<sup>423</sup> He begins his sermon which is frequently punctuated with revelation knowledge of those who have found favour in the sight of God or miracles happening to some members of the audience. In general, the homily is both exhortatory and didactic, sometimes interspersed with prayers in *oriki* format. Not infrequently he reminds his audience to bring out their note books and get prepared to take down notes as he preaches. Such preaching/teaching session ends with an altar call, and those who come out for prayers are prayed for and urged to "wash themselves clean in the blood of Jesus". They are also requested to give their names and addresses to counsellors behind the stage for follow up. Offering and the narration of selected testimonies follow the altar call. After the testimonies, there are a few announcements and musical performances by the choir or other performing groups. Often, there is a second collection, termed "thanksgiving offering" for those who have received the blessings of God during the session, an element that is followed with laying on of hands by the pastors on the members of the congregation. The end of the programme for the congregation comes at about 03.30 hours in the morning.

As Adeboye declares the programme over, he pleads with the congregation to allow the ministers and pastors of the church to file out of the auditorium as they had earlier filed in. He walks to his jeep parked at the back of the altar along the driveway that runs through the middle of the auditorium. He is driven to the "Prayer Arena" where the events started for him and his pastors earlier the previous evening. Here, the pastors join him and a prayer of thanksgiving is offered to God for a successful outing. This is the real end of the HGS for Adeboye and his pastors. This last ritual lasts for about ten minutes, at the end of which the pastors disperse while Adeboye goes back to his office to attend to visitors and other

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awaiting him or her in the next few days. He counted to nine, and then three young women of about 30 to 35 years of age emerged from the crowded arena and knelt down before him. He asked them to repeat after him "Lord I will never test your power again; just forgive me, have mercy on me today..." He also urged the congregation to pray for them, before retiring them to their seats in the congregation.

<sup>423</sup>Adeboye, "God of Double Portion", *op. cit.*

important engagements. Such visitors often include state governors and top politicians who participate in the event.

The RCCG manifests a great deal of symbolism in different aspects of its operations. One important aspect is in respect of seats and sitting arrangement. During the HGS, social ranking is maintained in the sitting arrangements in the auditorium. The hierarchical ordering of the sitting arrangement reflects the social ranking of Yoruba society where royal persons and other nobilities demand and receive preferential treatments from the public. Adeboye's seat is the highest in the auditorium, and markedly different, followed by his wife's which is bigger than those of the Assistant-General Overseers. The seats of the principal officers of the church are bigger than those of other pastors; and this last category is farther away from the stage from where the sermons and other oracular performances are delivered. The seats are ordered in order of priority: Adeboye's, and his wife's, those of the principal officers, followed by other pastors.

During religious events, socially important guests and other important personalities such as politicians, prominent company executives, media personalities, and members of royal households, have precedence over "ordinary" members of the church. These "royal" personalities are seated in a special section in the auditorium, just in front of the preaching stage and next to the pastors of the church. A section of the front area of the auditorium marked "Protocol" is reserved for VIPs who come to the church. A pastor, who literally acts as a club bouncer, is in charge of securing this location and making these guests comfortable by keeping all other lesser mortals away from the reserved place.<sup>424</sup>

When the HGS was celebrated at the Lagos headquarters of the church, it was a congregational ritual; however, when it moved to the Redemption Camp, it became a trans-congregational programme, where people from all occupations and religious persuasions are invited and welcome to be part of. February 1994 marked a further transformation of the HGS as it was the first time it was held outside the Camp since it was moved to the site. This was the beginning of holding the HGS on public (or secular) sites as it was held at the Tafawa Balewa Square (TBS), Lagos. The success of this event occasioned a repeat performance in November of the same year for the same site. On the local scene, the HGS has been on the

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<sup>424</sup> This pastor in charge must have been specially chosen for this task because he is very huge and muscular, sometimes threateningly physical in his approach to his task. Some senior pastors of the church who tried to secure a seat for me in this section of the auditorium during participate observation were rebuffed, sometimes rudely. This shows the seriousness with which he takes his responsibility to his V.I.P. guests.

move, having been redesigned to travel places. It thus moved away from Lagos and the Camp to Akure in 1995. In December 1995, the event came back to Lagos, but this time, the most important sports facility in the country, the National Stadium, Surulere, was host to over a hundred thousand people according to the church's estimate.<sup>425</sup> This public facility is now significant in the process of what may be termed "the Holy Ghost mobilisation" as it regularly hosts the event about two times a year. Today, the HGS is conducted in major cities and towns across the country.

According to the *Sunday School Manual* of the RCCG, "[m]iracle, great miracles, happenings of unprecedented dimension are regular features of the Holy Ghost Service each time and in each place where it holds".<sup>426</sup> The event serves as a strategy of i) proselytisation, ii) generation of material resources, iii) contest for social space, and iv) the dissemination of miracles, healings, blessings and deliverances.

It was also in 1994 that the HGS was packaged for the global arena as it was held in London, where it took a modified name: the **Festival of Lights**. The 1994 London celebration was the first HGS to be conducted outside Nigeria. This new name reflects the Jewish feast of Hanukkah, an eight-day festival beginning on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of Kislev in December.<sup>427</sup> For the RCCG, the HGS represents the (re)dedication of Nigeria and the whole world to God and the preparation of the world for the end-time events and the second coming of Jesus Christ.<sup>428</sup> The event now holds regularly in London every four months of the year. The public response to the London event and the enthusiasm of Adeboye's followers encouraged further expansion to such countries as the United States of America, Germany, Australia, the Netherlands, Israel and South Africa.

### 6.2.2.3 Holy Ghost Congress (HGC)

This is an annual ritual which started as a one-night affair in 1998 and holds in the month of December. It was originally called "Holy Ghost Festival" and during the convention of the church in August 2001, Adeboye announced that there was a change of name to reflect the true nature of the celebration. Giving reason for the change of name, he argued that "festival" connotes a worldly, fetish, and ritualistic assembly while a congress connotes "divine

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<sup>425</sup> *Sunday School Manual*, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>427</sup> This festival commemorates the rededication to Judaism of the Temple in Jerusalem in 165 BC after a period during which it had been used for the worship of Greek gods under Antiochus Epiphanes.

<sup>428</sup> Adeboye, *Fifty Years of the RCCG*, *op. cit.*

gathering”.<sup>429</sup> If the HGS was established in order that every member of RCCG would get a miracle, the HGC was established in order for the people of the world to get personal miracles of regeneration and prosperity. Thus, the HGC is to the world what the HGS is to Nigeria.

The HGC is a three-day event, the first of which took place at Lekki beach, in the outskirts of Lagos. The event, according to the church’s claim, constitutes the largest mobilisation of people as well as media blitz (Bankole 2001). It is claimed that the first edition of the event gathered approximately four million people in one spot on the surface of the earth, a feat never before recorded.<sup>430</sup> A feature of HGC is the media accompaniment. In 1998, the television rights for live broadcasting were sold to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Cable News Network (CNN). Although the local media organisations were used in advertising and mobilisation prior to the event, they never had the opportunity to broadcast the event unless they went through the BBC and the CNN.

The HGC also signifies the coming together of corporate bodies to sponsor the construction and provision of infrastructure at the venue in exchange for the rights to market their products. Right from its inception, the organising of the events and the packaging of advertisements have been in the hands of Assistant Elder Felix Ohiweri, who functions as the chairperson of the HGC’s public relations committee RCCG.<sup>431</sup> The planning of the events begins several months ahead with the erection of thousands of outdoor billboards in the country and in the sub-region: Ghana, Benin Republic and Cameroon. National dailies and newsmagazines are inundated with sponsored adverts placed by companies and individuals, church groups and other interest groups urging people to come and get their own miracles and prosperity. Companies do the supply of equipment such as electricity generating sets, chairs, public address system, floodlights and earth moving machines.

The last three editions of the event took place at the Redemption Camp, at a location now called “Festival Arena”, well beyond the largest auditorium. Perhaps the relocation of the event from Lekki Beach to the campground was partly because of some of the scathing criticisms that came from some pentecostal pastors who accused the RCCG of actually worshipping mermaids at the Atlantic Ocean rather than God.<sup>432</sup> Lekki Beach, where the HGC

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<sup>429</sup>*Redemption Light*, vol. 6, no. 8, September 2001.

<sup>430</sup>*Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 12, January 2003, pp. 17f

<sup>431</sup>See *NewsWatch* (Nigeria), vol. 30, no. 24, December 20, 1999, p. 13. Elder Felix Ohiweri’s wife is a deaconess in the RCCG, see *Ibid*, p. 31.

<sup>432</sup>One of the pastors who went public with this opinion was Tunde Bakare; see *The News* (Nigeria), 2 March 2002.

was first hosted, is off the Atlantic Ocean. It is a common belief that people come to the beach to invoke and worship some “marine” spirits or solicit for supernatural powers and wealth from the spirits of the deep sea.

Each annual event is given a tag, usually a catch phrase: Divine Visitation (1998); Victory at Last (1999); Open Heavens (2000); Wind of Change (2001); Showers of Blessing (2002); “A New Song” (2003). The pattern of activities during the HGC is essentially the same as the HGS: the performance of songs and praise, teachings and preaching, collection of offerings, call to the altar, prayers, testimonies, laying on of hands (for anointing and healing), thanksgiving collection and performance of drama sketches and songs. Since 1999, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria sends a delegation and presents speeches during the events. Other politicians, like state governors and ministers also attend these events, making speeches and other public gestures. Furthermore, important dignitaries and guests come in from other countries, especially the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

Much like other programmes in RCCG, the HGC has witnessed its transformations also. From a one night event in 1998, it moved to a three-day programme. From a three-day event, it is now a week long celebration of “what happens when and where God and man meet”.<sup>433</sup> The 2002 edition held between 16-21 December. Unlike the previous editions, there are now guest preachers and speakers; some are pastors from the United States<sup>434</sup> while others are political leaders and their representatives reading official addresses and comments. Again, the last edition witnessed the use of Outside Broadcasting Van (OBV) owned by the church to broadcast the events live to a global audience through Maranatha Christian Broadcasting station, Dallas, whose president, Roger Macduff, was also present at the events.<sup>435</sup>

Organising a mega-event such as HGC is a cost intensive enterprise. The provision of electricity alone for the one week of the 2002 edition was said to have gulped the sum of forty million naira (about €285.714, 28) according to Adeboye.<sup>436</sup> Much of this sum came from corporate bodies, federal and state governmental organs and wealthy individuals.

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<sup>433</sup> Bukonla Akinwande and Adeola Akinremi, “Holy Ghost Congress”, *Redemption Light*, vol.7, no. 12, January 2003, p.17.

<sup>434</sup> Examples include Bishop Harry Jackson of the Hope Christian Church, Maryland, and Bishop Alfred Owens, vice Bishop of Mount Calvary Ministry, Dallas, Texas.

<sup>435</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 12, January 2003, pp. 17f

<sup>436</sup> Bukonla and Akinremi, *op. cit.*

#### 6.2.2.4 Campus Holy Ghost Service (CHGS)

Campus Holy Ghost Service (CHGS) is the name given to the Holy Ghost Services that are conducted on the campuses of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. CHGS came into existence against the backdrop of increasing violence among campus gangs, otherwise popularly called “Campus Secret Cults” (CSCs). On 10 July 1999, some students at the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), who professed to belong to a gang, murdered fellow students in cold blood. In one night, about seven students were killed and several injured. Following this events, students took laws into their hands, and in their uncontrolled attempts to extirpate CSCs from OAU, Ile-Ife, hunted down and killed some identified members of CSCs, increasing the number of those killed and adding to the flurry of lawlessness and violence. Before this period, CSCs’ activities in different Nigerian universities had claimed the lives of no fewer than twenty-five students. These cases of violence soon became known in the popular media as “Students’ Secret Cults clashes”. The latest event was a rude shock to the psyche of a nation that had witnessed many years of military violence but nothing compared to what happened on 10 July 1999.<sup>437</sup> Consequently, Adeboye was consulted, mandated and mobilised by the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, and some university administrators to help in the sanitisation of the social and moral life of students. According to the President Obasanjo, as “[w]e were considering this problem (of students’ cultism) and as I was looking for ways and means of dealing with it, I rubbed minds with Pastor Adeboye and he took the responsibility to go to the institutions of higher learning”.<sup>438</sup> Since the HGS is seen as the answer to all of Nigeria’s problems, a version of it could as well be packaged to meet the present challenges in the nation’s tertiary institutions. If CSCs activities are a menace, then a Campus Holy Ghost Service may as well be the remedy!; as one is a social disease, the other will be its spiritual medicine.

The first instance of CHGS was held at OAU, Ile-Ife on 17 November 1999. Two months after, it was hosted by the University of Ibadan on 14 January 2000; and the following month it was the turn of Lagos State University (LASU) to play host to the divine guest on 11 February 2001. The University of Ilorin, where Adeboye once taught, played host to the event on 11 October 2002. The CHGS take the format of HGS described above: songs, prayers, two sermons (the first by a senior pastor of RCCG and the second which is the main event of the

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<sup>437</sup>See Emmanuel Ugwu, “Bloodbath”, *Newswatch* (Nigeria), 2 August 1999, pp. 29f.

<sup>438</sup> Olusegun Obasanjo, “How Our Eaten Years can be Regained”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 5, June 2002, p. 27.

evening by Adeboye), altar call, testimonies, offerings, more prayers and closing session. An added feature of the CHGS is the call to student members of secret cults to come out, renounce their membership and give their lives to Jesus. A prominent feature of later CHGS is the narration of “testimonies of deliverance from the power of cultism” by students.<sup>439</sup> As if to confirm its geographical base, all the CHGS events so far are in the institutions located within the southwest of Nigeria. The exception to this was the last CHGS that was held at the University of Benin in the first quarter of 2002. The event coincided with the 28<sup>th</sup> convocation ceremony of the institution.<sup>440</sup> This is another indication that the RCCG is quick to design programmes as a response to social events in the wider society.

#### **6.2.2.5 Divine Encounter**

Divine Encounter is a relatively new introduction in the ritual programmes of RCCG. Its roots, however, can be traced back to an earlier programme. In January 1998, the RCCG held a special Holy Ghost Service at the National Stadium sport complex with the theme: *Divine Encounter*. According to the church’s own estimate, “[t]he attendance (at this programme) was estimated to be more than a million people. With this development, the Holy Ghost Service entered a new stage.[...] This situation gave birth to the Holy Ghost Congress (HGC) which has become the single largest gathering of Christians the world over”.<sup>441</sup> The successes of the 1998 programme did not just give birth to the HGC; three years after, a distinct programme with the name of Divine Encounter was institutionalised in the RCCG. Again, a specific trend is maintained: the success of a particular programme leads to its cloning with a modified name and ritual logic.

Adeboye initiated the programme in February 2001 as a response and concern “over the state of poverty among God’s children”.<sup>442</sup> According to Adeboye, it was the intention of God to raise up ten thousand millionaires in the church in 2001, hence, the introduction of the programme to teach, instruct, pray and challenge people to become prosperous in line with divine will. “Within the next two years, when they begin to talk about the riches people in the world, many of them will come from the RCCG”.<sup>443</sup> These divinely raised millionaires will be “God’s treasurers”, and take responsibility for the financing of the construction of the

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<sup>439</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 17, no. 10, November 2002, p. 36.

<sup>440</sup> See Bukola Akinwande, “Campus Holy Ghost Service in UNIBEN”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 3, April 2002, p. 15.

<sup>441</sup> *Sunday School Manual*, *op cit.*, p. 130

<sup>442</sup> Olaitan Olubiyi, “Divine Encounter: A Life Changing Programme”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 6, no. 4, May 2001, p. 5.

<sup>443</sup> E. A. Adeboye, *Redemption Light*, vol. 8, no. 3, April 2003, p. 21.

RCCG's intended university and a television station, both of which will be dedicated to Jesus Christ. The programme is an opportunity for people who want to benefit from the divine largess by preparing them spiritually in order for them to access the original source of all things that are good. The programme rests on the pillar of belief that it is the spiritual which controls the material and physical dimensions of life; and no one becomes truly rich without divine encounter.

The Divine Encounter programme takes place every first Monday of the month. It lasts for one hour, beginning at 08.00 hours. It holds at the main auditorium of the church at the Redemption Camp. It consists of worship and praise (songs), a sermon, prayers, offering and final blessing. Most of those who attend this event come in from Lagos, a distance of 45 kilometres.<sup>444</sup> Attendance at the event is under two thousands, perhaps because of its timing when people should ordinarily be at their respective places of work, and the newness of the programme. Since it is an hour's programme, it does not receive the media attention that other RCCG events receive. However fourteen months after the inception of this programme, Adeboye, during a sermon in March 2002,<sup>445</sup> requested that millionaires (probably those who became such during the past months through the divine encounter programmes) in attendance at the March edition of the HGS be prepared to make generous donations of millions of naira to the church for the financing of its numerous projects and programmes such as the intended establishment of the Redeemer's University for Nations (RUN).<sup>446</sup>

#### **6.2.2.6 Ministers' Conference**

Ministers' conference in RCCG holds two times in a year: in May and just before the annual convention. Usually, the second conference runs directly into the convention week. Before 2002, all the recent ministers' conference held at the Redemption Camp, where all the ministers and workers of the church came together to improve themselves through teachings and seminars which form an essential aspect of rededication to the ideals of the church.<sup>447</sup> Through ministers' conferences, standardised liturgy, doctrine and practices are taught to the ministers. Adeboye is the principal teacher during these events. Through the inculcation of his ideas and ideals, the ministers and workers of the church become principal carriers and

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<sup>444</sup>The author participated in this programme on three occasions (May, June and July 2001), and observed that a good number of those present were on their way to their places of work. Such people included military and police officers in their uniforms and official vehicles.

<sup>445</sup> See Adeboye, "God of Double Portion", *op. cit.* Also, see section 6.3.4 above for details of how this request ties in with Adeboye's teaching on the laws of prosperity.

<sup>446</sup> See chapter 4

<sup>447</sup> Personal interview with AGO Pastor M. O. Ojo, *op. cit.*

transmitters of his innovations. In addition to the teachings of the leader of the church, these conferences constitute forums for the maintenance of loyalty to the leadership of the church and inculcating discipline among the clergy and workers of the church. Thus, the assembling of the pastors and workers of the church two times in a year helps check schisms and breakaways among the pastors. In addition, it fosters a sense of community and communion as well as stifling contrary tendencies.

With the increase in the population of the church and its ministers, organising such conferences at one location in the nation has become very unwieldy and cumbersome for the central administration of the church. Furthermore, there have been some strident criticisms of over centralisation of church administration in Lagos and the Redemption Camp. Some pastors of the church from parts of the country other than the south-west have argued that they needed a sense of belonging on an equal footing with Yoruba pastors and members of the church who have obvious privilege in terms of the distribution of administrative positions and resources. For the pastors whose parishioners seldom have the opportunity of meeting Adeboye in person unless when they visit the Redemption Camp, it has become increasingly expensive and fraught with risk travelling long distances to Lagos for the church's programmes. Adeboye seldom travels to the Eastern and Northern parts of the country. In January 2002, however, he undertook a pastoral visit to all the RCCG provinces in the east excluding those in Rivers state. In Uyo (Akwa Ibom state), he told his audience that his last visit to the state before the present one was seventeen years ago; the last time he visited Akwa, the capital of Anambra state was the year he was ordained a pastor of RCCG in 1975!<sup>448</sup> The people's complaints, therefore, made sense to him. Consequently, Adeboye decreed a change that translates into a form of decentralisation of the ministers' conference.

The ministers' and workers' conference for May 2002 held in three venues scattered to cover almost all parts of the country. Ministers from the eastern and northern parts of Nigeria were accorded the unique opportunity to organise and hold their own conferences in their own regions. All eastern provinces of the church held their conference at Mercyland Camp in Port Harcourt, the capital of Rivers state, while their northern states counterparts held theirs at Jos, the Plateau state capital. For both regional conferences, Adeboye presided over as the supreme patriarch of the church. Ministers from the southwest held theirs at the Redemption Camp. Through this form of decentralisation, the church is brought closer to non-Yoruba

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<sup>448</sup> See *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 1, February 2002, pp. 6 & 9.

members and given a quasi-national character. The leadership of RCCG now responds to the cravings of its members from other parts of the country, assuring them that “everything about the RCCG does not begin and end in Lagos only. That we are part of it and that our location is good enough also for whatever the church wants to do”.<sup>449</sup> The decentralisation of the church’s principal ritual events functions also to expand the sacred space and scope of the church within and outside the country.

### 6.3 Sacred Economy of Time and Space

Religious programmes which we have been describing above take place in space and time. In this section, we shall present ritual time and space in the RCCG.

#### 6.3.1 Ritual Time

Human encounter with the sacred always takes place in time and space, both of which represent aspects of the holy. Ritual time is used here to designate specific times in which the RCCG organises its ritual events such as the events described above. Significantly, the phrase also may be used in describing the “liturgical calendar” of the church. The RCCG has no specific events that revolve around such Christian traditional liturgical calendar as Easter, Advent, Christmas, etc. There is no mention of Easter or Christmas in the church’s documents of essential beliefs. Thus, there are no special services for these events which many Christians may regard as central to the Christian faith. Although the church recognises these events as part of Christian practices, it does not accord them as special positions within its liturgical calendar. According to AGO Pastor M. O. Ojo, rather than celebrate these events, Adeboye instructed that the period be used for evangelism, which the church calls *Let’s-Go-A-Fishing*.<sup>450</sup> While the RCCG does not follow the traditional Christian liturgical calendar, it celebrates New Year events, particularly the activities of the New Year’s Eve, which it calls the “Watch Night Service”. This event begins from the evening of 31 December and runs into the early hours of 1 January. It is usually on this occasion that Adeboye announces his prophecies for the New Year as well as takes special offerings as “the first offering of the year”.<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>449</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 5, June 2002, p. 33.

<sup>450</sup> Personal interview with AGO Pastor M. O. Ojo, *op. cit.*

<sup>451</sup> According to Adeboye, “it is my tradition whenever I enter the New Year that the first money I spend, I want to spend it for God and I always say ‘Lord I am spending first for you so that the devil will not touch my money in the [new] year’”, “Freedom”, sermon preached at the HGS, Redemption Camp, Nigeria, 4 January 2002, [http://www.rccg.org/Holy\\_Ghost\\_Service/Monthly\\_Holy\\_Ghost%20Service/jan2002.htm](http://www.rccg.org/Holy_Ghost_Service/Monthly_Holy_Ghost%20Service/jan2002.htm) (accessed 23.03.02).

The most important ritual event of RCCG, the HGS, takes place at night. Although there are other events that take place during the day, such as regular Sunday service, Mount Zion Hour<sup>452</sup> and the Divine Encounter, the events hosted at night (and at the Redemption Camp) receive more attention and status. The timing of the events has become an essential feature of the programmes. The primary consideration for fixing these events may be convenience and ability to attract huge attendance; however, certain biblical reasons are sometimes proffered for all-night events and vigils.

It is a cultural understanding that regards darkness as a covering for evil men and spirits, and day light as a period when children of light carry out the normal activities. For RCCG, because evil spirits such as witches and other malign forces are active at night, this is the most important time to keep up praying and praising God in order to destabilise the intentions and activities of these forces. Calling on the power of God at night, therefore, mobilises positive forces to counteract evil, negative intentions of the devil and his cohorts. Night represents the most vulnerable period for humans since this is when they let down their guard by sleeping and the devil has the most chance of making an inroad into their lives. For Adeboye, the danger of night is too obvious to be debated. Danger and evil that operate at night come in diverse manifestations. Physically, there are the armed robbers and hired assassins that terrorise people at night; spiritually, there are the witches and wizards that prefer to hold their meetings and get together at night.<sup>453</sup> This understanding of the meaning of darkness and its significance in the spiritual economy of humans, necessitates, and justifies ceaseless sessions of night vigils and all-night events.

The night may signify horrorifying and fearful images; it is also endowed with sacred symbolic meanings. Night is usually a period for sleeping, but for the church, “a sleeping man is at the mercy of his enemies, as in the case of David versus Saul”.<sup>454</sup> While a man sleeps, the enemy can do a great deal of havoc and mischief. According to the teaching of Adeboye, sleep is both a weapon of God and the enemy, Satan: when God wants to fight a man, he causes him to sleep. “When something terrible is about to happen to a man, sleep comes first”. Samson lost his hairs when he was sleeping, thus losing his power in the face of danger. Sleep

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<sup>452</sup> Mount Zion Hour takes place on the second Monday of every month at the RCCG National Headquarters, Ebute-Metta, Lagos. It is a deliverance service with attendance averaging about three thousand persons See (Adeboye, “Children Only”, Sermon delivered at HGS, Redemption Camp, 6 April 2001, p. 11).

<sup>453</sup> E.A. Adeboye, “Thou shall not be Afraid”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 4, May 2002, p. 10

<sup>454</sup> Adeboye, *The Ten Virgins*, *op. cit.*, p.28.

is dangerous since some people sleep and never wake up.<sup>455</sup> Furthermore, sleep can bring about missed opportunities for personal improvement and spiritual enrichment, for, “Peter, James and John slept and nearly missed seeing the glory of God. [...] Sleep can bring poverty, both physical and spiritual”.<sup>456</sup>

In addition to the above understanding of night, it is also believed to be the period when God is most active and at work, rectifying the havoc the devil has done in the lives of many people. According to Adeboye, it is at midnight that the tide turns for people who seek the face of God:

It was at midnight that Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God.  
It was at midnight that the Almighty God came and shook the prison  
doors open. And it was at midnight just before they were going to kill  
Peter that the angel came and set him free.<sup>457</sup>

Midnight represents the darkest hour, when life’s circumstances are toughest and hardest, making it impossible for some people to sleep. They must keep awake, therefore, to witness how God turns the tide in their favour. “By midnight [...] the Almighty God will do something in your life and things will never be the same again!”<sup>458</sup>

Time, in this context night time, becomes both an allusion and a mediator of sacred presence and action as well as divine absence and inaction. The ambiguity of night time is poignantly presented in Adeboye’s teaching. This is the feature that excites anxiety in people. Night time is when God may decide to manifest his presence powerfully by intervening in human affairs in extraordinary ways. The enemy may choose to deal a deadly blow on a sleeping man because his guard is relaxed during this time. It is a category of tension and ambiguity. Consequently, RCCG night time ritual events carry enhanced symbolic significance as well as attract more people than daytime events.

Night time frees the worker from obligatory economic activities which occupies his day time. This factor also accounts for the fixing of most religious events on weekends when a great majority of people is released from weekday economic engagements. In order, therefore, to attract many people, religious events are usually fixed when people are free to attend, when

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<sup>455</sup> Two examples are cited from the Bible: Judges 4: 17-21 and Acts 20: 9.

<sup>456</sup> Adeboye, *The ten Virgins*, *op. cit.*, p. 29 (Luke 9: 28-33; Prov. 20:13).

<sup>457</sup> Adeboye, “The Turning Point”, *op. cit.*

<sup>458</sup> *Idem.*

there is little risk of compromising one's employment or legitimate responsibilities in making an honest livelihood.

### 6.3.2 Ritual Space

While ritual events specify actions through which God is approached, and ritual time indicates moments or periods considered appropriate to invoke the favourable intervention of the holy, ritual space indicates physical places and locations thought to be mysteriously saturated with the presence of the sacred. In RCCG, religious geography is intimately related to the structure of sacred power. There are many ritual spaces in RCCG. For RCCG, Nigeria is a sacred place with a sacred mission to initiate the endtime message of salvation for the whole world. Hence, in recent times, Adeboye urges his congregation to pray for the total healing of Nigeria, and for God "to set fire to the buttocks" of anyone who is dragging the country back and impeding the quick realisation of its divine mission. Because of Adeboye's religious nationalism, he is recognised as "a true nation builder who truly believes in Nigeria's great future and who, from Nigeria, is effectively evangelising and disciplining [sic, discipling] the nations of the world as Jesus our Lord commanded".<sup>459</sup>

#### 6.3.2.1 The Redemption Camp: Origin and History

In addition to Nigeria as a sacred place is the conception of other specific locations which are believed to be places of God's epiphany. The most important of these and perhaps the best-known religious site in the country is the Redemption Camp of the church. To the members of RCCG, the Redemption Camp is a location where God manifests his dominion, a place where the *kingdom of heaven* is reproduced on earth. One of the roadside banners advertising a popular HGC programme of the church, reads *inter alia*, "Pastor E. A. Adeboye invites you ...[and] Jesus welcomes you all" to the Redemption Camp.<sup>460</sup> For those who design and disseminate ideas such as the one on the banner, the Camp is where Jesus is found, a site where God is waiting to welcome the weary worshipper, where miracles happen everyday, where dreams become reality and God speaks to his people.<sup>461</sup> To many Nigerian pentecostals, this camp will grow to become to Christians all over the world what Mecca is to world Muslims.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> Bishop Francis Wale Oke, *Redemption Light*, vol.7, no. 3, April 2002, p.24

<sup>460</sup> This banner is reproduced in Bankole (2001:20).

<sup>461</sup> Olaitan, Akinwande & Akinremi, "Redemption Camp and the Changing face of Nigeria's Busiest Express Road", *Redemption Light*, vol. 8, no. 2, March 2003, pp. 32 & 46.

<sup>462</sup> Personal Interview with Deaconess Shade Kuforiji, Office of the Mother-in-Israel, the Redemption Camp, 30 May 2001. Kuforiji is, at the time of this fieldwork, the secretary to Pastor (Mrs) Folu Adeboye.

A core ingredient of the Camp is the symbolic valorisation, which it has undergone as a place that God had earmarked for the church from the foundation of the earth. Consequently, God's presence is believed to be felt in a special way at this site. The Camp represents an emotionally charged environment for the members of RCCG and other "religious shoppers" and tourists, those who move from camp to camp in search of miracles. For the members of the church, it is "a miracle centre";<sup>463</sup> a "place where God is present and his presence is felt in an immediate way".<sup>464</sup> The Camp is a special place to interact with God, for "it is Nigeria's Israel".<sup>465</sup> Adeboye himself says angels are present on the campground, so he urges all women to cover their heads with a scarf or hat while there. He compares it to Shiloh where Hannah received the promised of the birth of Samuel (1 Samuel 1:9f). It is a refuge centre for women searching for "fruits of the womb". Hence, the church keeps statistics of births in the camp as a demonstration of the site's renown as "the Shiloh of Nigeria". During the 2002 convention, the live births recorded were 48 (27 males and 21 female children). Also, the one week of the "Showers of Blessing" HGC in December 2002 recorded 31 births.<sup>466</sup> There are numerous testimonies of those who claim to have received special favours just by visiting the camp.

At the Camp, there are many outdoor billboards and banners announcing divine presence and intimation sent to humankind through the oracular channel of Adeboye. The very first billboard is as important as it is instructive: "The Almighty Letter of Invitation: Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you REST". The presence and power of the sacred is believed to be specially manifested here. Adeboye's popular refrain "God says there is someone here ..." acquires a unique meaning because the site is holy. This refrain, as general and unrestricted as it appears, echoes the nub of religious geography: a physical location where God speaks to human beings concerning their existential situations, a site where the natural or human merges with the supernatural. According to the church, it is where "God and man meet".<sup>467</sup>

The history of the Camp is an interesting one, which also underscores its sacred character as God's own choice of a site to manifest himself in unusually ways. The church procured the first set of plots of land in 1983 when the national Headquarters of the church in Lagos

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<sup>463</sup> RCCG 1999 Annual convention brochure, p. 3.

<sup>464</sup> Personal Interview with Deaconess Shade Kuforiji, Office of Mother-in-Israel, Redemption Camp, May 30, 2001. (Mrs Kuforiji is the personal secretary to Mrs Folu Adeboye)

<sup>465</sup> Personal interview with Dapo Adesina, *op. cit.*

<sup>466</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 12, January 2003, p. 21. These births usually take place in the church's maternity centre located in the camp.

<sup>467</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 11, December 2002.p. 31.

became too small for the hosting of its annual convention. According to the (now retired) Deputy General Overseer of RCCG, Pastor J. H. Abiona,

We had very good problems (*sic*) during the 1982 annual convention, which was the last to hold at Ebute-Metta. The auditorium could not contain our members. For accommodation, we had to make use of schools and private houses. Any available space around was rented to accommodate our people. That was why we all agreed with the General Overseer to come here (that is, the new Camp).<sup>468</sup>

The original piece of property, according to the Camp Maintenance Manager (CMM), was a sacred site for indigenous religious practices such as masquerades and sacred shrines and grooves. The “no man’s land” was dominated by the worship of ancestral spirits, the practice of masquerades, “the spirit of the wild” and other wild animals and reptiles.<sup>469</sup> The site was the playing field of malign spirits and forces. The strategic location of this site made it a prized site to possess. It is nearly midway between Lagos and Ibadan along one of the finest highways in the country. This makes it easily accessible to people coming in from other major Yoruba cities such as Ilorin, Ilesa, and Abeokuta. Perhaps the most important physical feature of this site is its location along a major road linking the northern, the Middle-Belt and eastern parts of the country with Lagos, the commercial capital of Nigeria. This road was constructed during the military regime of Murtala-Obasanjo (1976-79), in order to ease the difficulties of long distance travels between the east, north and south of the country, and also open up parts of the Yoruba countryside. The road, measuring about 146 kilometres, runs through three states in the south of the country: Lagos, Ogun and Oyo states.

Adeboye was said to have rejected other locations found at Epe, Alakuko for possible acquisition for this virgin forest. A three-acre piece of land that was offered to the church for a give-away price of N15,000 was rejected by Adeboye. This was because the church did not have this sum of money ready for the owners of the land and it was unscriptural to owe, for, part of the terms of agreement between the church and the landowners included instalmental payment. This did not go down well with Adeboye, who argued that “it was not biblical for sons of God to owe anyone money”.<sup>470</sup> Mrs Folu Adeboye identifies the major problem with

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<sup>468</sup>Pastor J. H. Abiona, “God has Surprised Us” in Bankole (1999: 67).

<sup>469</sup>Personal interview with Pastor Dapo Adesina, office of the Camp Maintenance Manager, Redemption Camp, May 31, 2001.

<sup>470</sup>Pastor F. O. Leemose, “Ordained and Ordered by God”, in Bankole (1999: 78). Leemose is a civil engineer assigned the responsibility by Adeboye, together with Femi Agboola (a quantity surveyor) and Omojuyigbe (a business man), to scout for a new site for the church’s activities.

the rejected site: “I was not too satisfied with that place at Maforija in Epe mainly because of the clumsy route to the place. On a particular day as we were coming from Ilorin, I told the General Overseer that, that place at Epe was not for us”.<sup>471</sup> This assertion settled the fate of the Epe site as undesirable for the church’s purpose. Mrs Adeboye claims that God informed her that the camp of the church would be along the express road, a divine intimation she promptly shared with her husband, who endorsed the revelation. It was not long before the negotiation for the new site was initiated. The new site conformed to Mrs Adeboye’s initial suggestion that church’s camp would be sited close to a major road.

The new site was located at Loburo, close to Mowe village in Ogun state. It was secured through one Baba Gbemi, who was the go-between for the church and the villagers who owned the site. The initial piece of land measure 4.25 acres and was purchased for the sum of N6,000.00 in 1982, and work started there in February of the same year. In order to make this payment, Adeboye asked for ninety-eight members of the church who would be willing to join him and his wife to contribute a thousand naira each. This amount of a hundred thousand naira was meant for the purchase and preliminary construction work on the site. Those who made this initial contribution were offered parcels of land on which they could construct their own private residential accommodation in the camp.<sup>472</sup> A further 10 acres of land was procured for N10,000.00, with another 10 acres for N9,000.00. Adeboye believes that “the Lord has given it (the total expanse of land) to us because we refused to borrow” (Ojo 1997: 9).

### **6.3.2.2 The Auditorium and Other Facilities**

The most important facility on the Camp is the auditorium, a place of worship and other religious activities. The auditorium is a huge rectangular structure of “decorated shade”: a roof supported by columns of wooden and steel pillars. All the sides of the structure are left open without walls! The reason given for maintaining this simple structure is that Adeboye’s vision is focused on saving souls and not erecting magnificent buildings and cathedrals.<sup>473</sup> The initial construction work was carried out as “direct labour” by members of the church themselves. The church sourced for expertise and labour from among its members, except for the operators of heavy trucks and earth-moving machinery. Professional staff came from

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<sup>471</sup>Folu Adeboye, “The Lord Whispered to Me”, in Bankole (1999: 69).

<sup>472</sup>Leemose, op. cit., 80.

<sup>473</sup> (Personal communication with Mr S. Adeleke, the structural engineer in charge of the expansion of the auditorium, [The Redemption Camp, 01.06.01]).

different areas such as members of the church who worked with civil engineering companies such as the German construction firm, Julius Berger. The first major construction to be erected was the auditorium, which Adeboye prescribed its dimensions based on a vision he claimed he had. This first auditorium, which is now used for children's activities and sleeping place for people who attend the HGS, measures 150 feet by 300 feet.<sup>474</sup> The first major event that took place at the site was the annual convention of the church in 1983. The following year, the church's Bible College was relocated to the site from Lagos. Adeboye and his family started living in the Camp on 1 October 1985, three years after its procurement.

The church's auditorium has been expanded two times since the first one was built in 1982/3. In 1985, it was expanded to 200 metres by 300 metres in order to accommodate the expanding congregation. It was not long after this that it dawned on the church administration that a new auditorium was needed rather than the expansion of the old one. This realisation was in addition to the increasing anxiety the church's programmes caused government officials and traffic users on the express road. A day before and a day after any major programme at the Camp, the express road was (and still is), practically unusable due to traffic congestion and obstruction. The federal government, through its ministry of Works and Transport, once threatened to demolish the auditorium because it was constructed too close to the express road and was creating immense difficulties and road traffic accidents on the road. The church chose to relocate the auditorium away from the road and expand it as well. A new auditorium further inside on the campground was completed in 1995 measuring 395 metres by 500 metres.<sup>475</sup> By 2001, this new worship place was again experiencing further expansion by the addition of seven new columns of 25 metres by 500 metres.<sup>476</sup> A significant feature of the new addition is the use of improved building materials and design such as underground drainage system and the use of steel beams instead of wood as was used for the old parts of the auditorium. It is estimated that the new place would comfortably sit about half a million persons (cf. Ojo 1997: 9). According to the Camp Project Manager, Pastor Peter Adeyemi, the vision of the expansion is to have an auditorium that will be four times the size of the present structure.<sup>477</sup> The Camp as a whole measures more than ten square kilometres, with further

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<sup>474</sup> *Ibid*, p.79.

<sup>475</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Dapo Adesina, *op. cit.*

<sup>476</sup> Information on the dimensions of the expansion from the site engineer who chose to remain anonymous. Construction was still in progress during the first and second phases of fieldwork in April-July 2001 and July-November 2002.

<sup>477</sup> Interview, *Redemption Light*, vol. 8, no. 3, April 2003, pp. 22-23.

acquisition of land going on by the church for the construction of “Congress Ground”, a venue for the annual HGC.

The Camp is equipped with a range of facilities to cater for the church’s needs during religious programmes. In addition to the two standing auditoria, there is an international guesthouse and a conference centre, a maternity centre, a post office, a secondary school (Christ the Redeemer’s High School) and a gas filling station. Other structures include an orphanage, two supermarkets, two bookstores, five canteens, a bakery, guest chalets and dormitories. There are also two banks, City Express Bank and Global Bank plc, located at the Camp. Furthermore, the church has constructed two “presidential villas” for top state and federal politicians such as state governors, federal ministers and the president or his wife. The Camp is the permanent site of the church’s bible school, RCBC, and the temporary site of the yet to be opened university, Redeemer’s University for Nations (RUN).

A residential area, called Camp Estate, has sprung up in the interior of the campground, containing close to a hundred residential buildings. Here, members of the church are allocated plots of land for the construction of their private residential houses for a token fee of N50,000.00 for a bungalow and N80,000.00 for a storey building.<sup>478</sup> This token amount is called “Development Levy”, not for the land, which is donated free of charge, but for electrification, roads construction and maintenance of the Camp. In addition to this fee, every private house on the Camp must set aside a self-contained apartment for the use of the mission. The mission uses this apartment to accommodate its pastors and official guests during church programmes.

Application for a plot of land is channelled from a member of the church through the parish pastor, to the Area pastor, who passes it on to the provincial pastor and finally to the CMM. He is vested with the sole power and responsibility to allocate a piece of land to whosoever he approves. The CMM processes the request by verifying that the applicant is at least a worker in the church before finally allocating the plot. An important condition for acquisition of a plot is that whatever structure is erected there is not transferable to a second party; at the death of the owner, the property becomes the church’s.<sup>479</sup> This policy, apart from being a way of acquiring developed property by the church, is also designed to maintain peace, order and homogeneity in the camp, averting the chaos one experiences in many urban centres in the

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<sup>478</sup> Personal interview with Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op. cit.*

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*

country. It is part of the responsibility of the CMM to maintain the physical environment of the camp, its cleanliness (this it does in conjunction with “Sanitary Squad”), and water supply. The Redemption Guard (RG) provides security in addition to some hired and armed guards who patrol the perimeters of the camp bordering undeveloped forests.

The RG is a squad of trained security personnel from the church which maintains physical security of the Camp all through the day and night. State security officials who happen also to be members of the church such as serving and retired military and police officers train the members of RG.<sup>480</sup> Equipped with modern security and communications gadgets, the RG provides security details for Adeboye in and outside the Camp, except when he travels outside the country. At every corner of the Camp, there are security personnel, all carrying communications equipment such as walkie-talkies. During mass events, they get assistance from the state Police Force and Federal Roads Safety Corps in maintaining traffic discipline and order in and around the Camp, especially along the express road and around the many car parking lots. An Assistant Commissioner of Police, who is also an assistant pastor of the church, Femi Akintemi, acts as a bridge between the church and the state security team that consolidates on the efforts of the crop of church guards.<sup>481</sup>

The Redemption Camp is the international Headquarters of RCCG. It is the seat of Adeboye, where he has his office as well as residence. Because it attracts different categories of people seeking his attention or coming to fellowship with RCCG, state of the art facilities are concentrated here. The offices of top ranking leaders of the church look much like corporate offices, fully equipped with computers, secretaries, scanners, copies, fax machines, telephones and air conditioners. An important feature of the Camp is the inescapable presence of Adeboye even when he is nowhere in sight. There are countless numbers of loudspeakers and horn-speakers mounted virtually everywhere in the Camp, including in the toilets, offices and along the roads and streets, restaurants, parking lots, supermarkets and bookshops, playing the recorded sermons of Adeboye. Adeboye’s live preaching and other important events in the auditorium are also broadcast loud via the loudspeakers mounted throughout the Camp. The developments going on at the Camp indicate that it is transforming into an emergent “religious city”. Because some wealthy members of the church who work in Lagos prefer the security and peace of the Camp environment, especially when no event is going on, to the

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<sup>480</sup>Personal interview with Pastor S. Adedeji, Redemption Guard Office, Redemption Camp, June 1, 2001. Pastor Adedeji, a retired military personnel, is a senior pastor and chairman of the Redemption Guard.

<sup>481</sup>Personal Interview with Assistant Pastor/Assistant Commissioner of Police Femi Akintemi, Oyo state Police Headquarters, Iyagoku, Ibadan, 23 May 2001.

hustle and bustle of Lagos, they have built their personal houses on the Camp. From here they drive the forty-six kilometres to work in the city. Consequently, a Redemption City has emerged with almost all facilities in an urban centre.

### **6.3.2.3 Valorisation of Sacred Space**

The belief of associating spiritual power and potency with physical places and objects is very strong in Yoruba traditional religion. Mountains, hills, rocks, grooves and streams are often considered to be the abodes of spirit entities. In a similar way, we see the association of the RCCG camp with the presence of the divine. There is a hierarchy of concentration of sacred power, even within the camp. The two most important sacred spaces within the Camp are the auditorium and the personal office of Adeboye. The auditorium, with nothing resembling the glass and glitter of cathedrals, is a sacred environment, being where God manifests his glory through the performance of miracles of healing and prosperity. Within the auditorium, the altar or stage is marked off as most sacred. There is an elevated area that is marked out with blue and red coloured rugs. This is where Adeboye stands to deliver his sermons and call on God to hearken to the people's voices. This space is ritually secured with prayers and gestures before every ministration of Adeboye as a form of warding off evil and reinvigorating it with sacred presence and power. In February 2003, Adeboye commissioned the construction of a new altar the inspiration of which, according to him, was divinely revealed. The new altar, designed by Professor Olumide Olusanya of the Department of Architecture, University of Lagos, is higher than the previous one and architecturally set apart on six steel pillars. It is designed with a face and outstretched wings like a Cherub in motion. While the face is the main stage where Adeboye preaches, the wings are the stair cases on both sides for climbing up to the elevated stage. According to Adeboye, God revealed to him that the new altar should be called P.H.D: an altar for power, holiness and deliverance. This is "because power based on holiness will produce genuine and absolutely [sic] deliverance...power will flow through holy vessels to establish deliverance for God's people. [...] Power propelled by holiness will ensure complete deliverance to God's people". Complete deliverance means freedom "from all enemies internal and external, known and unknown".<sup>482</sup> This new altar is the fourth one since the founding of the Redemption Camp in 1983. It is part of the ritual mannerisms of Adeboye that he sits, kneels or prostrates face down on this elevated area during public service.

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<sup>482</sup> Pastor E. A. Adeboye, "What God told me about the New Altar", *Redemption Light*, vol. 8, no. 3, April 2003, p. 21.

At the end of each service, there is a scramble by followers who struggle to be the first to touch, prostrate or lie on this same marked area. They do this to come into physical contact with spots that Adeboye had freshly stepped on or where he stood during the service. This practice is common among people who are seeking healing or with a burden of spiritual anxiety. The popular belief, which is supported as we have seen by Adeboye's understanding of his anointing, is that Adeboye's anointing and powers of miracle and healing are mediated through the physical objects he touches, such as his clothes, chairs he sits on, etc. Anointing that is mediated through objects and items is supposed to bring about healings and deliverances. Members of the Redemption Guard are usually posted to stand guard around the perimeters of the altar when no activity is going on in the auditorium, indicating the deep anxiety surrounding its security. Attempts to photograph the area are strongly resented by church authority; as a sacred site, there ought to be no duplicate of it whatsoever.

Perhaps a more sacred space than the altar at the auditorium is Adeboye's personal office. While pastors of the church could walk around or stand on the altar with their shoes on, it is the (unofficial) practice among the pastors to remove their shoes as they walk into Adeboye's office. Even the retired Deputy General Overseer, Pastor J. H. Abiona, would remove his shoes when he walks into Adeboye's office. The reason for this may be from the respect they have for Adeboye, and the conception that has been inculcated among his followers that "he is the God we see now", therefore, where he stands must be holy ground reminiscent of Moses' experience of the burning bush (Exodus 3:5).<sup>483</sup> There is a special entrance that admits only Adeboye, his wife and their personal staff, an entrance that is guarded by security men from Redemption Guard. All this demonstrates the honour, respect and reverence, even awe, to which the leader is held. This practice also points to some convergence and parallel with the Aladura movement in Yorubaland.

### **6.3.3 The Economics of Religious Activities**

The RCCG is a successful church in many senses. The church has not just gathered people into an organisation, but has succeeded in gathering "quality people", those with the economic and social resources that count in contemporary society. These include top military, police and political office holders as well as industry officials. The numerical strength and the quality of people in the church give the church the confidence to state that "very soon no one

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<sup>483</sup>Personal communication with AGO Pastor Ojo (May 2001).

will become anything in Nigeria unless we allow him”.<sup>484</sup> A church that could hardly pay the salaries of forty people on its payroll in 1981 now spends more than four hundred million naira on a three-day programme, and has several thousands of people on its payroll.<sup>485</sup> It is an empire with strong economic resources, foundation and power.

Although RCCG forms a spiritual community, a movement of a people with spiritual ideas, goals and direction, it is also at the same time a religio-economic ideology. It is deeply involved in the diverse practices of production, distribution and consumption of an array of goods and services. The prosperity orientation, which the leadership of Adeboye has embraced and incorporated into RCCG doctrines, is one that is characterised by the blurring of boundaries between religious practices and economic activities.<sup>486</sup>

The church has not only appropriated the metaphors and motifs of direct selling economy in its discourse on prosperity, tithes and financial giving to church ministers, it has also recruited the professional expertise of economic actors and corporate marketers to organise, package and sell its programmes to the public. RCCG’s mass mobilisation has contributed to the formation of religio-economic ventures and enterprises, which support as well as feed on the large numbers of shifting populations from one prayer camp to another. Corporate organisations now lend their weight, technical know-how, financial influence, organisational expertise and skill to the church.

The activities of the church have seen the evolution of corporate piety or religiosity in Nigeria whereby companies model their products and services to suit and appeal to members of the church. An example is in the advert put out by Unilever plc for one of its products, OMO detergent, with the following text “Neither *Sin* nor *Stain* shall have dominion over you”. This text is a deliberate misquotation of Saint Paul’s Letter to the Romans 6:14: “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (See Plate 6). This same advert was repeated without modification on the brochure of 2003 Annual Convention of church which was held from 4-10 August 2003. The trick of putting the text of the advert in quotation marks is a deliberate ploy to deceive and mislead viewers to assume it is a direct text from the bible. Making a direct association between the text and the detergent seeks to establish a scriptural validation for viewers (members of the RCCG) to purchase and consume

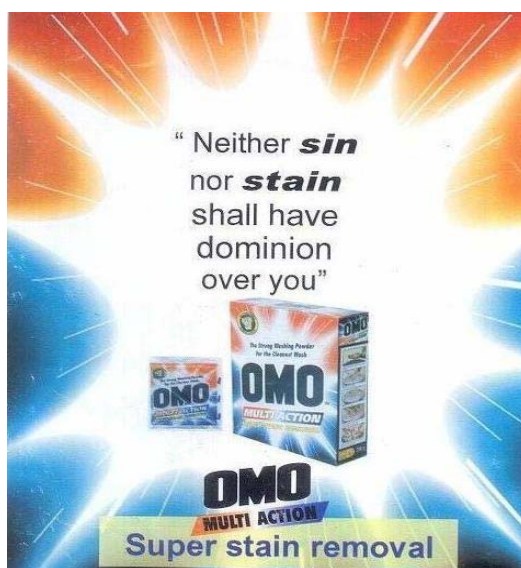
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<sup>484</sup> Adeboye, cited in Ojo (1997:14)

<sup>485</sup> Personal interview with Pastor E. O. Odeyemi, *op. cit.*

<sup>486</sup> See chapter 4 for the discussion of economic structures in the church

the product. The manufacturers of this product parted with a huge sum of money for them to advertise a deliberate disinformation in the church's programme of events.<sup>487</sup>



**Plate 6:** *Unilever advertising designed for the RCCG members.* Source: Outside back cover of RCCG programme brochure for 2002 Annual Convention. Photograph: Asonzeh Ukah, Lagos, Nigeria 2002.

Banks, insurance companies and manufacturers of household products are all designing special products and services for the church, targeting both individuals and parachurch groups. City Express Bank (CEB), for example, has put forward a range of “mission products” which include Church Remittance Account Scheme (CREMAS), Church, Cheques, and Cash collections (4cs), Church Asset Acquisition and Development Scheme (CAADs) and Church Planting and Missions Account (CHURPMAS).<sup>488</sup> The bank claims to be a partner with the church in fulfilling its missionary dream and expanding its missionary work which is to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ for the benefit of humankind.<sup>489</sup> There is a rabid competition going on among such banks like CEB, Global Bank, New Life Community, Ore-Ofe Community Bank, Sunrise Community Bank and Haggai Community Bank (HCB) to control RCCG's purse. The latter has established Haggai Business School that teaches Business School Ministry for churches because global business values have failed and that is why a Christian Business School is necessary to help Nigerians use God's kingdom values in

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<sup>487</sup> During the closing ceremony of the convention on 11 August 2002, Adeboye specially thanked Unilever plc, Protector & Gamble and Unison for their generosity and contribution toward the hosting of the event.

<sup>488</sup> See “City Express Launches Special Mission Products”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 8, September 2002, p. 33.

<sup>489</sup> See CEB advert in *Redemption Light*, vol. 8, no. 6, July 2003, p. 40.

their business.<sup>490</sup> These different companies all have adopted official mode of religiosity in order to court members of the church. HCB, for example, claims to be “moving on a God given vision” and has as its business slogan “...so choose now this day, what your money will answer”, an adaptation from Joshua 24:15 and Ecclesiastes 10:19.<sup>491</sup> They advertise the church and provide technical and financial resources for the church to expand.

A significant strength of RCCG is its ability to harness the resources of the business community in the country. Every important event or programme in the church has “partners” drawn from the business community. These partners raise the needed fund and other material resources for the hosting and staging of the event. These partners are invited to prestigious places for business luncheons where strategies are devised and fund raised towards the successful staging of specific programmes. The occasions serve as opportunities to thank the partners for their generous supports as well as encourage them to “sow again” by making “promissory note towards (future) project[s]”.<sup>492</sup>

A noteworthy feature of all RCCG mass programmes such as the Annual Convention, the Holy Ghost Congress and the Holy Ghost Service is the high degree of business transactions and activities that have formed part of the events. Reporting on this aspect of one such event, the church’s magazine declared:

Efforts were made to efficiently organise the business side of the (Holy Ghost) festival (of 1999). Apart from the regular markets and selling points in the Redemption Camp, about 400 units of stalls were created at the extreme left of the Holy Ghost Arena....Interested businessmen (and women) struggled to receive allocation for each of the stalls. Once they got their stalls, the traders believed it would be business as usual.<sup>493</sup>

Traders pay a fee to the Camp authority in order to be allotted stalls. There are also permanent stalls and makeshift shades on the campground for use during the Holy Ghost Service (HGS). All through the evening of the HGS until the next morning, food, barbecues, tea, coffee and chocolate drinks are sold and bought as the sermons, prayers and deliverances are conducted

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<sup>490</sup> See *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 10, November 2002, p. 23.

<sup>491</sup> RCCG 2003 Annual Convention brochure, p. 2. The text of Joshua 24: 15 reads “Choose you this day whom ye will serve...” while Ecclesiastes 10:19 reads “A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry; but money answereth all things”.

<sup>492</sup> See Toyin Onayiga, “Making a Way for Lekki, 99”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 4, no.2, March 1999, p. 26.

<sup>493</sup> “Holy Ghost Festival ‘99: So Great, So Glorious”, *Redemption Light*, vol. 4, No. 12, January 2000, p.30

in the auditorium. This is in addition to those who are marketing such commodities as audio-visual tapes of sermons, Nigerian video films, books, and other stationery, caps, hats and scarves, tambourines and rattling sticks. In addition, the City Express Bank located in the Camp, functions all through the night, for, once the offerings and other collections are taken during services, they are promptly counted by a select group of ushers in a secure location and lodged in the bank immediately.

There are three main groups of people and agencies engaged in these different activities. The first group is RCCG parachurch agencies such as Redeemers' Club (formed under CRM) which runs Redeemers' Café, Executive Toilets and Baths; Cherith Restaurant and CRM Supermarket. Others include Africa Missions and Tapes (Mrs Adeboye's pet project); Word and Sound Tapes; Dominion Tapes and CRFU Tapes. The second group is corporate organisations who liaise with the church authority and secure a retail outlet for their products and services for a fee. Among these organisations are Nestlé Foods Nigeria Plc; Nigeria Bottling Company Plc (makers of the famous Coca-Cola range of products); Procter and Gamble; 7Up Nigeria Plc; Sona Breweries (makers of Maltonic drinks), Unilever plc, Vitamalt plc, City Express Bank, Global Bank plc, Unisom and Nigeria Breweries Plc. The third group represents private individuals and petty traders who secure a stand or stall to vend their wares. Goods on display and sell include cheap books written by pentecostal pastors, almanacs, RCCG magazines or Adeboye's books, hymn books, calendars and diaries, posters, handkerchiefs and olive oil, tambourines and rattling sticks.

The presence of multinational corporations during RCCG mega-events is a permanent feature of these programmes. They constitute major financiers of the events, providing needed material and financial resources for the organisation of the programmes. According to the *Redemption Light* report,

Guinness (*sic*) Nigeria Plc sold its malt Guinness (*sic*) in cartons as well as Nigeria Breweries Plc who brought Amstel Malta, Maltina, Schwepps (*sic*) and Crush. This year [that is, 1999], coca-cola products were freely sold unlike the Lekki '98 experience. One significant dimension to business at the festival '99 was the participation of City Express Bank Limited.<sup>494</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> *Ibid*, p. 39.

During the event of the previous year (1998), Nigeria Breweries Plc bought the sole vending right for soft drinks, and so, there were no coca-cola products at the event. For these global economic operators to market their products at such RCCG events, they have to pay some amount of money to the church in return. The competition that is the hallmark of relations among companies producing similar products is also a characteristic of marketing strategies in the Camp.

The convention of the church is the most important period for businesses and for companies to scramble for business links with the church, with massive campaigns to woo church members and visitors to the event. The convention lasts longest among all RCCG major events in its liturgical calendar. The event lasts from ten to fourteen days. According to the official report on 2001 convention, tagged “Holiness”, the country manager of Procter and Gamble in Nigeria, Roland Ebelt, approached the church to lend a hand to his company in sensitising church members and dissociate the name of the company’s president from Satanism. Adeboye is reported to have announced to his audience:

I am convinced beyond all doubts now that it is just competitors of one type or the other that just wanted to run down the company through falsehood. So, I want to tell you that anything that is their product you can buy and you can use.<sup>495</sup>

The report further indicates, “Coca-cola...made enormous sales on its soft drinks at the camp”.

Directly opposite the main entrance to the Camp is a bustling market where a diverse range of goods and services are available. These include prepared food, ice cream vending cars, pop corn making machines, books, pentecostal ritual articles (olive oil, white handkerchiefs, scarves, bible pouches). There are different categories of buyers and sellers who engage in diverse range of economic exchanges. The operations at this “market” outside the Camp is not under the control and management of RCCG but different interest groups who lay claim to that portion of property on the other side of the expressway.

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<sup>495</sup>Summary of 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention, [http://www.rccg.org/Eyewitness\\_Report/Conve.../summary\\_of\\_49th\\_annual\\_convetio.html](http://www.rccg.org/Eyewitness_Report/Conve.../summary_of_49th_annual_convetio.html) (accessed 16.08.01).

## Part 3: Discussion, Interpretation and Applications

### Chapter 7

#### Mediating Local Identities and Contesting Global Processes

This chapter interprets the data provided in chapters 2 to 6. It relates the data to relevant theories. Specifically, the chapter examines: i) the nature of the relationship between the RCCG and: a) other pentecostal churches, b) the mission churches and the AICs, c) Islam and, d) indigenous religions. ii) The chapter discusses the nature of the RCCG as a transnational religious organisation by examining: a) how expansion has brought about structural changes in the church, b) RCCG's strategies of transformation, and c) the role of migration in the global spread of the church. iii) Further, we shall indicate the different ways in which the RCCG has embedded itself within the local culture by: a) constructing a local centre, b) using cultural thought-forms and practices, and c) establishing schools to train local manpower as well as entrench its ideas and practices. iv) Finally, the chapter examines the nature of religious globalisation as revealed in our case study by focusing on: a) syncretisation and local vitality, and b) the role of market regimes in the attractiveness as well as spread of Pentecostalism in Nigeria.

#### 7.0 Introduction

When Josiah Akindayomi received his divine calling to full time ministry, he migrated from Ondo town to Ile-Ife. To the Yoruba, Ile-Ife is the most ancient town, the centre of the world, from where *Olódùmarè*<sup>496</sup> initiated the process of divine creation of the physical universe. According to the official RCCG historiography, receiving his prophetic mandate from a C&S church in this town, Josiah was commissioned on a mission with global ramifications though he hardly knew the details.<sup>497</sup> The present members of the church believe that migrating to Lagos, the then capital of Nigeria, was an outworking of the vision, which Josiah had received at Ile-Ife. This study has traced the history and consolidation of this vision as well as how it has spread to different regions of the world. Further, it has emphasised the duality of change and continuity as central to the dynamics of identity-construction and self-presentation for individual RCCG members and for the church as a group.

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<sup>496</sup> Also known as *Olorun*, *Olódùmarè* is the Supreme Being in Yoruba pantheon of gods and divinities.

<sup>497</sup> See chapter 3 where Josiah's commission was discussed as claimed by Ajayi (1997) and *RCCG at 50* among other official church sources.

The rhetoric of continuity in RCCG is not merely the re-enactment of received ideas from its founder; it is the ever constant reconstitution of corporate self-understanding in complex circumstances. The leaders of the church embrace elements of change and incorporate them into a complex web of identity-formation strategies which are then harmonised as a long tradition of continuity with Josiah's primal and foundational vision. The total reworking of this self-understanding is interpreted as an outworking of the founder's primordial revelation and vision received at the beginning of the mission. For the present leadership of the church, change is both old and new: as old as the founder's vision which is regarded as God's intention for the present generation of human beings all over the world, and as new as its present unfolding according to the processes of recharismatisation by Adeboye and his lieutenants. Hence, the leaders insist that the church has changed over time, but has not deviated from its original mission of leading men and women to God.

For the RCCG, continuity and change involve complex processes of reinterpretation as well as localisation of global processes and globalisation of local processes of cultural identity and diverse modes of being-in-the-world. For members of this church, self-definition is religious in character. Socio-religious identity has assumed a heightened meaning and a depth that economic, political or national identity has never been able to achieve. For them, religious identity is significant to understanding the reworking of economic revitalisation, political engagement and national renaissance. In a situation of rapid change and uncertainty, religion is the anchor that holds their life-worlds together, generating stability, meaning and other resources necessary for accessing the larger world of global interconnectivity.

The RCCG straddles two worlds of action: a local world engaged in producing and appropriating local subjects and world-view and a global world that involves the engagement with, and reproduction of, global processes and ideas. Through its ritual rhetoric and actions, doctrines and practices the RCCG produces local subjects who are firmly rooted in the local context in which they share in a common unique cosmological underpinning. Through constant references to events occurring elsewhere in the world, formation and membership in translocal associations, and frequent travels of principal officers of the church, an awareness and realisation of global processes is entrenched. In our discussion of the beliefs of RCCG (chapter 5), we identified a clear awareness of *this world as a whole* as an arena of specific religious actions and events which the conditions of locality will influence. The local Nigerian situation, for example, is theorised to set the stage for global, irreversible endtime processes.

This idea generates a sense of the consciousness of the global among the church's members, an understanding that constitutes an important aspect of individual member's religious perceptions and practice. The return of Nigeria to democratic governance has ignited the renewed expectation for her enhanced, cosmic role in global affairs. Part of this role is to fire the zeal for God, which will culminate in "the end of history", that is, end of time as it is experienced now.

Furthermore, our study shows how a religious group constitutes itself as a "movement" with clearly defined objectives and direction. Part of the objectives of RCCG is to generate a local identity that is relevant at the same time for global discourses of nationhood and peoplehood. The strategies of RCCG in its mission bears out Robertson's (2001: 17) observation that

[W]e should expect a major feature of religious movements and orientations of the future to be a concern with the fate of the world as a world and the meaning of world history --- in a sense the religionization of the mainly 'grand narratives'.

One important feature of Pentecostalism as a globalising religion is that it is rarely the same in every culture or locality. The vitality it demonstrates, as in the case of the RCCG, is one that concerns the framing and articulation of locality. The local circumstances and practices that it encounters, engages with and produces, give the RCCG its motor of internal vitality and relevance. The practices of the church are directed towards generating relevance for every sector of the society. Its fortune is created and sustained by its careful self-insertion into the business class and global economic players, two groups that constitute mobile socio-economic classes in Nigeria. Our study of RCCG clearly and empirically demonstrates the intricate and complex intermingling of Pentecostalism, ideology of nationhood and politics of a people with a cosmic vocation, as well as economic capitalism dressed in religious idioms and culture. The blending of these diverse elements provides a form of "sacred canopy" under which to launch translocal incursions globally. Such local practices involve interaction with other religious groups and organisations in the society as well as the physical environment. In this chapter, we shall pursue our analysis a step further by examining how the RCCG relates to other religious actors in the local environment as well as its strategies of externality.

## **7.1 Relations with Other Faiths**

In the past, it was a wide spread assumption among many people in Nigeria, including Josiah as we discussed in chapters 3 and 4, that religion, religious practice and participation

represent a “non-market” institution geared primarily towards charity (non-profit organisation) and the search for spiritual salvation.<sup>498</sup> This public image of religion has, however, changed with the emergence to public prominence of pentecostal practice and culture. In the place of the old assumption has emerged the clear understanding that “religion is a thriving business in Nigeria” (Maier 2000: 263). The metaphor and concept of religious marketplace attempt to describe this social side of religious practice. The multiplication of worship sites, which corresponds with the expansion of the cadre of church founders, has thrown into great relief the unmistakable character of church founders as “religious entrepreneurs” (Greenfield and Droogers 2003:43) and the aggressively entrepreneurial character of pentecostal evangelism which is a search for a niche for potential adherents and consumers. The unregulated religious economy in the country is the socio-economic space within which religious enterprise is conducted. The religious marketplace is the interactive framework for the relationship among different faith groups.

The RCCG operates in a local multi-faith context. The church, through its teachings and the homiletics of its leaders, particularly those of Adeboye, addresses this religiously plural situation since its members do not live and work in isolation. In addition, the activities of the church, both missionary and non-missionary, portray its self-understanding as well as its orientation and mission towards other pentecostal groups as well as people of other religious persuasions. In this section, we explore this complex relationship with diverse groups with whom the church apparently may share common outlook or with whom it differs from in considerable ways.

### **7.1.1 Relationship with Other Pentecostal Groups**

In addition to the concept of religious market, the twin concepts of “front regions” and “back regions” provide fruitful conceptual insights for the analysis of RCCG’s relationship with other pentecostal groups. As the sociologist Erving Goffman (1969) suggests, much of social life and interaction are lived on two broadly distinctive levels: “the front region” and “the back region”. The former characterises official social encounters where persons or groups carry out formal roles and performances. This is the area of public engagement whereby conduct is open for inspection and the visibility created is geared towards creating desirable effect. The latter represents what goes on behind the scenes such as quiet manoeuvres,

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<sup>498</sup> Josiah played down the role of money in this church; there is no case of political involvement or economic mobilisation of his followers. According to his son, Ifeoluwa, his father preached against wealth among other things, Personal interview with Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op. cit.*

profanity or obscenity, sloppy conduct and unwarranted aggressiveness or secret intentions, interests and hidden ambitions. Often, as Goffman further points out, the back region activities act as preparation stage for the front region conducts. In the back region, public performances are choreographed, rehearsed and perfected in order not to bring offence to others, but more so to achieve one's or a group's desired results. Commenting on Goffman's thesis, Thompson (1995: 88) writes that in the back region, "individuals often act in ways that knowingly contradict the images they seek to project in front regions". The distinction made by Goffman may be fruitfully applied to the nature of the relationship existing among pentecostal leaders and churches in Nigeria in general, and between RCCG and other pentecostal groups in particular.

The RCCG presents itself as a pentecostal group and thus, is a registered member of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN). On the official level, the church relates with other pentecostal groups through this umbrella group, the PFN, a body that Adeboye once headed as president.<sup>499</sup> This official relationship is cordial and cooperative. The RCCG conceives its mission, especially the charismata of Adeboye, as designed for the whole body of Christians and not just for the church alone. The "mega status" of Adeboye as a speaker of orientations, an inaugurator of other pentecostal ministries as well as an oracle of God consolidates this pan-pentecostal assumption of RCCG. This conception allows the church to relate to other pentecostal churches as a *meta-church* that sets codes and canon of ritual practice and belief for other churches to follow.

The above assertion is bolstered by the fact that a good number of pentecostal pastors in Nigeria were ordained and their ministries inaugurated by Adeboye. He ordains pastors not only for the RCCG, but for other ministries as well. The ministries of Bishop David Oyedapo were inaugurated by Adeboye in 1982; he was also the principal preacher at the episcopal ordination of the Bishop Mike Okonkwo, the present president of the PFN. Charles Achonwa, the founder and leader of Doulos Ministries, Lagos, was ordained as a pastor in February 1990 by Adeboye (Ojo 2001). The length of time Adeboye has remained in the ministry privileges him to personally cultivate the acquaintance of many of the younger generation of pastors and church-founders. This situation has created the open display of deference to Adeboye, and by extension to the RCCG. Many pastors and leaders of other churches see him as their "Daddy in the Lord" and mentor. The cordial relationship existing between the RCCG

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<sup>499</sup> Personal interview with AGO M. O. Ojo, *op. cit.*

and this crop of pentecostal leaders necessitate these pastors to attend RCCG events such as the HGS or the HGC where they are often publicly recognised and accorded preferential treatment.

The RCCG has an open and liberal policy toward pentecostal pastors in general. The church's ministers' conferences are open to pastors from other ministries and pentecostal organisations without discrimination. Some little-known pastors and founders of small congregations crave to be publicly seen and known as having been associated with Adeboye and his programmes so that there may be some form of "impartation of anointing" from the RCCG leader to them. Some of these pastors, apart from attending religious services conducted by Adeboye, put up paid advertisements congratulating either Adeboye or the RCCG on an important occasion such as Adeboye's birthday, the celebration of the church's convention or ministers' conference.<sup>500</sup> Such public display of associational religiosity in some cases is a form of searching for and negotiating religious and social legitimacy. The strategy whereby RCCG services are usually advertised to a mass audience draws people from diverse congregations and publics, all claiming to be pentecostal. This practice helps to disseminate Adeboye's charismata globally as well as proselytise local adherents.

There is however, another side to this open and manifest public relationship which is comparable to Goffman's "front region" performance. The back region relationship between the RCCG and other pentecostal organisations is intense and vibrant. The single most dominant feature of this complex relationship is competition. The Nigerian religious field is marked by virulent competition for resources. This competition is stretched to its utmost limits by the pentecostal emphasis on, and practice of, evangelism. Further, the ownership of most pentecostal churches as a personal enterprise which entitles the founder to unquestioned loyalty as well as privileged position in the allocation of power and wealth act as a galvaniser of intense struggle for social, symbolic and economic resources. This scramble, therefore, has given rise to a range of back region manoeuvres, corporate imitations and the cloning of programmes of one "successful" church by other less successful churches. The evolution of a sophisticated and a more aestheticised religious advertising practice in Nigeria is a function of the scramble for religious space and market niche.

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<sup>500</sup> See, for example, the comments from religious (and political) leaders on the occasion of Adeboye's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration, (*Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 3, April 2002, pp. 21-25).

Like other corporate religious actors within the Nigerian religious field, the RCCG is a primary player in the local and global religious market. The transformation of the church, especially the introduction of the model parishes was as much the desire of moving the church forward as repositioning it to compete effectively and efficiently with other religious groups for quality members in urban centres. In the 1980s, the church was deeply enmeshed in competition with W. F. Kumuyi's Deeper Life Bible Church which was the fastest and most dynamic pentecostal/holiness movement as pointed out by Isaacson (1990) and Marshall (1991; 1993). The aggressive use of media technology and the doctrinal reorientations as well as the deliberate courting of corporate organisations and top politicians are strategies of competition. In addition, the relentless introduction of new programmes and expansion of old ones which ensures that votaries are ceaselessly present within church premises are both forms of encapsulation and organisational rivalry between the church and other pentecostal groups.

Encapsulation strategies, as Lewis Rambo (1993: 104-8) observes, are the different ways in which churches "create and maintain worlds of their own". These strategies isolate and restrict interaction between members of a group and other groups for fear of accessing alternative religious ideologies, rituals and practices which may precipitate the switching of loyalty. Churches deliberately create ways of controlling interference from outsiders as well as competing ideas and personalities. Rambo points out three significant varieties of encapsulation which he calls physical, social and ideological. These levels are evident in the relationship between RCCG and other pentecostal churches. Physical encapsulation involves the "removing of people to distant locations or remote areas where communication can be controlled" in such a way that only information which is deemed suitable or reinforcing is allowed to get to the isolated people (Rambo 1993: 106). The construction of camps and prayer centres, for example, functions in this way. As we shall discuss later, the camp is a significant feature of pentecostal rivalry and virulent contest for spheres of influence. It is a self-contained world where a unique brand of religiosity is brewed, packaged and distributed. The camp localises God. The narratives which emerge from it insist that deity answers to all human predicaments, hence, people are drawn from far and wide to this centre of sacredness and power. In an important way, the camp takes people away from their normal, daily routines and isolates them to a varying length of time where they focus and concentrate on a particular religious personality and what miracles are channelled through his intercession.

In the RCCG social encapsulation involves socialising church members and other followers into a specific life-style that restricts their interactions with non-members or the outside world. The routinised night vigils, prayer sessions, conventions and crusades, choir practice, bible study and house fellowship sessions are all forms of constructing social encapsulation for members in addition to the manifest aim of deepening Christian life and spirituality as well as raising fund through collections of offerings. Ideological encapsulation entails the development of a specific, sometimes unique worldview and doctrinal orientations for members designed to resist outside pressure from alternative competitive systems and groups. For the RCCG, this strategy is entrenched during *workers-in-training* classes when members are taught that “a church worker” is one who has made “an agreement with God that I will serve in this vine yard and nowhere else”.<sup>501</sup> At the end of this series of lectures which usually lasts for six months, members have been thoroughly steeped into the rituals and doctrines of the church as well as the foisting of a new set of relationships and roles on them (Rambo 1993: 108).<sup>502</sup> Through the creation of uniqueness and implementation of diverse strategies of isolation and containment, the RCCG actively competes with other pentecostal groups for new converts or reaffiliates as well as maintains a strong hold on those who are already members.

The implications of pentecostal rivalry are enormous. The spurning of innovations geared towards presenting positive group image is an important fallout of the desire to attract people. Musa Gaiya (2002: 23), writing about “the pentecostal revolution in Nigeria”, characterises the pentecostal field as “troubled waters” because of the uncoordinated introduction of a variety of practices from both the global sphere and the local worldview into contemporary religious practice. Some pastors who are on the competitive fringe of the country’s spiritual market are under pressure to innovate and improvise in a variety of forms in order to attract a clientele. Such new and desperate practices include the use of human skull in pentecostal advertising of a pastor’s power in dislodging ancestral curses.<sup>503</sup> The prominence of rhetoric of miracle, wealth and health is also a deliberate refashioning of group image to attract seekers who are now constructed to keep up the quest for these items. This is one way a group

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<sup>501</sup> Interview with Pastor S. T. Adetoye, *op. cit.*

<sup>502</sup> See chapter 4 for the discussion on the creation of new leadership roles in the RCCG which serves as a way of enticing members with symbols of power and entrenching commitment.

<sup>503</sup> A pentecostal bishop, Alexander Ezeugo Ekwuba of Overcomers Christian Mission, Owerri, was found with two human skulls in September 1996 during a mass uprising against ritual murderers in Owerri. The bishop claimed he “used the heads on display during evangelisation”, see Ben Duru, “Otokoto Uprising: Bishop Protests Innocence”, *Post Express* (Lagos), 14 September 2000.

can make itself attractive in the face of stiff competition and rivalry for spheres of influence and material resources.

Competition has also encouraged the obsession with image and visibility among pentecostal pastors and the groups they lead. The creation of a positive self- as well as group image and visibility and how these two “assets” are managed undergird much of the features of religious expansion which sometimes give rise to public intrigues and open hostilities among pentecostal pastors (Ukah 2002). Perhaps the most significant implication of the back regions activities among pentecostal pastors is the absence of ecumenicity within the pentecostal fold. Although some pastors share pulpits with others they may regard as more influential than themselves, there exists a great undercurrent of mutual suspicion in the relationship between pastors. The primary reason for this suspicion is the fear of “sheep stealing” or “flock poaching”. Some church founders refuse to join the PFN for fear of external interference or having to share their pulpits with an executive member of the association or other top members of the group whom they consider as predators on the prowl for members of other pentecostal churches. These pastors dread a more flamboyant preacher coming to create disaffection and dissatisfaction among their followers.

As an arena populated by individual religious actors who claim of divine authorisation for their enterprise, self-assertiveness is a feature of the religious field. Leaders assert their presence and opinions as a strategy of seeking public relevance and attention or claiming a niche for their services. Consequently, it is common to witness uncoordinated utterances and actions even from members of PFN. How PFN mobilises its members for political action has been one significant area of confusion in the association as different leaders respond differently to attempts by politicians to solicit votes from the pentecostal constituency through financial inducement. Contradictory voices among them have become a feature of the field where one prophecy from one pastor is cancelled out by another one from a different pastor, both claiming to have received their messages from the same God. Even the PFN lacks a unified voice on any one significant issue, a situation that indicates how rivalry and competition have replaced cooperation and ecumenicity.<sup>504</sup>

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<sup>504</sup> See, for example, Bisi Alabi-Williams, “Pentecostal Fellowship Seeks votes for Credible Candidates”, *The Guardian* (Lagos) 10 January 2003.

### 7.1.2 Relationship with Mission Churches and the AICs

Adeboye was a member of the Anglican Church before his reaffiliation to RCCG. He thus, understands the basic teachings of the mainline churches. His main criticism of his former congregation has been that he was not taught “deep things of God”.<sup>505</sup> This opinion is a general one that also refers to all mainline churches which are regarded as superficial and uncommitted to the deep things of God as revealed in the bible. He honours invitations to attend conventions of Anglican Churches (Bankole 1999: 188f) and at the same time extends invitations to members of the Anglican community to attend his own programmes. Going through pamphlets and booklets by Adeboye or his past sermons, one sees very few references to other churches in general. Sometimes subtle references are made when it is important to do so but never in any polemical way, like when he writes concerning the varied interpretation of Matt. 16:13-29, where Jesus asked his disciples “Who do men say I am?” Adeboye writes: “some people have interpreted this passage to mean that Peter was the first Pope. [...] They are obviously wrong...”<sup>506</sup> Adeboye made his point about Catholic theology and the Catholic Church but did not name names. In a similar way he advises his audience, “Before you stay in a particular church, be sure that the people there are the right people. Do not dwell in the wrong place and with the wrong people. [...] Stay where you will learn the deep things of God”.<sup>507</sup>

Although he never mentions churches or individuals by names, Adeboye categorises all Christian churches into two, namely, i) congregation of the dead and, ii) congregation of the living. The former group embraces all congregations “where all they talk about is evil, or they say they are worshipping God yet their lives show that they are not holy”.<sup>508</sup> Members of this congregation are sinners, or people who associate with people of the world. They are considered wanderers who have wandered out of the way of understanding of God’s plan and eternal life. They will suffer the wrath of God when judgement comes. The latter embraces all “born again” churches who dwell in the house of the Lord. For them, salvation is guaranteed as long as they remain in the house of God and uphold his standards by “living holy, unblemished, spotless lives”.<sup>509</sup>

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<sup>505</sup> Adeboye, *The Tree by the Riverside*, op. cit., p.28.

<sup>506</sup> Adeboye, *The Bride of the Lamb*, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>507</sup> Adeboye, *The Tree by the Riverside*, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29

<sup>509</sup> *Idem*

RCCG demonstrates a high degree of moderation and openness in its relations with people of other Christian organisations. This, perhaps, is a unique feature of the founder, Josiah. After his excommunication from the C&S, he went back to the church and apologised for previous wrongs and misdemeanours against any church officials. He called this restitution. Further, it is reported that Josiah had an audience with the Pope in 1975 when he went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Rome (Ajayi 1997: 92).<sup>510</sup> For Adeboye, members of the Anglican Church are “hungry and thirsty” for the deep words of God and the manifestation of his power in miracles (see Bankole 1999: 188). This illustrates the recognition of the spiritual authority of mission churches. However, this does not over-ride the church’s insistence on its unique identity as the purveyor for salvation for the last days, which is expected to commence from Nigeria. This perspective sees the RCCG as the covenant established by God to bring salvation and knowledge of God to the whole world. Such salvation and knowledge includes healing, prosperity, peace and divine serenity. It also recognises that there are many other religious organisations in the same quest for healing and salvation, but using different means. The church condemns the use of what it terms

non-biblical traditions in the search for healing. Such traditions include sanctification of water for the sick to drink, or to perform special washing for the sick in a flowing river, the use of robe, garment or to carry a small stick in form of cross about, or the use of candle and such things.<sup>511</sup>

The church places an imprecation on the churches and people who are “guilty” of these practices: “All those using the above materials for healing shall perish with them”.<sup>512</sup> The identification of these methods of securing healing as “non-biblical” affords the church a space to define itself and its rituals as “biblical” and therefore, correct. In doing this, it castigates and stereotypes those “others” that it sees as involved in unscriptural rituals. In this group of churches that “shall perish” are the main *Aladura* churches that are renowned for

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<sup>510</sup> The reigning Pope in 1975 was Pope Paul VI. However, although the church in its public self-presentation would not make any public identification with the Catholic Church, the Assistant Director of Missions, Pastor ‘Delana Adeleye-Olusae, claims Adeboye would honour any invitation from the Catholic authority to preach in the Catholic Church. A majority of the clergy of RCCG may have a different opinion. The pastors of the church, for example, prefers to refer to a federal government facility located at Kubuwa, Abuja, officially called “The Papal Ground” as “Christian Praying Ground” in order to dissociate it from the Catholic Church in whose honour the site was erected. The ground was prepared by the government of the late military dictator, General Sanni Abacha, to host Pope John Paul II in March 1998 (see *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 5, June 2002, p. 28).

<sup>511</sup> *FBB*, article 23.

<sup>512</sup> *Idem*. The same text that forbids swearing and cursing (*FBB*, article 17) finds it necessary to pronounce a curse in order to mark a boundary between the church’s ritual practices and those conceived of as “others”, and thus define its identity as “a Bible-believing church”.

their use of ritual objects in healings, and some mission churches such as the Catholic Church that use candles during the celebration of Eucharistic liturgy.

However, this boundary-drawing posture of the church notwithstanding, it has maintained amicable relation with people of other religious persuasions. Accounting for this non-aggressive posturing, a senior pastor of the church says,

The ministry that God gave to the General Overseer (Adeboye) is not sectarian. If you give him the time and opportunity to come and preach in the Catholic Church every Sunday, he will be willing to do that. If there is a way he would pay to do that, he will be willing to do so [...]. It is his joy that people in every church would see the light and follow God. The gifts God has given him is more of an influence [to affect people's life in a positive way] than a personal claim of anything as 'my own'. [...] The anointing that is upon him is not meant for only those in RCCG.<sup>513</sup>

This explanation fits into the situation in which people from numerous churches other than the RCCG attend the church's programmes. Maintaining a liberal attitude towards people of Christian organisations may also be a way of cultivating a broad-based clientele, which ensures that the church's events attract a mass audience and participation. This point is all the more important when it is realised that "if we have an attendance at a particular event of one million people, probably there will not be more than three hundred thousand who are *bona fide* members of RCCG".<sup>514</sup> This liberal self-representation of the church "is also a way of not erecting barriers; we do not want to build barriers"<sup>515</sup> between the RCCG and other churches or even other religious traditions.

### 7.1.3 Relationship with Islam

Nigeria is a country almost evenly split between Christians and Muslims, with about ten percent of the population belonging to the indigenous religions (Ness and Ciment 1999: 652; Paden 2002: 1-2). This situation evidently supplies raw material for intense missionisation by RCCG. Knowing that "Islam has gradually grown to become the church's biggest headache in Africa"<sup>516</sup> and "the whole of Northern Nigeria is a mission field",<sup>517</sup> the RCCG recognises

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<sup>513</sup> Personal interview with Pastor 'Delana Adeleye-Olusae, *op. cit.*

<sup>514</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>515</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>516</sup> Joe Egwuda and Jentle Abul Malik, "Discipling Muslim Converts in Africa", *The Catalyst*, vol. 1, no. 3, p. 30.

“the need to evangelise the Muslim world more than ever before”.<sup>518</sup> For RCCG, according to Adeboye, “our major duty as Christians is to establish the kingdom of God on earth by destroying the kingdom of Satan here on earth”.<sup>519</sup> To make everyone in Nigeria a Christian would be part of the ways of establishing God’s kingdom on earth. Although Adeboye does not in any explicit way identify Islam with “the kingdom of Satan”, however, establishing the kingdom of God on earth would mean the eradication of Islam. This will also involve converting the more than sixty million Muslims in the country to Christianity.

Searching through three years of sermons of Adeboye and piles of church documents, there is rarely any mention of Islam or direct measures in approaching Muslims and working among them. For the leadership of RCCG, an indirect method of attracting Muslims by presenting the benefits of being a Christian appears to be the most feasible strategy in converting Muslims to Christianity. Although in informal and private discussions Islam is demonised by pentecostals in general, there is a particular restraint within the RCCG. The church rarely if ever confronts Islam as a religion but prefers to insist on what the Muslim stands to gain in belonging to the Christian family. This restraint issues apparently from the understanding that direct confrontation with Islam yields little fruits in terms of converts or mutual co-existence.

The muffled nature of the discourse on converting Muslims to Christianity has some important political implications. Since Muslims in the country have dominated the political scene, converting them to Christianity means that Christians would now be in full control of the political and economic resources of the nation. Converting Muslims is not only a religious enterprise but also a political and economic one. This confirms Marshall-Fratani’s (1998: 306) view that “[w]inning Nigeria (Africa, the world) for Jesus means the projection into the national public space of a highly political agenda. The image of the ‘invading army’, sweeping all unbelievers in its path, expresses the political ambition on the part of Pentecostals for material and political autonomy from the state”.

The leadership of the church believes and teaches that the charismata of Adeboye are a provision by God to the whole nation (and humanity). Hence, by making these available to Muslims in a peaceful and conducive environment allows Muslims to share in the blessings that Adeboye represents and in turn influence their conversion to Christianity. One strategy of

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<sup>517</sup> Patrick Uponi, “Missions Approach: Northern Nigeria”, *The Catalyst*, vol.1, No. 3, 2002, p. 30.

<sup>518</sup> Joe Egwuda and Jentle Abul Malik, *op. cit.*

<sup>519</sup> Adeboye, *Spiritual Warfare*, (Lagos: CRM Book Ministry, 1994), p. 6.

expanding the church's influence and presence in the Muslim-dominated north of Nigeria is the holding of Holy Ghost Nights in the area. During such services, the main thrust of teachings of the church is on the benefits of believing God and becoming a "born again" Christian. Furthermore, the church proposes the use of social work such as healthcare, education, water, agricultural extension and animal husbandry sports and recreation as effective ways of reaching Muslims. Also, the popularity of the HGS as a miracle event has made the programme central to further expansion in the Muslim-dominated north of Nigeria "because disputes may arise over theology, the deity of Christ and other issues, but not over miracles. Some of the greatest conversions that have been made [among Muslims] have been as a result of indisputable miracles".<sup>520</sup>

Adeboye's main activities are mostly held in the southern part of the country. There are occasional incursions to the Middle-Belt and Abuja zones. At the end of 2002, the RCCG had eleven provinces in the whole of northern Nigeria.<sup>521</sup> Majority of the members of these provinces and its leadership are southern migrants.<sup>522</sup> He has strived to maintain a moderate position in his relationship with Muslim leaders and faithful. Although he is positive about Nigeria having a Christian leadership in order to fulfil God's design for the country, he says, "I know that the issue of Nigeria (that is the problem with Nigeria) is not the issue of North versus South. It has nothing to do with Moslems versus Christians. The issue of Nigeria is the devil versus God's plan for Nigeria".<sup>523</sup>

A socio-theological position such as the above does not antagonise Muslims but rather externalises the recurrent problems of religious crises and intolerance and the tension-soaked interfaith relations in the country. This perspective may be because of Adeboye's frequent theological emphasis on the Holy Ghost and its powers of transformation and less on the "Blood of Jesus" which Muslims find difficult to understand and accept. Unlike Reinhard Bonnke whose firebrand rhetoric of "soaking Africa in the Blood of Jesus" arouses strong Muslim opposition, often resulting in great human fatality (Lease 1996), Adeboye rarely mentions the "blood of Jesus" in his sermons. His theological orientations, as discussed in

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<sup>520</sup> Patrick Upuni, *op. cit.*, p.28.

<sup>521</sup> *RCCG Year 2002 Annual Report*. These provinces are located in Abuja, Bauchi, Borno, Damaturu, Jos, Makurdi, Minna, Kaduna, Kano, Sokoto, and Yola.

<sup>522</sup> Of the eleven provincial pastors, only one is non-Yoruba, that is, Pastor A. Abdulahi of Northern 11 Province. See *RCCG Year 2002 Annual Report*, pp. 292-332. Upuni writes that "most of our parishes [in northern Nigeria] are populated by outsiders [hence they are not] affecting the indigenous communities where they are located" (Patrick Upuni, *op. cit.*, p. 29).

<sup>523</sup> Adeboye, sermon to commemorate the 39<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Nigeria's Independence, preached at the Holy Ghost Night, Redemption Camp, October 1, 1999. Excerpt of sermon is published in Bankole, (1999: 177-183).

chapter 5, are such that raise minimal theological objections from members of other faiths. He would rather be silent over difficult national issues that may also concern Islam or Muslims.<sup>524</sup> Not wanting to antagonise Muslims or castigate Islam for the woes of the country may also represent a subtle way of positive self-representation and the shunning of public controversy. It is only reasonable, judging by the country's past political history, for Adeboye to want to change the religio-political culture of Nigeria through Christian leadership by subtle, non-aggressive, non-polemic means. Any other style by any religious leader is doomed to fail by instigating stiff resistance and probably violent backlash. More importantly, perhaps, is his desire for peaceful coexistence among peoples of all faith, for he writes, "if you are always behaving like an angry dog, and always quarrelling, you are not a child of God. You will have no place in heaven".<sup>525</sup> For him, peace is a primary condition for making heaven.

Although the attitude of Adeboye as a person and a leader influences the general trend concerning relationship with Islam and Muslim in the RCCG, there are multiple voices on how this issue is to be negotiated. There is, therefore, the possibility that in private individual members of the church or indeed some of its senior officials may demonise Islam and build up rhetoric of Muslims as the primary targets of evangelism, in public, there is an evident restraint and caution. Writing on the nature of the church's mission in northern Nigeria, Patrick Uponi, the acting Missions Director of RCCG, enumerates a number of factors which constitute formidable hindrances to the enterprise of converting Nigerian northern Muslims. Such factors include the colonial history of northern Nigeria that forbade Christian missionary activities, late establishment of a Western-type educational system, the absence of medical and social services and the prevalence of "occultic and syncretic practices" (such as witchcraft and animism) among the southern peoples of Northern Nigeria. For Uponi, "the originator of all hindrances to the gospel is Satan".<sup>526</sup> Islam, therefore, is not directly demonised but conceived as an instrument of the devil to hinder the work and spread of the gospel.<sup>527</sup>

In a slightly different tone, another pastor, Joel Oke, writes that all people without Christ, especially Muslims in such countries as the Comoros Island, Maldives, Western Sahara "are

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<sup>524</sup> See Adeboye's prophecies for 2003 made public on 31 December 2002, when he said, "For Nigeria, only a few revelations that relate to 2003 can be shared [publicly]", *The Week* (Lagos), 13 January 2003, p. 11.

<sup>525</sup> Adeboye, *Heaven*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>526</sup> Patrick Uponi, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>527</sup> When Muslim clerics make miracle claims, the church regards such claims as "the use of sura 36 in making magic". See Egwuda and Malik, *op. cit.*, p.33.

qualified candidates for hell”.<sup>528</sup> For him, the church of God (meaning perhaps, the RCCG) will be held reasonable by God for not converting these peoples. Claiming that Nigerian born again Christians constitute a formidable force (as the third largest population of Born Again Christians in the world) with all the resources (wealth, connection and educated manpower) available to them to convert these peoples, he asks rhetorically: “What excuse will Nigeria give to God” for failing to bring Muslims into the fold of Christians?<sup>529</sup> Narrowing his focus from Nigeria to his church, the RCCG, Oke continues: “RCCG is one of the richest churches in Nigeria today. Besides, there is no class of people or profession that is not properly represented in RCCG, from the royal fathers to the ordinary men on the street. [...] What excuse are we going to give God for not electrifying the whole world with the Gospel?”<sup>530</sup> Oke’s position represents yet a strand in the many faces of relationship between the church and Islam which believes that the RCCG is not aggressively evangelising Muslims both in Nigeria and abroad. For those who advocate this position, “the many divine focus of many individuals and churches are lost already and what many now concentrate upon are just mere side attractions”.<sup>531</sup> However, making such strong opinions open in written form is what many pastors and officials of the church may be very reluctant to do.

The less aggressive of the pastors maintain that subtle, more indirect but constructive engagement with Islam is more profitable than an all out open confrontation in the name of evangelism. Uponi, for instance, recommends making willing Muslims “secret disciples based on the Naaman/Nicodemus principle”, by which Muslim converts need “not attend church services or programmes until they are grounded enough and ready to make a public stand for their faith”.<sup>532</sup> Other strategies of engaging with Islam include having non-formal bible fellowships with no fixed addresses for such meetings as well as no semblance of religion during such encounters. People are brought into the circle discretely and tutored in secret; “during such meetings, the bible is quietly studied and prayers quietly made, then at the end, the venue and time for the next meeting is fixed”.<sup>533</sup> This caution informs the discouragement of the use of video and audio cassette recordings in disseminating testimonies of Muslim converts as doing this exposes the converts to considerable risk and persecution from former colleagues or family members.

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<sup>528</sup> Joel Oke, “Tragedies of the Missing Opportunities”, *Catalyst*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2002, p. 25. Oke is an Assistant Pastor with the Directorate of Missions of RCCG.

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.*, p.26

<sup>530</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>532</sup> Patrick Uponi, *op. cit.*, p.29.

<sup>533</sup> *Idem.*

The above principles influence how the church handles its new Muslim converts. In general Muslim converts to the church are not necessarily separated from families for fear of persecution or relapse but are often encouraged and helped to consolidate their faith, face antagonism or persecution, to be economically productive by working for or in the church. In this way, they are prepared to become positive witnesses to their immediate Muslim families with the expectation of eventually converting members of families to the church. Narrating her experiences during an interview, Esther Morenikeji, a former Muslim and now a member of RCCG, says she got converted through associating with schoolmates and attending RCCG programmes in Lagos. She still lives with her Muslim parents but has succeeded in getting a few of her sisters to become Christians. She is now a church worker and also markets Christian videotapes and church literature during RCCG events all over the country.<sup>534</sup>

#### **7.1.4 Relationship with Indigenous Religions**

Members of indigenous religions have been the hardest hit by the rhetoric of RCCG. In its manifesto, the church insists that its primary mission is to convert the non-Christian to the Christian faith. Foremost among non-Christians are members of indigenous religions whose religious practices are seen as antithetical to the search for Christian salvation. Traditional religious categories and practices are conceived as “hostile forces” that must be eradicated through aggressive missionising strategies. Such forces to be conquered include witches, wizards, charms, local demons, ancestral practices, and other forms of local cultural norms considered to be against Christian tenets.<sup>535</sup>

In addition to indigenous religious practices, traditional medicine is also vilified partly because the church teaches doctrines against the use of medicines in general, and partly because indigenous medicine is an integral aspect of traditional religious practices. According to Adeboye, “some trust in charms, some trust in inoculations but they should have known there is no inoculation against witches and wizards, no inoculation against demons”.<sup>536</sup> The drive to convert members of indigenous religions is also directed towards the conversion of indigenous religious worship places. Such sites are seen as places of evil and danger, represented by wild and dangerous animals. The Redemption Camp now exists on sacred sites

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<sup>534</sup> Personal interview with Esther Morenikeji aged 29, Redemption Camp, 5 May 2001. She was a Yoruba theatre practitioner, who, since her conversion, has become a script writer for the RCCG National HQ parish in Lagos. She is active in youth drama groups in the church through which she showcases her skills and talents in drama to the whole church especially during important church services.

<sup>535</sup> Adeboye, “Children Only”, sermon delivered at HGS, 5 April 2002, at the Redemption Camp, [http://www.rccg.org/Holy\\_Ghost\\_Service/Monthly\\_Holy\\_Ghost%20Service/apr2002.htm](http://www.rccg.org/Holy_Ghost_Service/Monthly_Holy_Ghost%20Service/apr2002.htm) (accessed 30.05.02).

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*

indigenous to the Yoruba people. The church believes that by taking over sites of indigenous religious practices, it is liberating the physical environment from ancestral spirits and local demons that plague the local environment.

Villages are often identified as places where local deities abound and have strong authority and so contexts where counter-forces to the missionising spirit of RCCG are easily mobilised. There are more instances of poverty in the villages than in urban environments, and this lack of development is attributed to the spirits of ancestors, demons and other categories of hostile forces. There have been instances where people have been advised to migrate from villages and rural areas to urban areas, for these new places are where they will encounter God and divine abundance.<sup>537</sup> Prosperity and godly virtues are identified with life in urban centres. Also, certain indigenous food items are believed to be associated with local deities and so must not be consumed by a born-again member of the church. Palm wine, for instance, is an indigenous drink from the raffia and oil palms the consumption of which is considered by the church to be unchristian.<sup>538</sup> Kola nuts, alligator pepper and bitter kola are considered sacrificial and ritual objects in indigenous religion which the church teaches its members to abhor.<sup>539</sup>

The doctrine of demons and other evil forces has a traditional cosmological underpinning. This doctrine underlines the practice of ceaseless exorcisms, which form an important feature of RCCG ritual world and liturgy. Some aspects of traditional cultural practices are heavily demonised and held accountable for human misfortunes, sickness, poverty, barrenness and other forms of existential hardships. The concept of personal deliverance made possible through the intervention of the church brings about protection from such local spirits. Such deliverance makes it possible for individuals to reconstitute them and enter into new religious networks. These loosely structured interactions are often translocal as they link one church with another in far-away places and bring distant personalities into members' orbit of personal experiences.

The RCCG presents itself as a modern community in contrast to traditional society and practices, which are portrayed as "counter-modern" and as a counter-kingdom of God. Thus, prosperity does not come through such traditional occupations of the people such as farming,

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<sup>537</sup> Adeboye, *Victory: The Decision is Yours*, op. cit. pp. 11-12

<sup>538</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>539</sup> *To Have and to Behold Forever*, op. cit., p.57.

fishing, iron smiting, cloth-weaving, tie-and-dye but through modern variants such as banking, civil construction and the chase after contracts. The emphasis on prosperity is configured as a way of accessing modern consumer goods and services, but also as a way of moving farther away from traditional lifestyle and local understanding of the good life. Pentecostal exorcism involves the deliverance from traditional conceptions of wealth productivity and lifestyle into “localized conditions of modernity” (Gore 2002: 222). The stress on westernised conceptions of prosperity, wealth and modern consumer goods constitutes both a symbolic and economic valorisation of the individual who has achieved deliverance within the spiritual space of the church. The

emphasis on material success in the modern world also provides the ideological framework for worshippers to redefine and reduce the collective obligations (and economic costs) of extended kinship in order to replace it with the spiritual community of the church to which they belong and so focus on a more individual sociality (Gore 2002: 224).

From the foregoing, the RCCG through its doctrines and practices perpetuates different forms of demonisation of indigenous religious practices and certain aspects of local culture. These aspects of culture that are vilified are in turn replaced with other practices that may not be classified as Christian but only modern, such as the replacing of palm wine with malt drinks and coca-cola drinks, or the replacement of kola nuts with biscuits, extended family ties with nuclear family. It is the church’s desire that through its activities, prayers and aggressive proselytisation, “one day, everybody in Nigeria will be a Christian”.<sup>540</sup> Achieving this objective entails the replacement of certain local practices considered incompatible with Christian teachings and practices. This attitude of the RCCG is not new in itself, for, the Aladura churches also did and still make the same creative selection and adaptation. Perhaps, a subtle difference could be found in the degree of ritualisation which takes place among Aladura churches and the RCCG. While the former moves in the direction of the ritual efficacy of objects (holy water, oil, sacrifice victims, etc.), the latter moves in the direction of the efficacy of prayer and concentration on bible verses.

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<sup>540</sup> Adeboye, “Children Only”, *op. cit.*

## 7.2 RCCG and Religious Transnationalisation

Pastor Adeboye is not just a religious leader; he is also a political figure whose present role in Nigeria could be aptly compared to the role of Billy Graham in the religious politics of the United States of America. As Billy Graham is often called upon by successive American presidents to pray for the nation, so Adeboye is frequently called upon to officiate and preside over national religious programmes by prominent political leaders ranging from the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to state governors. These political leaders do not only consult him on important national issues, he is sometimes sponsored to carry out specific programmes deemed beneficial to the country or particular political regimes.<sup>541</sup> In addition to this, he is known to make positive and favourable political prophecies concerning the present political dispensation in the country.<sup>542</sup> Many national political leaders, Christians and Muslims, as well as representatives of foreign countries in Nigeria attend the church's programmes.

The RCCG is a transnational religious organisation; with its strong and firm local base and content, it has an uncontested translocal presence. The leader is a guest of governments abroad and in Nigeria. On 15 June 2001, he was awarded the Liberty Bell and the Key to the city of Philadelphia in the United States of America. This is a gesture of recognition of his position as the leader of a multinational religious organisation and his role in transforming the RCCG "from a local church of a few hundreds to an international church with more than four million members in Nigeria and more than a million<sup>543</sup> in other parts of the world".<sup>544</sup> It is significant to see how the transnational spread of the church has affected its structures.

### 7.2.1 Organisational Transformation

In chapter 4 we described and discussed the past and present organisational structures of the RCCG. We discerned an initial loose scheduling of group responsibilities marked by spontaneity and decentralisation. This type of organisation structure is characterised by

<sup>541</sup> See Olusegun Obasanjo, "How our Eaten Years can be Regained", *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 5, June 2002, p. 27.

<sup>542</sup> E.A. Adeboye, "2003 Poll will be Peaceful", *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 5, June 2002, p. 28. This pronouncement was made against the backdrop of increased social insecurity, armed robbery, politically motivated assassinations and intensified election violence in the country.

<sup>543</sup> Although it is extremely difficult to know the exact number of members of the RCCG, these figures offered here are obvious exaggerations. Based on the annual statistics of the church released in August 2001, the combined estimate of all RCCG members in and outside Nigeria is under two million. Very few of the 3,245 parishes in Nigeria have membership of more than a hundred. In fact there are many parishes where the statistics are available having membership strength of between 5 and 70! (See *RCCG: Year 2001 Annual Report*). The above statement holds true of the 6,265 parishes of the church worldwide as at August 2002 (See *RCCG Year 2002 Annual Report*).

<sup>544</sup> Sola Oshodi, "Adeboye Gets Liberty Bell", *Redemption Light*, vol. 6, no.8, September 2001, p.27.

Rudolph (1997) as “self-organisation”. This first structure gave way to a more formal concentration of decision-making powers and prerogatives in the hands of a few men. It was gradually that a formal and rigidly hierarchised organisation emerged inscribed in a constitution that became a framework for such a formally ranked order. Believing that order is the first law in heaven, the nascent group promulgated a constitution that ranked offices and members in definite order, from the founder and head of mission to the visitor to the church. The hierarchy that emerged was assumed to be a divinely authorised form of coordinating group actions, objectives and authority.

The church’s present reality as a multinational organisation has necessitated the creation of new instruments for structurally ordering the church. While the local church is structured according to provinces based on a territorial organisation, the branches in African countries are organised according to “regions” and “coasts”. A region or coast is comprised of all the branches of the church in more than one country. The branches of the church in different African countries were formerly under the jurisdiction of the Assistant General Overseer (Missions) and the Mother-in-Israel, through her “African Missions” Department. With the new structure put in place in August 2002 which effectively abolished the office of Assistant General Overseer in charge of Missions, Adeboye himself as head of mission is directly in charge of all the mission areas and branches of the church worldwide.

Branches in non-African countries are grouped and administered differently: cluster of countries form one unit under one co-ordinator. For example, RCCG congregations in North America (RCCGNA) are administered according to “zones”. There are ten zones in all, each under a zonal coordinator.<sup>545</sup> The team of coordinators is headed by a “Chairman, Board of coordinators” who is, in principle, the link between the coordinators and the General Overseer.<sup>546</sup> RCCG congregations in the United Kingdom have a clear structure with an officer in charge of them all. He acts as a link between the branches and the GO. As discussed in chapter 4, the local church is organised differently from the international arms. While both organs have Adeboye as the supreme head, he concedes some authority to some of his officers through a form of “trickle down” policy. By this strategy, power is gradually diffused from top to bottom. The national headquarters exercises administrative competence over the local church through the five Assistant General Overseers superintending over the five regions of

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<sup>545</sup> Of the ten “zonal coordinators”, only one (Pastor Emmanuel Osakwe in charge of Georgia) is *not* a Yoruba (see [http://jht.rccg.org/parish\\_directory/north\\_america/north\\_america\\_coordinators.htm](http://jht.rccg.org/parish_directory/north_america/north_america_coordinators.htm) (accessed 17.01.2003)).

<sup>546</sup> Personal interview with Assistant Pastor S. Tai Adetayo, *op. cit.*

the church in Nigeria. All the other branches in non-African countries report directly to Adeboye through their respective coordinators.

What emerges with the present arrangement is a form of heterarchy, a concept that Gunnar Hedlund (1993) describes as a loosely structured network such that different units within an organisation are differently structured according to geographical location, products/services best suited for, function and technology available to them. A leader in one unit may be a subordinate in another, involving some degree of circularity and multidimensionality. Applying Hedlund's concept to global religions, the sociologist James V. Spickard (2002) argues that global organisations often move away from hierarchical structures to heterarchical ordering of objectives and actions as a means of executing global objectives. According to him, increased expansion and global spread of an organisation will engender a form of "matrix management" whereby the "centre" of a heterarchy sustains and integrates the different units rather than controls them. A matrix management allows each unit to develop according to the resources, functions and expectations of its location in the total network of global connectivity.

The present organisational structure of RCCG exemplifies basic features of a heterarchy as described by both Hedlund and Spickard. The church is a network of units weaved together under a paramount leader who exercises absolute authority and power in matters of doctrines, administration, liturgy and finance but allows each unit sufficient scope to develop according to where it is located. Doctrinal emphases shift subtly according to the geographical location of the church. Strong channels of communication, links, and "bypasses" are established by this strategy, a style of leadership that transcends the local terrain and exigencies. Through a semi-decentralised form of administration, multiple options of communication, interaction and supervision are created with relatively strong centre representing the source of vision, direction and charisma. Intermediate positions of authority multiply with time, giving the middle cadre of leadership openings to aspire to and things to crave for in such a way as to satisfy aspirations and contain ambition. The positions are also vested with an aura of charismatic mystification, whereby in theory, they are open to any qualified member of the church but in practice, the Holy Spirit directs Adeboye on how to fill vacancies as well as create new ones. This organisational style has resulted in the multiplication of the office of Assistant General Overseers while leaving vacant the office of a Deputy General Overseer for many years.

The use of “bypass”, adapted from Rosabeth Moss Kanter’s (1995) attempts to describe the multiplicity of possibilities of accessing diverse resources of communication and administrative support from different wrungs of leadership. A pastor ordinarily has intermediate bosses before reaching the General Overseer, but he can choose to report directly to the General Overseer without going through anyone. In the same manner, the General Overseer can choose to call on any of these pastors without going through the established chain of commands. In much the same way, the possibilities of travelling abroad have become multiplied with the multiplication of parishes in foreign countries, such that the GO only spends the first weekend of every month in Nigeria and the rest abroad, visiting these different parishes and missions, especially those in Europe, North America, Australia and Asia.

Adaptations are also evident in doctrinal emphasis and the quality of conduct recommended to members as Christians. While it is strongly insisted upon in the parishes of the church in Nigeria that women must not wear trousers and must cover their heads while in church or within the premises of the Redemption Camp, such teachings are not taught in the branches of the church in North America. Here, members of the church are advised to wear what makes them comfortable, for God sees the heart and not the flesh. As stated in the website of one of the parishes, “We welcome you as you are! People dress in a variety of ways, casual, professional, traditional. If you are comfortable, you are welcome”.<sup>547</sup> The situation in the United States of America especially necessitated a senior pastor to say “[m]ost people who claim to be Christians here do not qualify to be so called in Nigeria. The Lord is however enabling necessary changes”.<sup>548</sup>

That every position of authority has a quasi-equivalent for the female spouse of its occupant represents a leadership strategy that co-opts female strength in shoring up moral support for a course. In this respect, Adeboye remains a successful manager of human resources, imbued with strong leadership vision. In the words of Bishop Wale Oke of the Sword of the Spirit Ministries, Ibadan, Adeboye is “an excellent organiser of men and a prudent steward of resources”.<sup>549</sup> He creatively engineers positions within the leadership hierarchy which give all and sundry expectations and intermediate goals to aspire to in the name of God. The

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<sup>547</sup> <http://www.jesushousedc.org/faq.htm> (accessed 09.01.03).

<sup>548</sup> Pastor Olaniran Fafowora, e-mail correspondence, 27 February 2003. Fafowora coordinates one of the ten administrative zones of RCCGNA. He coordinates six states in the west coast of the US (South Carolina, Hawaii, Nevada, Wyoming, Utah and Arizona). In addition, he is in charge of Information.

<sup>549</sup> *Redemption Light*, vol.7, no. 3, April 2002, p. 24.

structuring of authority in this way constitutes a specific configuration of means oriented towards the pursuit of specific goals. The goals include the dissemination of the gospel, the harnessing of material and human resources and the establishment of firm institutional supervisory powers of the leader(ship).

Through these networks, charisma is globalised by trickling down from top to bottom as well as spreading out from the centre to the periphery. The “centre” has multiple locations, but in one sense, it is represented by the international headquarters of the church in Nigeria. In another sense, the centre *is* Adeboye. The periphery is constituted by those multiple contexts or global outposts that RCCG has reproduced its doctrines, practices and institutions. In yet another sense, the periphery is constituted by the extensions which Adeboye creates as his subordinates, the pastors who form channels through which charisma flows out to the masses. The periphery is the socio-cultural contexts that Adeboye frequents monthly.

The multiplication of branches of RCCG in different parts of the world is therefore “characterized by the development of a new organizational logic” (Castells 2000a: 164) which combines institutional and charismatic forms of authority, reflecting current processes of change, transformation, continuity, and mobility. As Castells rightly points out, the state of technology plays a significant role in the transformation of organisational styles in modern societies. The availability of computer technology facilitates the creation of a culture of the network enterprise. It is the state of technology and the strength of the North American economic culture that have given RCCGNA, with about a hundred and ten (110) parishes, its dominant place within the present RCCG organisational scheme.<sup>550</sup> RCCGNA is constructing its version of “Redemption Camp”, a multimillion dollar holy site inspired by the Nigerian “original” version, on a choice 252 hectares of property in Farmersville, Dallas, Texas, USA. This new organisational logic is a result of multiplication of congregations and intense competition for resources.

The fusion of the new paradigm leadership of Adeboye and the new organisational logic described above constitutes the social-spiritual basis upon which the transformation of RCCG rests.<sup>551</sup> This transformation did not begin with the ascension of Adeboye to the leadership of the church. It is rightly traced to an earlier period between 1977 and 1979. In 1977, Adeboye formed the CRM, a group that protested the federal government’s hosting of FESTAC ’77

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<sup>550</sup> See <http://www.jesushousedc.org/faq.htm> (accessed 09.01.03).

<sup>551</sup> See chapter 4 above.

cultural revival but was later to galvanise support for his leadership ambition at the death of Josiah Akindayomi. In 1979, he first travelled to the United States of America in the company of Akindayomi, and participated in the Kenneth Hagin Camp Meeting.<sup>552</sup> It is significant that it was during the course of this visit to the USA that Josiah was claimed to have first informed Adeboye and a handful of inner supporters that he (Adeboye) would succeed him. It was in this vision that the seed of change and transformation was first sowed.

### 7.2.2 Strategies of Transformation and Globalisation

Soon after its inception, the RCCG leaders had the understanding that the mission of the organisation is to evangelise “the whole world”. Its charter of association, the Constitution, explicitly states that the whole world is its arena of mission activities. The emphasis on the whole world as its mission arena is not totally surprising since Christianity has always been conceived as a world religion. The covenant narrative, which undergirds its history and seems to be its present anthem, is hinged on an alleged promise by God to the founder that the church will spread to the whole world before the second coming of Jesus Christ. This “covenant” has acted as a spur, prodding the church to embark on a relentless expansion.

However, it is difficult to specify what “the whole world” might have meant for Josiah judging by his relative lack of formal Western education and exposure. Having its roots in *Aladura* Christianity that appropriated a great deal from the vernacular faith, the local turf was its favourite terrain for the first three decades of RCCG history.<sup>553</sup> Like the older *Aladura* churches, the RCCG early in its history sought affiliation with an external body thereby going beyond the country in its attempt to negotiate a transcultural identity. The search for translocal identity reflected in the many changes in its name from *Ogo Oluwa* Praying Band to the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (Nigeria Branch Headquarters), to the Apostolic Faith of West Africa and finally to the RCCG.<sup>554</sup> The opening up of the church to cross-cultural influences was the result of recruitment of people with university education. The expanded worldview brought about by the coming together of the local and the global generated new “glocal” tensions exemplified in the person of Adeboye. He was reluctant and sceptical, according to official sources, of taking up the mantle of leadership of a “tribal church” in view of his global aspirations to be the youngest university Vice Chancellor in

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<sup>552</sup> See chapter 5 for details.

<sup>553</sup> The *Aladura* churches were initially culture bound, restricted in their theology, liturgy and socio-cultural activism to Yorubaland. Their expansion to include other geographical and cultural areas was a later development brought about partly by the emergence of educated leadership in the different churches.

<sup>554</sup> Details of these changes were discussed in chapter 2.

Africa.<sup>555</sup> It was his responsibility to articulate and negotiate the uneasy waters of global cultural flows and networks, introducing new forms of actions and performances, new opportunities and allowing new practices to develop.

Recognising that “people go to church for different reasons”,<sup>556</sup> Adeboye articulates a broad response to the diverse quests by creating new “flows” of religious services (HGS, HGC, CHGS, etc), doctrines, and material goods (audio-visuals, church literature, etc). While the flows generate networks of relationship and organisation, the fluids create asymmetric power structures and symbolic translocal values and aspirations. Statuses are ranked; and means to access them are varied. The drive towards standardisation is followed by unequal access, uneven playing turf: the pastors lead and the non-pastors follow. This unevenness is the context for the creation of motivation, drive and the urge to move up the hierarchical ladder. To be a leader requires hard commitment of time, money, energy, talent, skills and zeal. These are the resources, later vested with an aura of sacredness, from which and through which a leader emerges.

Global organisations or institutions represent multiple contexts of actions and practices. The RCCG exemplifies multiple contexts of actions which is characteristic of global organisations. The crisis of leadership in the church in the early 1980s created the background for institutional transformation.<sup>557</sup> The bitter tussle induced an urge to succeed, as success would be an indication of divine sanction and a means of legitimating the claim of divine election to rule. The constant reiteration of “God told me many things” or “God speaks to me often” is an appeal to supernatural authority indicating both divine intimacy as well as anchoring the claim to institutional leadership on a firm support.<sup>558</sup> Such claims as these entrench an image of certainty and infallibility, which give his word and action a sacred aura and legitimacy. The establishment of strong power base and authoritarian posture made it possible for Adeboye’s programmes to be implemented in the church, drawing to himself a band of loyalists and admirers from within the church and the academia.

As a response to the crisis of leadership, the urge to succeed necessitated the incorporation of the “strategies of extraversion” (Bayart 2000: 224) through Christ the Redeemer’s Ministry

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<sup>555</sup> Such official sources include Ajayi (1997); Tony Ojo (2001) and RCCG at 50.

<sup>556</sup> Adeboye, *The Bride of the Lamb*, Lagos: CRM Books, 1997, p.2.

<sup>557</sup> Details of this were discussed in chapter 4.

<sup>558</sup> See, for example, Adeboye, *To Obey is better than Sacrifice*, op. cit., p.33 and *As Pure as Light*, op. cit., p. 21.

(CRM). Bayart's phrase is used here not as "the creation and capture of a rent generated by dependency" (Bayart 2000: 222) but to signify the use of CRM as a conduit for bringing in external ideas, innovations and practices into the RCCG. These ideas and forms of actions were the outcome of Adeboye's involvement in Kenneth Hagin's Camp Meetings since the late 1970s (Adekola 1989: 235f). Adeboye and the CRM became the bridgehead that turned the social face and doctrinal orientation of the church. That this arm of the church became registered as an independent organisation with Adeboye as the leader (and later, life patron) is indicative of what roles and functions it was designed to carry out in the processes of transformation of the RCCG. As the launch pad upon which Adeboye contested the leadership of the church, the CRM was also the channel through which changes were introduced into the RCCG.

The CRM provided Adeboye with alternative possibilities to exercise and develop his managerial skills and to cultivate a loyal cohort. More importantly, it provided an alternative to the church itself since he was fully in charge of this group and its activities. Through the CRM, Adeboye introduced aggressive media use in the RCCG such as audio-visual recording, the publication and marketing of his sermons in booklets and pamphlets. These strategies extended his social presence and spiritual authority, establishing a social power that influenced the lives of many within and outside the church. They also introduced social packaging and commodification of his *charisma*. A brand name was created as a result. The construction of fluid, oral deliveries enabled the ideas and gifts of leadership to travel almost everywhere. The intensified use of new technologies of social communication, such as audio-visuals, books, magazines, posters, handbills and tracts, the Internet, radio and television, therefore, forms strategies of expansion, commodification, transformation and globalisation.

The practices described above created a sort of ubiquity for the RCCG leader. The ubiquity of Adeboye is constructed by inundating the different media with his images, ideas, teachings, sermons and aura. His presence is inescapable at the Redemption Camp as roads, offices, and rest rooms are wired with loud speakers broadcasting his sermons and teachings. When he preaches and performs his religious functions elsewhere than the Redemption Camp, these are marketed to a mass of followers at home in video and audio cassettes. The church's website constantly streams his images and voice as he makes his epiphany on the sacred altar in different parts of the world. These strategies reinforce power and authority, creating a larger than life image for the leader. The constraints of geography are ameliorated as the global and

the local are intricately fused in the diverse visualisations of Adeboye through media technologies.

Elites create and establish social edges that constitute a resource in the competition for other forms of “capitals” such as followership, credibility, respectability, and finance. Through the CRM, educated and economically powerful people were effectively proselytised and brought into the RCCG fold. It became the arm of the church responsible for the proselytisation of elite groups. The initial set of university teachers and workers who were recruited into the church came in through the CRM. It was only a matter of time before rich and economically powerful would be made to seek anchor in the church as well. The CRM, through its state co-ordinators, identifies significant professionals in the society as targets of proselytisation, and assigns the responsibility of getting them committed to the church to professional colleagues who are already members of the church. Through professional networking and peer pressure, the CRM effectively recruits the rich and powerful in the society, thus, boosting the prestige, resources and social power of the church.

### **7.2.3 Mobilities and Multiplications**

Elite groups are characterised by social mobility and migration. As the sociologist John Urry (2000: 49) observes, mobility is at the heart of social life and configuration. In the same vein, Stephen Vertovec (2000: 13) writing on the dynamic relationship between religion and diaspora, maintains that for a group of people living in a foreign environment in search of cultural identity, religion is a veritable factor in the negotiation of survival. For such a group, religion readily anchors collective identity claims and community self-ascriptions. Vertovec further argues that religion reproduces some semblances of cultural familiarity and in that process mitigates the “strangeness” of a foreign environment. The way in which the group practises its religion functions as an indispensable part of cultural reproduction.

In Nigeria, religion is arguably the country’s second most successful global export after oil.<sup>559</sup> In the sphere of export of religion, Pentecostalism far surpasses all other religious groups put together in its missionary zeal as thousands of pentecostal missionaries are trained and turned out each year by hundreds of mission and bible schools. Most of these hastily trained missionaries head primarily for Europe, North America, and Australasia with the explicit

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<sup>559</sup> See “Traders in the Temple: Miracles on Demand”, *Africa Confidential*, vol. 43, No. 14, July 12, 2002, pp. 1-3.

intention of remisionising these societies, stem the tide of apostasy and crass material atheism and win converts from all races of human kind.

Elite mobilities and migration have played significant roles in the expansion of RCCG both in Nigeria and outside the country. Mobility of the elite recruited through the CRM in the late 1970s and early 1980s, carried the ideas, practices and institution of RCCG to different cultural contexts.<sup>560</sup> The church in the 1980s, while not directly designing a mission strategy for the world, worked through the mobile elite who criss-cross the world in search of academic and professional competence or economic survival. In Nigeria, the spread of the church to the southeast and the north of the country was mainly through graduating university students who were sent on compulsory one year national youth service to different parts of the country. RCCG campus fellowships are thus the seedbeds for planting of RCCG parishes in other parts of the country. On the international scene, elite and middle class migration has remained a powerful dynamic in the transformation of the church from a local group to a translocal, multinational organisation. Initially, the existence of a global labour market and global education system such as universities and specialist research facilities was the primary lure and impetus for those elite members of the church to travel outside the country. The primary intention of these people was not to start a branch of the church or missionise the world outside Nigeria; rather, as circulatory migrants, they were to shuttle between their new labour and educational environments and their home culture. In the course of their sojourn abroad, however, possibilities were explored for beginning a fellowship with fellow Nigerians or Africans. The need for the fellowship was part of the search for cultural familiarity, the desire to worship like they did at “home” and to implement the teaching of the church that members who choose to live and work in foreign land where there is no congregation of the RCCG should start one. The intention to reproduce “home away from home”, therefore, compelled the initial actors to fall back on what they already knew and had, what constituted their religious capital and repertoire.<sup>561</sup>

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<sup>560</sup> The first branch of RCCG outside Nigeria was in Ghana in 1981 (*RCCG at 50*, p. 117). The first congregation outside Africa was established in London in 1985 (Personal interview with Pastor S.T. Adetoye, *op. cit.*). The first branch of RCCG in the USA was “Winners’ Chapel”, opened in Detroit in the early 1992 as a house fellowship in the home of Pastor James Fadele, who had then just completed his first degree at the Western Michigan University and was working at Ford Motor Company, Dear Born, Michigan, as a mechanical engineer, (Olaniran Fafowora, *op. cit.*, see also *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 5, June 2002, p. 23). A decade after the establishment of this first parish, there are more than 110 RCCG parishes in the United States of America. See <http://www.jesushousedc.org> (accessed 09.01.03).

<sup>561</sup> Afe Adogame (1998) has also described the proliferation of Celestial Church of Christ parishes in Europe as the search for “a home away from home”.

In the absence of a clear policy on foreign missions in the RCCG then, individual members were only fired with personal zeal and enthusiasm for carrying out the biddings of a *new* teacher with a new teaching: those with the financial resources should sponsor and found branches of the church abroad. Many did. These individuals used their personal initiatives and funds in establishing churches and all the requirements needed for a modern worship centre. The pioneer and mobiliser of resources in this project invariably becomes the pastor of the church who oversees all its affairs until it becomes a stable offshoot. Thereafter, it is registered with the parent church in Nigeria from where administrative and organisational supports and other resources begin to flow. It is from after its registration with the parent church that there is a transfer of supervision to the parent church who may now transfer its pastor or call for an audit of its account. Before this, the financial responsibility and leadership rest squarely with the individual whose vision it is to start a fellowship of RCCG. In this way, migrants originally in search of social and economic advancement in a global system became conduits for the transmission of religious ideas, culture and value.

A significant aspect of the expansion of the religious field (both in Nigeria and outside) by RCCG is the prominent role individuals played. Individuals who initially were not commissioned by the church and had no institutional support were the arrowheads for the expansion of the church. It is part of the success narratives of the church today that it was able, through the teachings of Adeboye, to spur, persuade and transform its wealthy members to put in their resources selflessly in expanding the RCCG project of religious enterprise and expansion. It is on record that some individuals sold their property and cars; others closed their businesses all in the bid to establish a branch of the church either in Nigeria or outside.<sup>562</sup>

The same elite group has contributed its professional and financial resources in making the church what it practically is today.<sup>563</sup> Urry's (2000: 49) apt observation is pertinent here: "cultures are themselves mobile as a result of the mobilities that sustain diverse patterns of sociality". Migrants are carriers of cultures from one locale to another; as they settle down to a new form of life in a new location, they also settle some forms of cultural life, defining and

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<sup>562</sup> The church says of Tony Rapu, one of the pioneers of the Model Parish vision who expanded the church by establishing many branches in and outside Nigeria, that "He gave all he had including selling his car and other valuables to bring the model parish vision into reality", *RCCG at 50, op cit.*, p. 45. See chapter 4 for details on Tony Rapu and the Model parishes.

<sup>563</sup> This statement does not in any way ignore the insistence of the success of the church being because of, and an indication of, divine approval. The sociological implication of "divine approval" is indicated in how the church has succeeded in utilising the human and material resources available to it in achieving its goals and aims.

redefining, creating and recreating, producing and reproducing new patterns of social life and meanings.

It is in the social life of elites that cultural identity and mobility mingle, forming the basis for a metaphor of the global. In his sermons and writings, Adeboye makes constant references to personal experiences in foreign lands, especially the United States of America, the United Kingdom, South Korea, Hong Kong and Canada. He describes flight incidents such as encounters with flight attendants and interactions with fellow travellers on board aircrafts. These narratives often bring dimensions of the global graphically home to his audiences. In some concrete ways, external, foreign environments have impinged on the religious and cultural identity of the church. The dimensions of the auditorium constructed at the Redemption Camp, for example, came in a flash of inspiration while he was in Hong Kong. In 1980, the idea of initiating “Faith Clinic” programme was confirmed while Adeboye was attending the annual Kenneth Hagin Convention in the United States of America (Ojo 1997:7). Urry (2000: 48) recognises that “hotel” forms one of the metaphors of movement and an infrastructure of flows. Experiences and incidences in and about hotels, airports and airplanes constitute important elements in Adeboye’s sermons, testimonies and writings.<sup>564</sup> These and many other instances form defining moments and policies for the transformation of the church as well as religio-cultural identity for its members. The global is graphically inserted into the local and the local is also exported and disseminated abroad.

Through migrant elites, RCCG has become a travelling church. Members of the church who go on transfer to different places are mandated not to join existing churches in their new locations but to start a branch of the RCCG there. “If you are member of RCCG and you decide to settle elsewhere as a result of migration or job transfer, you don’t just settle in your new location, you must settle a church too. You start a fellowship that must become a church. That is how the church has been growing”.<sup>565</sup> The need for expansion and evangelism prompted Adeboye to reengineer the church, making it easy for non-pastors to found and head congregations. RCCG is designed for mobility; it is a portable religion in which two or three members outside Nigeria constitute a fellowship, and from there a church. The ritual of ecclesiastical ordination is not necessary for officiating at services. Different local parishes of the church are mandated also to found parishes abroad through their members who are living outside the country. These big, buoyant parishes such as the headquarters model provincial

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<sup>564</sup> Adeboye, *The Excellent Christian*, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26. Also, Adeboye, *The Water and the Fire*, *op. cit.*, p. 29

<sup>565</sup> Personal interview with Adetoye, *op. cit.*

parishes engage in intense competition among themselves to see who will sponsor the establishment of the most number of parishes outside Nigeria. These Nigerian mother-churches sometimes claim to invest huge sums of money in the enterprise of expanding the RCCG field in Europe and America. For example, Pastor Itua Ighodalo of Christchurch parish in Gbagada industrial estate, Lagos, claims his model parish invested more than three million United States dollars in founding Jesus House parish in Washington D.C. in 1992. Between its founding and 2001, the Jesus House parish has given birth to six additional parishes, all with financial support from the mother-church ranging from about one and a half million dollars in each case.<sup>566</sup> The mother-church in this case is not RCCG national headquarters in Nigeria, but Christchurch, Lagos.

The congregations of RCCG outside Nigeria are mainly populated by Nigerian or African migrants (Hunt and Lightly 2001; Hunt 2002). These migrant churches function as mediators of a mobile religious culture. These migrant churches act as mobilisers of resources such as funds and technical know-how that are sometimes transmitted to the local mother church. Describing the importance of RCCGNA, Pastor Fafowora says, “[s]trategically, RCCGNA is very important to RCCG worldwide because the US has all the resources and infrastructure to make preaching of the gospel to all nations of the world relevant”. He elaborates further concerning funds, “the total amount [of money] pulled together [by RCCGNA] is distributed into three parts, viz.: (i) one-third [goes] to maintain North America [RCCG congregations], (ii) another one-third [goes] to support missions all over the world and (iii) the last one-third [goes] to support special programmes like the Holy Ghost Congress and services all over the world as may be advised by the General Overseer”.<sup>567</sup>

The multiplication of parishes through migration and mobility ensures the circulation of sacred persons, objects, services and meanings, hence the maintenance of a moral economy among far-flung members of the church. It is one strong way in which the church has made its presence, ideology and practices felt in different regions of the world. The above discussion empirically disconfirms Gifford’s (1998) over-emphasised thesis of “extraversion” by which he meant that African churches seek external links and sponsors in Europe and America in order to survive and flourish. The RCCG mobilises local resources to found congregations

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<sup>566</sup> Pastor Itua Ighodalo, “Passion for Service”, *Lifeway* magazine (Lagos), vol. 1, no. 3, August-September 2001, p.26.

<sup>567</sup> Pastor Olaniran Fafowora, *op. cit.*

abroad and through these congregations, made of mainly Nigerian and other African migrants, build strong global network and identity and buoys itself for more evangelism elsewhere.

### **7.3 Strategies of Localisation**

Localisation is not the opposite of globalisation. In contradistinction to the latter process, the former is a complex of dialectical processes that emphasise some forms of geo-cultural specificity. Localisation, Peter Kloos (1999: 9) rightly observes, is “embedded in *identity movements*, often ethnic and/or religious movements that stress or create a social and cultural identity on behalf of groups or categories of people...” (emphasis in original). Kloos further points out that there is a complex dialectics between globalisation and localisation; for him, movements in search of a localised, cultural-specific identity make use of global regimes in order to survive and achieve their objectives (Kloos 1999: 18). The RCCG as a religious organisation is emblematic of the dialectic relationship between the complex processes of localisation and globalisation.

Through many strategies some of which have been enumerated in this study, the RCCG mobilises and transmits specific local identity to the global arena, while at the same time taking the world to remote local sites of its practice. This it does through the use of such global regimes as telecommunications and the capitalist market. We have argued that the church is strongly embedded in Yoruba cosmological worldview from which standpoint it relates to translocal complexes. Aspects of this worldview are selectively incorporated and reinterpreted according to the religious vision of the church, especially of the two principal architects of its doctrines and practices, Josiah and Adeboye. These transformed doctrines and practices are then transmitted through travel and technology to diverse regions of the world.

Globalisation, as this present study has attempted to show, is neither monolithic nor unidirectional. As complex worldwide processes of interpenetration and interconnectivity, they embody related processes of localisation that point to the familiar world and experiences of people on the margins of social life. Both processes point to the experiences and resources available to these people from which, and with which, they construct new forms of life and meanings in a rapidly changing world. They are not opposing processes but multiplex reality of a world in motion and a world of diverse mobilities. According to the anthropologist Jonathan Friedman (2002: 235), they are “two constitutive trends of global reality”. They form one complex, multifaceted search and practice of identity, self-presentation and self-

representation that is always constructed and reconstructed according to the demands of social life (Reymers 1998)

The history of RCCG demonstrates the dynamic relationship and dialectic of both processes of globalisation and localisation. In the previous section, we have outlined those strategies and instruments that have aided the church in its drive towards expansion from a “tribal church” (as one of the leaders called it), to a global organisation. Its expansionary tendencies have also been occasions and contexts of producing strong local texts and audiences. These have endeared it to many of its followers, making it not only a “megachurch” with numerous branches, but also a “metachurch”, defining and innovating rituals and orientations for others. The RCCG is a trendsetter for other churches in Nigeria and in the sub-region as a whole. The influence of Adeboye goes beyond the confines of RCCG; what he does is a model for other pastors to emulate. Lesser known pastors consider his pronouncements and the practices he sanctions as canon of orthodoxy. Through wide ranging practices and texts, the RCCG has emphasised aspects of local culture and has taken steps in incorporating these into its vision of a new life in Christ, not for Nigerians alone but potentially for the world as a whole. As we shall discuss in the following section, the RCCG has localised principally through i) constructing a local centre, ii) using traditional thought-forms and adopting some cultural practices, and iii) establishing a range of schools.

### **7.3.1 Religious Camps and the Environment**

One important feature of pentecostal vitality in Africa is the emergence of prayer camps. Larbi (2001) documents the proliferation and activities of these camps in Ghana. According to his investigation, the camps play a significant role in the people’s search for salvation conceived as healing, security and material wellbeing (Larbi 2001: 412). The Dutch anthropologist, Rijk van Dijk (2000) observes the crucial role these camps play in the schedule of people who wish to engage in transnational travel. Intending migrants visit these camps to solicit the prayers of a man or woman of God for successful travel abroad. This may involve spending days in the camp in secluded supplications, fasting, presenting the travel documents (passports, letters for procurement of visa, etc) to be ritually prayed over as a form of divine covering. According to van Dijk, “once a migrant has made it to Europe, close relatives might occasionally come and stay at the prayer camps to engage in prayer and fasting for the success and protection of the one who has travelled abroad” (van Dijk 2000: 187). In Nigeria, camps and camp meetings are prominent features of contemporary

pentecostalism. In the southwest of the country, the Redemption Camp the history of which was discussed in chapter 6, was the second to be established along the Lagos-Ibadan express road, the first being the Taborah Camp of the Church of the Lord Aladura which was established in the 1930s before the construction of the expressway. There are now about twenty other camps established by different pentecostal and non-pentecostal groups. More of the camps are being planned or already under construction. What is happening on this stretch of road constitutes a physical transformation of the landscape and the ecology of the environment

An important feature of every prayer camp is the stripping of forest cover for religious purposes. Large hectares of land are converted in this way, since this is one way of physically representing the pentecostalist form of concentrating the presence of God in particular individuals and sites. This new form of conceiving human relations with the supernatural is in turn altering people's relationship with nature. Changes in forest cover brought about by the establishment of prayer camps constitute both an ecological stress and an environmental loss. William Beinart (2000), writing on the relationship of African history and environmental history, reminds us that changes in forest cover can be conceived as "forest conversion" and may have complex social consequences part of which may manifest in the asymmetrical power relations between the global and the local, the North and the South. Andrew Greeley (1993), working with data from the United States General Social Survey (GSS), argues that a person's religious imagination, political and ethical orientations as well as rigid or liberal lifestyle correlate significantly with attitude towards the environment. Conservative groups, morally, religiously and politically, are less likely to care for and protect the environment or support government spending on the environment, he concludes (Greeley 1993: 27). The RCCG does not only aim at converting human beings, it is deeply involved in the conversion and transformation of the environment and its ecology. Such conversion is devoted to the production and reproduction of Pentecostalism, depriving the space of other uses. With people circulating freely among the different camps, sampling and participating in religious as well as non-religious activities, the camps represent a huge industrial plant devoted to the recycling of pentecostal Christians and the reproduction of pentecostal popular culture.

The removal of top soils and trees bring in their wake erosion and other forms of environmental depletion. The forceful conversion of forests into a sacred site is a process of colonisation of a specific location marked out for religious, social, and economic action. "The

production of neighbourhood”, Appadurai (2001: 105) points out, “is inherently colonizing, in the sense that it involves the assertion of socially (often ritually) organized power over places and settings that are viewed as potentially chaotic or rebellious”.<sup>568</sup> The construction of the Redemption Camp illustrates the use of varying degrees of force and violence on the physical environment, the animals and reptiles which are the original inhabitants of the forest, and on the local communities who are now permanently alienated from their ancestral lands. In a sense, these are different classes of victims. Of these, the last category of victims is often no longer allowed to get into their once prized property as, in the case of RCCG’s Redemption Camp, armed guards are hired to police and secure the perimeters of the camp and keep away intruders, usually members of the local communities.<sup>569</sup>

The manifestation of force and violence is also an indication of the reconstitution of sacred geography as sites of power and control. The construction of camps is inherently an exercise of power over some sort of hostile or recalcitrant force, environment, or people. The Redemption Camp is built over a site recognised as a sacred ground for the local communities where they worshipped local deities and ancestral spirits.<sup>570</sup> These spirits, according to the Camp Maintenance Manager, co-habited the forest with other dangerous animals. The conversion of the forest brought about the expulsion and exorcism of these “local landlords”, and replaced them with a global God and global vision.<sup>571</sup> The erection of structures of worship and living spaces brought with it a measure of control of these forces and of the environment, a resacralised atmosphere with definite feelings and sentiments attached to it. Again, the recycling of sacred space is not new in the religious history of Nigeria. There is a common stereotype of “bad” or “evil” bush/forest which was part of nineteenth century missionary rhetoric in Nigeria.

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<sup>568</sup> The article of Arjun Appadurai “The Production of Locality” (2001 [first published in 1995]) has been useful in our reflection on the place of the prayer camp in the production and reproduction of local and global audiences and consumers of pentecostalism in Nigeria.

<sup>569</sup> While walking close to the perimeters of the Redemption Camp in June 2001 in the company of a church pastor, a local guard, armed with a gun, forced us back, not paying attention that my companion was a senior pastor of the church. The presence of armed security operatives on religious grounds is meant to ensure security of property mainly, but it is also an indication of lack of security and the precariousness, tension and uncertainty that pervades such environment.

<sup>570</sup> This is the story from the RCCG officials who attempt to counter allegations of unfair dealings with the local communities whose lands they now occupy. Claims that the location was once a sacred site for the worship of local deities follow an old, missionary stereotype that points to a narrative of power between local gods and the global God of Christianity. Christianity came to Africa, according to this stereotype, and conquered local deities, driving them out of their abodes and taking over the traditional religious sites. Chinua Achebe presents a standard version of this narrative of the power of the Christian God over local deities and the recycling of sacred space in his fictional work, *Things Fall Apart* (1975 [1958]: 135-147).

<sup>571</sup> Personal interview with Pastor Dapo Adesina, *op cit.*

Aside from removing virgin forests, prayer camp attracts a market, a collection of people who congregate at the fringes of the camps to display and sell their wares, making a living from the margins of the religious market. Such activities are largely uncontrolled and constitute a form of environmental degradation. Some scholars have recently argued that there is a correlation between the intensification of poverty in Nigeria and the multiplication of places of worship such as prayer camps. Gideon A. Oshitelu (2001),<sup>572</sup> describing the concentration of prayer camps along the Lagos-Ibadan express road as “Heaven’s Gate”, argues that the churches that operate these camps are creating fast growing communities, which appear positive though there are real as well as potential problems. He identifies some of the problems to include i) under-utilisation of buildings, ii) absentee house-ownership and iii) over-exploitation of the environment. Furthermore, he asserts that the frequent concentration of large crowds of worshippers, transporters, and other economic operators on camps constitute a heavy drain on the lean and scanty facilities available in the host communities. He observes that while these churches are huge financial empires, “they pay no taxes to the host village(s), community, local government or state government. [...] Huge profits are made by non-indigene settlers or occasional settlers who have financial resources to invest in their trades”. Oshitelu, himself a clergy of, and eldest son of the founder of Church of the Lord Aladura which also operates a prayer camp along “Zion’s Gate”, calls the operators of these camps “speculators”, who are

buying up the host communities’ land, with the consequence that a traditional farming community (now) has no land to farm on. Food is very expensive including basic local food items which are now being brought in from other places. There is an emerging affluent ‘new’ settlers while ‘old’ communities and their indigenes are getting poor [...] Far from helping to alleviate poverty, some of these church organizations are unwittingly contributing to the impoverishment of their host communities (Oshitelu 2001: 27-28).

Oshitelu’s scathing comments capture a growing public concern over the proliferation of prayer camps along major roads in Nigeria, the problems these camps pose to motorists, and the silence of the government over the plight of both citizens and the environment. Above all, these concerns indicate that the “Nigerian church” as one commentator calls it, is being transformed and in turn transforming the nation in ways that may not altogether be positive

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<sup>572</sup> Dr Gideon A. Oshitelu, at the time of this research, is the Head of Department of the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He is an elder brother to Rufus Oshitelu, the present head of the Church of the Lord Aladura.

and desirable.<sup>573</sup> Another observer argues that “the sudden transformation of Lagos-Ibadan Expressway into a religious market [...] has not reduced the rate of accidents and crime on that road”.<sup>574</sup> The RCCG counters such sentiments by insisting that the host community did not use the environment they have converted for farming and that by erecting the camp, the RCCG rescued the environment from armed robbers and wild animals.<sup>575</sup>

### 7.3.2 Redemption Camp and Local Identity

Pentecostal prayer camps are significant features of pentecostal expansion and vitality in Nigeria. The Redemption Camp is an indication of the expansion and vitality of RCCG in Nigeria. The Camp exists against the background of regular vigils and prayer programmes that attract large numbers of people. Physically located at the fringe of urban centre, it constitutes a significant structure in the people’s search for salvation on the fringes of modern life. Of significance to the present discussion is the feature of the camp as integral aspect of religious techniques for the production of local pentecostalism from its global variant. Through the activities on the camp, and especially in the course of the production of material pentecostal culture (discussed in chapter 6), a form of “inscription of locality” has occurred within Nigerian pentecostalism (Appadurai 2001). RCCG’s Redemption Camp is strategically positioned at the intersection between the negotiation of the global and the local in Nigerian pentecostalism.

As “Nigeria’s Israel” or Islam’s Mecca, the Redemption Camp is infused with intense religious feelings. Locality is sometimes defined and mediated by specific feelings of familiarity. Globality and locality are thus composed of feelings or “consciousness” (Robertson 1992) inducing people to react in some specific ways. Certain feelings are generally attached to and attributed to religious camps. For the operators, it is a holy place where God is in some extra-ordinary degree present and so answers prayers readily. This type of feeling is spread about so that it becomes one ingredient of the advertising of the camp and its products. Because there are many camps, each camp operator must sell his camp to the public by means of aggressive advertisement and attractive packaging of services. These

<sup>573</sup> See Adebola Adewole, “The Jesus Highway”, *Tell* magazine (Nigeria), August 2002, pp. 18-21. Also, Isaac Sagay’s three-part article is relevant in this respect: “The Nigerian church and the Nation: Before the Second coming comes”, *Sunday Vanguard* (Nigeria) September 15, 2002, p.11; “The Nigerian nation and the Church (2): Evil has a Human Heart”, *Sunday Vanguard*, September 22, 2002, p.10; The Nigerian Church and the Nation (3): The Judas in all of Us”, *Sunday Vanguard*, September 29, 2002, p.11.

<sup>574</sup> Reuben Abati, “Religion and the Expressway”, *The Guardian* (Lagos), September 27, 2002, p. 45.

<sup>575</sup> See *Redemption Light*, vol. 8, no. 2, March 2003, pp.32 & 46 where the RCCG has argued that the “Redemption Camp has changed the ugly face of Lagos-Ibadan Expressway to a beautiful one desire (*sic*) and love (*sic*) by all and sundry”.

operators act like business entrepreneurs who use the most persuasive iconic elements to sell the camp to religious consumers and religious tourists. Such iconic elements include health, wealth and miracles and the good life defined in some material way.

The identification of a site for the construction of a religious camp is attributed to divine inspiration. In the case of the RCCG, God is said to have revealed to the wife of Adeboye that the church's camp would be constructed close to an expressway. There must be some sort of divine likeness for particular types of expressway. The processes of transforming a local forest into a divine landscape further entail the reproduction of locality. The stories of the evil spirits that haunted the site before its conversion amount to a central theme in the production of locality. The stories demonstrate conflicts between the forces of good and those of evil. These are goal-directed activities that imbue the environment with a certain sense of awe, fascination, anxiety. The stories also construct certain expectations and feelings to which people can recognise and identify with. They illustrate the superior powers of the leader of religious group that operates the camp. These stories also form strong advertisement materials for the leader and his group.

As the history of the Redemption Camp shows, the process of establishing camps entails a process of conflict between the forces of good and those of evil. Hence, when camps are constructed, they are done in spite of spiritual and metaphysical opposition. They are constructed to demonstrate and advertise the superior spiritual powers of the leader of the church which owns it. The contest between good and evil forces is also the tension between the old and the new, the local and the global. Different methods are used to control this tension. Some of these are local while some are global. Ceaseless acts of exorcism, for example, point to constant tension between the deities and spirits who form part of the original owners of the land and the new occupants who are representatives of a global God. The use of modern technologies also point to acts of domination or contest between the local and the global (Franklin, Lury and Stacey 2000: 2). Such technologies at the Redemption Camp include loud speakers wired along all the roads and offices, satellite dishes, large telescreens, computers and telecommunication equipment.

Camps are products of contexts. In the case of the Redemption Camp as discussed in chapter 6, the context was expansion and the drive to demonstrate success and physically institutionalise it. The Redemption Camp was built against the background and pressure to

successfully transform the church. Acquired barely two years into his leadership, the camp was an indication of success to the detractors and rivals of Adeboye who caricatured the RCCG then as “a muddy, dirty pool [of water] that would soon dry up”. The camp was a morale booster and a source of inspiration and confidence that a river would soon flow through the desert. The procurement of the camp soon became the occasion for the inauguration of a range of programmes and services that put the space into national and international limelight. The camp represents a signpost and a testimony of vision and success which state that the muddy pool is now “a river flowing unto nations [...] where large fishes can now enjoy the abundant life of God” through the instrumentation and vision of Adeboye (Ojo 2001: 55). These contexts give the camp meanings and situate it within a wider context of meaning-making activities in pentecostalism.

For Nigerian Pentecostalism in general, camps are strong encapsulation strategies the proliferation of which has occurred in the context of stiff rivalry and competition among church founders and leaders. The proliferation can be understood and their activities in camps interpreted against the context of religious competition, mutual suspicion, lack of ecumenicity among pentecostal groups and super-star pastors.<sup>576</sup> Establishment of camps is one way pastors have designed to demonstrate how large God is, how bountiful he is in supplying the material needs of his clients. Camps are contexts for the demonstration of the charismata of church leaders since activities on camp revolve around a leader believed to be spiritually powerful and capable of working miracles such as deliverance from oppressive spirits, poverty, healing and foretelling future events. Camps, therefore, function as part of the search and scramble for a clientele, as well as its maintenance. They help in the production of a local market, a local audience for religious (pentecostal) goods, services, ideas, and lifestyles. The search for mass followership translates into adaptive emulation and cloning of strategies of those trend-setting pastors whose actions have been deemed successful. The Redemption Camp stands out strongly as a success story which other leaders have emulated, confirming the observations of the sociologists Strang and Macy (2001: 147, 178) that “firms respond to perceived failure by imitating their most successful peers” and “career choices are shaped in part by the success of others”.

The Redemption Camp is a site of multiple texts. It tells the stories of a community of believers. In itself, the Camp carries the inscriptions of believers’ biographies, anxieties and

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<sup>576</sup> Karl Maier (2000: 267) likens some categories of Nigerian pentecostal pastors to “Hollywood stars” always “flanked by a gang of aids”.

expectations. It carries the testimonies of multitudes who troop here, who define themselves against the existence of its special spirituality. One such “camp text” of the Redemption camp is the numerous success stories that circulate in the media and among individuals in person to person communication. There are audio tapes, video-films, magazines and books of testimonies from this camp which are circulated through local and global channels such as the Internet. There is a global image of success which is constructed against the context of local situation, local gods and sickness which these testimonies convey.

There are three categories of narratives surrounding the invention of the Redemption Camp as a sacred field. The first revolves around the choice of the location as a divine act. Mrs Folu Adeboye claimed to have had an instruction through a dream in which “God whispered to me [...] that our camp would be on the [Lagos–Ibadan] express road” (Bankole 1999: 69). The second category of narratives centres on the validation of the claim by detailed description of divine providence and preservation from harm, dangerous animals or other accidents during the first acts of clearing the forest. The absence of injuries and accidents is interpreted as a manifestation of God’s approval of the choice of site. The third category involves the re-enactment of the two earlier categories through testimonies from votaries who claim that God has decisively intervened in their favour while, or because, they participated in events at the campground. The central aim of these texts is to reinforce the claim that the camp is a sacred site. Consider this one: “In September 1999, our Daddy, the General Overseer, organised a special programme for the barren. I came for the programme [at the Redemption Camp] and was blessed with a baby boy to the glory of God. I had been looking for the fruit of the womb for five years before then”.<sup>577</sup> Or this: “I was here (that is, the Redemption Camp) for Festival 2000. After the Festival, I was involved in an auto crash in Madrid, Spain, but the Lord rescued me and others in the vehicle”.<sup>578</sup> As venue for numerous forms of social, spiritual and economic events, the camp is a cultural centre of local productivity.

In addition to the camp texts are camp rituals. These are expected and patterned codes and modes of social and religious behaviour exhibited by those who visit the site. Women are expected to cover their head with scarves, and not wear trousers or short skirts. Lip sticks, nail vanish and other female face make up are frowned at though no one is turned out as a result of breaching these expected codes of conduct. There is also a list of rules often pasted at the

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<sup>577</sup> Mrs Olaniyi Gladys, *Redemption Testimonies*, no. 74, April 2001, p.8.

<sup>578</sup> Brother Ayo Onofowokan, *Redemption Testimonies*, no. 74, April 2001, p. 10.

lodgings and accommodation section of the camp relating to how to conduct oneself while in the camp.

The RCCG camp produces local believers, faithful followers, clients and votaries. Within the circumscribed perimeters of camp, prophets produce prophecies, healers produce healings, prosperity preachers produce wealth-inducing messages, and holiness preachers produce salvation or the feeling of it. The site may be local, but the inspiration and aspiration are global. Clearly, the intentions and orientations that undergird it are translocal in nature. The effects of the camp, as one of the testimonies cited above shows, reverberate outside Nigeria.

As discussed earlier, camps are constructed close to major roads. This is an indication that camps are built in relation to the wider society whose “wood” and resources must feed the fires of religious enthusiasm and ritual performances. The roads guarantee influx and access from the public, but also lead to larger, global access and spheres. Activities at the camp are usually open to the public and never restricted to members of the owner-church. Activities are also structured in relation to a wider body of pentecostal practices and rituals. Conventions, congresses, workers’ meetings, mass rallies, ministers’ conferences, all make the construction of camps meaningful and profitable. In addition, camps give flesh to the merging of religious ideas and economic practice, the centrality of icons of modernity, the quest for success, for money and the pressures of competition and religious empire building.

The Redemption Camp, as discussed in the previous chapter, is the context of specific activities in RCCG. The camp has its own work force, its unique style of dressing and practices, deliverances and rituals. These practices are moments of ritualised exchanges and economic activities. They also produce contexts for further actions. People come here to get healed, rich or are blessed, and are empowered if they are healed, got rich or blessed, or if their hope for these are renewed. They are empowered, invigorated and released for further actions in the wider society. In conjunction with other prayer camps in and around Lagos, the Redemption camp is a huge recycling plant where followers, clients and religious tourists are empowered, consoled and encouraged through the activities of preaching, singing, praying, clapping and shouting<sup>579</sup> as well as making donations.

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<sup>579</sup> Adeboye teaches that shouting and making loud noises are special weapons against the Devil.

The Camp is thus a context of healing and for healing. The first brings about a desired and long sought after healing and wholeness, while the second empowers and enlarges the scope of divine influence mediated through the charismatic personality of Adeboye. There are numerous testimonies circulating in magazines, on the Internet, in books, tapes, films, word of mouth and in popular press about a range of healing mediated through Adeboye and the Redemption Camp.

The valorisation of Pentecostalism has indicated the subtle ways in which it is produced. The camps are important sites for the production of Pentecostalism, the reproduction of locality, the performative arena for divine insertion into human history and affairs, and the merging of sacred time and profane space. The intentions, practices and orientations that sustain and undergird it are translocal. The vitality and expansion of practices that are witnessed in camps occur against the context of global practices and influences. Some of the items (material and non-material) produced in camps are not all for local consumption. The anointed handkerchiefs, audio-visual tapes, magazines, books and CDs are also destined for a global community of consumers and clients (Ojo 2001: 78). The ritual exchanges also have a global dimension: when a pastor bellows out a divine intervention that “someone is being healed right now”, this is not directed to only those present but also to a global community of votaries. To God, according to Adeboye, “someone could mean many people” in multiple locations all over the world.<sup>580</sup> The camp is the site of power where God speaks out to someone anywhere in the world.

The camps have come to play significant roles in the expansion of pentecostalism. For RCCG, its camp is the nub of its transformation and expansion. Since the camps are in most cases located by major roads, they attract people who come into them for various reasons, ranging from seeking God, health and wealth to seeking social connection, employment and spiritual insurance against evil spirits. Through these new entrants, the activities enlarge, bringing about subtle changes in ritual practices, organisational structure, worldviews and collective self-understanding (cf. Appadurai 2001). The HGS of RCCG has yielded several of its kind at several levels and regions, bringing about expansions. Certain situations and circumstances bring about the necessity for the establishment of camps. When this is achieved, it generates other actions, rituals and practices, thereby enlarging the pentecostal scope of action.

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<sup>580</sup> Adeboye, “The Turning Point”, *op. cit.*, p. 31

The Camp produces local audiences who are the targets for the production of goods and services. These goods and services are directed to both local and translocal destinations and markets. As venue for international engagements also, the camp produces global contexts of action as well as fluid networks of enterprises some of which are symbolic while others are physical and material. Such networks, for instance, includes the activities of global economic actors (Coca-cola, Unilevers, Procter & Gamble, etc.) discussed in chapter 6. In this way, the Redemption Camp facilitates the articulation and mediation of local and global resources and practices. It thus demonstrates that “local forces and situations mediate the global, inflecting global forces to diverse ends and conditions and producing unique configurations for thought and action in the contemporary world” (Cvetkovich and Kellner 1997: 2).

### **7.3.3 Cultural Thought-Forms and Practices**

The production and reproduction of locality and local identities in RCCG manifest in the use and revitalisation of cultural thought-forms and practices. It is significant for us to consider some of these practices and how they mediate specific identities in the context of globalisation. While Josiah preached in Yoruba and had Adeboye as one of those who translated into English, Adeboye preaches in English and has translators who interpret into Yoruba. This is not simply a reversal of cultural value; it has brought with it the intensification of certain aspects of local cultural thought forms and patterns. Yoruba is the language of the local context while English, as Peter Berger (2000; 2002) shows, is the language of global communication. The use of English by Adeboye has made his teachings more accessible to more people than was the case with his predecessor. However, Adeboye has deeply anchored the church’s liturgy and doctrines in the local worldview as well.

The leaders of the church produce a strong sense of local identities among their followers through selective revitalisation of some cultural practices. Several times, Adeboye has advised his audience to pray in the vernacular: “I would advise you to pray in your own mother tongue [...] do not speak [to God] in a language something else<sup>581</sup> will hear [that is, understand], say it in your own mother tongue. It is between you and Him now”.<sup>582</sup> Adeboye is a man of many worlds: as a scientist, he is part of the global world of figures and numbers; his upbringing indicates that he is also rooted in the traditional culture of his people. He makes frequent

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<sup>581</sup> “Something else” in this context may be understood as malign forces such as evil spirits, witches and their cohorts. Since these are also local spirits, one is inclined to believe that they too, understand local languages of those they are designed to torment.

<sup>582</sup> Adeboye, “God of Miracles”, sermon at the HGS, 2 November 2001, Redemption Camp, Nigeria, [http://www.rccg.org/Holy\\_Ghost\\_Service/Monthly\\_Holy\\_Ghost%20Service/nov2001.htm](http://www.rccg.org/Holy_Ghost_Service/Monthly_Holy_Ghost%20Service/nov2001.htm) (accessed 20.03.02).

references to his “youth as a local and village boy”, creating a social capital from his background in a poor, disadvantaged, polygamous family.<sup>583</sup> Although there is a tension in the conception of the village as a site of malign forces and as a place where he was born, Adeboye sometimes romanticises village life, claiming “it takes the eyes of a village boy to locate” animal tracks where he would set his traps and make a catch for survival. Where a village boy like him survives, he claims, those brought up in the cities will wander into desperation and despondency.<sup>584</sup> “Those of us from the village...can say ‘this is a track of a rat, this one belongs to a squirrel, this one belongs to a rodent, these are footsteps of a deer’. Thank God for being a bush (village) boy!” Sermons that are laced with experiences of local or traditional activities such as hunting and farming strike particular cords of familiarity in his audience.

An important feature of Adeboye which endears him to his local audience is story telling. As Jolyon Mitchell (1999: 5-6) rightly observes, a “sermon that lacks appropriate images or stories may distance or even disconnect the speaker from the listeners, and risks going unheard”. Adeboye is a master storyteller who creates intense pictures and symbols with words. He has used the medium of telling stories he considers important to define and constitute members of the RCCG as a moral and religious community. More significant is the embedding of such stories in the oral character of African culture. Adeboye tells stories of his personal encounter and struggle with God, his contest with rivals for the headship of the church, testimonies of other people that confirm his experiences and convictions about life and God. Of all the different strands of stories, perhaps the most significant are those culled from the local cultural repertoire of the Yoruba.

Once upon a time, there was a bird that used to fly high. One day, a hunter shot at this bird and hit it in one of the wings. The bird survived the accident, but it could no longer fly. So the bird hopped about singing sorrowfully: ‘The bird with the broken wind (*sic*, wing) can no longer fly high again’. Then, one day, Jesus came and touched the damaged wing and healed it, and gave it strength again. Then the bird began to sing joyfully, ‘My broken wing is healed, I can now fly again’. Do you feel there is no hope for you anymore? All you need is

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<sup>583</sup> See Adeboye, *Victory: The Decision is Yours*, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-21.

<sup>584</sup> Adeboye, “Only Children”, *op. cit.*

the touch of Jesus Christ and then you will be able to fly twice as high again.<sup>585</sup>

Stories such as this are simple and have immediate appeal to his audience, the majority of who are not sophisticated people. The stories are part of the Yoruba cultural heritage of entertainment and the teaching of morals through stories. Story telling is for Adeboye a meeting place of the local and the global, where local repertoire is mingled with global experiences of travelling, hotels, airports, the Internet and so on.

Proverbs form another important speech art of African cultures, which are replete in Adeboye's sermons. According to Onwubiko (1991: 30), the use of proverbs and idioms of language is a characteristic of a mature language-user. It demands a thorough knowledge of local environment, social order and norms of actions. As a cultural form of communicative aesthetics, proverbs "are the philosophical and moral expositions shrunk to few words, and they form a mnemonic device in societies in which everything worth knowing are relevant to day-to-day life has to be committed to memory" (Onwubiko 1991: 30). Although the proverbs are derived from Yoruba culture, their application transcends that specific context. "There is a saying in Africa that you do not hide your nakedness from the one who is going to bury you".<sup>586</sup> What is Yoruba is unmoored and crosses border to become African in application and scope. "A man never appreciates the superiority of the new wine until he has tasted the old" is a reference to his previous life of sin and wanton callousness. It is also a reference to the importance of the present and the future in relation to the Christian's past.<sup>587</sup> Through this cultural speech form, Adeboye negotiates a new identity that is both local and translocal at the same time.

The Yoruba art form of praise singing, called *oriki*, is a favourite practice of Adeboye.<sup>588</sup> This poetic formula is characterised by a measured mingling of praise and prayer with references to historical events and personages. As a poet and songwriter,<sup>589</sup> this traditional praise chant appeals to Adeboye and he uses it to express his Christian belief that God deserves human praises and songs. As he walks to the altar to perform his main task as a preacher and teacher,

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<sup>585</sup> Adeboye, *Touch Me O Lord*, Lagos: CRM Press, n.d, p.3.

<sup>586</sup> Adeboye, *The Water and the Fire*, op .cit., p.24.

<sup>587</sup> cf. Ojo (2001: 248).

<sup>588</sup> A collection of four lengthy praise chants of Adeboye can be found in Ojo (2001: 255-299). All these chants have been publicly performed as *ewi* during the church's convention.

<sup>589</sup> A sample of four poems of Adeboye is found in Ojo (2001: 303-311).

the first fifteen minutes is devoted to chanting the praise names of God in the format of Yoruba oriki thus:

Blessed be the Name of the Lord!, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the I Am that I Am, the Unchangeable Changer.<sup>590</sup> ... You are the most High, the Ancient of Days, Bless the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Bless the Bright and Morning star, the Great Provider, Great deliverer, Great defender, Great Saviour, Great healer, miracle working God... You are the Alpha, You are the Omega; You are the Almighty, glory be to your Holy Name.<sup>591</sup>

The *oriki* is a traditional praise prayer of the Yoruba that is chanted in honour of local deities as either part of private, usually early morning, prayer or public and regular cultic practice (Barber 1990: 313-337; Lindon 1990: 203-224). According to Aylward Shorter (2001: 75),

*Oriki* praise poetry constitutes a shared, protean repertoire, with an infinity of manifestations [...] The *Oriki* is essentially oral, spontaneous and imaginative. It recruits ideas and images from a wide spectrum of sources, and appeals as much to the emotions as to the intellect. In this way it mirrors the world, natural, human and divine.

*Oriki* is deeply embedded into Yoruba oral performance, incorporating as well as being incorporated into other cultural performing genres. Commenting in this respect, Karin Barber (2000: 341) writes “*oriki* incorporate proverbs and fragments of *Ifá* verses; *Ifá* verses swallow folktales and have slots into which *oriki* and proverbs can be fitted; proverbs can expand into lengthy narratives studded with songs and *oriki*”.

Benjamin Ray (1993: 282-284) observes that *Aladura* prayers or praise epithets are deeply steeped in *oriki*-like conventions, a style that gives struggles in a prayer its performative force. By the adoption of this device from the cultural (religious) repertoire, Adeboye makes Christian service and worship part of the cultural world of his listeners, who feel at home now and can claim to worship God in their cultural text. The use of this style of prayer is hinged on the confidence of the believer “that God will be moved to respond, simply upon hearing the properly performed prayer, rather like the recipient of *oriki*” (Ray 1993: 283). The greatest

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<sup>590</sup> Pastor E. A. Adeboye, “Reversing the Irreversible (Part 1)”, *op. cit.*

<sup>591</sup> Pastor E. A. Adeboye, “The King is Coming”, sermon preached at the convention Holy Ghost Service, Redemption Camp, Ogun state, 9 August 2002.  
[http://www.rccg.org/Holy\\_Ghost\\_Service/Monthly\\_Holy\\_Ghost%20Service/aug2002.htm](http://www.rccg.org/Holy_Ghost_Service/Monthly_Holy_Ghost%20Service/aug2002.htm), (accessed 29.11.02).

exposition of *oriki* performance is witnessed during the annual convention of the RCCG when Adeboye displays his best as poet and singer.

Adeboye's first encounter with *oriki* performance was with his mother and stepmothers in their dealings with his father. Whenever his mother had an important or difficult request to make of the father, she began by chanting the father's *oriki* or praise names. This family ritual always ensured that what was asked was received. Adeboye claimed he was enrolled in school after his mother performed an extensive *oriki* for his father as an act of persuasion.<sup>592</sup> This family experience of Adeboye informed his theology that when one praises God, one is raised as a result; hence, praise is a key to prosperity and wealth.

The *oriki* is central cultic practice of the Yoruba traditionally devoted to the honour of local deities. According to Beier, (2001) chanting the *oriki* of the *Orisa* makes worshippers feel vibrant. It is a root metaphor of paying homage to the *orisa* and incorporating divine vibrancy into one's being and actions. Through the deployment of *oriki*, even "an ignorant novice must feel that he is on the threshold of another sphere of existence, another dimension of consciousness" (Beier 2000: 47). Barber (1991: 14) further points out that "it is in *oriki* that boundaries between entities are opened. [...] Through them, relationships are made and remade", identities are invoked, articulated and repositioned. The merging of a local method of worship and cultural identity and global Christian content provides a potent avenue for Yoruba Christians to identify with Christianity in forms familiar to them. As discussed in chapter 5, "praise" is a central element in Adeboye's theology of prosperity, a practice that is embedded in local knowledge which links praise and money in a reciprocal relationship (Barber 2000: 226). Adeboye's *oriki* chants are now mass produced in CDs and sold all over the world.

Always chanted to the accompaniment of traditional *dundun* (talking) drums, the performance of *oriki* and *ewi* is a cultural marker for the Yoruba.<sup>593</sup> For the Yoruba witnessing the display of *oriki* with all traditional accompaniments, it is a unique experience that appeals not only to their sense of cultural and social aesthetics, but also to the deepest spiritual sensibilities and identities. The incorporation of this "local" practice into RCCG's global outlook is a potent demonstration of the "flexibility and adaptability of Yoruba culture" (Beier 2001: 48). Although inadvertently, the *oriki* chants in RCCG liturgy constitute a celebration of the

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<sup>592</sup> *RCCG at 50*, p.26.

<sup>593</sup> See chapter 6 for a description of Adeboye's performance of *ewi*.

people's common cultural heritage and a common social identity even with non-Christian Yoruba. This confirms Beier's (2001: 67) incisive observation that, to the Yoruba, praise singing and storytelling are "a means of explaining and justifying the present, rather than of enlightening the past". To Adeboye, the present state of affairs is more important than the past, and incorporating the best art form into his global vision points to his conviction that there is a common destiny for both the local and global cultural practices: the perfection of humans in preparation for the Parousia.<sup>594</sup> To him, "what you will be tomorrow is what you are saying to yourself today" (Adeboye cited in Ojo 2001: 254).

The politics of cultural identity in RCCG needs to be seen in a historical trajectory. The transformation of the RCCG has occurred at the same time that Adeboye himself has matured and changed specific perspectives in his Christian life. As a young "born again" Christian, he was decidedly aggressive and considered many aspects of the local culture unchristian and offensive. Adeboye and his zealous followers attacked the vitalisation of local culture through the FESTAC '77 events. The event provided him with the context for the inauguration of the CRM. This organisation afforded him the moral and political platform from which to bid for the leadership of the church. What he previously attacked as idolatry and demon-infusing, he has now, in his more matured age, creatively adapted and incorporated into the liturgy of the RCCG. The church now performs the role of a platform upon which *oriki*, *ewi*, Yoruba stories and speech forms are displayed to a wider, global audience. The global has now served as the condition for the survival of the local and the local mediates ready relevance and familiarity to the global.

Another significant transformation of Adeboye is in his political thoughts and practices. As a young zealous Christian, Adeboye taught that political institutions and structures were instruments of the devil to oppress Christians. Satan and his agents controlled secular governments put in place anywhere and everywhere.<sup>595</sup> In conjunction to this perspective is another that is also strongly political, which is that "God is not a democrat".<sup>596</sup> If God is not a democrat, one may confidently reason that God does not support or sanction democratic institutions and governance, a perspective that may play into the hands of power-hungry military officers in Nigeria. However, over time, Adeboye has revised his position. Creatively and diplomatically, he now teaches that God gave Nigerians a democratic rule headed by his

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<sup>594</sup> See *FBB*, article 34.

<sup>595</sup> See Adeboye, *Spiritual Warfare*, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>596</sup> Adeboye, *Child of Destiny*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

friend, Olusegun Obasanjo, himself an ex-military Head of State. It must be remembered that it was this same Olusegun Obasanjo who, as the military head of state of Nigeria, hosted the FESTAC '77 which Adeboye mobilised the Christian south of Nigeria against. Such change in political perspectives and an overt support of political action brings the church and its leaders into the corridors of political and economic power. Political institutions are still powerful repository of coercive and economic force, which cannot be ignored by cultural globalisers. Such demonstration of religious pragmatism is only possible with the accumulation of experiences that Adeboye lays claim to. With that experience comes a new vision of the importance and role of Nigeria, the local site of action and its political structures in the wider context of global history and destiny. The destiny of Nigeria is to inaugurate and press outward an endtime revival that will mark the end of history of the world as it is being experienced.

The change in political perspective illuminates the change in the organisational structure and administration of the RCCG. The privileged position given to “national elders” as gatekeepers of doctrine and right rituals is akin to the political structure of Yoruba society where authority is vested on male elders. While pentecostalism, through its rhetoric of “democratisation of the spirit”, perpetuates a systematic subversion of the Yoruba cultural ranking of people, RCCG has gone almost full circle by institutionalising a gerontocratic rule according to old Yoruba society. The attack on FESTAC '77 was a demonstration of the empowerment provided by pentecostalism for the youth to criticise official state policies considered inappropriate or unchristian (see Ojo 1988a).

The introduction of elders, multiple schools and other administrative structures work in concert to ensure “purity of doctrine and practice”, resolve disputes and maintain financial probity point to the imposition of some forms of “iron curtain” on the more youthful pastors within the church. The institutional function of the national elders is to maintain the status quo in the church and restrain the actions of its pastors who may attempt to break away from the RCCG. The institutionalisation of elders is a strategy that aims at organisational continuity, doctrinal uniformity, the preservation of the gerontocratic administration. It is a way of incorporating local strategy of social organisation into global practice of religious expansion. Since the RCCG is always changing, incorporating new doctrines and practices, the elders ensure a sense of continuity with what is already available, what serves as a norm of action

and belief. Adeboye's frequent reference to "what my father in the Lord told me..." is an appeal to collective memory and history to nurture a specific church tradition.

The importance of uniformity is to generate a sense and a feeling of belonging to one large community of faith, an extended family of believers. This uniformity also ensures that resources, especially finances, are appropriately channelled from bottom to the top or from the periphery to the centre. Moreover, in doing this, central authoritarian control is enforced and schisms reduced to manageable numbers. Above all, the hierarchical organisational structure of the RCCG functions to ensure that a particular set of ideas, doctrines, practices and worldview prevail in the church. This is the hegemony of the elite. This structure is also akin to the model of Yoruba traditional society (see Peel 2000).

This situation of cultural gerontocracy is in sharp contrast to the activities and practices of pentecostal organisations elsewhere in Africa. In Malawi, for example, van Dijk (1999: 164-88) describes the audacity that pentecostalism offers youth groups as a veritable instrument in the struggle for social and political power among different classes of people, but especially between the youth and elders of the society. The interest of RCCG leadership in state power and its possessors restricts the religious freedom of its members in criticising state policies even when these policies have obvious negative impact on the people. Aligning itself with those in power and designers of political order, the church identifies with the political culture of the day, and so, cannot speak out against social injustice and economic pauperisation of the people. In this perspective, the problem with Nigeria is not corrupt political actors and economic predators but the devil who does not want Nigeria and Nigerians to achieve their noble destiny as designed by God. The solution to the problem "is going down on our knees", for the "weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God".<sup>597</sup>

#### **7.3.4 Schools and the Dissemination of Global Charisma**

Academic institutions such as schools, colleges and universities have traditionally played an important role in the Christian missionary enterprise. The establishment of these institutions remains a formidable missionary strategy of such organisations as the Catholic Church and other missionary establishments. These schools form a strong social force for the Christian gospel. The RCCG, realising the socio-economic and symbolic significance of education and educational facilities, has embarked on a missionary enterprise through the establishment of a

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<sup>597</sup> Adeboye, sermon preached on the 39th anniversary of Nigeria's Independence, October 1, 1999, at the Redemption Camp, Ogun States, Nigeria. (Excerpt of sermon is published in Bankole [1999: 177-183]).

variety of schools. For twenty-eight years the RCCG existed without any school of its own. The CRM was instrumental in the establishment of theological schools and other forms of educational institutions in the RCCG.<sup>598</sup> Bible schools are potent elements in the organising and dissemination of global culture and charisma. Through these schools, the work force of the church is invested with quality, valorised symbolically and infused with “a certain kind of translocal value” (Coleman 2000: 6). Through these schools, pastors acquire knowledge about practices outside Nigeria. They help in the dissemination of Adeboye’s ideas and teachings as students and graduates become carriers of these ideas. Students are catalysts of reform.

The certificates and diplomas from the school form prestige symbols for members of the church and their pastors to crave after. They function as a key to admit their possessors into certain specific socio-economic classes within the church and in the wider society. Thus, the schools mediate specific elite identity that makes certain claims on those outside its boundaries. Because those who pass through the school are required to be treated deferentially by the members of the church, attending these schools has become a goal in much demand for many people who desire to share in the spiritual and material benefits they carry.

The leadership of Adeboye early discovered that higher institutions such as universities and other tertiary institutions provide a plurality of pathways for accessing global resources. For the RCCG, these institutions provide strategic channels and new stakes to the souls of the elite class as well as the heart of a world in constant motion. As we have already discussed, the church has made capital out of the mobile class and has used their resources to establish its presence in different socio-cultural zones of the world. Some of the church’s institutional and academic programmes are now exported to Europe, North America and Israel.<sup>599</sup>

Furthermore, with the proliferation of parishes and the bulging of the lower cadre of the clergy came the necessity of quality control and training of work force for the church. It is the responsibility of the tertiary institutions to articulate a fairly uniform and harmonious set of doctrines. This body of doctrines characterises the church and gives it a unique public and religious outlook. The schools disseminate a standardised form of doctrines and practices. As many of these schools are interdenominational, these practices and doctrines filter into other churches as well. They help spread the influence of the church and recruit prospective local

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<sup>598</sup> See chapter four for a discussion of these schools.

<sup>599</sup> According to Pastor J. A. Bolarinwa, the Redeemed Christian Bible College (RCBC) now has “campuses” in Kenya, Israel, South Africa, Togo, Ivory Coast, Ghana, London and the United States of America. (Personal interview, *op. cit.*). A campus of RCBC is not the same as a campus of a formal tertiary institution.

students and local membership for it. Moreover, they represent sites for the cultivation of local ideas about witchcraft, demons, sorcery, etc. As students graduate and travel out of the country, they carry along these ideas to their new locations. This process forms a significant method for the production, circulation and consumption of locality.

Circulating from one school to another constitutes a significant ritual of status within the RCCG community as well as a socio-spiritual marker of pentecostalist consumption. To go through these schools is locally significant to members of the church. They represent sites for the cultivation of spiritual intentions, desires, ambitions, and a lifestyle; through them, global ideas are localised and local ideas (about witchcraft, demons, sorcery, etc.) are globalised. As prestigious institutions symbolically valorised, they enhance local mobility and circulation, expansion and vitality. They are also points of contact and access to the fountainhead of global ideas, images, fluids and flows; they are signs of spiritual well-being and social power. Consuming ideas in such quasi-formal settings is a strong indicator and constitution of local identity. This forms a significant ritual for the production, circulation and consumption of locality. Local narratives concerning malign forces of witchcraft, evil possession, family curses, and covenants with local devils, all create and reinforce particular structures of judgement, perceptions, feelings and emotions in those who frequently listen to them and imbibe the stories and warnings. What one buys and consumes, the ideas, goods, associations and community of believers to which one belongs, all have direct relevance to the potency in defining concretely the meaning of being and living in the world, of being a particular kind of person with specific goals, ideas, and ambitions.

These schools also constitute strategic instruments of the RCCG in competition with rivals in the local environment.<sup>600</sup> The schools attract people from outside the church and try to keep them even after they have graduated. Also, the schools promote the dual processes of standardisation and bureaucratisation of RCCG in Nigeria. Although these processes were designed to produce predictability and order<sup>601</sup>, they also tended towards a religious form of “McDonaldisation” (see Ritzer 1996; 1998). The comparison is almost obvious: a chain of churches organised as a network, producing routinised texts and rituals of branded goods and services. As Urry (2000: 37) points out in this respect,

Such networks depend upon allocating a very large proportion of resources to branding, advertising, quality control, staff training and

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<sup>600</sup> Cf. Pastor Ezekiel A. Odeyemi, “Strategic planning and Thinking”, *The Catalyst*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 18-20.

<sup>601</sup> Personal interview with Pastor J. A. Bolarinwa, *op. cit.*

the internalisation of the corporate image, all of which cross societal boundaries in standardised patterns so sustaining the network. [...] McDonaldisation thus involves new ways of organising companies on a global scale with a minimum of central organisation [...].

The limits of the analogy to the McDonaldisation process are recognised here. While the McDonaldisation process is evidently a uni-directional flow in which “a series of American innovations are being aggressively exported to much of the rest of the world” (Ritzer, 1998:8), the RCCG has introduced a reverse process of exporting its home-brewed spirituality and the present leader’s charismata to principally the US and Europe. However, what RCCG exports (the video and audio tapes, Holy Ghost services, books, ritual items such as handkerchiefs and holy oil, and religious personnel) represent barely a trickle when compared to external items and practices it has incorporated into its organisation. A major importation of the RCCG from the United States of America is the prosperity teaching,<sup>602</sup> which Coleman (1993) contends is not a “neutral” or “originless cultural form”. For Coleman, faith ideology retains a strong imprint of its North American roots, not least of which is its combination of entrepreneurial evangelicalism and positive thinking. RCCG’s embrace of prosperity teaching and its popularity in Nigeria have given rise to a form of “microwave spirituality”,<sup>603</sup> indicating a change in spiritual consumption. This change can rightly be compared to the processes of McDonaldisation, which Ritzer describes and Urry endorses.

The strategies that have vastly extended the church’s authority and influence, in some respects, also indicate how rooted it is in the local religious field. Transformation for the RCCG worked as dual processes of globalisation and localisation mutually reinforcing each other in subtle ways. One process defines and gives content to the other, thus, becoming intractably interwoven. These strategies, as we have shown in the preceding section revolve around, and form variations of the theme of the global and the local.

### **7.3.5 RCCG’s Local Mass Appeal**

Nigeria is a society where different religious practices and doctrines have achieved popular appeal. The RCCG holds a multiplicity of interests for a wide range of people. The

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<sup>602</sup> See chapter 6 on RCCG doctrines for details.

<sup>603</sup> I use the concept of microwave spirituality to denote the sort of thinking and teaching which emphasise quick, almost magical, solutions to human existential problems such as illness, poverty, social decay, and the crisis of economic meltdown simply by believing and by the invocation of the name of Jesus. The appeal to human greed and entrepreneurial competition sometimes exacerbates a bad social problem, as is the case in Nigeria in the last two decades.

programmes of the church appeal to large numbers of people. The attractions of RCCG for the people who throng its programmes are based on a number of factors. The most important of these include i) the popular perception of Adeboye, ii) simplicity of doctrines of the church, iii) perceived benefits that may accrue from association with the church, iv) socio-cultural circumstances of Nigeria, v) economic exchanges and entertainment performances in the church, and vi) multiple modes of religiosity, and vii) emphasis on family values, especially children.

**i) Popular Perception of Adeboye:** Scholars are basically agreed that trust is at the root of any social relations based on mutual beneficial exchange (Buchan *et al.* 2002: 169). The leader of the RCCG has cultivated a public image that portrays him as humble and sincere. The cultivation of public trust has galvanised interest and mobilised social resources in his course. The perception of him as a “man of God” who is not self-seeking predisposes many people to believe what he says without further evidence. Having shunned self-advertisement earlier in his leadership, discarding the academic title of “Dr.” as well as the religious title of “Rev.”, Adeboye came across to many, especially the educated and middle class elites, as a humble “servant of God”.<sup>604</sup> This is the condition of credibility that enables the public to attach more meanings to his actions and words, and therefore the programmes he officiates. A truly charismatic figure, Adeboye has cultivated the understanding among his followers that he is in direct touch with God. A constant refrain in his sermons and books is “God told me”, “my father says”, or “the Lord instructed me...”. While God speaks to some people in dreams and visions, God speaks to him in plain language because he is special.<sup>605</sup> The oracular character of this image disposes many to come in search of divine intentions concerning their specific conditions and circumstances. Adeboye appeals to a direct revelation from God which is the only authority he recognises. He often speaks from his personal experience with God, who he refers to as “my father”. These personal characteristics of his public self-presentation puts him in line with such prophetic-healing figures in Yoruba Christianity as Joseph Babalola who led a religious revival in Yorubaland in the late 1920s and early 1930s (Mitchell 1970: 142f; 1979: 187-218). He is publicly seen as a miracle worker, with great anointing such that whatever he touches ceases to be ordinary.<sup>606</sup> His followers regard him as

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<sup>604</sup> Adeboye said of himself “I remember once...when I became pastor, I was introducing myself [as] ‘I am Reverend Dr. E.A. Adeboye, B.Sc. Mathematics, M.Sc. Applied Mathematics, PhD. Hydrodynamics. Looking back now I wish I had added ‘alias empty Barrel!’ I used to be noisy, wanting everybody to know I have arrived...But thank God I read in...James 4:10 ‘Humble yourself under the mighty hands of God and He will lift you up’”. (E.A. Adeboye, “The Almighty Formula” *op. cit.*)

<sup>605</sup> See Adeboye, *As Pure as Light*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>606</sup> Adeboye, *Deep Calleth unto Deep*, *op. cit.*, p. 5

a repository of grace and locus of miracle. As Gerrie ter Haar (2003: 409-428) rightly points out, the prophet-healer-miracle worker figure is a strong source of popular appeal in African Christianity. Adeboye has achieved a good measure of public credibility which has fostered legitimacy in the minds of many people. Generally, Adeboye's public gestures of humility, honesty and simplicity have all worked towards the creation of credibility, an asset that he has used to further his mission and attract varied classes of people to his cause.

**ii) Simplicity of Doctrine:** The doctrines of RCCG are popular and populist in leaning. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the doctrines of the RCCG were not socially popular. Marked by strict holiness ethic, many people in the cities, especially the educated and middle classes found the doctrines alienating, unappealing and a hindrance towards rapid social and economic mobility. A church that preached against prosperity would be a dead end for economically comfortable people. By establishing his authority as a spokesperson of God, Adeboye was poised to turn things around. This he did by injecting to the system doctrines that sought to address social and economic circumstances of the people he intended to bring into the church. In the 1970s and early 1980s, Nigerians did not need doctrines of prosperity and wealth because the country was very rich, with few economic problems that would encompass a larger proportion of the population during the next decade and a half.<sup>607</sup> The contemporary doctrines of RCCG such as prosperity, wealth, health, tithing, anointing and others have social resonance. It is significant that prosperity, wealth and health for all are all part of the promises of global economic and political institutions such as the World Bank and IMF but have been in short supply (Stiglitz 2002). Such scenario made the religious versions of these promises more appealing to the people who now seek the fulfilment of the promises through other channels such as Pentecostalism. In a society where there is enormous wealth staked side by side with scandalising penury and diseases, these doctrines help people to come to terms with the situation and also encourage them to look forward to accessing the best that is available. According to Adeboye, "there is enough money in Nigeria to make everybody comfortable but some people have stolen the money and some are still stealing the money". What the people need to do to remedy this situation is for them to pray to God: "stretch forth your hand and compel all those who have stolen our money and all those who are still stealing our money to vomit" all they have stolen.<sup>608</sup> It is the responsibility of government to create and sustain social justice, provide high-quality education to all and furnish much of institutional

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<sup>607</sup> This was the oil boom era when General Gowon, the then military Head of State, was reported to have said that the problem of Nigeria was not how to produce wealth, but how to spend it! (Osaghae 1998).

<sup>608</sup> Adeboye, "Turning Point", *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

infrastructure such as roads, a functioning legal system, electricity and security of life and property. In this vein, the failure of government in Nigeria to live up to the social contract between it and her citizens is not attributed to individuals who fashion and implement policies that enrich a few and impoverish many but to the devil. Hence, no government official is held accountable for wrong-doing, making the RCCG an attractive place for them to be and feel comfortable.

One doctrine that exemplifies the social construction of RCCG's teachings is on "noise". Ordinarily, cities are noisy environments that attempt to asphyxiate or drown divine soundscape (Giggie and Winston 2002: 1f). Among the Yoruba, noise has important significance in identifying the social space and location of an individual. Yoruba social gatherings such as parties are exceptionally noisy occasions that often warrant the closure of public roads in order to stage the events outdoors. RCCG has aligned its doctrine of noise to this social situation by teaching that noise is a necessary element of heaven. According to Adeboye,

in heaven there is noise...I do not know who taught us that God is nervous when we shout...My God loves noise because He is a living God, and where there is noise there is life. Where there is noise there is power. [And] where there is noise there is victory.<sup>609</sup>

For the RCCG, noise is a divine instrument that is effective against the devil and his agents. Hence, Christians are encouraged to shout and make great noise, as this will keep the devil away from them. A doctrine as this will only be appreciated in a situation and among a people that have made noise a part of their cityscape and daily existence. By simplifying complex doctrines, RCCG becomes intellectually accessible. It also avoids doctrinal controversy that can deplete social cohesiveness within the church.

The proliferation of parishes, sometimes within five-minute' walking distance of one another, functions to conquer the physical environment, saturating it with its powerful signs and logo. It also ensures physical accessibility. The camp by the roadside clearly exemplifies this. The simple doctrine, the easy-to-follow rituals, all are geared towards catering to "seekers". This is the amorphous group of people who believe but do not belong, who seek what to get from the church but know what not to give: full membership. For the church, however, this group

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<sup>609</sup> Adeboye, "Children Only", *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7

of people is recognised as “affiliated members” and much effort is devoted in not erecting barriers against them.<sup>610</sup>

Adeboye is not a “fire and brimstone” preacher who threatens his hearers with judgement and impending doom. In the main, his messages are ones of hope, consolation and empowerment. His major sermons are always given catchy titles which indicate their contents. For several months from late 2002 till early 2003, he preached a series of sermons titled “Reversing the Irreversible” which ran into seven parts. These teachings constituted sources of encouragement to the people who are urged that “whatever it is going to cost, there is somebody here who is going to reach the top”.<sup>611</sup> Other significant titles of sermons include “Born to Reign” and the “Beginning of Greatness”. The former tells his audience that they are children of the King of Kings and so will reign over all their earthly problems and enemies,<sup>612</sup> while the latter tells his hearers that God has chosen them to begin a journey to greatness and rapid promotion in life.<sup>613</sup>

**iii) Self-Interest:** Another point of attraction of RCCG is that everyone who identifies with the church is made to believe that there is something in it for him or her. For the sick, there is healing; the poor look for miracles of prosperity, while the rich get comfort and security from malicious demons, baleful spirits and envious persons. Politicians have the formation of alliance with the community of believers as their primary constituency. They gain moral and social support as their actions or policies are never criticised by church officials.<sup>614</sup> Corporate organisations also have much to gain when they advertise and market their goods and services on the platform of the church’s many public events. As a comprehensive community, the church ensures that the interests of every segment of its members are taken care of in specific respects. Recognising that material and existential concerns are important motives in bringing people to the church, Adeboye says,

People go to church for different reasons. Some people go to church because they know that Jesus can heal...Jesus will heal them. Some

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<sup>610</sup> Personal interview to ‘Dalana Adeleye-Olusae, *op. cit.*

<sup>611</sup> Adeboye, “Reversing the Irreversible, Part 7”, sermons preached at the HGS, Redemption Camp, Nigeria, 3 January 2003, [http://jht.rccg.org/holy\\_ghost\\_service/2003\\_hgs/hgs\\_Jan\\_03.htm](http://jht.rccg.org/holy_ghost_service/2003_hgs/hgs_Jan_03.htm) (accessed 17.06.03)

<sup>612</sup> Adeboye, “Born to Reign”, sermon preached at the HGS, Redemption Camp, Nigeria, 4 April 2003, [http://jht.rccg.org/holy\\_ghost\\_service/2003\\_hgs/hgs\\_Apr\\_03.htm](http://jht.rccg.org/holy_ghost_service/2003_hgs/hgs_Apr_03.htm) (accessed 17.06.03).

<sup>613</sup> Adeboye, “The Beginning of Greatness”. Sermons preached at the HGS, Redemption Camp, Nigeria, 2 March 2003 [http://jht.rccg.org/holy\\_ghost\\_service/2003\\_hgs/hgs\\_Mar\\_03.htm](http://jht.rccg.org/holy_ghost_service/2003_hgs/hgs_Mar_03.htm) (accessed 17.06.03)

<sup>614</sup> Adeboye does not criticise state policies even when these are inimical to the welfare of the public. For him, “silence cannot be quoted”, hence he prefers not to be drawn into public controversies. This stance has necessitated some Nigerian church leaders to call upon him to “speak out” every time there is confusion in the nation. See *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 3, April 2002, p. 22.

others go to church because they want to prosper in their businesses. I can also assure them that they will prosper. Some people go to Jesus Christ because they are barren and they want children of their own. I can assure them that Jesus Christ will give them children. They are very few who go to church simply because they want to become part of the Body of Christ.<sup>615</sup>

Through attempts at satisfying the needs of these different interest groups, the RCCG creates, sustains and reinforces social integration and solidarity; generates alternative routes to modernity and globalisation. As an organisation with global aspirations and intentions directed towards achieving the domination of its environment, RCCG supports the integration of the Nigerian society as well as satisfying the different needs of individuals and groups, thus keeping all together. Those who are excluded from official routes to wealth and social wellbeing are accommodated through the church's system to achieve relevance in the new state of affairs. This analysis of RCCG strategy at attracting people, especially the ambitious youth, fits in with Odozor's (2000) observation that the AICs are Africa's alternative to globalisation.

From a doctrinal point of view, the leaders of the church make it obvious that it is biblical that one gets out of the system what one puts into it. For Adeboye, "exchange"<sup>616</sup> is an organising metaphor for religious practice, human-divine relationship, for social interaction within the church and between the church and other segments of the society. Furthermore, "exchange" is deeply rooted in Yoruba culture of gift giving. Gifts establish moral relationships of reciprocity since, according to Peel's (2000: 86) observation, among the Yoruba, "disinterested or unreciprocated giving simply made no cultural sense". Giving superiors gift is an entrenched practice in RCCG. According to the son of the founder of the RCCG, Adeboye taught the members of the church to give to the church and its ministers.<sup>617</sup> In the teachings of Adeboye and the practices of RCCG we find strong evidence of the role and place of reciprocal exchange in building and maintaining social, economic and religious relationships, a point that has been frequently emphasised by such scholars as Lee (1992), Buchan *et al.* (2002: 168-206) and Molm *et al* (2003: 123-152). For a society in search of economic empowerment and survival, such root metaphors as exchange and reciprocity

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<sup>615</sup> Adeboye, *The Bride of the Lamb*, *op. cit.*, p. 2

<sup>616</sup> See chapter 5.3.5 for Adeboye's doctrine of "the Law of Exchange".

<sup>617</sup> Personal interview with Deacon Ifeoluwa Akindayomi, *op. cit.* Some pastors of the church, especially the younger ones, complain that the teaching on giving is being abused by some among them who use it to "make unnecessary demands on the people they are expected to take care of". Ifeoluwa, for example, said that some pastors "demand" what gifts they should be given, and "that has been a serious problem" in the church now.

(among humans and between humans and God) have powerful emotional attachments and resonances. Blending innovatively, a cultural element of giving with a translocal prosperity teaching has had a powerful impact on the RCCG and Nigerian Pentecostalism in general. Globalisation has had its fast spread when it is harnessed to specific economic practices. These economic practices are often undergirded by corporate greed and competition.

**v) Entertainment Performances:** The church embodies a great amount of entertainment activities for both individuals and groups. Especially for the youth, it is an environment for the exercise and development of their skills and talents in different spheres of life. Performing and theatre groups are features of every large parish of the RCCG.<sup>618</sup> This has enabled the church to become a major player in the production and circulation of popular cultural materials such as video films and audio tapes, music videos, olive oil, handkerchiefs, tambourines, calendars, magazines and books. The popularity of these commodities indicates that people are seeking for religious values, meanings and satisfaction through mediated popular cultural materials. Central to the understanding of such popularity is the harnessing of spiritual power through human symbolic and material actions. Undergirding such power is the search for health, success, wellbeing and security.

These materials are valorised as modern channels of grace and empowerment, of divine anointing that breaks all yokes and brings freedom. The association of these cultural materials with the church gives it a market edge over other competing articles. These materials constitute new pulpits for pastors: they extend their sermons, doctrines, rituals and practices by unmooring them from a physical location and setting them loose as floating signs and symbols. Video-production technologies in Nigeria help small religious groups to create flexible and effective global strategies of self-representation and cultural survival. The success of the RCCG cannot be considered in isolation from the production and use of popular cultural materials as well as the electronic mobilisation of the Nigerian religious communities at home and abroad who identify with these items and patronise both products and their producers.

By defining its symbols as infused with the sacred, the RCCG secures a power base to mass-produce these materials. The media and other cultural producers also anchor their texts on these symbols, aligning with what amounts to popular religiosity and material practice. In the

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<sup>618</sup> Personal interview with Esther Morenikeji, *op. cit.*

on-going process, religion is vested with economic value, and economic practices are invested with religious fervour, tenacity and focus. This scenario illustrates Chidester's (2000: 231) apt description of religion as

a repertoire of cultural practices and performances, of human relations and exchanges, in which people conduct symbolic negotiations over material objects and material negotiations over sacred symbols.

The negotiations that are conducted over material objects are multifaceted. These material objects are used in diverse ways and contexts to both construct and negotiate difference, meanings, and identity. They are social and religious symbolic and economic markers for both producers and users. Hence, through these objects, the RCCG defines itself materially and marks out its sphere of influence. The material practices of RCCG are consequently vital symbols in its projects of globalisation and localisation, which constitutes a multidimensional "regime of value production" (Myers 2001). As these objects move from one locale to another, they acquire, and are infused, with meanings for different constituencies and contexts. Such regimes of value are undergirded by a theory of exchange. These values are not produced for their own sake; they must be exchanged in specific ways in order for them to realise the purpose for which they are produced.

**vi) Multiple Modes of Religiosity:** Harvey Whitehouse's theory of modes of religiosity may partly be applied in explaining the popular appeal and mass following of RCCG. Building his theory from primary data on Melanesian religion, Whitehouse (1995; 2000) isolates two principal modes or tendencies, viz.: doctrinal and imagistic modes of religiosity. The doctrinal mode of religiosity constitutes tendencies within religious traditions to codify revelations "as a body of doctrines, transmitted through routinized forms of worship, memorized as part of one's 'general knowledge', and producing large, anonymous communities" (Whitehouse 2000: 1). For the imagistic tendency, however, revelation is "transmitted through sporadic collective action, evoking multivocal iconic imagery, encoded in memory as distinct episodes, and producing highly cohesive and particularistic social ties" (*Idem.*).

Relating this theory to the RCCG, both tendencies are found to be very prominent within the church's ritual and doctrinal formulations. Both tendencies are blended and emphasised during all major events of the church such as the HGS, the HGC and the annual convention. The weekly, monthly or annual events are repetitive ritual events that are also infused with imagistic expectations. Every HGS, for example, is regarded as unique, special and

unforgettable. The reiteration of these features through mass advertising strategies and by Adeboye's personal attestations pattern and channel popular expectations towards the anticipation and search for the extraordinary, the creation of strong mental and spiritual images and memories. The expectation for "miracles, healings and deliverances"<sup>619</sup> constitutes the church's popular image; for those who claim to have received any of these items, that experience would constitute a strong episode in their life of faith and an organising memory for further search.

While the imagistic tendencies in RCCG appeal to and attract the masses who are in constant search for the powerfully extra-ordinary and spectacular experiences such miracles and *glossolalia*, the doctrinal mode of religiosity has had a strong sway for a new breed of religious professionals who have emerged as leaders and routinisers of tenets, prescribers of orientations and enforcers of rules and rituals. This professional cadre, who had first achieved success in some forms of secular callings such as banking or in the academia, have also received great incentives in becoming pastors and leaders in the church. Combining both spheres of influence has resulted in a highly mobile and articulate doctrinal leadership. As Peel (2003) has recently argued, it is in the way that a pentecostal group such as the RCCG has found to combine imagistic and doctrinal modes of religiosity that much of the effectiveness of the Born-again movement is to be found.

The corps of elders who constitute the principal routinisers of doctrine and "a managerial tier of patrolling officials" (Whitehouse 2000: 14) also contain such cadre of individuals as retired university professors, senior military officers, accomplished captains of industries and business tycoons. These are highly influential people in the government of the country as well as controllers of the nation's economy. Through the national elders of the church, its influence and power permeate into secular political and economic institutions of the country. As transmitters of a set of standardised and formalised code of doctrine, this layer of the church's leadership also transmits political and economic orientations found favourable to the church's socio-religious ideology. Their main task may be the reproduction of orthodoxy, doctrinal coherence, stability and uniformity but also wealth and entrenched group interest in the polity.

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<sup>619</sup> The advertisement for the 16 -21 December 2002 Holy Ghost Congress was simple: "Showers of Blessing: six days of Miracles, Healings and Deliverances". There are thousands of large billboards carrying this message mounted on major roads from Lagos through Benin to Abuja, Onitsha and Aba as well as some in Ghana, Benin Republic and other West African countries.

The interaction between both modes of religiosity has made the church a seedbed for the creation of uniqueness and difference in the search for the spectacular, the miraculous, the unusual, while at the same producing and ensuring a high degree of sameness in doctrine and ritual services. The political and economic ramifications of such coexistence of divergent religiosities are all the more felt in a society with an evolving political democracy where number is a resource sought after by many politicians and the economy is in the hands of a few powerful individuals who are strongly connected to the political class.

Another illustration of multiple modes of religiosity is in the creation of three strands of parishes, each targeting different social groups. The classical, model and unity types of parishes appeal to different social cohorts and are different strategies of mobilisation of specific social categories. They demonstrate the “homogenous unit principle”, which, as Hunt (2003: 80) shows, is a “North American importation”. This principle is based on the assumption that “like attracts like” and according to Adeboye, “the rich are friends of the rich, and the poor are friends of the poor”.<sup>620</sup> This principle is something of a “global assumption”, found in use by contemporary Christian groups in the United Kingdom, North America and Africa. Undergirding the popular appeal of this assumption is the reasoning that

People are most likely to be won over to a church constituted by people similar to themselves. [...] This marked a recognition that in the contemporary world, where there is a great deal of social and geographical mobility, people gravitate towards churches comprised of people like themselves and establish an ‘achieved’ religious status as a matter of choice rather than as a result of social pressure. This strategy made explicit use of established sociological and psychological findings and hence made church-growth tactics something of a science (Hunt 2003: 80).

**vii) Family Values:** The present study has consistently argued that one significant doctrinal and ritual emphasis running through Josiah’s and Adeboye’s ministry is the place of children in a woman’s life. Josiah prayed and ministered to women seeking “fruits of the womb” and these women enlarged his circle of influence and renown. The cultural conditions of the family were central to his prophetic ministry. Adeboye maintains the same style of ministration by emphasising the place of children in the home. He dedicates one edition of the

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<sup>620</sup> Adeboye, *How to Turn your Austerity to Prosperity*, op. cit., p. 6.

HGS to children each year. Also, he dedicates another edition of the HGS to the problems and matters concerning “youths”. He advises parents to bring along their children, no matter how young they are to the services at the Camp so he would pray for them and minister to their spiritual needs. By calling the camp “Shiloh” he designates it as a site where the prayers and desires of women in search of children are met. Furthermore, Adeboye stresses those cultural issues that matter most to women.

Aside from stressing the importance of children and their proper upbringing, he places great significance on the spiritual protection of children from demonic possessions, witchcraft and sorcery attacks. He further teaches his followers how to identify when children are under spiritual attacks, and encourages parents to bring such children for spiritual deliverance in the church. As the “Service of Deliverance” in August 2002 indicates, women are those most afflicted by these issues of demon possession and evil attacks as well as the invasion of baleful spirits.<sup>621</sup> He insists that the church is a hospital for these diverse problems because cosmopolitan medicine lacks competence in handling spiritual matters. More importantly to women, the doctrine that marriage once competently contracted cannot be dissolved is a strong appeal to women who often benefit from stable marriage relationships. To cement his concerns for the family and its values, Adeboye in August 2002 created a new office of an Assistant General-Overseer for Family Affairs. Like Bonnke, RCCG’s great attraction is the emphasis Adeboye places on the family as a unit (Lease 1996: 119), not infrequently illustrating this by reference to his own family: “Apart from the salvation of my soul, the next best thing that has happened to me is the wife God gave me”.<sup>622</sup> The emphasis on the family consolidates the church’s influence on its members.

Examining the factors that make RCCG appealing to many people, one finds that at core is the repositioning of the doctrines and practices of the church to tolerate and accommodate social cultural practices and conduct. This fact is countervailing evidence to certain models of religious vitality which presupposes that strict religious groups are more successful than liberal ones (Stark 1996b; Iannaccone 1994). While it may be true that in the social, cultural, and economic context of the United States of America strict religious groups flourish better than less strict ones, this is certainly not the case in Nigeria as our research has repeatedly emphasised. In a situation in which more than seventy percent of the people live in

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<sup>621</sup> See *RCCG 50th Annual Convention: Deliverance Service*, Videocassette, RTVM 2002.

<sup>622</sup> Adeboye, cited in *Redemption Light*, vol. 7, no. 3, April 2002, p.22. Also, see *Twentieth Anniversary Thanksgiving of Adeboye as GO of RCCG*, RTVM, 21 January 2001.

incomprehensible and crushing poverty, religious groups that offer appealing alternatives will certainly attract more members. The dominant values of the Nigerian society are that of primitive accumulation of wealth and its public display, search for security and health. In theory, RCCG offers avenues and access to these values. The church states categorically that it is “interested in the overall development and welfare of people and society: spiritual, economic, educational, social and emotional”, hence it has strong structures to articulate and cater for these interests.<sup>623</sup>

## 7.4 Theorising Religious Globalisation

There are many theories which attempt to relate religious doctrines and practices to contemporary social and cultural transformations. While there is a great degree of consensus about the intensification of interconnectedness, there is little agreement concerning how best to conceptualise the operative dynamics as well as their social and structural consequences. (Held *et al.* 1999). In the following section, we shall relate our discussion on RCCG to some relevant conceptualisations of cultural change of which religious change is a part.

### 7.4.1 Sycretisation and Local Vitality

In the preceding pages of the present chapter we have tried to discuss several forms of “cultural blending” of local and extra-local elements as evident in RCCG, taking care not to use the word syncretic or its derivatives. We have discussed how a small group of twelve persons resisted being absorbed by a larger group such as the C&S, how over a period of two decades a “tribal church” of thirty-nine parishes has expanded to 6,265 parishes worldwide, having in its fold several millions of votaries. Furthermore, a group that could hardly pay its few clergy a few years ago has emerged as an economic empire with millions of dollars in assets and now being sought after and courted by global economic players such as Procter and Gamble, Unilever, Coca-Cola Company, Nigeria Breweries, Global Bank, and City Express Bank among others.

A religious group which has achieved these accomplishments can only be described as successful in every sense of the word. Such success could in turn be ascribed as a quality of vitality the group demonstrates in the context of its operations and activities. The concept of vitality is used here to account for self-assertiveness and expansion of scope of influence, practices and domination. The anthropologist Gerd Spittler (2002) explaining the complex

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<sup>623</sup> “Cooperation: The key to Everyone’s Welfare”, *op. cit.*, p.8.

meanings of “local vitality”, points out that the phrase is employed in describing a problem: “whether, how and to what extent local units can be characterized as vital in relation to other units” (Spittler 2002: 2). For him, a local unit may be described in four possible relational ways, viz.: resistance, self-assertion, appropriation and expansion.

Our case study illustrates strong features of self-assertiveness, appropriatory and expansionary practices. Hence, the group is vital in relation to its local and extra-local contexts or even to similar religious organisations. The RCCG’s self-assertiveness can be seen in its use of modern media technology to contest symbolic, ritual, economic, political and social spaces and resources. Spittler (2002: 2) describes “appropriation” as “adopting foreign elements”. This is not exactly so with the RCCG since it appropriated both foreign and local (non-Christian) cultural elements such as local political and socio-economic practices and ideas. Furthermore, the RCCG demonstrates vigour, enthusiasm and intensified energy towards a broadly defined religious and non-religious domain. The RCCG has not just expanded by increasing its parishes in and outside Nigeria; it has also expanded its scope of influence and practices to engage with the distribution and organisation of social and symbolic resources such as in politics, prestige and wealth (Ukah 2002).

In describing RCCG as “vital”, the postulation is that there is a qualitative difference between what it was at some time in its history and what it is at the present. Using a time frame of twenty years, for example, RCCG has embraced change in the context of emphasising its pristine identity as a movement founded by divine authorisation and vision. It has reinforced new doctrinal and ritual orientations, routinised economic and political practices and perspectives that endear it to the political and economic classes of the society. In other words, the church has *globalised* by expanding or broadening its fields of operation and perspectives, by specifying particular views and relations to modernity.<sup>624</sup> The church has redefined itself and its mission in the context of greater networking of diverse strata of social life and the coordination of human, material and symbolic resources.

The processes by which cultural elements are transferred from one society to another and are appropriated and adapted have been variously described as creolisation, syncretisation, domestication, indigenisation, globalisation or localisation. The first of these concepts has

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<sup>624</sup> An example of the church’s conceptualisation of alternative modernity is Adeboye’s views that Nigeria will achieve global greatness and renown, not by technological and scientific breakthroughs and feats, but leading the world and humankind back to God, by heralding, through the activities of RCCG and its prophets, the events of the Endtime and the Parousia.

been popularised by Ulf Hannerz (1996) who prefers to conceptualise globalisation as both processes of interconnectedness and “cultural mixture”. For Hannerz, creolisation connotes cultural strength, vitality and creativity which are manifested in ongoing processes of cultural interpenetration and interconnectivity. Cultural mixture creates diversity which Hannerz (1997: 17) identifies “as a source of cultural vitality”. In his descriptions of creolisation processes, Hannerz uses the concept in an evidently positive sense to describe the complex processes of creative cultural transformation and adaptation. He applies it not only to non-western societies such as Nigeria, but to European and American cultures as well as to the English language.

Such positive applications of the concept of creolisation notwithstanding, the concept carries an inherent connotation of “impurity”. It carries the conceptual baggage of corruption of a pure form of a particular language; hence its normative undertone makes it less able to articulate the complex dynamics of culture change.<sup>625</sup> Creolised languages are often spoken by the less powerful group within a society and people living on the margins of society as against the pure languages of the socially powerful and culturally sophisticated.<sup>626</sup>

Unlike creolisation, syncretism (from where syncretisation is derived) has a long history of usage in the comparative study of religions. The concept of syncretism is controversial (Stewart and Shaw 1994). It has been contested as appropriate in describing aspects of the religious development of a people. Originally developed as a social category that described the union of different and opposing groups among the ancient Crete, it was soon transformed to a theological category by the Church Fathers in the pejorative description of non-Christian/Jewish religions of Antiquity. Adogame (1999) has elaborated on the different phases of transformations which the concept has undergone from its first historical (positive) reference by the Greek historian and philosopher, Plutarch (46-120)<sup>627</sup> to its ideological (normative and negative) use to differentiate true, orthodox religion from false, heretical religions. Although he observed efforts by a crop of contemporary scholars to restore or rehabilitate the concept, he concluded by rejecting the word in preference for “synthesis”.

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<sup>625</sup> Hannerz’s concept of “creolisation” has been fruitfully applied by Victor Samson Dugga (2002) in describing the transformations in Nigerian theatre. However, it is doubtful if the same can be done in describing transformations in Nigerian pentecostalism and religious field.

<sup>626</sup> See *Encarta World English Dictionary*, *op. cit.*, p. 444, s.v. “Creole”.

<sup>627</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1451, s.v. “Plutarch”.

As the concept of syncretism has been applied to religions of Africa, it has exhibited the unrestrained triumphalism of missionary Christianity in the denigration of local culture conceived as “weak” (Huntington 1996), imitative, backward, uncivilised and impure. In what fruitful way can we describe the incorporation and appropriation of exogenous elements by RCCG as a process of syncretisation? In the context of rapid social and cultural change, the creative or innovative negotiation of change is a strategy for survival. Ulli Beier (1988) has applied the concept of syncretism in this sense to the Yoruba in their continuous active struggle for existence as a distinct social group. According to Beier (1988: 44) “[t]he Yoruba people have always shown an extraordinary ability to adapt to changing circumstances”. Beier further describes how the Yoruba have traditionally tried to negotiate change and survival through “an extraordinary capacity for syncretism [*sic*]”, attributing to this capacity “century old survival techniques” which give “hope for the survival of Yoruba culture and identity in generations to come”(Beier 1988: 65, 67).

Beier uses the concept of syncretism as a descriptive tool to signify the creation of a “working synthesis”, the adoption of, “borrowing” of elements from different religious and cultural traditions. Such capacity is a matter of cultural strength rather than weakness. In this sense, syncretism is a demonstration of cultural tolerance, co-existence and accommodation, the ability to integrate diverse aspects into a new, relevant whole. This ability results in the creation of new forms of social and cultural existence that reinforce cultural identity rather than erode it. Those living on the margins of society and culture must develop this type of capacity for cultural fusion as a survival strategy, according to Beier. This capacity, Beier concludes, is a demonstration of strength rather than weakness.

In his discussion of divergent pentecostal doctrines and practices, Walter Hollenweger (1999a: 185) asserts strongly that “Christianity is a syncretism par excellence, and all churches are syncretic”. The elements of continuity between RCCG and the C&S, on the one hand and RCCG and the Yoruba worldview, on the other, may perhaps be described, using Ulrich Berner’s (2001: 499-509) “model of two levels of syncretism”: syncretism on the level of elements and syncretism on the level of systems. Discernible continuities may represent transformation of elements rather than a whole system. The RCCG, as we have discussed in chapters 5 and 6, transformed elements in C&S such as the emphasis on fasting, healing and the use of ritual objects like olive oil and ritual clothe. In a similar way, the church also incorporated elements of Yoruba religious and cultural practices such as the use of oriki, ewi,

and theological orientations on sacrifice, praise and gift-giving as well as Adeboye's theology of exchange. Thus, the RCCG belief and ritual praxis is markedly "shaped in a way to allow some continuity in world view" (Berner 2001: 505). This continuity is significant in the group negotiation of identity, authenticity as well as social-cultural relevance or survival.

However, as we have seen from Beier's usage, there is nothing that the concept of syncretism explains that cannot be explained without using it. Syncretism, when used on the level of metatheory, as Berner maintains, may provide valuable insights but when applied to living groups of people may easily provoke vehement resentment and anger. In addition to this limitation, the ideologically laden content of the concept makes it inappropriate for describing a religious group such as the RCCG who themselves use it in denigrating the ritual conducts of those they disagree with. A senior pastor of RCCG defines syncretism as "[t]he practice of mixing witchcraft with christianity [sic]" (Ajayi 1997: 40). He claims that this practice was responsible for Josiah Akindayomi's exit from the C&S: "he (Josiah) left the Cherubim and Seraphim church even as more and more unbiblical practices began to filter into the [...] church" (Ajayi 1997: 43-44). Another pastor of the RCCG, Patrick Uponi, groups "syncretic practices", "witchcraft" and "occultism" as practices originated by Satan to hinder the work of the church among Muslims in northern Nigeria.<sup>628</sup> For such stereotypical usage, syncretism is no longer a strategy for group survival as Beier or even Plutarch intended in their work, but a mere "unwholesome mixture" of elements from different, incompatible systems. As the concept is understood among RCCG clergy, syncretism is a corruption of an originally pure practice.

The use of the notion of syncretism, therefore, has featured prominently in the identity politics of stereotyping others as deviating from a true, pure, orthodox form of religion. The educated members of the RCCG are not unaware of this usage. They describe the changes taking place in the church as a deepening of their understanding of the bible, expansion of orientations and visions God gave to their founder. They insist that the changes the church is experiencing is still an outworking of God's covenantal promises to the founder through Adeboye. Ulrich Berner (2001: 501) makes the same important observation that

even when the notion of 'syncretism' is used in a purely descriptive way, the researcher has to keep in mind that the results of his/her work will probably offend living members of the religious

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<sup>628</sup>Patrick Uponi, *op. cit.*, p.28.

community under study when the publication becomes available to them.

He further recommends that the best solution would be for the concept to be avoided in empirical research and be restricted to historical research. “In any event, the ethical dimension of the methodological problems involved in the usage of ‘syncretism’ has to be taken into consideration as far as empirical research is concerned” (Berner 2001: 501).

From the foregoing discussion, the present study prefers to examine globalisation and vitality not as processes of syncretisation but as vigorous expansion of scope and field of activities as well as intensification of fervour and depth. As processes of invigoration, vitality is not conceived as religious contamination but a deepening of self-comprehension and a process of negotiating religious change (Mary 2001). As Peel (1968a) did not characterise the Aladura churches as syncretistic, so the RCCG may not be regarded as syncretistic. As a senior pastor of RCCG puts it, “all innovations in the church are scriptural”; they “are blown into the church through the Holy Spirit of God”.<sup>629</sup> The strong emphasis on the role of the “Holy Spirit” and vision in reworking innovations helps portray a global outlook and a feeling of authenticity, for as Hecht and Simon 1994: 36) succinctly put it, “[i]ncorporating multiple beliefs and worldviews may avail societies who have limited power to negotiate a global system with expanded options and references for achieving a sense of internal cohesion”. Having made the above point, it is pertinent as well to stress David Maxwell’s position that labelling African Christianity “syncretic” in a pejorative sense “is to miss the point that all vernacular religion is a form of syncretism” (Maxwell 1999: 222; see also Greenfield and Droogers 2003; Meyer 1994).

#### **7.4.2 Religious Globalisation and Market Regime**

Globalisation metaphors are in the main culled from exchange relationships between specific social categories. Interconnectivity and interpenetration are forms of social exchange in which ideas, funds, goods, images, and persons move from one location to another either physically by mechanical means or by electronic means. As Kim and Shin (2002: 447) observe, “globalization denotes worldwide participation in economic exchange”. Metaphors of the market and exchange are significant as we have seen in discussing the doctrines of RCCG.

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<sup>629</sup> Pastor Olusegun Odebola in Bisi Alaba Williams, “The Changing face of Worship”, *The Guardian* (Nigeria) 29 September 2002, pp. 26, 31.

Among the Yoruba, the market is an ever present reality.<sup>630</sup> The marketplace is the physical embodiment of everyday experiences intricately weaving a network of visible and invisible forces. The reality of the market depicts the multifacetedness and multidimensionality of social life. It ties together notions of exchange, network, public space, creation and consumption of value. It is a site where fortunes are made (and sometimes lost). As a site of new horizons, the market enunciates new possibilities and new relationships (see Hodder and Ukwu 1969). In the context in which it is applied in designating the relationship between human beings and the deity, exchange is designed to bring human beings fortunes and riches. The market also is a metaphor for the world.<sup>631</sup> For the Yoruba it is a depiction of collective purpose of a people to remain connected, to be a network of services, goods, intentions and interests. The market reflects the people's aspirations and inspirations. It blurs distinctions and boundaries as well as represents a site of shifting power and identity. A seller may become a buyer and vice versa. Here, there is an active and subtle obliteration of the core and the periphery, the giver and the recipient. The use of such imageries of the market and exchange in religious discourse as evident in the RCCG strikes a familiar cultural cord and sentiment among the church's audiences.

The marketplace is a zone of competition. This sense of competition captures the strategies of territorial conquest which propel the RCCG to establish parishes every five minutes' walking distance in urban centres. For the carriers of this idea of competition, an "economy of compensation" (Hecht and Simon 1994: 88) oils the wheel of expansion. Since "nothing goes for nothing", if one puts in something in supporting RCCG's religious practice, one must get compensated with something in return. This is an enticing promise that has coordinated elite efforts and corporate engagement with the church, a practice that considerably engineered the church into the global realm. The metaphors of the market and competition reflect significant aspects of the processes of globalisation.

The history and development of RCCG, as this study has shown, is emblematic of the challenges and tensions in the relationship between religion and globalisation, especially in non-Western societies. The relationship between religion and globalisation is complex and multi-faceted. For some theorists of globalisation, religion remains the original globaliser, initiating the processes of border-crossing, culture traversing. For some others, economic

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<sup>630</sup> The market is such an important aspect of Yoruba social and cultural life that in the pantheon of deities, a deity, Eshu, is the god of the marketplace (Hecht and Simon 1994: 77-79; Beier 2001: 29f).

<sup>631</sup> An Igbo adage says "*Uwa bu ahia*", the world is a market.

practices led the quest for territorial conquest and expansion which epitomised the processes of globalisation. Drawing empirical data from the sphere of pentecostal practice and transformation in Nigeria, fresh insights have emerged on the nature of the relationship between pentecostalism and globalisation.

Globalisation, Henriot (1999) observes, in certain of its features assumes a religious character. This religious character is obvious in the economic dimension of globalisation that promotes the ideology of the “free market”, which David Loy insists, fulfils a religious function for those who espouse it. According to Loy, “our present economic system should [...] be understood as our religion, because it has come to fulfil a religious function for us. The discipline of economics is less a science than the theology of that religion, and its god, the Market, has become a vicious circle of ever-increasing production and consumption by pretending to offer a secular salvation” (Loy 1997: 275). The American economist, Joseph Stiglitz (2002: 12) endorses such religious metaphors of globalisation when he writes that the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) are the “missionary institutions” of the religion of the market through which poor countries on the periphery are converted and drawn into the religion of the “free market”. Almost a decade earlier, Hecht and Simon recognised the uncanny similarity between Christian missionary strategies in Africa and “World Bank/IMF-sponsored liturgies on economic salvation” (Hecht and Simon 1994: 151). The significance of these religious metaphors of globalisation lies in the extent to which Pentecostalism has globalised using the structures of market expansion. As we have shown in this study, the expansion of the religious field in Nigeria occurred through intensive and varied use of media technologies, increased travels and intensified networking of different groups and structures. Through this expansive networking, religious groups “proliferate channels of access to resources by configuring a world that self-consciously aims to anchor itself in diverse positions within the worlds of others” (Hecht and Simon 1994: 151). To a great extent, this vitalisation is a function of the entrepreneurial character of contemporary pentecostal culture.

Pentecostalism is a transnational process. As such, through reinterpretation and appropriation, it has utilised what Kloos (1998) calls “transnational regimes” in inserting itself into contemporary global order.<sup>632</sup> Kloos describes a transnational regime as a body of human interdependences in which implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making

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<sup>632</sup> Peter Kloos, “Global Order: Transnational Regimes and Identity Movements”, <http://casnws.scw.vu.nl/publicaties/kloos-transnat.html> (accessed 19.03.01).

procedures created by actors around which their expectations converge in a given area that transcends national borders (Kloos 1998: 6). For him, one such important regime is the capitalist market which has almost literally sucked the remote corners of the world into the sphere of its influence. He further argues that for identity movements to survive and be relevant in the contemporary global arrangement, they must use such regimes as the capitalist regime, time regime, entertainment and electronic communications. Pentecostalism itself represents a veritable transnational regime which merges and utilises other regimes in reproducing its practices and orientations in different societies.

Pentecostal Christians have demonstrated that business and the Bible could profitably mix. This mix has made Pentecostalism the fastest-growing economic activity in Nigeria. Pastors have produced large financial bases that enable them to buy up factory spaces, warehouses, and industrial complexes and convert these to vast sacred space. In major cities of the south west, the demand for church space has forced up estate costs. Furthermore, the vitality of religious popular culture that is a feature of urban Nigeria is partly a function of pentecostal practice and involvement. Pentecostal churches such as the RCCG and Liberty Gospel Church (LGC)<sup>633</sup> have pioneered a booming trade in locally produced video-films, audio cassettes of sermons and songs, inspirational books, church magazines and other church paraphernalia. These economic activities make it attractive for individuals and groups to patronise the churches since the activities are cloaked with sacred aura and spiritual authorisation (see Varga 1999: 342-344).

When pentecostal missionaries travel around the world on their divinely sanctioned enterprise, they are not just representatives of their sponsoring churches. They are also ambassadors of their local culture(s). The economic culture of the local community is often translated into the new, receiving contexts. The condition of globalisation under which many of the churches were founded and exist now also impinges on the emergent culture and regime of material production as well as economic activities. The sponsoring churches, owned by affluent pastors, see their missionaries as religio-cultural entrepreneurs who disseminate ideas, services and goods. Such dissemination is intimately connected to global regimes of the

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<sup>633</sup> LGC was founded in 1992 by Evangelist (Mrs) Helen Ukpabio. Six years later, she started making movies, and has produced thirteen video-films. She has so integrated video-film and religion that she is now more known as a movie-evangelist and a church founder. The films are part of her evangelism as well as membership drive and the church branches (sixty-three in all as at December 2002) function as channels of distribution for the films.

capitalist market, value, material culture, mass media and entertainment. It is through these practices that religious ideas and practices have been given form.

Pentecostalism is in some respects like and unlike other more obvious global institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO. Like these three organisations, which are generally considered prime motors of globalisation, Pentecostalism is a powerful economic, social, and political force in Africa in addition to its retention of a clearly marked spiritual identity. Like these “secular” drives of globalisation, Pentecostalism is a cultural purveyor of globalisation. In Africa, as in Latin America and Asia, Pentecostalism affects the lives of millions of people in diverse and decisive ways than ordinarily thought. Often, it is their first public identity reference in social and economic interactions. Unlike the global economic institutions mentioned above, Pentecostalism is not a faceless symbol of a new world order; it has a social presence and force in non-Muslim Africa, which can be hardly ignored. As these three financial organisations have driven globalisation along a particular direction, so Pentecostalism presents a unique perspective on globalisation and a new global order. These institutions promise the best possible life here on earth according to the direction and logic of the market; pentecostalism makes the same assertion but with a difference: the spirit of God will renew everything, including the market and all its limitations and imperfections.

Globalisation is not a free-floating, directionless, originless process blowing across the world. It is a complex process driven by certain institutions, certain regions, interests and governments. Pentecostalism is also an institution pushing globalisation to many different points from different angles almost simultaneously. Our study has shown that Pentecostalism is an established framework for economic activities, cultural practice, and political activism. Consequently, its spread has been on the wings of certain structures of contemporary life such as the media, migration, educational institutions and technologies of mobility.

The blossoming of Pentecostalism in Nigeria has come in the wake of the disastrous consequences of World Bank-IMF imposed structural adjustment regimes. Pentecostalism expanded in its bid to “mop up” some of the unwanted effects of unemployment, urban decay, unprecedented poverty, economic meltdown and social collapse. The collapse of public health system made divine healing appealing to many who cannot afford the money for drugs and hospital consultation fees. Although there are cases where spiritual healing was a last resort along the pathway to health, there are also some for whom it was the only viable and feasible

option available. The collapse of the Nigerian education system because of “cost recovery” strategies of IMF conditionality almost physically turned lecturers into pastors and church founders. Pentecostalism was able to fit into this situation because of its protean feature, adjusting and negotiating each unique situation according to the cultural context. This is its strength: a global perspective on each local set of circumstances. This strength has also helped it to establish networks of relationships between local contexts and translocal centres.

One of the strengths of Pentecostalism, therefore, which the World Bank, IMF and WTO lack, is cultural adaptability. As our study of RCCG demonstrates, significant elements of doctrines, structural organisation, and liturgy are innovative cultural blends. Through its strategy of cultural adaptation, the RCCG and its brand of doctrines and practices do not come across to the people as an alien institution. Its potency for mass mobilisation hinges here. While political and economic globalisation has been foisted from above on countries such as Nigeria, globalisation via Pentecostalism has come from below, attempting to address and represent the interests of those most badly hit by the failure of globalisation from above visibly epitomised by IMF-World Bank policies.

The failure of IMF-sponsored structural adjustment programmes in concert with political and economic mismanagement and corruption created the wider context that further explains the heightened desire and clamour for change. The successes of RCCG, its expansion and appeal are to be understood against the backcloth of what a senior pastor called “divine timing”. According to Pastor Pitán Adeboye, “in everything God does, timing is key”.<sup>634</sup> To him, it is this divine timing that explains the appeal and popularity of the RCCG. Adeboye and his programmes of change for the church “spoke” directly to the mass of people in south-west Nigeria who have been prepared by social, economic, political and religious events in the country. The social timing, the cultural resonances and the economic underpinnings of his message compelled people to listen to Adeboye and take him seriously. The search for alternatives from prior set of circumstances corresponded with increased mobility, interconnectedness and interpenetration of cultures, peoples, objects and images. The vision of Adeboye is in his recognition of divine timing and socio-economic preparedness, in addressing the nation in the language and images of the time, in accurately and prophetically reading and interpreting the signs of time and acting decisively according to these

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<sup>634</sup> Pitán Adeboye, *op. cit.*

endowments. His prophetic proclamations carried his visions by means of technological channels of travels and mass communication to diverse regions of the world.

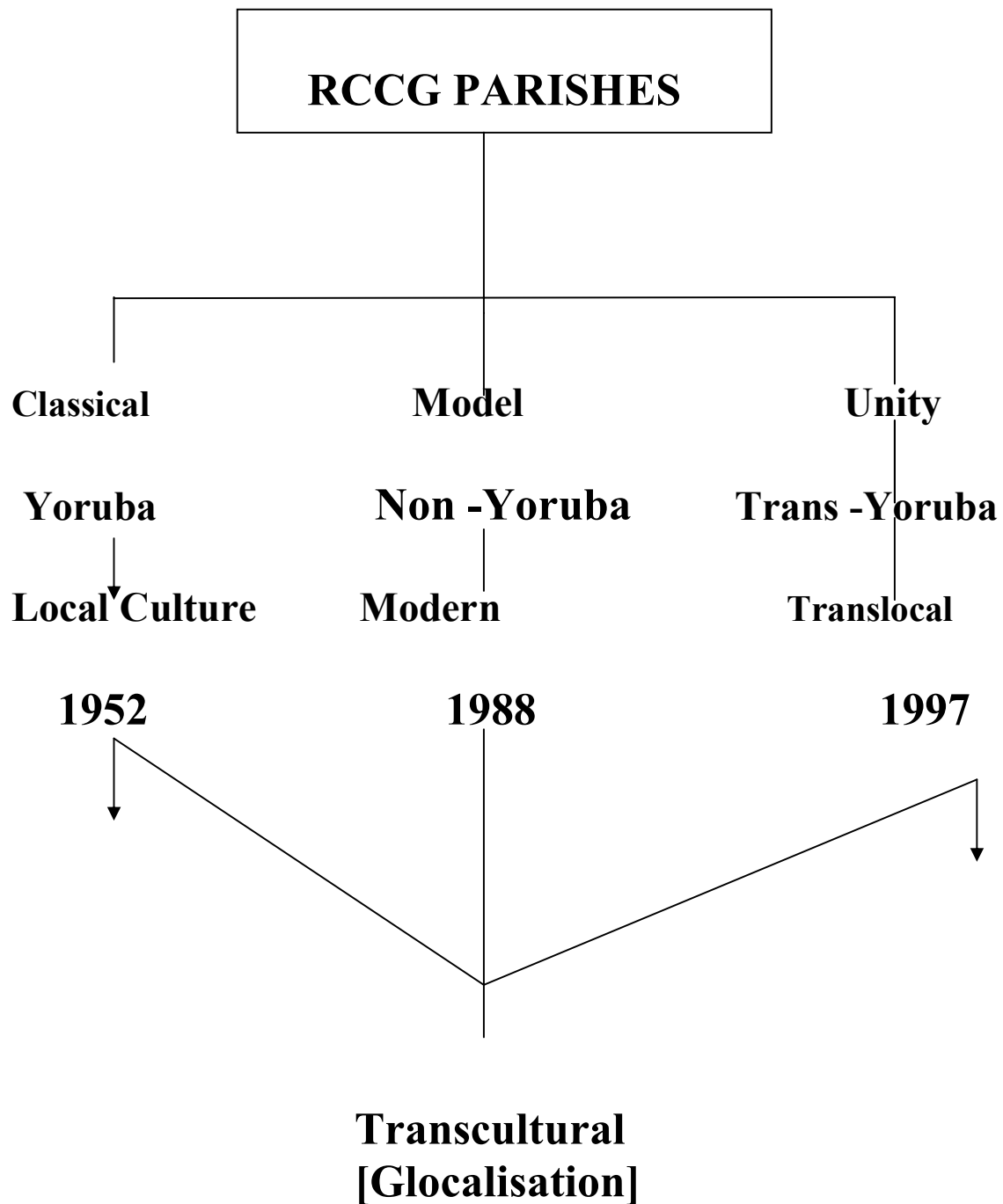
Our study illustrates that globalisation is not a unidirectional phenomenon. The West does not represent the world, neither does it represent and define the meanings of such complex phenomena as “modernity” and “globalisation”. The concept of globalisation, for it to be empirically meaningful and enlightening, requires such complementary conceptualisations as “multiple-globalisations”.<sup>635</sup> The RCCG exemplifies a strand of globalisation that does not refer to the West for authentication. For the members of the church, the local *is* the global and vice versa. These members and those who regularly congregate at the Redemption Camp on weekly and monthly bases are already familiar with global centres through stories and narrations from the church leaders concerning these places and the practices associated with them. Using new media such as the Internet and video, local images, ideas, practices and symbols are exported and transmitted to other remote parts of the world. One process, in the main, is embedded in the other without necessarily involving an “inferior – superior” hierarchy or distinction. A model of globalisation emerging from the history of RCCG may be seen in the three strands of parishes, classical, model and unity, in the church. When the local absorbs external influences, the product is not a foreign culture, but a local form of the global and a global form of the local.

The processes of globalisation and localisation are tension generating. This tension is evident in the RCCG. In addition to the three types of parishes discussed in chapter 4, a senior pastor<sup>636</sup> of the church insists that there are three categories of people in the church, that is, i) modernists, ii) traditionalists and iii) fundamentalists. The first group is the *modernists* who are mainly found in the model parishes. The members of this group are raw material for conversion, for they are deeply involved in the world and the things of the world; they may be likened to the “hyperglobalists” who generally privilege “an economic logic” which guides social and religious practices (Held *et al.* 1999: 3; Held 2000). They represent the *new order* of religious entrepreneurship whose strengths coalesce around organisation strategies, mobilisation and application of resources and the marketing of spiritual and religious packages. As a pragmatic group, the world is an arena of opportunities to which the application of *methods* brings success.

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<sup>635</sup> This idea of multiple globalisations has recently received scholarly attention in the book, *Many Globalizations* (2002) edited by Peter L. Berger and Samuel P. Huntington.

<sup>636</sup> Pastor Johnson Funso Odesola *op. cit.*



**Figure 7.1** Strands of Parishes in RCCG as they mediate different emphasis on local and global culture

The second group is the *traditionalists*. They are those who wish to shut out the world and its corrupting influences by maintaining the pristine purity of the spiritual vision of the church and its founder. The traditionalists say, “[t]his is the way things have been done since the beginning of the church; whatever is of the world is sinful and ungodly and it should be thrown out of the church”.<sup>637</sup> Members of this group see themselves essentially as *pilgrims* in the world. This group represents the *sceptics* who in the main argue that unwholesome practices are being allowed to infiltrate into the church in the name of change. Positioning themselves as an apocalyptic group who are waiting for the Parousia, members of this group consider the hyperglobalisers as fundamentally wrong, spiritually uncritical and naïve. For them, spiritual purity and love of the world are contradictory tendencies that must be guided against.

The third group is the *fundamentalists*. This group takes a little from the modernists and a little from the traditionalists. They share from both worlds of pristine religious and cultural purity and contemporary technological change. Generally, the members represent transformationists who insist that the church must change with changing times but not compromise its truth value. For them, since the church cannot reverse contemporary trends, it must adopt what is best in social, economic, technological advancements.

Given the fact that the society in which the church exists is experiencing change, the practices of religious life seek a strategy that is consistent with its spiritual vision in dealing with the world. Members sometimes lament that as the church is adopting and adapting to social change, it is also attenuating its spiritual vision and practices.

The tension which is evident in the church is clearly seen in the relationship of these groups to change. While the modernists/hyperglobalisers embrace a cosmopolitan mind set which accommodates change and are enthusiastic about innovation, the traditionalists/sceptics are parochial, suspicious and reluctant or even resistant to change; and the fundamentalists/transformationists show signs of caution in embracing change. While the first group represents unabashed globalisers, the second is cultural centrists, and the third represents “glocalisers”. As Kanter (1995: 24) rightly observes concerning the relationship between cosmopolitans and locals, while one is globalising, the other is localising thereby creating “great tensions and paradoxes”.

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<sup>637</sup> *Ibid.*

The RCCG shares certain of the multiple features that characterise global institutions. Indeed, it is a local-global church in the sense of being founded by Nigerians in Nigeria, working with the cultural material that is productive of locality. This locality has not restricted it to the local context. The branches outside the country represent its global (or transnational) arm. Through these branches, a relationship of mother-daughter is established between the Nigeria church and its global outgrowths. To adapt the coinage of Daniel Miller (1997: 60f), while the RCCG parishes in Nigeria represent “global” local units, the branches outside the country are, in the context in which they now exist, “local” global cultural enterprises. In a previous chapter, we argued for the rootedness of RCCG in the Yoruba worldview. This rootedness also manifests in the membership of the church, which is overwhelmingly Yoruba. The hierarchy of the church is made up of over ninety percent Yoruba. Even the pastors and leaders of the foreign missions are mainly Yoruba. This state of affairs is an indication that even as the church extends its scope of influence and presence, the motor of this expansion, the human agents driving this expansion remain those with a specific cultural identity. Thus, the immediate context for the expansion of RCCG is strongly intertwined with such important issues as ethnic identity and composition of the church. As this situation illustrates, globalisation has become a function of localisation and globalisation has intensified the revitalisation of local processes and identities.

Globalisation has often received scathing attacks, criticisms and protests, some resulting in fatalities. This is because of the manner it has been managed and directed especially by global financial institutions. The processes of top-bottom globalisation are shown to undermine traditional values as well as cultural identities by the mechanism of foisting a “new dictatorship of international finance” over the dictatorship of national elites (Stiglitz 2002: 247). In the case of the RCCG, as we have shown in this study, globalisation is integrated into a new form of cultural renaissance whereby global media have become vehicles and carriers of cultural ideas and practices. The local culture is invigorated and enlarged, its scope and relevance expanded. It is in this sense that the RCCG represents an alternative to globalisation from the above. This observation confirms Odozor’s (2000) position that the AICs are Africa’s emergent alternative to globalisation. He sees the mission churches as “unwieldy transnational giants” that represent foreign religious domination and paternalism. RCCG provides alternative structures that i) answer to particular (local) needs of the people, ii) alternative routes for the less powerful people in the society to access global modernities, and iii) material benefits to individuals. The local people are the “experts” in charge of

administration and church rituals. The practice of RCCG demonstrates the strength and skills, and resilience of local culture in “synthesizing relevant epistemologies from divergent traditions. A profusion of new cultures, religions, and worldviews are continuously reweaving Africa’s social fabrics. Individuals and groups, loaded with a diverse of identities, wait ready to reinvent themselves for the twenty-first century” (Hecht and Simone 1994: 11-12).

As we have seen in this study, globalisation has proceeded the fastest through the market. Religious globalisation has occurred through the commodification of religious ideas and practices. With such commodification, it is easy to package religious ideas and sites in such ways as to make them travel from one locale to another. The incentive of the market has become one of the strongest mobilisers of religious entrepreneurship. This fact is part of the predicament of Pentecostalism which offers significant insight into its ability to globalise and incarnate in different parts of the world.

In a similar sense, the predicament of globalisation is that it is strongly embedded in a market ideology (Stiglitz 2002). This point ties in pretty well with the nature of Pentecostalism, that is, its ready amenability to market practices and market-orientated ideology. Robertson (1992) points out that globalisation is a consciousness of ever-increasing interpenetration of different parts of the world. He is certainly correct in this opinion. However, globalisation is much more than a consciousness; it is even more than an orientation of action. For many peoples of the world, such as members and leaders of RCCG, globalisation is both a state of being in the contemporary world as well as a practical handle for negotiating existence, survival and identity in the world.

Our study of RCCG shows that the flow of pentecostal culture and practice is determined to a great extent by the perspective of “exchange”. This is not just an economic metaphor; it is a strong religiously embedded idea and practice (Alles 2000). Exchange is a strong pillar in the new theology of Adeboye. As Peel (2000) convincingly demonstrates, the idea of exchange in both religious and social interactions is deeply indigenous to the Yoruba. The stress which Adeboye intricately knits around it brings to the fore the dynamics of obligation and management of personal interest in the RCCG. It helps explain the nature of social relationships which a convert is socialised in, the social organisation that emerges as a result of what believers expect from both the deity and from fellow Christians. As a system of reward and motivation, exchange repositioned the church as an attractive alternative to other

religious organisations. Although it does not explain everything about how a religious group works, it provides valuable insights into the strategies of cultivating trust, commitment, human agency and competition as our case study amply demonstrates (Miller 1995: 490-493).

The doctrines and practice of exchange in the RCCG fits in with Rodney Stark's theory of "religious economy". To understand how RCCG is spreading outwards, it is important to situate it in the total socio-cultural environments in which it exists (Stark and Finke 2000: 35; Stark and Finke 2002: 31-62; Bainbridge 2002: 63-89; Hamburg and Pettersson 2002: 91-114). The spread of RCCG has involved the interplay of supply and demand. Exchange, again, is at the heart of the social interplay between the suppliers of culture and those who demand and consume it. Adeboye insists that this concept underscores the relationship between human beings and God, hence elaborate exchange practices have been put in place which makes God an exchange partner in a rational organisation of religious conduct. The commodification of religion has been an undoubted factor in RCCG's vitality, no matter how distasteful this point may seem to many people. In the case of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, as in other parts of the world, the processes of valorisation remain essential motors of its globalisation. The use of a marketing strategy such as the poster is, for example, an explicit use of rational method of selling a product or an ideology which points to increasing commodification and marketisation of religious personalities, sites, images and sentiments. Advertising strategies are attempts by religious actors to maximise and expand their market niche and influence, compete for clientele and "scramble for state patronage and recognition".<sup>638</sup> Increasingly, the pentecostal culture and behaviour in Nigeria are lending themselves to more calculation, more rational decision-making that relate to choice and options.

The present study, therefore, calls attention to the potential explanatory capacity of recontextualising the globalisation of Pentecostalism along the line of religious economies (see Chesnut 2003; Gill 1998). This proposal offers a critical insight into the shifting ways that religious practice and culture are changed under the conditions of the market. We have already observed that the market itself and the processes of globalisation are religious in character, hence, the ready amenability of Pentecostalism to market and global practices. Much of the theories attempting to account for the interface between globalisation and religion, such as Beyer's (1994) model, ignore how religions constitute regimes of

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<sup>638</sup> See Munachim Eze, "Are the Shepherds more confused than the Sheep?", *The Guardian* (Lagos), 29 September 2002, p. 32

commodified values and markets. By far a more significant neglect is the omission of data from Africa in the elaboration of theories of religion and globalisation by sociologists such as Beyer (1994, 2001) and Robertson (1992), or even theories of religious economy (Stark and Finke 2000; Iannaccone 1991; 1992; 1995). The present study presents empirical data for the reconsideration of these theories and their relevance to the African continent and condition. One important direction to explore will be the link between religion and the market. This link obviously offers one important perspective for understanding contemporary shifting postures of religious globalisation, especially as it affects societies in the southern hemisphere.

### **7.5 Concluding Remarks**

From our study of RCCG emerge four broad characterisations of the church as it surges forward into almost uncharted global territory. The church can conveniently be conceived as a five-fold sphere of interpenetrating activities: i) congregational: this covers all parish activities such as baptism, communion service, Sunday worship, Sunday school and prayer meetings; ii) trans-congregational mobilisation: this covers such mega events, usually regarded as interdenominational, such as the HGS, the HGC, CHGS, Divine Encounter, and MZH; iii) educational institutions: these further comprise of three strands, viz.: bible schools (RCBC, RESCOM; SOD); business or professional schools (IBI&LTS, RBA, CRM computer school); secular schools (nursery, primary and secondary schools; iv) business outfits: consisting mainly of two strands, viz.: media business (publishing and audio-visual production and distribution) and other commercial or fiscal engagements such as the Jubilee Development Foundation, Jubilee Cooperative Society, insurance companies, banks, security companies, supermarkets, bakeries, etc.; and v) social institutions/NGOs: such as hospitals, maternities, clinics, orphanages, RAPAC and CADAM. From these activities emerge the church's global surge and identity.

Globalisation processes exacerbate local identity processes and dynamics in complex ways. The process of localising global ideas, practices, lifestyles and material culture involves the excavation and reconstruction of indigenous worldviews, refashioning primordial identities in the light of present state of affairs (Medea 2002). We find this pattern of interaction between the global and the local in our study of the transformation of RCCG. Significantly, local identities, through various forms of cultural brews, have become plural, complex and multilayered as they absorb external influences and reshape internal life world of individuals and groups. As global influences impinge on local subjects, these identities are mobilised to assert, contest and insert their presence and interests. Christian politicians in Nigeria, for

example, deploy religious identity in the mobilisation of sentiments for the contest of elections and state power and privilege. In a similar vein, pastors and missionaries of RCCG use their religious status in contesting social and economic spaces in Western, Australasian and American societies.

Our study observes that there is an intellectual need to deepen the social scientific understanding of the processes of routinisation of charisma. Routinisation can proceed through means other than institutionalisation as we found in RCCG. Institutionalisation of charisma was a threat to Josiah's unlimited prophetic capacity which forced him to renegotiate the procedure for the transfer of authority through invocation of the Holy Spirit and prophetic vision. He strategically domesticated charisma making it ease for changes to flow into the church without the strictures of a legal-rational framework. Adeboye is following in the same stride, thus institutionalising the role of prophetic vision in the administration of the church.

This study also illustrates the creation of a global identity in the context of local processes. A good example is the repositioning of Nigeria as a sacred site of global consequence. Blurring the border between the secular and the religious, Adeboye mobilises religious sentiments towards the creation of a local legitimacy where the ordinary believer is empowered and encouraged to assume a significant role in the new scheme of things. As Nigeria ignites the fire of last revival through the activities of RCCG, it is the individual Christian who is the carrier of revival as well as the beneficiary of God's intervention.

The broader and enhanced image given to Nigeria is reinforced through media technologies of commodification and commercialisation: video tapes, books and magazines, audio cassettes. These are produced locally but exported, marketed and consumed globally. Valorised as channels of grace and anointing, these materials constitute new pulpits for pastors; they extend the pastors' sermons, doctrines, rituals and practices by unmooring them from a physical location and setting them loose as floating signs and symbols. As effective means of self-representation, these materials also function as "regimes of value production" (Myer 2001) and strategies of cultural survival and competition. Their distribution in the different outposts of the church, together with the frequent visits of Adeboye and his lieutenants to the congregations abroad, reinforces the image of a global network of churches and religious professionals. These professionals exude a strong sense and image of cosmopolitan Christians

mediating between local or national cultural traditions, transnational communities of faith and alternative forms of being-in-the-world (Held *et al.* 1999: 449). Here we see the fusion of national identity, religious zeal, consumer culture, and the “symbolic negotiation over material objects and material negotiation over sacred symbols” (Chidester 2000: 231).

Although we have described the congregations of RCCG in the West as “global outposts” of a local church, there appears to be a growing importance of these global outposts in the evangelical economy of the church. As globalising forces intensify the flow of peoples across borders, these congregations will assume increasing significance for both the national church and individual members in foreign countries. Furthermore, the leadership of the church is firm in its belief that a reversed missionisation is taking place in these countries which is producing congregations that will not be completely an African or a Nigerian congregation as they are at present (Hunt and Lightly 2001; Hunt 2002a, b). Overtime, the West will be reconverted through the activities of the church; other non-western societies will also be converted to God. This understanding adds value and zest to the missionary activities of the church both at the local level (which produces the personnel) and the global level (which consumes the labour of the locals).

The influence of RCCG extends far beyond the confines of its congregations, touching the political, economic and cultural aspects of life. This is significant in understanding or reformulating a concept of religion that is relevant in the context of globalisation. The western conceptualisation of religion that seeks to restrict it to a private domain of pious practices is incongruous with the understanding of religion which emerges from the history of RCCG (cf. Beyer 2001). The conflation and interpenetration of spiritual activities, economic, political and cultural performances strongly point to the dominance of religion in contemporary African societies. The doctrine and practice of the RCCG are linked to economic recovery, active political engagement and national renaissance. RCCG sees itself as a project that will enable and empower people to access national resources for global action and global resources for national/local restructuring. Its popularity is not only because of spiritual rejuvenation but also the perceived enhancement and motivation it gives to redeemites to contest and appropriate translocal resources and power

Nigerian pentecostal Christians, especially in the Bible belt of the southwest, are increasingly following in the shadow of the church. As a trend and pace setting community, the church has

endeavoured to maintain its lead and reinforce its presence both locally and globally. Members see themselves as an integral part of a global network of Christian communities with a global vision for a global mission. The different activities of the church reinforce this self-perception and self-understanding which is seen at the heart of their global aspirations and intentions.

One may be attempted to peer into the future about the probable fate of a global enterprise such as RCCG at the eventual exit of its prime motivator, Adeboye. Our study indicates that Adeboye follows the strategy of his predecessor, Josiah, in speaking in riddles, idioms and veiled imageries about his probable successor. An organisation that controls a vast amount of resources, human and material, located in different parts of the world is bound to ignite a crisis of leadership when its primary prophet dies. In the absence of a written and acknowledged framework for leadership transfer, many voices will emerge claiming to have been commissioned by the Holy Spirit. As Chikwendu Christian Ukaegbu (2003) observes concerning entrepreneurial succession and post-founder durability among some Nigerian private firms, prospects for development and consolidation are vitiated when resources accumulated by one generation are lost at the death of founders of firms, businesses and organisations. The church is not unaware of this problem. Pastor D. A. Ilori, one of the Assistant General Overseers in RCCG, comments in this respect thus:

During the time of Moses, the elders stood by him. During the time of Joshua, the elders also stood by him. But during the third generation, the bible says the people did whatever they liked. During the time of Elijah, there was no problem. He handed over to Elisha, but when it got to the third generation, there was nobody to continue.<sup>639</sup>

The present leaders, who constitute the second generation, are already apprehensive about the fate of the church in the third leadership generation. Leadership crisis is not new in the church. The events of 1980/81 period will act to prepare the leaders for an eventual repeat. It appears, however, that the church will survive whatever leadership problems that will emerge at the exit of its global oracle. Its global spread may influence the choice of a leader with a global identity who will embody a global vision and ambition.

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<sup>639</sup> Pastor D. A. Ilori, "Food for Thought", in Bankole (1999: 123).

## Glossary of Yoruba Terms

<b><i>Abiku</i></b>	A “born-to-die” child
<b><i>Adahunse</i></b>	One who can really do something; medicine practitioners
<b><i>Agbebi</i></b>	Traditional Birth Attendants
<b><i>Alabaru</i></b>	Market porter
<b><i>Aladura</i></b>	Owners of prayers
<b><i>Alafia</i></b>	Total well-being
<b><i>Alaḡfin</i></b>	The supreme traditional leader of the Oyo people
<b><i>Alagba</i></b>	Elder
<b><i>Ase</i></b>	Mystical power and force to make one's words/proclamations come true.
<b><i>Aso Oke</i></b>	Traditional Yoruba hand woven material designed for important occasions.
<b><i>Baba Ijo</i></b>	“Father of the congregation”; church elder.
<b><i>Baba</i></b>	Father/papa/daddy
<b><i>Babalawo</i></b>	Father of secrets/mysteries (Diviner and priest of <i>Ifa</i> oracle)
<b><i>Dundun</i></b>	Yoruba talking drum
<b><i>Gele</i></b>	“Headgear”: A piece of clothe for covering women’s head.
<b><i>Ifa</i></b>	Oracle of divination
<b><i>Ijo elekun</i></b>	Weeping Congregation
<b><i>Ipele</i></b>	A piece of clothe women place on their left shoulder or lie round their waists made from the same material as the <i>gele</i> .
<b><i>Iro</i></b>	Traditional Yoruba wrapper.
<b><i>Iya Abiyamo</i></b>	traditional Birth Attendant
<b><i>Iyan</i></b>	pounded yam
<b><i>Oba</i></b>	Yoruba King
<b><i>Ogboni</i></b>	Yoruba secret politico- religious organisation
<b><i>Ogun</i></b>	Deity of Iron
<b><i>Olodumare</i></b>	God Almighty
<b><i>Olodumare</i></b>	Supreme Being/God
<b><i>Olosi</i></b>	Poverty/wretchedness

<b><i>Onisegun</i></b>	Professional healer, Masters of medicine
<b><i>Oriki</i></b>	Praise chant
<b><i>Orisa</i></b>	Deity
<b><i>Osun</i></b>	A river Deity as well as the name of a geopolitical state.
<b><i>Woli</i></b>	Prophet

## Appendix 1

### The History of the RCCG<sup>1</sup>

IN THE BEGINNING.

#### Origin of The Redeemed Christian Church of God.

In July 1909, a son was born into the Akindayomi family of Ondo State of Nigeria. Even though this child grew up surrounded by idol worshippers, he knew there existed a greater power and yearned to know, "The God who created the earth and everyone on it". This pursuit for God led him to the Church Missionary Society where he was baptized in 1927. Still spiritually unfulfilled, he joined the Cherubim and Seraphim church in 1931.

Whilst there, he began to hear a voice within him saying, "You will be my servant." Since this was not his intention, he decided to ignore the voice. This went on for seven years during which all the business ventures that he tried resulted into failure. In debt and without peace of mind, he found himself totally dependent on the grace of God. Here marked the beginning of a definite relationship with God.

Totally broken, he yielded saying, "Lord, I will go wherever you want me to go." He asked for signs to confirm that this was indeed God's call. The confirmation came through the Bible passages of Jeremiah 1:4-10, Isaiah 41:10-13 and Romans 8:29-31. The Lord assured him that He would provide for all his needs, as he would not receive any salary from that point on. This proved to be a comforting reminder during the trials in the months ahead. He became married in 1941. He continued to worship with the Cherubim and Seraphim. In 1947, he started to become concerned that the church was departing from the true Word of God in some of its practices. By 1952, he felt totally persuaded to leave the church. He started at Willoughby Street, Ebute-Metta, Lagos a house-fellowship called, the Glory of God Fellowship. Initially there were nine members but before long the fellowship rapidly grew as the news of the miracles that occurred in their midst spread.

Pa Akindayomi also had a vision of words that appeared to be written on a blackboard. The words were "The Redeemed Christian Church of God." Amazingly, Pa Akindayomi who could not read or write was supernaturally able to write these words down. In this visitation, God also said to him that this church would go to the ends of the earth and that when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in glory, He would meet the church.

The Lord then established a covenant with Pa Akindayomi, synonymous to the Abrahamic covenant in the Bible. He said that He the Lord would meet all the needs of the church in an awesome way if only members would obey Him.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.rccg.org> (accessed 07.06.2002). A modified version of this history posted in 2003 can be found at ([http://main.rccg.org/church\\_ministry/church\\_history\\_main.htm](http://main.rccg.org/church_ministry/church_history_main.htm)) [accessed 24.10.2003].

## **Appendix 2**

### **The Fundamental Beliefs of RCCG<sup>1</sup>**

#### **1. The Bible Teaching**

We believe that the entire Scripture, both Old and New Testament are written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit - II Tim. 3:16-17. All the Christian teachings and the Christian attitude of the Children of God are such as are established in the Holy Bible - II Tim. 3:10-15; II Peter 1:21; John 17:17; Ps. 119:105.

We believe that the Bible is the written and revealed Will of God. Man's position to God, the way to obtain salvation, woe and destruction awaiting sinners that refuse to repent and everlasting joy that is kept for the born again souls. All the Bible teachings are holy, what the Bible reveals as the will of God are such that we should accept, and whatever God writes in the Bible and His Law are to remain unchangeable; for the Heavens and Earth may pass away but the Word of God stands forever. Deut. 4:22; Rev. 22:18, 19; Matt. 24:34-38.

#### **2. About God: Ps. 33:6-9**

As revealed unto us by the Bible, we believe that there is only one God, Who is the Creator of both visible and invisible creatures - Gen. 1:1; Ps. 86:9-10; Is. 43:10-11; John 1:1-3. Only God will be in existence forever. Ez. 3:14; in God every creature receives life - John 5:26.

#### **3. About Jesus Christ**

We believe that He is the Son of God; Who took away our sins, and the Savior of the world. We also believe that Jesus is God and was born by Mary the Virgin. He is God revealed in the flesh. Through Him all things were created. John 1:1-14; John 14:9; Matt. 1:18-25, Is 9:6; Is 53:5-6. We believe in His death on the Cross, and resurrection, by which He brought redemption - Is. 53:4-10; I Pet. 2:24; John 10:11; Gal. 3:13, Matt. 20:28; I Cor. 15:3; Rom. 4:25; II Cor. 5:14; Heb 2:9; Heb 9:26.

#### **4. About the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is the third Person in the TRINITY. He has the same power, the same glory with God the Father and God the Son - John 14:16-17; John 15:26; Matt. 3:16; Acts 13:24. He is one with Father and the Son who is to be worshiped and served. Three Persons that become one are the source of blessings to all the living creatures in Heaven and on earth - Matt. 28:19; II Cor. 13:14; I John 1:5-7. The Holy Spirit has a great work to perform. He Teaches, He Speaks to men, and bears witness in us - Acts 16:6-7; He performs the work of regeneration for man- John 3:5-6; He also performs the work of Sanctification in the born again souls until they are fully sanctified - John 16:8; Eph 1:17-19; II Thess. 2:13; I Cor. 6:11. This same Holy Spirit endows believers with gifts they can use - I Cor 12:7; He empowers one in the Lord. Acts 1:8.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [http://main.rccg.org/church\\_ministry/fundamental\\_belief\\_main.htm](http://main.rccg.org/church_ministry/fundamental_belief_main.htm) (accessed 24.06.2003). This is the Internet version of the church's booklet *Our Fundamental Beliefs in the Bible*, (1999).

## **5. About Trinity**

The egg is comprised of three parts: The yellow yolk, the whitish part, and the shell. Despite these three (3) substances, the egg is not three but one. Likewise, we believe that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost are one God, but made of three persons - hence they are ONE IN TRINITY - Gen. 1:16-29; Matt. 3:16-17; Matt. 18:19.

## **6. About the Devil**

We believe that there is a devil, who seeks the down fall of every man. He brought sickness, sin and death into the world. Gen. 3:1-16. He seeks the destruction of those who exercise their faith in the Lord Jesus. Matt. 4:1-11; James 4:7; I Peter 5:8. The devil has several unclean spirits over whom he governs - Matt. 12:24. A time would soon come when he shall be thrown into the pit and chained for one thousand years- Rev. 20:7-9. After this, he will be put into the lake of fire where he will remain suffering together with his followers for ever and ever. Rev. 20:10

## **7. About Man**

God made man ruler over all the other things He created. Gen. 1:26. God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul - Gen 2:7. Therefore man is of three parts, namely body, soul and spirit. Man is God's ambassador on earth to take control over all other creatures on His behalf on earth. Gen. 1:26-28. God allows man to take part in His work and thereby reveal His love for mankind more than any other creatures - Gen. 2:15. This also shows how God elevates man more than the other creatures upon the earth.

## **8. Repentance unto God**

Repentance is the sorrow of a godly man for his sins with decision to abstain from them - Acts 3:19; 20:21; II Cor. 7:10; Mark 1:15; Is. 55:7; II Chron. 7:14; Ezek. 18:21.

## **9. Justification or New Birth**

This is God's grace whereby we are cleansed from our sins by which we are able to stand before God as though we have never sinned. Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:25-26; Rom 5:1; I Cor. 6:11; Gal. 3:24; John 1:12-13; 3:3; II Cor. 5:9; Titus 3:5; I Peter 1:23; Acts 10:43; John 3:3,5.

## **10. Sanctification (Holiness)**

Sanctification is another grace of God by which our souls are progressively and completely cleansed. This is the second accomplishment of the grace which through our faith in the Blood of Jesus Christ is wrought after we have been justified and free from our sins or regenerated - John 17:15-17; I Thess. 4:3; Heb. 2:11; 12:14; 13:12; I John 1:7; Luke 1:74, 75; II Cor. 7:1; I Peter 1:16; Eph. 5:25-27; I Thess. 5:23-24; II Thess. 2:13.

## **11. Water Baptism**

We believe that water baptism is by immersion. We do not baptize infants as they are not at the age of accountability. Our members are baptized after conversion and undergoing believers and water baptism class and are thereafter fully part of our fellowship. Act 2: 24

### **A. The Kinds of Baptism**

We believe in baptism by the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost - Matt. 28:19. The teaching is revealed in the New Testament and all Christians must obey this rule of the Lord - Acts 2:24; Acts 16:15; Acts 18:8; Acts 19:4-5. Every saved soul automatically qualifies for Water Baptism - Acts 8:29-39; 16:18-23.

### **B. Baptism by Trinity**

We believe that all members of this Church should receive immersion Water Baptism, in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as believers who would not add to, or take out of the Word of God. Matt. 28:19.

### **C. The Reason for Water Baptism**

Water Baptism stands for a sign and an example of two things.

1. It is an outward sign, an example of a true repentance of a sinner from his or her sins. Acts 2:38; Acts 22:6  
2. Anybody who is baptized is joined with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection - Rom. 6:1 - 23; Col. 2:11-13. Therefore anybody baptized is dead to the world and the evils thereof - Gal. 6:14. 12. Baptism of the Holy Spirit All born-again souls should ask for the Holy Spirit from above, as the Apostles were ordered to wait in Jerusalem until they were filled from above. It is the promise of the Father. It is God's gift which He gives to those who obey Him - Luke 24:49; John 4:14-26; Acts 1:4-5; Acts 5:32; Acts 8:14-17. It is God's promise unto those who are far and all whom the Lord shall call - Acts 2:38-39. Any Christian who receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit must speak in tongues - Acts 2:4; Acts 10:34-36; Acts 19:2-6.

### **13. About Prayer**

A Christian without condemnation of heart has a right to thank God and be in adoration and in prayer unto the Lord always - Zek. 12:10. His soul thirsts for God - Ps. 42:2. The Holy Spirit helps his infirmities in prayer - Rom. 8:26. We must pray only by the Name of JESUS - John 16:23; ; I Tim. 2:25. Without faith our prayer shall be powerless before God - James 1:6-8; Heb. 11:6. Those who are unable to pray annoy God - Is. 42:22; Is. 64:6-7. Much trouble and danger are encountered in the absence of prayer - Zeph 1:4; Dan 9:13-14; Hosea 8:13-14. We are commanded to pray and not to faint and to pray without ceasing - Col. 4:2; I Thess. 5:17; I Cor. 7:5; Luke 18:1. The Apostles put prayer first in their life and they spent much time in prayer - Acts 6:4; Rom. 6:4; Rom 1:9; Col. 1:9. It is God's plan and order that we should pray to receive all the goods He has promised in His treasure for us - James 4:2; Dan. 9:3; Matt. 7:7-11; Matt. 9:24-29; Luke 11:13.

### **14. About Restitution**

Restitution is a sign of true repentance. This is payment for what is damaged - Ez.. 22:3. Whatever cannot give us a clear conscience before man and God should be restituted without delay - Lev. 6:1-7; Luke 19:8; Prov. 28:13; Acts 24:16.

### **15. Divine Healing (Healing without Medicine)**

Healing without medicine is Biblical - Matt. 4:23; Ps. 103:3; Sickness is caused because of the fall of man. The force behind this is Satan - Job 2:1-9; Luke 13:15; Acts 10:38. But JESUS came to destroy the works of the devil - I John 3:8. Christ purchased our soul from the curse of sin. He bore our infirmities and carried our sorrow - Matt. 8:15-17. By His stripes we are healed. Is 53:4-5; Gal. 3:13; I Peter 2:24. Healing without medicine is of the Gospel - Matt. 9:35; Mark 6:10-18. We read that the twelve Apostles and the seventy disciples combined healing with their Ministry of the Gospel - Luke 9:1-2; Luke 10:1-9. The Lord commanded us to go into the world, just to teach the nations alone, but that we should also heal the sick - Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 10:1, Mark 16:15-18.

We could obtain our healing in these four ways: 1. By individual prayer - John 14:13-14 2. By two people (or a group of people) who have agreed to pray by faith - Matt. 18:19-20. 3. By the laying of hands on the head - Mark 16:18; Acts 9:18; Acts 28:8. 4. By the Ministry of the Elders, anointing the sick with prayer of faith - James 5:14-15 Special Notice - Before we can work by healing without medicine, we would have sanctified our life to the doing of the Law - Rom. 6:13, 19; Rom. 12:1; Matt. 16:24; II Cor. 8:5, 15. Many miracles were performed by the Apostles - Acts 9:33-42; Acts 19:11-12; Acts 28:8-9.

### **16. Worldliness Forbidden**

The Bible teaches us to abstain from all appearance of evil - I Thess. 5:22. "But follow after righteousness, faith, love, purging ourselves from unclean things so that we may be vessels unto honor, sanctified, and prepared unto every good work" - II Tim. 2:21-22. Therefore we must not see our Church members in dancing halls, or cinema halls, reveling, for such things are works of the flesh. All people doing such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God - Gal 5:19-21; I Peter 4:3-4; Prov 31:4-5; Rev. 1:5-6; Gen 19:30-38.

### **17. Swearing and Cursing Forbidden**

All Christians should not swear or curse or blaspheme for we were not taught of Jesus in such a way. "Bless, and curse not" Rom. 12:14. Swear not at all, neither by Heaven, nor by the earth or any other swearing. But let your yes be yes, and No be No so that you do not run into condemnation - Matt. 5:34; James 5:12.

### **18. Due Reverence to Parents and Authorities**

All Christians are to obey the law of the country, obey the government and authority. They should honor their parents and elders. I Peter 2:13-14; Rom 13:1-5; Eph. 6:1-3.

### **19. Rebellion against Church Authority Forbidden**

Rebellion against Church Ministers is against the Will of God. Those who rebelled against Moses did not escape unpunished - Num 12:1-10; Num. 16:1-4,32. The Bible teaches that we should obey our Spiritual leaders and submit to them - Heb 13:17; Joshua 1:16-18.

## **20. Debts Forbidden**

Any member of this Church must not willfully enter into any debt which he finds difficult to repay for the Bible teaches us "owe no man anything, but to love one another" - Rom. 13:7-8.

About Debt: 1. Monetary Debt 2. Debt of promise or Vow - Ps. 105:8 3. Debt of time - Eccl. 3:1-8 4. Debt of not preaching the Gospel - I Cor. 16-17

## **21. Our Garment**

We believe that any born again soul is a child of God and is clothed with white garment which is the Righteousness of Christ. It is received freely, a gift unto them that lead a victorious life - Rev. 19:7-8. Furthermore, we are advised to put on charity, which is the bond perfectness - Col. 3:13-14. It is not our policy to have special robes. We believe that all members must be moderate in adornment. "Not with braided hair, or gold or pearls, or costly array, but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" I Tim. 2:8-9; I Peter 3:1-6; Gen. 35:1-4; Ex. 32:1-8.

## **22. Laying of Hands and Anointing the Sick**

We believe in the laying on of hands and anointing the sick on the head in the Name of the Lord and that prayer of faith shall save the person - James 5:14-16; Mark 16:17-18. But we do not use any other methods which are not according to Bible teaching such as sanctification of water for the sick to drink, or to perform special washing for the sick in the flowing river, the use of robe or garment, or to carry a small stick in the form of a cross ones person or the use of candles and such things. They are not Biblical. The order of our Lord is that we should heal the sick free of charge - Matt 10:8. We do not receive money or charge money before we offer prayer for anybody. All those using the above materials for healing shall perish with them - Mark 16:18; James 5:14; Matt 10:7-8; Mark 6:13.

## **23. Holy Matrimony**

Marriage is honorable in all - Heb. 13:4. Therefore all members who wish to marry could do so in the church. They are not to follow the worldly patter with drumming and dancing, drunkenness or wear clothes that bring sin; their joy is to be moderate and glorify God - I Cor. 7:30-31; I John 2:15-17; Rom. 12:2.

## **24. Tithe and Offering**

Regular payment of tithe and offering is obligatory because it is God's command. It is God's way of providing for the Ministers in the Church. The ministers and other church employees are paid their food, allowance through tithe. The offering is used to cater for the needy in the Church. Tithe and Offering must be paid on every income e.g. salary, profit from business transaction, gifts, etc. Mal. 3:8-12; Gen. 14:19-20; Num. 18:20-21; Deut. 26:12-13; Lev. 27:30; Heb. 7:2-5; I Cor. 16:2; Matt. 23:23. Tithe is exclusively for the minister's welfare.

## **25. Prophecy in the Church**

We believe in all the prophecies in the Bible; likewise we believe that we can be given the gift of prophecy by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit - I Cor. 14:29. Despise not prophesying - I Thess. 5:20. But any prophecy that is against the Bible is rejected.

## **26. Church Discipline**

Above all, whatever is not Bible teaching should be ignored entirely by all members. If there be found any member disobeying these teachings he may be disciplined privately, but if any backslider would not admit discipline and retribute his way, he may be disciplined openly as it is written in Matt. 18:15-18, So that truth might be established by the witness of two or three according to the Word of God. Rebuke them that sinned before all that others also may fear - I Tim. 5:20; I Cor. 5:1-13; II Cor. 2:6-11; Heb. 12:5-12.

## **27. One Husband, One Wife, Correct Divorce and Re-Marriage.**

The Word of God teaches us that monogamy has been the order since the beginning of the Law of Christ. Divorce is permissible only when a life partner has committed adultery. Even then, neither of the two should be married to a new partner while both are yet alive - Matt. 5:31-32, 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3; Mal. 2:13-16; Gen. 2:18; Matt. 19:4-6.

## **28. Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper**

It is instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ shortly before His death. He commanded all Christians to gather together regularly to share the bread and wine till He comes back again - Luke 22:17-20; Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; I Cor. 10:18, 21; Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 11:23-30

## **29. The Church of God**

The born-again souls are called the Church of God - Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:1-18; Eph 3:10; 5:24-29. The assembly of the believers, the sanctified souls in Christ Jesus, Those who we call the Holy people of God - I Cor. 1:2; Acts 14:23; Phil. 4:15; Acts 13:28. Therefore all that God has called to gather together in a place and fed with the Word of God - Acts 2:41-47; They accept Christ as the head of the Church. They gather from time to time to worship God in truth and Spirit to share the bread and eat. Their major assignment is to spread the Gospel of Christ to all Nations - Matt. 28:19.

## **30. The Dedication or Separation**

Dedication is very important for the children of God for the Lord is Holy - John 17:19; I Peter 1:15-16. If we want God to be our Father, we must separate and dedicate ourselves unto God - II Cor. 6:17-18. God called us unto Holiness - I Thess. 4:7; Rom. 12:1-2

## **31. The Dedicated Christian**

The dedicated Christian would avoid foolish talking or jesting, Eph. 5:4. He or she would not wear clothing of the opposite sex, Deut. 22:5. Marriage would be esteemed honorable in all respects in the life of the dedicated Christian, and he or she would be a hearer as well as a doer of the Word of God at all times.

### **32. The Dead in Christ**

We believe that a brother who sleeps in the Lord is with Christ already - Phil. 1:21-23; I Cor. 5:1-9. Paul said that it is better to come out of this flesh and be with the Lord forever in our Heavenly home. Further still he emphasizes that " But I would not have you to be ignorant brethren concerning them which are asleep that ye sorrow not even as there which have no hope" I Thess. 4:13-18. Therefore all members should separate themselves from the things of this world in worshiping the dead by which we become idolaters - Deut 14:1

### **33. Resurrection**

We experience daily the resurrection of the Spirit, all the born-again souls who are passed from death to life - Eph. 6:14; Rom 6:11; John 5:20. As this body is dissolved, immediately we are entering into our Heavenly Home or house not made with hands eternal in the Heavens - I Cor. 5:1-8 There is resurrection of the Body. Jesus taught us plainly that the buried body will be raised up from the tomb at the last day Job 5:28-29. Paul also explained this to us - Acts 24:15; I Cor. 15:22, 42-44; Phil. 3:21; Dan. 12:2. Only Holy people will be at the resurrection those who belong to Jesus when He appears; but the sinners shall resurrect in hell, a place where people whose names are not found in the Lamb's Book - Rev. 20:4-5; John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:12-15.

### **34. The Second Coming of Christ**

The Second coming of Jesus Christ will be in physical form and will be visible to all in like manner as He was seen ascending up to heavens - Acts 1:9-11; John 14:3. His return will be in two stages: A. Christ's return in the sky - The Saints or Bride of Christ will be rapture to meet Christ in the sky - I Thess. 4:15-17; I Cor. 15:51-52; Matt. 24:40-44; Matt 25:10 B. His return to the earth - He will return to the earth to judge the sinners and the ungodly - Rev. 19:19-21; II Thess. 1:7-10; Jude 1:14-15; Zech. 14:3-4.

### **35. The Tribulation Period**

The time between His coming to receive the brides or saints into heaven and His coming to administer judgments will be the time of Tribulation - Matt 24:21; 22:29; Rev. 9; Rev. 16; Is. 26:20-21; Mark 13:19; Jer. 30:7; Daniel 12:1; Malachi 4:1

### **36. The millennial Reign (Christ 1,000 years' reign)**

After Christ appears upon earth, He would set up His Kingdom with the Holy people for one thousand years - Rev. 20:1-6; Rev. 2:26-27. This one thousand years will be entirely different from any kingdom ever set on earth. The Kingdom is peace all over - Is 65:18-20. There will be no death - Is. 65:18-20. There will be no poverty - Mich. 4:4; Is. 65:21-23; Christ is the ONLY KING in the Kingdom - Dan. 2:44-45; Dan. 7: 13, 14, 22, 27.

### **37. Satan in Prison**

At this time - millennium, Satan will be chained - Rev. 20: 2-3, and it will be the time of peace and blessing to mankind also - Is. 11: 6-9; 65: 25; Hosea 2: 18; Zech 14: 9-20; Is 2: 2-4.

### **38. The Coming Judgments**

We believe that there will be three special judgments.

- i) The Judgment of the Believers: This would start immediately believers are caught up in the sky, they shall stand before Christ. After this judgment they will descend down with Christ upon the earth - II Cor. 5:10; I Cor. 3:3; 11-15; James 1:12; Rom 2:16
- ii) The Judgment of the Nation: This will be the time when Jesus appears upon earth between the millennial reign and final judgment. Acts 17:31; Joel 3:2; Ez. 14:15; Jud. 1:14-15; II Thess 1:7-10; Rom 2:16; Rev. 1:7; Mal. 16:21
- iii) The Judgment of the Unbelievers: or the White Throne Judgment : This will happen after Christ's one thousand years reign at the White Throne. - Rev. 20: 11-15; II Peter 3:7; Dan. 12:2.

### **39. New Heaven and New Earth**

The Word of God teaches us that after judgment, this wicked world will be removed. God will create a new Heaven and a new earth in which HOLINESS will exist - Matt. 24:35; II Peter 3:12-13; Rev. 21:1-3; Is. 65:17; 66:22

### **40. Eternal Life and Eternal Punishment**

The Bible teaches us that there is eternal punishment as well as eternal life - Matt. 25:46. The wicked people will be sent to a fiery hell made of sulphur, to be tormented both day and night. The punishment will continue forever and ever - Rev. 14:10-11; Luke. 16:24; Mark 9:43-44.

### **41. Dedication of Children**

We believe that after a child is born on the 8th day, the parent should bring him/her unto the House of the Lord for dedication unto the Lord - 1 Sam. 1:22; Luke. 22:22-24; Matt. 19:13-15.

### **42. The Lord's Day**

We believe that the first day of the week called Sunday is a special day which the believers should separate as the Lord's day during which time are to gather to worship - Acts 20:7; 1Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10. The Lord resurrected on the first day of the week - Mark 16:9; Ezek. 31:12-14.

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(m=male)

(f=female)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Rank/Status</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Date</i>
Aboaba, Afolagbade	Prof., Pastor & RUN Co-ordinator	M	08.11.02
Adediji, S.	Pastor & Chairman RG	M	01-06-01
Adejare, Popoola	A/P & Assist. Director, CRWS	M	04-06-01
Adenuga, Laide	Pastor & RAPAC Coordinator	F	11.08.02
Adesina, Dapo	Senior Pastor & CMM	M	31.05.01
Adetoye, Tai S.	A/P & Sec. to AGOs	F	12-06-01
Akindayomi, Ifeoluwa	Deacon	M	06-06-01
Akintemi, Femi	Assist. Pastor & Assist. Police Com.	M	23.05.01
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Onyeancholam, Joshua	A/p & Prayer Warrior	M	07-05-01
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Orakpo, Chidinma	RCCG Member	F	10.07.02
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Udoh, Ofonime A.	Former RCCG Member	F	29.09.02
Wigwe, Shyngle I.	Assistant Elder & Pastor	M	06.08.02
Yetunde, Bukola	RCCG Member	F	10.08.02

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## **Erklärung**

Ich erkläre, dass ich

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