

**AN APPRAISAL OF SELECTED TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES OF THE
CHURCH OF CHRIST IN SOUTH-WESTERN NIGERIA**

By

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this thesis was carried out by Sunday Abiodun OWOLABI, under my direct supervision in the Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, in partial fulfillment for the award of Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Religious Studies.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the one who made it possible:

God Almighty

and

To Christ

and

His Church

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ABSTRACT

The Church of Christ (COC), established in South-western Nigeria in 1959 as an offshoot of the 19th century sectarian American Restoration Movement, claims to be the only true church to restore primitive Christianity in both teachings and practices. Contrariwise, evidence from Early Church history contradicts this claim, which necessitates an investigation into the true position; existing studies having focused on the history of the church and the biographies of its leaders to the neglect of the appraisal of the claims of the church in terms of conformity with the teachings and practices of the Early Church. This study, therefore, makes a comparative appraisal of selected tenets of COC in South-western Nigeria against the backdrop of the Early Church with a view to examining the validity of its claims.

The study adopted the descriptive research design. In-depth interviews were conducted with purposively selected clergy (36; six from each state of South-western Nigeria) and laity (36; six from each state). Church records were consulted in six (one from each state) congregations of the church to complement the interviews. Published Early Church records were also consulted. Data were subjected to historical and comparative analyses.

There were three teachings of COC: exclusive claim to being the true church; the belief in theology, but non-celebration of Christmas and Easter which were believed to be absent in the Early Church era; and non-belief in miracles after the apostolic age. Three practices were also distinguished: non-use of musical instruments in worship, absolute congregational autonomy and alienation from other Christian denominations. Attestations from Early Church writings revealed that COC has no antecedent in post-apostolic Christianity; but archival sources showed that the church emerged from the 19th century religious aftermath of American independence premised on democratic theology. The COC's teachings on non-celebration of Christmas and Easter were nullified by evidence from Early Church writings confirming Easter as the oldest Christian festival and that Christmas celebration had its origin in the Early Church. The teaching that miracles ceased with the apostolic age was negated by evidence from the *Didache* (A.D. 110) and testimony of St. Augustine (A. D. 354-430). Conversely, COC's *A cappella* practice was confirmed from the writings of Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165) and Tertullian (A.D. 160-220) that musical instruments were seen as corruptive influence of the Roman culture. On absolute congregational autonomy, Ignatius (A.D. 50-110) and Eusebius confirmed that Episcopacy was in practice from the second century. Contrary to its anti-ecumenical disposition, Early Church records confirmed that ecumenical councils were convened starting from Nicea (A.D. 325) to define the substance of the Christian faith and defend it against heresy.

All the teachings of the Church of Christ are at variance with those of the Early Church; one out of the three practices aligned with that of the Early Church. Thus, there is a wide disparity between the tenets of the two churches, which invalidates the church's exclusive historical connection with the Early Church. Therefore, the church needs to own up to history and reappraise her hermeneutical presuppositions.

Key words: Church of Christ, Early Church, Christian Teachings and Practices, South-western Nigeria.

Word count: 499

List of Abbreviations

ACOC	Apostolic Church of Christ
ACSF	African Christian Schools Foundation
APCON	Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria
BOT	Board of Trustees
COC	Church of Christ
NBC	National Broadcasting Commission
OAU	Obafemi Awolowo University
PAWM	Pentecostal Assemblies of World Missions
SBS	School of Biblical Studies
SWSE	Southwest School of Evangelism
UI	University of Ibadan
WBS	World Bible School
WNBC	Western Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation
WNCC	West Nigeria Christian College

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The Church of Christ, established in Southwestern Nigeria in 1959 as an offshoot of the 19th century sectarian American Restoration Movement, claims to be the only true church to restore primitive Christianity in both teachings and practices. The Restoration Movement emerged across America and Europe around 1800 with a plea for the restoration of primitive Christianity and Christian unity on the basis of the Bible.¹ The Movement began when a conglomeration of members from different Christian groups and denominations observed that their denominations had departed from the basics of Christianity. Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and others abandoned their former denominations with hopes of replicating the primitive Christianity taught in the New Testament. With their belief in Jesus as the only model and the Bible as the only sacred book, they endeavored to re-establish Christ's church as started on the day of Pentecost. Because the different organized denominations had constructed rules and practices that did not come explicitly from the Bible, they felt that divisions must be dissolved. As Alexander Campbell puts it, "The leprosy of Apostasy has spread over all Christendom, Catholic and Protestant; the Christian religion has been for ages interred in the rubbish of human invention and tradition."² The goal of the restorers therefore, was for everyone to abandon their dividing religions and become united as one church under God's rule alone.

It should however be noted that neither the Restoration Movement nor Churches of Christ could claim to have made the first move for a return of Christianity to primitive practice. Ecclesiastical history is replete with earlier attempts by Christians or Christian groups who sought to restore and maintain the church of the New Testament. As early as the fourth century Priscillian and his followers known as the Priscillians urged a return to apostolic practice. From the middle of the seventh to the middle of the ninth century, the

¹C. L. Allen. 2004. *Things Unseen: Churches of Christ in (and After) the Modern Age*. Siloam Springs, AR: Leafwood Publishers. 53.

²A. Campbell. 1834. Christendom in its Dotage. *Millennial Harbinger* 5 August 1834. 372-373.

Paulicians, also known as “the true Christians” labored to maintain the apostolic faith. In the Slavic territory, the Bogomils, also known as “friends of God” labored assiduously to sustain “the true church.” At the dawn of the twelfth century, Pierre de Bruys and his movement known as the Albigenses (a name taken from Albi district where members of this movement were concentrated), established churches after the New Testament pattern. In the 13th century, Peter Waldo of Lyons and the movement he led, the Waldenses-“the poor men of Lyons” persisted in their testimony of the New Testament faith. In the fourteenth century, John Wycliffe held that only by the observance of the pure law of Christ as revealed in the Scripture without mixture of human tradition that the church could grow and prosper. In Hungary, John Huss, who was influenced by Wycliffe’s writings appealed for the restoration of apostolic practices, but was soon summoned to the Council of Constance, accused of heresy and condemned to die by burning. In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther in the earlier years adhered faithfully to the principle of *sola scriptura* which made him to defy the pope, abolish the mass, teach the principle of justification by faith, abrogate the celibacy of the clergy and many other Romish practices. But national, political, and economic pressures eventually conspired to swerve him from this course of action. The Anabaptists had a keen discernment of the relative importance of the New Testament over the Old and insisted that all doctrine and practice in the Church have New Testament support.³

In France and Switzerland between 1500 and 1800 there was more searching of the scriptures and many churches after the New Testament pattern were established under such leading influences like Farel, Le Fevre, Roussel, Calvin, Zwingli and several others who ensured that the translation of the scriptures into the vernacular and free discussion of the tenets of Christian religion spread throughout Europe. The Puritans emerged out of English Congregationalism in 1620 and sought to purify the doctrine and order of the state church and took the Bible only as their rule of faith and practice. The “Brownites” emerged from Baptist congregations; practiced immersion of believers, accepted the sole authority of the Scriptures in doctrine and life, universal brotherhood of all believers and sovereignty of the local church. The Haldane brothers: James and Robert and their

³ J. D. Murch. 1962. *Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing Company, 9-14.

associates, broke from the Church of Scotland in the 1700s in search of scriptural truth. They rejected extra congregational church government, taught that Christ was the sole head of the church and that local church government should be vested in a plurality of elders. The Haldane movement gave Alexander Campbell his first impulse as religious reformer and it is regarded by some historians as the first phase of the American Restoration Movement.⁴

Leading members of the movement included, Barton W. Stone (1772-1844), Thomas Campbell (1763-1854), Alexander Campbell (1788-1866)⁵, Walter Scott (1796-1861) from Presbyterian; James O'Kelly (1735-1826) and Rice Haggard (1769-1819) from Methodist; Elias Smith (1764-1846) and Abner Jones (1772-1841) from Baptist.⁶

In a divided religious world, the Restoration Movement believed that the Bible is the only possible common denominator upon which most, if not all, of God-fearing people can unite. This was an appeal to go back to the Bible. It was a plea to speak where the Bible speaks and to remain silent where the Bible is silent in all matters that pertain to religion. Richard M. Tristano identifies truth and unity as the major motives of the Restoration Movement. The truth motive, he says, was evidenced in the belief that Christian truth can be discovered in the teaching and practices of the early church alone and the utilization of the truth motive of primitive Christianity to unite all Christians.⁷

Scholars have written extensively on the reasons for the split in the ranks of the Restoration Movement. Church historians from the Christian churches (Disciples of Christ) generally believe that issues which created tension between the two groups included open communion, the title Reverend (not biblical), one-man pastoral leadership,

⁴Murch. *Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement*, 14-18

⁵Alexander Campbell summarized the thinking of the restorers on their perception of the Bible as a divine revelation, complete, authoritative, infallible and inerrant when he said, "The Bible alone must always decide every question involving the nature, the character or the designs of the Christian institution....." See Paul Southern.1957. Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Restoration Movement. *Restoration Quarterly* 1.1: 9-11.

⁶C. L. Allen and R. T. Huges.1988. *Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ*. Abilene, Texas: Abilene Christian University Press. 101-108. See also E. I. West. 1964. *The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement 1849-1865*, Vol. I. Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate. 10-11.

⁷R. M. Tristano. 1998. *Origins of the Restoration Movement: An Intellectual History*. Atlanta, GA: Glenmary Research Centre. 3.

the use of creeds, the use of musical instruments in worship and missionary societies. Churches of Christ historians generally point to the use of musical instruments in worship and establishment of missionary societies as the two main reasons responsible for the fracture of the Movement which was made official when the U. S. Bureau of Census listed churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ as separate churches in 1906. Some scholars traced the division to the social, geographic, educational, financial and political tensions between the North based Disciples of Christ and the South domiciled churches of Christ. And to some others, this fracture was initiated by a desire to restore ancient Christianity and was consummated by the inability of the opposing parties to resolve different practices using restoration hermeneutics. The ghost of this fracture is believed to be haunting the groups particularly Churches of Christ to date.

The Movement which coalesced as one at the beginning later disintegrated as a result of differences on how to realize their primary objectives of restoring the ancient order of Christianity and fostering Christian unity on the basis of the Bible. Two different groups or churches initially emerged out of this division.⁸ These are the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) and the Churches⁹ of Christ. The Christian Churches and

⁸For detailed discussions on the factors leading to fissure in the restoration edifice see, W. C. Gilpin, "Common Roots, Divergent Paths: The Disciples and the Churches of Christ," www.christiancentury.org pp 3-4 of 8, retrieved on February 6, 2012; Ron Petter, "The Role of the Restoration Hermeneutic in the Fractures of the Churches of Christ in the Twentieth Century" McMaster Divinity College (MTS), 2009, 22-38; N/A, "Restoration Movement" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_Movement pp. 12-13 of 24, retrieved on March 28, 2011; Douglas A. Foster, "The 1906 Census of Religious Bodies and Division in the Stone-Campbell Movement: A Closer Look," *Disciplina* 66, no 3, 2006, pp -83 – 93; Henry E. Webb, "Geographical Factors in the 1906 Division," *Disciplina* 66, no 3, 2006, pp 75-82; David E. Harrell, Jr., "From Consent to Dissent: The Emergence of the Churches of Christ in America," *Restoration Quarterly*, 19 no 20 1976, 98-111; Bill Humble. 1969. *The Story of the Restoration*, Austin, Texas: Firm Foundation Publishing House, pp 63-68; David E. Harrell, Jr. "Sectional Origins of Churches of Christ," in *American Origins of Churches of Christ: Three Essays on Restoration History*, Douglas A Foster ed. Abilene, TX: A.C.U. Press, p. 45-64; Richard Hughes, "The Apocalyptic Origins of Churches of Christ and the Triumph of Modernism," in *American Origins of Churches of Christ: Three Essays on Restoration History*, Douglas A Foster ed. Abilene, TX: A.C.U. Press, p. 65-107; Roger Huston, "Women's Movement vs. Restoration Movement: The Founding of Churches of Christ." <http://testifychurchofchrist.community.officelive.com> pp. 1-17 retrieved on March 20, 2012; John Mark Hicks, "The Struggle for the Soul of Churches of Christ (1897-1907): Hoosiers, Volunteers and Longhorns" <http://johnmarkhicks.files.wordpress.com/2009/06/full-casey-article.doc> pp.1-20 and Victor Knowles. "Going Separate Ways: What Really Happened in 1906? Why Churches of Christ and Christian Churches Served God Apart in the 20th Century" A paper presented at the 63rd Annual Bible Lectures, Pepperdine University, Malibu, California, May 2-5, 2006. Retrieved March 20, 2012 from www.poeministeries.org 1-8.

⁹Churches of Christ often use a small 'c' as in "churches of Christ" to signify the universal church and to indicate their rejection of denominational status. This use is also premised on the church's understanding

Churches of Christ (Independent Christian Churches) later broke away from the Christian Church (The Disciples of Christ) in 1927 when the North American Christian Convention was formed.¹⁰ The Disciples of Christ were the most liberal of the three groups, the Independent Christian Churches in the middle position and the Churches of Christ constituting the most conservative wing of the Movement.¹¹ Russell Paden observes that while the Disciples of Christ increasingly accepted unity in pluralistic diversity and subtly downplayed a strict adherence to the concept of unity through the restoration of apostolic Christianity, Churches of Christ became more exclusive and rigid in their interpretation of the Bible.¹²

Frank S. Meade notes that Churches of Christ are the larger of the two principal bodies of the Restoration Movement with a distinctive plea for unity based on the Bible.¹³ Churches of Christ do not see themselves as a denomination. Joe R. Barrett explains why, “We do not conceive of ourselves as being a denomination—neither as Catholic, Protestant, nor Jewish—but simply as members of the church that Jesus established, the one for which he died. And that, incidentally, is why we wear his name.”¹⁴ Churches of Christ members do not also see themselves as a new church started around 1800, but the

that small ‘c’ for church is used in the New Testament, not as in a proper name, but as a descriptive phrase to show that the church belongs to Christ. This is reflected in most publications of this heir of the Restoration Movement. But for the purpose of this work, capital C as in “Churches of Christ” will be used to refer to the same group of churches.

¹⁰The breakup up between the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Independent Christian Churches were attributed to controversies surrounding theological modernism, impact of ecumenical movement and open membership (acceptance into fellowship of individuals who had not been baptized by immersion).

¹¹T. H. Olbricht, “Who are the Churches of Christ?” Retrieved July 8, 2010 from <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/who.html>, 1 of 3.

¹²R. Paden. 1992. “From the Churches of Christ to the Boston Movement: A Comparative Study.” *B.G.S.*, University of Kansas (MA Thesis). 15.

¹³F. S. Meade. 1985. *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, 9th ed. Revised by Samuel S. Hill, Nashville, TN: Abington Press. 91.

¹⁴J. R. Barrett. 1980. *The Churches of Christ: Who Are these People?* Arlington, Texas: *Mission Printing Inc.* 3.

only church that Christ founded. The church is seen as reproducing in contemporary times the church originally established on Pentecost, A.D. 30.¹⁵

The Church of Christ emerged on Nigeria's religious landscape when Coolidge Akpan Essien from Ibiaku, Ikot Usen, Ibiono, in the present Itu Local Government area of Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria established a congregation of the church through Bible correspondence course of Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee, USA, in 1948. From Akwa Ibom state Churches of Christ spread across eastern Nigeria in the late 1940s. The first congregation of the church in Southwestern Nigeria was planted at 48, Orodu Street, Ajegunle, Apapa, Lagos, in 1959. From Orodu, Churches of Christ spread across Southwestern Nigeria with over 200 congregations scattered across the geo-political zone by 2009. The need to historically appraise the extent to which Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria have succeeded in replicating the early church which she claims to be a renaissance of is the justification for this study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Previous scholarly works¹⁶ on the Church of Christ have focused more on history of the church and biographies of its leaders to the neglect of the appraisal of the claims of

¹⁵The actual date of the Pentecost has been a subject of prolong debate in biblical scholarship. While some put the date to be Friday, April 7, AD 30, others put it on Friday, April 3, AD 33. For an insightful discussion on the debate, see John P Pratt. 1991. Newton's Date for the Crucifixion. *Quarterly Journal of Royal Astronomical Society* 32: 301-304; J. K. Fotheringham. 1934. The Evidence of Astronomy and Technical Chronology for the Date of the Crucifixion. *Journal of Theological Studies* 35: 146-162 and Arthur M. Ogden. The Crucifixion Date. *Truth Magazine*. Retrieved May 10, 2010 from [truthmagazine.com/archives/volume28/GOT028159.html](http://www.biblereference.org/observancebook5/b5w52.html). Also available from <http://www.biblereference.org/observancebook5/b5w52.html>

¹⁶The following are few of the existing scholarly works on the Churches of Christ: J. J. Haley. 1914. *Makers and Molders of the Movement: A Study of Leading Men among the Disciples of Christ*. St. Louis, MO: Christian Board of Publication.

¹⁶The following are few of the existing scholarly works on the history of the Church of Christ and biographies of her leaders: R. T. Hughes. 1996. *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Williams B. Herdmans Publishing Company. D. Phillips, 1975. *Restoration Principles and Personalities*. University of Alabama: Youth in Action Inc.; Nsentip, N. E. and Basse, Bokime. 2001. *The New Testament Church and Its Restoration in Nigeria: A Study of the One Christian Church*. Ikeja, Lagos: Bytex Publishers. J. J. Haley. 1914. *Makers and Molders of the Movement: A Study of Leading Men among the Disciples of Christ*. St. Louis, MO: Christian Board of Publication. P.H. Welshimer. *Concerning the Disciples: A Brief Resume of the Movement to Restore the New Testament Church*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing Foundation; A. M. Fitch Jr. 1970. *Alexander Campbell: Preacher of Reform and Reformer of Preaching*. Austin Texas: Sweet Publishing Company; John Rogers. 1847. *The Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone*. Cincinnati: J. A. & U. P.

the church in terms of conformity with the teachings and practices of the early church which she claimed to replicate. Among the doctrinal teachings is the claim to be the only true church with exclusive historical connection with the early church. Similarly, the church in her teachings kicked against the celebration of Christmas and Easter as inconsistent with the teaching and practice of the early church. Another teaching of the church which appeared contestable is the belief that the era of miracles had ended with the apostolic era, thus teaching that miracles are not possible in the subsequent ages.

In practice, the church holds that singing unaccompanied by mechanical instruments of music is the right Christian standard modeled after the early church. Other peculiar practices of the church include: absolute congregational autonomy under plurality of elders and pharisaical exclusivism towards other Christian denominations branding them as perverts of apostolic Christianity. These practices were claimed to have been inherited from the early church.

However, some critical questions need to be asked: How valid is the church's particularistic claim as the only true church with roots deep in the early church, dismissing other churches as man-made denominations without direct link with the church founded by Christ? Secondly, how consistent with the early church's teachings and practices¹⁷ are the so-called distinctive teachings and practices of the church which are claimed to be superior and more authentic than what other churches uphold? These and other related questions in connection with the church's teachings and practices call for a scholarly attention in the light of the evidences from early church history.

James; Sanders, Joseph Enloe. 1957. Major Theological Beliefs of the Churches of Christ and Their Implications for Christian Education. *Boston University* (PhD); Woodson, William Edgar. 1975. 'An Analytical History of Churches of Christ in Tennessee (1906-1950).

¹⁷The justification for using the writings of early church fathers as the basis of appraisal is premised on the understanding that early church fathers were close to the events of the life of Christ and the apostolic era and the fact that they took the lead in defending Christianity against heresy and barrage of intellectual criticism from the second century. Be that as it may, this is not to say that the teachings of the early church fathers are to be taken hook line and sinker. As Charles Ryrie, 1991, *Dispensationalism*, Chicago: Moody Press, 15-16, logically observes, "The fact that something was taught in the first century does not make it right (unless taught in the canonical Scriptures), and the fact that something was not taught until the nineteenth century does not make it wrong unless, of course, it is unscriptural" For example, Ryrie faulted most early church fathers, particularly, Origen for abandoning literal method of interpreting the Bible in favor of allegorical, spiritualized and functional hermeneutic which often apply the text to their own situation without regard for its original context. This limitation notwithstanding, the writings of the church fathers still offers relatively objective historical substructure for task of this study.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

In the light of the above, this study makes a comparative appraisal of selected teachings and practices of the Church of Christ in South-western Nigeria against the backdrop of the early church with a view to examining the validity of its claims.

The selected teachings under review include, the claim to be the only true church, the belief that the early church did not celebrate Christmas and Easter and the belief that miraculous manifestations ceased with the apostolic age and are unfeasible in the contemporary church. The church's practices that were juxtaposed with that of the early church include aversion for use of musical instruments in worship, absolute congregational autonomy under plurality of elders and pharisaical exclusivism towards other Christian denominations.

This comparative appraisal becomes important in view of the fact that virtually all existing studies on the church have been apologetic rather than an objective appraisal of her teachings and practices of the Church of Christ particularly in Southwestern Nigeria.

This study therefore, critically examined the above selected teachings and practices of the church to observe the extent to which she has succeeded in restoring the primitive church she claimed to replicate.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This study was limited in scope to selected congregations of Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria. There are about 200 congregations of Churches of Christ scattered across the six states that made up the South-West geo-political zone of Nigeria. One hundred of these congregations were selected to facilitate an in-depth study. The congregations were selected as follows: Lagos State – 30, Oyo State - 20, Ogun State – 20, Osun State – 10, Ondo State - 10 and Ekiti State – 10. The numerical strength of the church in each state, date of establishment of each congregation and numerical strength of each congregation are the criteria for this selection.

As Earl Irvin West rightly notes that “every historical study must start and end somewhere,”¹⁸ the research covers a period of fifty years (1959-2009). The first congregation of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria was planted in Lagos in 1959. A period of 50 years is considered to be a reasonable period to evaluate the performance of the church whether or not she is living to her professed objective of restoring primitive Christianity.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This work is significant in that it critically assessed the contestable features in the teachings and practices of the Church of Christ which were claimed to be traceable to the early church in the light of the writings of the early church fathers. Similarly, this work is significant in that it sought to show in history whether the teachings and practices of the church have either been a roadblock or a roadmap in her quest to reaching the world with the gospel of Christ. This work is also significant in the sense that it will afford the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria the opportunity to see itself from the mirror of academic scholarship devoid of ‘God-speaks’ sentiments and prejudices. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, the study is a pioneering scholarly study on historical evaluation of the teachings and practices of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria as existing studies on the church have been preoccupied with its history and biographies of her leaders. Finally, this work opens the way for more scholarly studies on the idiosyncracies of the Church of Christ in South-western Nigeria.

1.6 Research Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research design. Data were gathered through archival search, oral interview, observation and questionnaire administration methods. In the archival search, the researcher retrieved information from archival materials like published Early Church records, church records, missionary memoirs and programmes of important events with vital information. In-depth interviews were conducted with purposively selected clergy (36; six from each state of South-western Nigeria like Lagos,

¹⁸West. *The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement 1849-1865*, Vol. 1. xii.

Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti states) and laity (36; six from each state). Church records were consulted in six (one from each state) congregations of the church to complement the interviews. Observation method was used to retrieve relevant information from recorded past events of the church put on VCD, DVD and other digital electronic devices. Data from these sources (excluding questionnaire) were analyzed and discussed using historical and comparative analysis.

The question of objectivity has always been associated with the study of history. Can the historian be completely objective in his interaction and analysis of the past? The realistic answer to this question is, No. This is because the subject of history is limited by the facts that are available and the limitations of the historian. Consequently, this work is premised on two historical hypotheses: a) that not all the past is recoverable, hence historians are restrained to that part of history which evidence survives; b) that the historians as part of the historical process are influenced by time and space. The issue becomes more complicated when it comes to church history. According to J. E. Bradley and R. A. Muller, each church historian often has different views of God's involvement in history depending on their understanding of issues involved.¹⁹ Where then do we go from here? Philip Schaff proffers a solution:

The historian must lay aside all prejudice and party zeal, and proceed in the pure love of the truth. Not that he must become a *tabula rasa*. No man is able, or should attempt, to cast off the educational influences which made him what he is. But the historian of the church of Christ must in every thing be as true as possible to the objective fact, do justice to every person and event; and stand in the centre of Christianity, whence he may see all points in the circumference, all individual persons and events, all confessions, denominations, and sects, in their true relation to each other and to the glorious whole.²⁰

To this, Gordon Heath concurs: "Regardless of the historian's understanding of human freewill and God's sovereignty, the historian must hold sacrosanct the Christian

¹⁹J. E. Bradley and R. A. Muller, 1995, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 76.

²⁰Philip Schaff, 1966, *History of the Christian Church* Vol. 1, Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 25-26.

conviction that God is at work in history.²¹ The above historiographical conjectures provide a helpful guide in actualizing the task of this research.²²

A set of questionnaire was also designed and administered to test quantitatively pieces of information gathered from leaders and educated members of Churches of Christ selected for this work across Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti states of Southwestern Nigeria. Five hundred and fifty (550) copies of the questionnaire were randomly administered, 470 copies representing 85% of the questionnaire were retrieved. The questionnaire was divided into Sections A and B. Section A comprises of personal data of the respondents. Section B was divided into three parts: Part 1 contains research statements on selected teachings of the Church of Christ. Part 2 consists of research statements on selected practices of the church, while part 3 has research questions on strengths and weaknesses of selected teachings and practices of the church. Data retrieved through the questionnaire were analyzed and discussed in chapters four, five and six of this research (complementarily with other sources) using simple percentage formula:

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

“N” stands for respondents while “TN” stands for Total Number of respondents per question. Findings are presented with frequency tables and cross tabulations.

The bulk of secondary sources for this research were retrieved through bibliographic search method. This involved consultation of academic books, articles in learned journals, newsletters, bulletins, newspapers, magazines and other library and internet materials.

Theoretical Framework

²¹Gordon Heath, 2008, *Doing Church History: A User Friendly Introduction to Researching the History of Christianity*. Toronto: Clements, 34.

²²For further discussions on historiography and historical methods, see Richard Evans, *Defence of History*; Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History*; Geoffrey Elton, *The Practice of History*; Keith Jenkins, *On What is History and Re-Thinking History*; Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativity and Truth*; Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*; and G. J. Renier, *History, its Purpose and Method*.

The research was predicated on the theory of Leonard Allen and Richard Hughes which states that a church that imagines it stands beyond history, beyond conformity to culture, beyond sin, and beyond tragic misunderstandings and miscalculations has little to offer the world. But a church that owns up to its blunders, its compromises and its humanness is a church that can both receive and reflect the love and grace of God to the world around it. In appreciating its humanness and profanity, such a church contributes mightily to the restoration of the gospel of Christ.²³

The authors posit further that if a church claims to be entirely sacred and not profane, entirely apostolic not historical, entirely biblical not cultural, the church might inadvertently be elevating herself beyond common humanity to the level gods. The authors observe that a church is not demeaned if she admits that it emerged out of specific social or historical context. In admitting her profanity, Allen and Hughes insist will make the church's message reasonable and intelligible. This theory was applied to selected congregations of the Church of Christ in South-western Nigeria to test the validity of Allen and Hughes' theory.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This study is organized in a seven-chapter format. The first chapter is made up of the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, research methodology and theoretical framework, organization of the study and clarification of terms. Chapter two contains a review of relevant literature including books and learned journals. The review covers vital aspects of the study like Christian doctrines, Christian practices and scholarly literature on Churches of Christ. Chapter three attempts an overview of the emergence and growth of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria. This chapter traces Churches of Christ to its origin in the United States of America, its advent in Nigeria, expansion into Southeastern, Northern and Southwestern regions of the country and its growth in Southwestern states of Nigeria like Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti states.

²³Allen and Hughes, *Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ*, 9. The authors both hold PhD in the history of Christianity from the University of Iowa and teach at Abilene Christian University, Allen in College of Biblical Studies and Hughes in the Department of History with a joint appointment in Biblical Studies.

Chapter four looks at the teachings of Churches of Christ peculiarly as it concerns the belief to being the only true church, teachings against celebration of Christmas and Easter and the belief in the seal of miracles. Chapter five examines the church's teachings in practice like aversion for use of musical instruments in worship, absolute congregational autonomy under plurality of elders and pharisaical exclusivism towards other Christian denominations. Chapter six investigates the strengths and weaknesses of the selected teachings and practices on the accomplishment of the mission of the church. On the strength side, insistence on doing Bible things the Bible way and the potency of Bible Correspondence Course as a means of conversion as exemplified by Churches of Christ were carefully analyzed.

On the negative side, challenges militating against the realization of the objectives of the church like; myopic hermeneutical presuppositions, relative obscurity of the church, the albatross of absolute congregational autonomy and paucity of ordained elders over congregations were examined. Chapter seven, the concluding chapter consists of summary of the study, critical evaluation and recommendations, contributions to knowledge and general conclusion.

1.8 Clarification of Operational Terms

The terms employed in this study whose meaning may be different from conventional meaning and usage are clarified as follows:

- (a) **A Cappella** - an Italian word which means "in the manner of chapel" that has come to be used to denote exclusively vocal music devoid of the use of instruments of music in contradistinction to the use of instruments of music in Christian worship.
- (b) **Denomination** – A church that recognizes that it is only a part of the universal body of Christ. A denomination has typically made its peace with the dominant culture in which it exists. Churches of Christ regard themselves as the whole body of Christ and the term denomination is commonly used to refer to a segment of the universal body of Christ that recognizes itself as a segment and confesses itself to be a segment.

- (c) **Democratic Theology** – It is described as the theology of the people by the people and for the people. It affirms the right of individual Christian to study, comprehend and practice the teachings of the Bible unaided.
- (d) **Early Church** – The first five centuries of Christianity
- (e) **Patristic Period** – The period from the death of the last apostle (John) which runs roughly about A.D. 100 to the Middle Ages (A. D. 450). This period is filled with theological importance on the development of Christian Doctrine. Patristic writers are Christian authors who flourished within this period while Patristic writings are the surviving texts of the Christian authors.
- (f) **Pharisaical Exclusivism** – The belief among Churches of Christ that they constitute the only true church and that there is no assurance of salvation outside their own ranks which made them to assume a posture of sectarian exclusivism toward other churches.
- (g) **Primitive Christianity** – Christian faith as it was believed and practiced by the early church.
- (h) **Restorationism** – The systematic stripping away of the traditions of time and history until the article standing at the fountainhead of history emerges in uncontaminated purity. For Churches of Christ, restorationism is a sense of historylessness-identification with the early church so strong that the intervening history becomes irrelevant or even abhorrent.
- (i) **Restoration Hermeneutics**–Hermeneutical methods for restoring the ancient order of Christianity premised on the tripartite formula of analysis of command, example and necessary inference; dispensational analysis distinguishing between Patriarchal, Mosaic and Christian dispensations; and grammatico-historical analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant existing literature on the subject under study. Existing scholarly works on the history of the Church of Christ, biographies of the church's leaders and church doctrines and practices were constructively cross-examined. The relevance of the materials under review was appropriately appropriated. Works of scholars like Earl Irvin West, R. T. Hughes, Dabney Philips, P. H. Welshimer, J. J. Haley, A. M. Fitch Jr., A. Jennings, Everett Ferguson, Leroy Brownlow, Thomas H. Olbricht, Rubel Shelly and Randall Harris, Leonard Allen and Richard Huges, Reda Goff, E. J. Ebong, Nsentip Nsentip and Bokime Bassey, Oji O. Oji, E. G. Josiah, D.T. Alaje, Ronald E. Heine, George A. Lindbeck, Alister Mcgrath, T. Scannell, Wayne Gruden, Gerard Loughlin, Carl E. Braaten, Eugene F. Klug, George Newlands, Jaroslav Pelikan, Albert C. Sundberg Jr., Paul M. Harrison, James Leo Garrett Jr., J. D. Kinner, D. Bennett, R. M. Anderson, Craig Dykstra, Christopher Cobb, Leif Kehrwald, Robert Muthiah, Edmund Afagbegee, E. Byron Anderson, Dorothy C. Bass, Anthony A. Stephenson amongst others were reviewed to reveal the extent and scope of scholarly research on the subject and the gaps to be filled by this study.

2.1 History of the Church of Christ

Earl Irvin West's four-volume series titled *The Search for the Ancient Order of Things* was a classic chronicle of events in early American nationhood characterized by the thirst for New Testament Christianity and rejection of human doctrines and creeds. This atmosphere, according to West led to the emergence of the Restoration Movement, a section of which metamorphose into the Church of Christ. The four volume series of books cover four epochs of the history of the Restoration Movement. Volume one covers events of the Movement from 1849-1865; volume two from 1866-1906; volume three from 1900-1918 and volume four from 1919-1950. In the first volume, West documented works and struggles of early pioneers who started from the scratch and

worked out their way out of the darkness of denominationalism and laid the groundwork for generations yet to come. According to West, "These pioneers believed in their cause, and they pressed on, wilting before no tribunal, but with profound conviction they had the truth and that the truth, under God, would triumph."²⁴ West identified leading men in the Movement apart from the well known names like Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone, John Smith and Walter Scott, included Jacob Creath Jr., Ben Franklin, T. M. Allen, Robert Milligan, Tolbert Fanning, J. McGarvey, Samuel Rogers, among others. The following expression of Alexander Campbell quoted by West reflects the conviction of the pioneers for the rightness of their cause:

Numbers with me count nothing. Let God be true, and every man a liar. Let truth stand, though the heavens fall. When contending with thirty millions of Lutherans, I feel myself contending with but one man. In opposing seventy millions of Greeks and Eastern Professors, I am in conflict with but one leader. When one hundred millions of Baptists assail me, I feel myself in a struggle with but one mind. In all the Methodists I see but John Wesley; in all the Calvinists, John Calvin; and in all the Episcopalians, one Cranmer. Names, numbers, circumstances weigh nothing in the scales of justice, truth and holiness.²⁵

These men who were Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists abandoned their various Christian denominations in search for the ancient order and advocated a return to the revelation of God's mind and doing his work in his way. Some of the contemporary issues that engaged the Movement particularly before the American Civil War according to West were slavery, canal warfare, missionary society and use of musical instruments in worship. West notes further that even though opinions were divided on these issues but the brotherhood remained in-tact.

The second volume continued with discussions on of the scriptural authority for the use of musical instruments in Christian worship and the appropriateness of missionary societies in carrying out what were considered to be duties of the church. The debate became intense with the the inauguration of American Christian Bible Society in Cincinnati in January, 1845 and the establishment of American Christian Society in 1849,

²⁴West. *The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement 1849-1865*, Vol. 1. 127.

²⁵West. *The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement 1849-1865*, Vol. 1. 54.

the latter having the endorsement of Alexander Campbell. The general trend of discussions among Christians of the Restoration sort during this period according to West included, attitudes toward the Scriptures, consistent application of scriptural principles, the difference between the universal and the local church, the singular nature of the New Testament church among others. By 1885 division has become manifest within the ranks of the brotherhood and by 1906 Christian churches (those favouring the missionary society and instrumental music) and Churches of Christ (those opposed to these practices) were officially listed separately for the first time in the census of churches. West listed leading men in the brotherhood who were actively involved in these discussions to include, David Lipscomb, Isaac Errett, E. G. Sewell, John F. Rowe, F. G. Allen, James A. Garfield (who later became the President of the United States) Daniel Sommer, F. D. Srygley, J. A. Harding, Austin McGary, amongst others.

In the third volume of his history of the Restoration Movement, West gave a general history of the period between the turn of the century and the end of the World War I. Externally, West notes that the period was that of religious strife where preachers of Churches of Christ engaged in debates with denominational leaders and these exciting events often turn scores of people to the cause of New Testament Christianity. Internally, West observes that the church was preoccupied with issues like the status of the local preacher, the Sunday School issue, the Christian literature issue, Christian Colleges imbroglio, how the American Civil War contributed to the growth of Christian Pacifism and ministry of foreign missions amongst others.

In the last volume of the series (1919-1950), West described this period as a truculent age where many in the Church of Christ were worried about premillennialism because this concept was believed to be sewing an unmatched patch on the garment of New Testament Christianity. Christians during this period according to West were worried about the infiltration of liberal theology into the church. He notes further that during the same period, the basis of justification for practices changed from "What do the Scriptures say?" to "If it is expedient, it is scriptural." West proceeds in this volume to describe the activities of some preachers and institutions that were active in the discussions and debates that characterized this period. While observing that the Church of Christ during the period under review was yet to reach perfection, he predicts that

divisions will continue to exist and cruel schisms will abound in the church as long as jealousies prevail, as long as men are driven by unchecked ambitions and as long as men fail to walk humbly before God and fellowman. As to the reliability of his historical account of the activities of the Restoration Movement/Churches of Christ as contained in the series, West confesses:

I do not place any man or any age, the past or the present, as an authoritative one. My guideline remains the Word of God, as best I know that Word. But the fact that I believe in many of the things David Lipscomb said, for instance, does not make me tied to him as my authority in religion. To respect him for the battles he fought, for the spiritual excellence he reached, or for his supreme knowledge of the Scriptures does not make me a traditionalist as the term has come into somewhat popular use.²⁶

Earl West in this four-volume set of a history of the Restoration Movement in America from 1866-1950 did a masterful work in portraying the mindsets, struggles and sacrifices of pioneers of the Movement and leading members of Churches of Christ in their struggle to restore Apostolic doctrine and practice. The series were classics on the religious events in America which led to the emergence of the Restoration Movement, the activities and cardinal emphasis of the Movement, issues that led to disagreement and divisions in the Movement and the evolution of the Church of Christ. The series were full of instructive lessons for all heirs of the Restoration Movement particularly, Churches of Christ; to emulate successes of early pioneers and avoid repeating their mistakes. While three churches eventually emerged of the Restoration Movement: The Disciples of Christ, the Christian Church and the Church of Christ, it was very glaring that West's heart was with the Church of Christ at the expense of other groups. It then goes without the saying that until the lions have their own historian, tales of hunting will always glorify the hunter. While West's work provided the substructure for this present study, it fell short of appraising the teachings and practices of the Church of Christ in Southeastern Nigeria which is the concern of this study.

Introducing the Church of Christ is a comprehensive history on the beliefs and practices of Churches of Christ. Written by over fifty of her ministers, the four-section

²⁶West. *The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement 1849-1865*, Vol. 4. vii.

book discusses the exclusive features of the church. Section one addresses foundational issues like prophetic predictions of the church, its foundation by Jesus and on him, explanations on why it is not a denomination, Jesus as the only head, its description by many figures, the New Testament as the only standard of authority and the Old Testament only for learning. This section also describes liturgical procedures like singing in worship, method of giving, communion, prayer and preaching.²⁷ Section two of the book explains the system of church government and describes how each congregation of the church is self governing under Christ, overseeing by biblical elders and serviced by deacons. It describes the roles of preachers and the church's penchant for biblical names and evangelism. Other issues on focus under this section include, New Testament plan for salvation, the practice of baptism, godly living, role of women in the church and Churches of Christ understanding of Bible teaching on marriage and divorce.²⁸

Explanations on why the doctrine of the church was anchored solely on the scripture devoid of man-made creeds, why she sought to restore the church that started on Pentecost and the need for all Christians to fellowship in Christ were provided in the third section. This section also expatiates on the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian, Churches of Christ's insistence on Bible time's miracles, the nature of man, the doctrine of the Godhead and priesthood of all believers. Topics discussed in the forth section include doctrinal matters like virgin birth of the Savior, the deity of Christ, inspiration of the Bible, salvation by the atoning blood of Christ, salvation by faith and works, church and salvation, second coming of the Lord, bodily resurrection of the just and unjust, heaven as a reward for the righteous and hell as compensation for wickedness.²⁹ Expectedly, the text is a compendium of the gospel according to Churches of Christ as it is apologetic in intent and purpose. The contributors copiously quoted the scriptures to defend the beliefs of the church. The text is more of a promotional material than an objective representation of the gospel from a broader perspective. More still, it failed to juxtapose beliefs and

²⁷A. Jennings. ed. 1981. *Introducing the Church of Christ*. Fort Worth, Texas: Star Bible Publications Inc. 7-70.

²⁸*Introducing the Church of Christ.*, 136-195.

²⁹*Introducing the Church of Christ*, 137-256.

practices of the church to see the extent to which the doctrines are actualized in practice. This vacuum this study hopes to fill.

Everett Ferguson in his doctrinal approach to the study of ecclesiology systematically examines the New Testament's teaching on the existence, meaning and purpose of the church from the doctrinal position of Churches of Christ. In his work titled, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today*, Ferguson identifies historical and theological categorization as that of person, proclamation and people. The person is Jesus Christ, who is the object of faith and basis of salvation, the proclamation centers on his person to gather a people, while the church is constituted by people gathered through proclamation. Ferguson argues that God gave a word before he gave a church, and the church is not the proclamation but the result of the proclamation. The church then preserved and protected the integrity of the proclamation through a recognized canon. Ferguson notes further that the recognition of a canon of the scripture was an acceptance on the part of the church that it was not its own authority and was also an act of obedience to apostolic writings. In this doctrinal study of ecclesiology, Ferguson insists on allowing the doctrinal teaching on ecclesiology to emerge from the text of the scripture. By so doing, he argues that it can be easily proved that one cannot have Jesus without the church. Ferguson declares,

On the very practical level, without the Bible preserved and promoted by the church, and without a believing group of people teaching about Jesus, he would not be known. On a more theological level, one cannot have Jesus without the church. Jesus died for the church; his whole mission was directed towards gathering a saved community. Christ is not complete without his people. To take Jesus means taking his teachings and also taking his people who are joined to him. To emphasize Christ is to make his church important.³⁰

In view of the above submission, Ferguson insists that the starting point for a proper doctrinal study of the church is to start from Jesus and work down to the nature and activities of the church. To Ferguson, while biblical materials on matters of worship and polity are normative, they are not as important and central as the saving work of

³⁰E. Ferguson. 1996. *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, xx.

Christ. Subsequently, Fergusson used the first three chapters of the six-chapter work to develop the theological maxim that Christology and soteriology determine ecclesiology. Discussions under this first section centre on the people and the Messiah, the church and her Lord and the church and her Savior. Under the people and the Messiah, Ferguson highlights God's Covenants and the covenant people, the kingdom of God and Israel, Jesus, Church and the future, Jesus as the Messiah, the Suffering Servant and the Son of Man. On the church and her Lord, Ferguson launches into an irenic conversation on the centrality of Christ, the people of God, biblical terminologies for people of God, election, implications of being the people of God, the body of Christ in all its ramifications, the community of the Holy Spirit, the Old Testament expectation of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit in the ministry of Christ, the Holy Spirit in the life of the church, miraculous manifestations and various metaphors of the church as the family of God. The final part of this section which is on the church and her Savior addresses issues like the need and nature of man, theological reflections on sin, God's efforts to redeem humanity and human response in the form of faith, repentance and baptism.³¹

The second half of the 443-page study focuses on the church and her high priest, the church and her bishop and the church and her teacher. The portion on the church and her priest deals with the meaning and theological foundations of worship, the church as temple, priest and priesthood, attitudes toward worship and in worship, the importance of the assembly, the day of the assembly, purposes of the assembly and activities of the assembly. The section on the church and her bishop talks about the worker and his works, the giver and the gifts, the minister and the ministers, the shepherd and the shepherds, the preacher and preachers, the servant and the servants, women servant and autonomy and cooperation. The piece on the church and her teacher addresses issues on the new way of life, morality and community, the nature of Christian ethics, fellowship, discipline, Christian liberty, church and society.³²

Ferguson's work, no doubt, was thorough, biblically focused and immensely scholarly. He was careful, in his own words, "to let the biblical text determine these

³¹*The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today*, 1-205.

³²*The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today*, 207-409.

subjects” by quoting copiously from the scriptures to support his exposition. He also succeeds in opening a new vista for scholarly discussions on ecclesiology in the New Testament. As much as he tried to hide his bias and not impose “a doctrinal scheme on the text,”³³ it is very obvious that Ferguson’s perceptions were deeply colored by the hermeneutical presuppositions of his heritage-the Church of Christ. Moreover, his work was more or less an ecclesiological exposition rather than appraisal of the doctrine and practices of Churches of Christ which is the major preoccupation of this study

Leroy Brownlow in his book titled, *Why I am a Member of the Church of Christ* affirms the responsibility of the church to teach and practice the truth of the word of God based on biblical rather than ecclesiastical authority.³⁴ Consequently, he sought to defend his membership of the Church of Christ in this work that is apologetic of the doctrinal position of the church. He contends that he became a member of the Church of Christ because the church was founded by Christ, on scriptural foundation, and on the Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ. He also justifies his membership on the ground of the church bearing a scriptural name, scriptural in organization, has the Bible as its only creed, believes the Bible to be the inspired word of God to be rightly divided and the fact that the church practices undenominational Christianity. Other justifications given by Brownlow include the teaching that the kingdom has been established and Christ is now reigning in the kingdom, that man is saved by the blood of Christ, that the church administers scriptural baptism and teaches that miraculous manifestation of the spirit have ceased. Other reasons advanced by Brownlow for his choice was because of the church’s scriptural teaching and observance of the Lord’s Supper and on music in worship.³⁵ In all, Brownlow meticulously cited biblical references to support the doctrinal position of Churches of Christ on the twenty-five justifications for his membership of the church. Like Ferguson, Brownlow’s work was a product of his hermeneutical background, but unlike Ferguson, his work lacks depth and sound biblical exegesis. His

³³*The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today*, xix.

³⁴L. Brownlow. 1973. *Why I am a Member of the Church of Christ*, Fort Worth, Texas: Brownlow Publishing Company, 4.

³⁵*Why I am a Member of the Church of Christ*, 7-191.

work provides a justification for a critical appraisal of the teachings and practices of Churches of Christ which is the obsession of the present study.

Thomas H. Olbricht³⁶ in his article titled, “The Theology of the Church in Churches of Christ” was preoccupied with the theology of the church in Churches of Christ and notes that the focal points of ecclesiology of Churches of Christ was evident in the need to restore the church of the New Testament and to unite Christians into one visible and undenominational church. In his analysis, Olbricht looks at the background of Churches of Christ’s theology as explained in the works of leading 19th Century resorationists like Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott and Robert Milligan; the theology of the church from the perspectives first generation leaders like David Lipscomb and W. T. Brents; recent ecclesiologies of the likes of Roy Cogdill, Leroy Brownlow, Everett Ferguson and concludes with his thoughts on the works he reviewed.

Olbricht traced the ecclesiology of Churches of Christ to the theological likings of Swiss reformers like Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer and others whose theology so much influenced Scottish and English religious thinking. The Reformed Tradition exemplified by Zwingli and his contemporaries, according to Olbricht, sought to purify the physical structures of the church by purging it of its statutes, images, crucifies, and replacing them with the simplicity of New Testament liturgy and worship. They also saw to the reformation and eventual dissolution of monasteries. According to Olbricht, Zwingli as People’s Preacher in Zurich denounced purgatory, indulgences, invocation of saints and monasticism in sermons based on the New Testament. Furthermore, Olbricht notes that supremacy of the scriptures; the sovereignty of God and the need to separate the true church from the apostate church were at the heart of Zwingli’s ecclesiology.

Olbricht also observes that Martin Bucer, a friend and disciple of Zwingli who migrated to England and taught at Cambridge became the link between Swiss reformation and Puritanism in the Church of England which was bent on purging the English church along the line of Swiss reform. Heinrich Bullinger who succeeded Zwingli as People’s Minister in Zurich, Olbricht explains, was famous for his covenantal theology as a substructure of the theology of the church. For Bullinger, Olbricht notes, the church is the

³⁶T. H. Olbricht. 2008. “The Theology of the Church in Churches of Christ” *Restoration Quarterly* 50.1: 15-35.

body of persons elected by God through the establishment of covenants. Johannes Cocceius, according to Olbricht, was another force to reckon with in the discourse on the covenant backgrounds of the church. Born into a reformed family in Bremen; educated in Netherlands; well trained in biblical languages, philology and exegesis; a successful teaching career at Leiden; Cocceius' best known work, Olbricht asserts, was on covenantal theology and that Alexander Campbell's dispensational theology clearly reflect the work of Cocceius. These reformers, Olbricht, avers, had indirect influence on restorationists like the Campbells and Walter Scott through Scottish Reform and the Puritans.

Olbricht subsequently surveys the ecclesiology in the works of 19th Century restorationists like Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott and Robert Milligan. Olbricht maintains that Thomas Campbell, like Bullinger and Cocceius believed that the church is a covenantal community which came into being through the work of God in Christ and that the old covenant differed from the new. He explains that Campbell's ecclesiology sees Christ's church as essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one; that the authority of the church is entrenched in the New Testament, not the Old and that the church must conform to the model and adopt the practice of the primitive church as revealed in the New Testament.

Olbricht equally observes that Alexander Campbell's ecclesiology drew upon the foundation laid by his father, but was more detailed and systematic in his methodology elevating the church as the centre of God's activities and Jesus as the chief cornerstone. According to Olbricht, Alexander Campbell variously conceives the church as the Body of Christ, the Congregation of God and the Kingdom of Heaven. As the body of Christ, Christ is her Head, the King, the Lord and the Lawgiver while the several members of the body are subjective to his direction and government. As the congregation of God the church is seen as community of communities with cooperation between the communities (congregations) within the sphere of Christ's governmental authority. As the kingdom of heaven, the laws and statutes of the Christian kingdom are sought from the teaching of Christ during his earthly ministry. Olbricht concludes that Alexander Campbell's ecclesiology as contained in his essays in the Christian Baptist covers such topics like, the need for the church, creeds and confessions, unity, God and the Trinity, worship,

breaking of bread, fellowship, weekly communion, office of a bishop, love feasts, purity of speech, voting on membership, deacons, devotion, singing Psalms, church discipline, leadership names and titles.

For Walter Scott, Olbricht claims that his ecclesiology was profoundly grounded in Christology proclaiming Christ as the founder and the foundation of the Church of God. Furthermore, Scott's major contribution to the ecclesiology of Churches of Christ, according to Olbricht, was his discovery of the gospel plan of salvation or the process of becoming a member of the church which he divided into two parts. The first part consisted of what man must do to be saved: believe, repent and be baptized. The second part is made up of what God does in the salvation process: remits sins, confers the Holy Spirit and bestows eternal life. The last of 19th century restorationists whose ecclesiology impacted the ecclesiology of Churches of Christ according to Olbricht's categorization was Robert Milligan³⁷. Milligan, Olbricht says, included ecclesiology under soteriology to come up with the scheme of redemption hatched by God from the beginning to redeem fallen humanity. Milligan, Olbricht remarks, saw the Bible as a product of divine wisdom, justice, goodness, mercy and love through the atoning sacrifice of Christ to redeem man. Milligan, Olbricht notes, subscribed to the typical restorationists' dispensations of the Patriarchal, Mosaic and the Christian epochs. Milligan avows the culmination of the scheme of redemption in the harvesting of the church into the everlasting Kingdom of God.

Olbricht listed David Lipscomb and T. W. Bents among the restoration leaders who shaped the ecclesiology of Churches of Christ in the Post-Civil War Period in the United States. For Lipscomb, the church is the platform for God to return the fallen humanity to himself premised on actions of the Holy Spirit and Christ. This reconciliation will be done by the establishment of a kingdom (the church) which will never be destroyed but will grow to be the mightiest force on earth toppling governments of all

³⁷Milligan's original work titled *Exposition and Defense of the Scheme of Redemption as it is Revealed and Taught in the Holy Scripture* was published in 1868. For a reprint of the 577-page scheme see, R. Milligan. 2001. *The Scheme of Redemption*. Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company.

nations under the sovereignty and rule of God through his Son³⁸. Like Lipscomb, Olbricht declares that Brents conceives of the church as a monarchy, a kingdom-not a republic, established on the promptings of the Holy Spirit to realize the salvation of fallen humanity. The heart of Brents' ecclesiology, Olbricht notes, was his conviction that the work of the Holy Spirit chiefly dwells within the church. Olbricht concludes his chronicle of theology of the church in *Churches of Christ* with the church's ecclesiology in the 20th century.

Olbricht posits further that theologians in *Churches of Christ* in the 20th century see the church as the starting point for self-understanding and evangelism. Reviewing the works of Roy E. Codgil and Leroy Brownlow, Olbricht avers that the authors were both apologetic of the Church of Christ presenting it as the church that best replicate the church of the New Testament and the only place where salvation can be sought. The works of Codgil and Brownlow, Olbricht observes, shaped the theology of *Churches of Christ* from the 1930s to the 1980s and are very much in use in conservative churches. Everett Ferguson, unlike his predecessors, brought modern scholarship to the task of ecclesiology. Olbricht maintains that for Ferguson, Christology is the norm of ecclesiology insisting that the church was clearly founded upon the work of the Father and the Son. Ferguson, Olbricht observes, subordinates soteriology to ecclesiology, declaring that to be saved is to be in Christ and to be a Christian is to be a member of the church. Rubel Shelly and Randall J. Harris, according to Olbricht advocate the need for the church in the 21st century not only to remain faithful to the unchanging biblical text but to be sensitive to its context by adjusting its methodology to meet the needs of the age. The first incarnation was Christ's earthly presence; the second incarnation is his Body, the church functioning in the world today to replicate the work of Christ in the first incarnation not as a static object, but as a dynamic force.

In all, Olbricht situates the strength of ecclesiology of *Churches of Christ*, as observable in the writings of its successive leaders, on the emphasis on the history of salvation through covenants and the salvific work of Christ. While commending these leaders for providing judicious insights into the workings of the church, he variously

³⁸It would seem that Lipscomb's major legacy bequeathed to *Churches of Christ's* ecclesiology is the vision of the kingdom (church) in Daniel 2 as an everlasting kingdom starting from Jerusalem and outlasting all earthly kingdoms.

faulted their inability to construct comprehensive theological and dynamic backgrounds in which these details are situated. Olbricht, no doubt, provides a first-class survey on the theology of the church among Churches of Christ which will remain relevant for a long time. But like the works he chronicled, his ecclesiology was equally colored by the hermeneutical bias of Churches of Christ. They all failed to realize that the Christian faith is larger than the limited parameters of their church's ecclesiology. It is difficult, albeit possible, if the restoration of the New Testament church and configuration of Christians into one visible church which the ecclesiology of Churches of Christ seeks to achieve is possible given this opinionated outlook of the church's ecclesiology.

Rubel Shelly and Randall J. Harris present a theology for the Church in the 21st century in a world of constant change and upheaval in their work titled, *The Second Incarnation: A Theology for the 21st Century Church*. According to the authors, ecclesiology for the church in the 21st century can be justified on the following reasons. Firstly, the church operates in an ever-changing world and ecclesiology must be an ongoing task constantly reminding the church of its mission. Secondly, it is to ensure that the church do not lose focus of its true calling amidst worldly distractions and institutional activities. Thirdly, to humble the church to acknowledge the fact that she is a mere tool in the hands of God to achieve his purpose as salvation is ultimately a product of divine grace, not human achievement. Shelly and Harris further observe that as a result of changes in the religious landscape of the environment, the church should be in tune with reality by answering the questions that the society is asking as failure to do this is self-deluding. The church, the authors note, should provide theological justification for current changes but warns that such changes should not be destructive to God's purpose. Thus the Bible must guide the church as she responds to changes and challenges of the age.

Apart from the introduction, the 12-chapter text was divided into five sections namely: possibilities and limitations of a new doctrine of the church, fundamental conceptions, fundamental relations, ecclesiology and eschatology and conclusion. The first section on possibilities and limitations of a new doctrine of the church looks at the freedom to change in chapter one and the need for the change to be anchored on theological insights about divine renewal as God's will for his people in chapter two. The

second section on fundamental conceptions addresses the identity of the church as the body of Christ in chapter three, the nature of the church as a pilgrim church and the kingdom of God in chapter four and the church as a community of God's people and the fellowship of Spirit in chapter five. The third section looks at fundamental relations of the church in such areas as worship (how the church relates to God) in chapter six; life (how the church relates to itself) in chapter seven; mission (how the church relates to the world) in chapter eight, and evangelism (how the church wins souls) in chapter nine. The fourth section on ecclesiology and eschatology explains Baptism and Lord's Supper as symbols of promise in chapter ten and the ultimate purpose of the church at the end of time as a glorified church in chapter eleven. The fifth section which is the conclusion and chapter twelve attempts a synopsis of the purpose of the book with suggestions for subsequent study.

By and large, Shelly and Harris succinctly challenge the church to break out of its way of seeing itself for a fresh look at the biblical model of the church as the body of Christ for the sake of vitality and relevance in the new century. Just as Christ functioned as the first incarnation, the church continues the ministry of Christ as the body of Christ and the second incarnation. The church should therefore, not be afraid of change, but like all living creatures embrace incremental change as only preserved dead body never alter in form and appearance. This change according to the authors should reflect in worship, life, mission and evangelism activities of the church. In doing this, the authors propose that denominational loyalties should give way to Christ-centeredness and Christological reading of the Bible. They conclude that if the church will take time to revisit biblical model of doing church in the light of modern challenges, "There could be healthy, creative and liberating change. There would emerge the possibility of reaching millions of people whom we now impress only negatively, if at all. We could become a more attractive, robust and resourceful body to our head, the Lord Jesus Christ."³⁹

There seems to be some sense in Shelly and Harris' perception of the church as a moving progress, never a static accomplishment, never a perfect reflection of God's idea, but always striving towards the goal expressed in the Scripture. One only hopes that

³⁹R Shelly and R. J. Harris. 2001. *The Second Incarnation: A Theology for the 21st Century Church* rev. ed. Abilene, TX: Hill Crest, 211.

many conservative elements within Churches of Christ will embrace this call and stop the tendency to declare any new method as unscriptural without subjecting it to the klieg light of the Scripture. Having said this, it should equally be noted that the authors' ecclesiology was Gospel-centred devoid of the Old Testament background of the Church as the Kingdom of God. No reference was made to the church in prophesy and God's penchant to have a people for himself and to always want to be with his people as read through the pages of the Old Testament. Much as the authors tried to be ecumenical in their methodology, their hermeneutics still reek of their restorationist background. They however acknowledge these limitations by admitting that, "Only the Word of God is normative. This book is another in a series of flawed attempts by all-too fallible disciples to understand its meaning for the life of the church."⁴⁰

Thomas H. Olbricht⁴¹ in another article titled, "Hermeneutics of the Churches of Christ" examines the subject of hermeneutics particularly as it has to do with Churches of Christ. He started by observing that hermeneutics of a specific body of believers are shaped by their culture and theology and that once formed, hermeneutics are in turn influenced by culture and theology. Olbricht also acknowledges the impact of the sociological and theological background of a specific body of believers on their hermeneutics and posits that the hermeneutics of Churches of Christ are grounded in the hub and context of their theology. The church and salvation, he annotates, are at the heart of the theology of Churches of Christ which are reflective of their restoration background. Olbricht explains that the presupposition for restoration theology and hermeneutics could be traced to Swiss and English reformation as regards centrality of the church and English-Scottish enlightenment concerning the scripture. He adds that restoration theology is indebted to the reformed theology of Calvin and Zwingli with reference to the emphasis on the church and the scripture. He surmises that Churches of Christ theology is a hybrid of Zwingli, John Knox, Scottish Presbyterian and the Campbells' influences.

Olbricht went on to identify the three major facets of Churches of Christ' hermeneutics as: the command, example and inference formula; the dispensations facet

⁴⁰*The Second Incarnation: A Theology for the 21st Century Church*, p. viii.

⁴¹T. H. Olbricht. 1995. Hermeneutics of the Churches of Christ *Restoration Quarterly* 37. 1: 1-23.

and the grammatical-historical facet. According to Olbricht, the first facet and the most popular of Churches of Christ's hermeneutical *modus operandi* revolve around the tripartite formula of commands, examples and inferences. This formula of ascertaining primitive pattern was traced to Edward Dering as early as 1572. Elements of the formula, he insists, could also be traced to Scottish Presbyterians, English Puritans, British independents, American Puritan, Baptists and ultimately to Thomas Campbell's Declaration and Address of 1809. This formula, he notes, has been employed over time by Churches of Christ to restore the New Testament Church in the contemporary age.

Olbricht tags the tripartite dispensations of Patriarchal, Mosaic and Christian as the second facet of the hermeneutics of Churches of Christ. This dispensational formula, according to Olbricht, affirms the authority of the New Testament over the Old Testament in restoring the primitive church. Although this formula was implicit in Thomas Campbell's "Declaration and Address," Olbricht annotates that the first explicit use of the method was in Alexander Campbell's "Sermon on the Law" presented to the Redstone Baptist Association in 1816. This method according to Olbricht, informs the reluctance of Churches of Christ in employing the Old Testament to support Christian practice against the reformed positions of Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, the Puritans and even Luther. Olbricht traces Campbell's perception on the three dispensations to the covenantal theology of Dutch scholars such as Grotius (1583-1645) and Cocceius (1603-1669), with the latter positing that God instituted the covenant of grace in three dispensations-the Patriarchal, the Mosaic and the Christian as a result of the failure of the covenant of works with Adam. Olbricht however observes that Churches of Christ have started having a rethinking on this position by recognizing the significance of the Old Testament for Christian faith and life, but the relegation of the Old Testament to a non-authorial status in determining the structures and worship of the church remains fundamentally intact.

The third facet of Churches of Christ's hermeneutics is what Olbricht calls the grammatico-historical approach. This approach he observes has to do with the traditional principles of evangelical Christian interpretation which formed the content of the book titled, *Christianity Restored* published by Alexander Campbell in 1835. By the book, Campbell, according to Olbricht, maintains that systematic interpretation of the scripture

should proceed according to the same rules for understanding of any other document. He then went on to set out the principles by which the Christian institution may be satisfactorily ascertained. Olbricht observes further that Campbell's book shows that he was acquainted with the best grammatico-historical approaches, especially of the British-American and German stuff of the early nineteenth century. Olbricht avers that since the time of Campbell, the grammatical-historical interpretation of the scripture developed considerably in the 20th century, first in Germany, then in Britain and subsequently in the United States in the 1970s.

Of the three interpretative strategies discussed above, Olbricht thinks that inference is the major means through which the Scripture is interpreted to determine what is authorized in Churches of Christ, but doubts whether the manner of inference is the most descriptive. For instance, he notes that Christology, in a way, is foundational to the theology of Churches of Christ and this underlies Christ being seen as the head of the church (Eph. 5: 24), the rock upon which the church was built (Matt. 16: 18), died for the church (Col. 1: 18-20) and has all authority on heaven and earth (Matt. 28: 18). Olbricht asseverates that neither Campbell nor Scott or any of the early preachers of Churches of Christ concerned themselves with the word and work of earthly Jesus and therefore failed to focus on the character, ethics and teaching of Christ. This asymmetry, Olbricht notes, also reflects on the emphasis of academic work on Churches of Christ as very few of about fifty doctoral works on the church in the last fifty years were on the Gospels. Olbricht however remarks that Churches of Christ in the last thirty years have been reversing this trend providing the force for a hermeneutical shift.

Olbricht also examines the understanding of Ephesians 5: 25-27 by Churches of Christ as proof that the structural features of the church are perfect because they were put in place by Christ himself. Believers, even though washed and forgiven, they remain blemished, while the church remains perfect in conception and blueprint because it is a product of God through Christ. This is taken by some to mean that membership of the church is a visa for heaven and informs the arrogance of some to condemn non-members to hell. Again, Olbricht notes that there has been some changes on this position in the last thirty years as the grace of God rather than the works of believers, has increasingly surfaced to depict the church as a loving family of forgiven people of God and the

perception of a privileged position receding into the background. If the church is a family rather than a blueprint, it then possesses a loving Father rather than a Judge constantly dispensing the law. Another hermeneutical shift noticed by Olbricht concerning Churches of Christ was the perception of her members in the 1930s seeing themselves as outsiders and less involved in culture. This thinking was informed by the need to replicate Christ's unlimited loyalty to the church. The text cited to instill this loyalty was Ephesians 1: 22. Olbricht noticed that after the World War II, Churches of Christ members became culturally more assimilated to the extent of preachers joining service clubs since this could be a forum to win souls for Christ.

Olbricht concludes by advising spokespersons for Churches of Christ to adopt an inductive approach to interpreting the Scripture rather than the prevailing deductive approach of jumping from one premise to the other to arrive at a conclusion. Olbricht also observes that there has been a hermeneutical crisis among Churches of Christ. This crisis he says, emerged out of the need to respond appropriately to challenges arising from the traditional homiletical methods. He proposes that the Scripture should be seen as a communication from a loving God rather than a legal document and commended the intensification of current interest in narrativity as probable solutions to the hermeneutical crisis. And most importantly, he calls for a hermeneutical procedure that revolves around the questions the Scriptures wish to put to the church, not the questions the church wish to put to the Scriptures.

Olbricht seems to have an exquisite knowledge of the hermeneutical methods of Churches of Christ. As an insider, it was easy for him to spot the weaknesses of these methods particularly as they applied to the use of inference to ascertain the primitive pattern of Christianity; reliance on deductive as against inductive interpretation of the Scripture and the need for a paradigm shift of the traditional homiletical tools of Churches of Christ. The above notwithstanding, Olbricht also fell into the same trap of the shallowness of restorationist's hermeneutics of trying to explain the Christian faith with the narrow and bigoted lenses of restorationist's hermeneutics.

C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes⁴² in their work titled, *Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ* investigate the ancestry of Churches of Christ

⁴²*Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ.*

and other co-heirs of the Restoration Movement of the early nineteenth century. The authors specifically sought to provide answers to the following questions concerning Churches of Christ: “where did we come from?” “How did we get this way?” “What has been the heart of our movement?” “Why did we read the Bible the way we do?” And finally; “what can we learn from those who have viewed restoration in ways different from our own?”⁴³ The authors observe that Churches of Christ wrongly assume that their roots are simply in the New Testament and that they have not been shaped in any significant way by the intervening history, that they are simply New Testament churches, no more no less. Thinking this way, the authors note, make them to overlook their weaknesses and ultimately deny the fact they are like other mere mortals shaped by time, culture and tradition. The authors insightfully assert, “If we assume that our roots are entirely sacred and not profane, entirely apostolic and not historical, entirely biblical and not cultural, then we have elevated ourselves above the level of common humanity and in essence, made ourselves into gods.”⁴⁴

Allen and Hughes insist that Churches of Christ inherit not only the Bible, but a traditional way of reading it. Using the conscious participants or unconscious victims’ paradigm of Jaroslav Pelikan⁴⁵, the authors advised that Churches of Christ must choose either to understand how their traditions have shaped them or to allow their traditions to shape them unconsciously. For Allen and Hughes, the glory is not in denying the tradition as Churches of Christ often do, but in acknowledging and interacting with it in the journey towards spiritual maturity. The authors went on to identify the four roots of ancestry of Churches of Christ which were categorized as: a) the biblical root left by the primitive church which forms the fundamental source of identity of the church; b) the restorationist wing of Protestant Reformation which shaped their presumptions about the Bible; c) the 16th and the 17th centuries Enlightenment which formed the rationalistic

⁴³*Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ*, 2.

⁴⁴*Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ*, 8

⁴⁵Jaroslav Jan Pelikan (December 17, 1923 – May 13, 2006) was one of the world's leading scholars in the history of Christianity and authored more than 30 books including the five-volume *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (1971-1989). His works also include, *The Vindication of Tradition: The 1983 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986). For more information on Pelikan see, http://orthodoxwiki.org/Jaroslav_Pelikan.

model for unity and d) the restoration movement anchored by Barton Stone, Walter Scott, the Campbells and their ilk in the 19th century. The authors describe the biblical root as sacred and the remaining three roots as profane- because they were rooted in human soil in particular times and places. The authors also looked at the stories of those who stand largely outside the stream of restoration movement that has also shaped the identity of Churches of Christ. These include, Martin Luther in view of his passion for restoring the gospel of grace, the sixteenth-century Anabaptists who were devout restorationists with penchant for moral purity and a church distinguishable from the world, the holiness tradition of the nineteenth century which sought Christian unity by restoring the sanctified lifestyle of primitive Christians and the Pentecostal movement that emerged at the dawn of the twentieth century which hunted to restore the apostolic gifts of the Spirit, particularly speaking in tongues and divine healing.

The authors urge Churches of Christ to firstly, enlarge their circle of discourse to enrich the quality of conversation by resisting the temptation to sweep history away and abandon the polluted stream for pure spring. According to Allen and Hughes, the questions should not be, “Why listen, then, to those perceived as purveyors of confusion, apostates and blind guides, and voices of corruption? Why draw up chairs for them to join our enlightened conversation?”⁴⁶ The question, the authors insist, should be “what can we learn from those who have viewed restoration in ways different from our own and how can this help in our journey towards spiritual maturity?” Secondly, Allen and Hughes advise Churches of Christ to come to terms with tradition instead of only seeing the treachery of tradition and how tradition quickly grows moribund, stifling living faith, fostering schism and compromising with the world. They caution that sweeping rejection of tradition results into a faith more vulnerable to blind traditionalism:

Human traditions are simply inevitable, even among those-or perhaps especially among those-who reject them. We would do well, therefore, to admit it, for only then can we begin the self-conscious engagement with traditions so vital to a healthy church. Tradition, we must recognize, is always a mixed blessing: it easily domesticates and distorts the Christian way to be sure, but it also conserves and sustains it.⁴⁷

⁴⁶*Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ*, 152.

⁴⁷*Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ*, 154-155.

Consequently, the writers advocate that the church recognize the inevitable fact of tradition, so that with clear vision which it provides, Christians in Churches of Christ can constantly examine their lives in the light of the scriptures. Thirdly, the authors advise Churches of Christ members to be sincere enough to face their finitude as time-bound, culture-bound and sinful members of the human race. As a church, they also need to recognize the tension between the ideal and the real church. In their words, “though holding a high vision of a glorious and divinely perfect church, we have not faced up well to a human and painfully imperfect church.”⁴⁸ The church will be wholly glorious, wholly without spot and wrinkle, only when Christ returns to wash it clean and present it to himself (Eph. 5: 26-27). Hence the tension between the church as human and divine and between present hope and future fulfillment must be constantly acknowledged.

Allen and Hughes offer the most honest and critical appraisal of Churches of Christ by an insider that I have ever come across. The sacred and the profane analysis of the church’s root should be a great eye-opener for members of the church particularly in Southwestern Nigeria who have been indoctrinated to believe that the church has no place in church history other than that it began on Pentecost Day. Another important revelation of the authors was the fact that restoration of ancient order of Christianity was not peculiar to Churches of Christ. Several other Christian denominations also had the restoration motif. The difference is on the area of emphasis. While Churches of Christ have a penchant to restore the form and practices of ancient Christianity, the Lutherans were interested in the restoration of the gospel of grace. The Anabaptists were preoccupied with the restoration of moral purity and a church that was dissimilar from the world. The Methodists insist on restoring sanctified lifestyle of primitive Christians while the Pentecostals were bent on restoring the apostolic gifts of the Spirit through speaking in tongues and divine healing. Allen and Hughes did well to create a common ground and shared background by Churches of Christ and other Christian denominations concerning several elements of the Christian faith. They counselled that there is not much to be gained for Churches of Christ to remain in splendid isolation of other Christian

⁴⁸*Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ*, 156.

denominations. However, the authors, like others before them, stubbornly held to their Church of Christ heritage- that other forms of restoration were not far-reaching enough.

The starting point of enquiry for any meaningful study on Churches of Christ or the Restoration Movement in Nigeria is the work titled, *The Great Nigerian Mission* written by Reda C. Goff in collaboration with the Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee, USA. The study remains a compendium of information on the beginning of the Church of Christ in Nigeria from American perspective covering a period of twenty years (1944 – 1964). It traces the Nigerian restoration story to the Bible Correspondence Course initiated by the Lawrence Avenue church in 1944, the contact with C. A. O. Essien, Essien's call for American missionaries for assistance, the arrival and activities of several American missionary families, church planting, establishment and management of secular schools and Bible Colleges, mentoring of native evangelists and all other Christian activities that made it possible for the Church of Christ to have a strong foundation in Nigeria starting from Eastern Nigeria and from there to other parts of the country.⁴⁹

Although the book was written by an American from an American perspective, it was very fair and relatively objective in documenting the exploits of Essien and his men in establishing the Church of Christ and planting of about 50 congregations even before the arrival of first missionary families in November 1952. The work would seem to have passed the test of reliability of the source, credibility of the author, objective assessment of moral issues and guilt/praise assignment. Expectedly, it displayed some ignorance and misunderstanding of the culture and tradition of the people, it nevertheless reflects a sincere effort at chronicling series of events that constitute the early history of Churches of Christ in Nigeria from 1944 to 1964.⁵⁰

It took about twenty-one years before another effort was made to further document the history of Churches of Christ in Nigeria. This time, it was an indigenous effort spearheaded by one of the native evangelists who was trained and mentored by American missionaries. *History of the Church of Christ in Nigeria during the Second*

⁴⁹R. C. Goff. 1964. *The Great Nigerian Mission*. Nashville, TN: Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ, 1-52.

⁵⁰*The Great Nigerian Mission*, 1-52.

Generation written by E. J. Ebong to a reasonable extent relied on the earlier work of Reda Goff on the advent of the Churches of Christ and the activities of early missionaries. It continued from where Goff stopped on church planting in Igboland, the Nigerian civil war and its effect on the church and the extension of the work to Southwestern Nigeria using Lagos as the gateway. Ebong's work was a good reference material on how Churches of Christ started and spread across Lagos and the gradual incursion into other cities in Western Nigeria. Ebong also gave an insight into how the gospel was taken to Northern Nigeria from Lagos, and how the Church of Christ penetrated all the then nineteen states listing the location and addresses of Churches of Christ in the Lagos area as at 1985.⁵¹

Ebong never claimed to be a professional historian; hence it won't be fair to subject his work to critical test of historiography. He was unequivocal as far as his motivation for writing the book was concerned. He maintained that his work was "a special request by faithful brethren everywhere I visit to document the history of the church as one of the pioneering native evangelists."⁵² This notwithstanding, Ebong's work would seem to have passed the test of reliability of the source, credibility of the author, objective assessment of moral issues and guilt/praise assignment.

Up till date, the most detailed work on the history of Churches of Christ in Nigeria written by Nigerians was co-authored by Nsentip Nsentip and Bokime Bassey. The work, published in 2001 and titled, *The New Testament Church and its Restoration in Nigeria: A Study of the One Christian Church*, contains relevant information on Churches of Christ in Nigeria. In the 161-page and nine chapters work, the authors used the first four chapters preaching restoration theology and grounding their subject in the scriptures. The remaining five chapters and the appendix documented the origin, growth, development and challenges confronting Churches of Christ in Nigeria. The authors gave a vivid description of how the church started in Nigeria through C.A.O. Essien; the spread of the church in Nigeria; church conflict; controversies and their resolution; the

⁵¹E. J. Ebong. 1985. *History of the Church of Christ in Nigeria during the Second Generation*, Mushin, Lagos: Ola Bamgbose Press. Co.

⁵²*History of the Church of Christ in Nigeria during the Second Generation*, 1

state of the church in Nigeria as at 2001; growth strategies; charting the way forward and some biographies of pioneering native evangelists and church workers.⁵³

The strength of this work lies in the doggedness and the unrelenting spirit of the authors in unearthing information which formed the substance of the work. The authors took tremendous advantage of being natives of Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria (Nigerian Restoration Belt) where the whole story of Churches of Christ began to enhance the worth and the historicity of their work. The authors also traveled across the country and neighboring countries like Cameroon and Ghana in search of information, interviewing native evangelists and pioneers who succeeded American missionaries. Other major highlights of this work were its extensive discussion on the establishment and the spread of Churches of Christ in Igboland, its analysis of contemporary challenges confronting Churches of Christ in Nigeria and suggestions for a better church.

Be that as it may, subjecting the book to the test of historiography reveals some inherent weaknesses. While the work seemed to have passed the test of reliability of the source and credibility of the authors; the same cannot be said on objective assessment of moral issues and guilt/praise assignment. For instance, the authors note that:

Despite the tremendous progress made by Essien and his team, coupled with series of letters to Lawrence Avenue church of Christ for missionary assistance, the Americans hesitated for two years to come to his aid. Wondering how a native African could restore the New Testament church all on his own unaided by a white man. What Lawrence Avenue did in the interim was to send Bibles, tracts, study materials, communion cups and some cloths for distribution to the needy; supposedly to stop further disturbance from a hungry African who needed some material sustenance. Meanwhile, Essien and those native evangelists he had converted and trained were recording greater numbers in baptism.⁵⁴

In the light of what actually transpired between the Lawrence Avenue church and C. A. O. Essien as documented by Goff, the above statement appears to be unwarranted and unfair to the Lawrence Avenue church. To say the least, it is an over-glorification of the evangelistic prowess of C. A. O. Essien. What Lawrence Avenue did was to send

⁵³N. Nsentip and B. Bassey. 2001. *The New Testament Church and its Restoration in Nigeria: A Study of the One Christian Church*. Bariga, Lagos: Ndom Multiform Press.

⁵⁴*The New Testament Church and Its Restoration in Nigeria*, 49.

resident missionaries already working in Southern Africa to confirm the claims of Essien and to conduct feasibility on what it would cost to send missionaries to Nigeria.

Meanwhile, the church was working on recruiting prospective missionaries and mobilizing financial support for them. The Lawrence Avenue church did not send those materials “to stop further disturbance from a hungry African.” This statement was unkind to the intention of the Lawrence Avenue church. One wonders whether the church was expected to jump at Essien’s request without verifying his claims. It is true that the credit for the planting of the Church of Christ in Nigeria cannot be taken away from Essien, but one wonders whether Essien on his own would have been able to sustain the work without American missionaries. The fact that Essien acknowledged his own inadequacies by calling for missionaries to further teach him and his men the way of the truth was a pointer to this fact and a testimony to his humble spirit.

Another area where Nsentip and Bokime failed the test of objective assessment of moral issues and guilt/praise assignment was their passing judgment on the attitude and culture of members of the church in Western Nigeria. Some of the attitudes identified by the authors that characterized Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria are; lack of love among the preachers, preachers as Alpha and Omega, extreme application of the concept of autonomy, little or no experience of the scriptures by native evangelists and the influence of Yoruba culture which “is loaded with merriment” on the church.⁵⁵ While one is not discountenancing or discounting that there are elements of truth in this assessment, the same Nsentip and Bokime frowned at the use of the word “mushrooms”⁵⁶ to describe mass conversion of denominations in the Akwa Ibom area of the East at the inception of the church, rationalized and defended every aspects of the Anan/Ibibio culture and played down the problems of idolatry, superstitious beliefs and polygamy which Churches of Christ in the area struggled with in the beginning and even now.

While this argument is not meant to be a contest of whose culture is the best, the point that is being made here is that every culture possesses one vice or the other that is not consistent with true practice of Christianity and that Nsentip and Bokime were not as critical on the vices of their own culture as they were of others. Paul’s Epistle to the

⁵⁵*The New Testament Church and Its Restoration in Nigeria*, 80-82.

⁵⁶*The New Testament Church and Its Restoration in Nigeria*, 54.

Romans addresses the righteousness of God against any culture. There is no distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles before God. Both are equally under the power of sin, both stand before an impartial judge of human works, both are dependent on divine mercy. The best of any ethnic heritage cannot stand the righteousness of God. The above notwithstanding, Nsentip and Bokime's work remains a reference point as far as the history of Churches of Christ in Nigeria is concerned.

Oji O. Oji addresses the issues of autonomy and unity among Churches of Christ in Nigeria in his work titled, *Autonomy Issues and Unity of the Church of Christ*. He opens the discussion by defining the terms unity and autonomy within the context of the book. He abhors what he considers to be abuse of the doctrine of autonomy in certain quarters of Churches of Christ to the detriment of the entire body. He notes that this abuse is more pronounced when it comes to the issue of whether or not congregations can cooperate with one another without infringing on the autonomy of each of the cooperating congregations. In order to correct this abuse, Oji approaches his subject from the perspective of historical theology. This he did by reflecting on how autonomy issues have incapacitated the church and prevented her from harmonizing both human and material resources for the sole purpose of spreading the gospel of Christ. He is convinced that what operates in some Churches of Christ today is abuse of autonomy rather than authentic practice of autonomy as can be read on the pages of the New Testament.⁵⁷

Oji proposes biblical paradigms to explain how congregations can cooperate and work together without infringing on the autonomy of cooperating constituents. Biblical paradigms of the church as a body, as a family, as the wife of Christ, as a nation, an army, as a kingdom, as a building, and a host of other Bible-based models were meticulously explored to help readers have a fresh look at the subject. The heart of the book is the very first chapter that deals with the church as the body of Christ. Using 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27 as his theological framework, Oji likens the Church as the body of Christ to the human body comprising of semi-autonomous systems concurrently working in unity for the body to function properly. Oji took time to explain how the respiratory, digestive, circulatory, excretory, reproductive, nervous, skeletal and muscular systems,

⁵⁷O. O. Oji. 2009. *Autonomy Issues and Unity of the Church of Christ*, Ikeja: Christian Restoration Voice Publishing Company, 1-10.

although semi-autonomous, remain interdependent for the good of the body. He further observes that damage to any of the constituent system can paralyze the whole body. He notes that this is the type of autonomy that the Bible authorizes for the church with Christ as the head which is the central nervous system. Though the parts are reasonably self propelling, each part recognizes that the ultimate survival of the body depends on the cooperation with the other parts and that the cooperation, though voluntary, is necessary. Oji marvels at the height of inconsistency displayed by preachers who lament at Churches of Christ's apparent inability to take Nigeria for Christ but still hold tenaciously to their wrong teaching on self sufficiency of the local church. In his words, such preachers "seem to blame God for a defective precept instead of blaming themselves for misinterpretation and misrepresentation."⁵⁸

While Oji deserves commendation for employing scientific models to complement biblical exposition on the issue of autonomy and unity in Churches of Christ, his inability to provide specific case studies to illustrate his points is an area future researchers can explore. Nevertheless, Oji's work provides workable paradigms to further understanding on issues of autonomy and unity among Churches of Christ.

E. G Josiah looks at the subject of the Holy Spirit and miracles from the doctrinal perspective of Churches of Christ. In his book titled, *The Holy Spirit and Miracles* Josiah posits that modern miracles rarely meet standard of biblical miracles. He sees the event of Christ walking on the Sea (Matt. 14: 25-33) as a vintage Bible miracle that no modern miracle workers have been able to match. As far as Josiah is concerned, the questions begging for answers with reference to modern miracles are: "Are miracle workers today truly men of God?" "Do men of God patronize diabolical powers to draw people to themselves?" "Does the Bible say anything about how people obtain powers to perform miracles?" "Do we have biblical answers to these questions?" These and other questions Josiah attempted to answer in his work. He observes that most of what is called miracle today is nothing but providence of God. This belief in God's providence, according to him, causes us to pray when we are sick or confronted with any problem or desires. Josiah insists that "Our prayers are answered, the sick recovers, the jobless get job, the

⁵⁸*Autonomy Issues and Unity of the Church of Christ*, 28.

spiritually sick is set free, etc. . . . -all these are God's providence"⁵⁹ Josiah employs the situation of two women in the Bible to illustrate the distinction between miracle and providence. He observes that while Hannah, the mother of Samuel desired and prayed to God for a child (1 Sam 1: 2-28), Hannah, still had to have sexual relation with her husband, Elkanah before she conceived and bore Samuel. Josiah argues that this was not a miracle but a classic case of God's providence. He compares Hannah's case with that of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. He notes that Mary's conception was miraculous because she had no carnal knowledge of any man.⁶⁰

Furthermore, Josiah associates ability to perform miracles to the level of the Holy Spirit at the disposal of the miracle worker. According to him, four measures or categories of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit were identified in the New Testament. These are full or total measure of the Holy Spirit, baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit, impartation measure of the Holy Spirit and the Indwelling Measure of the Holy Spirit. Josiah avers that the privilege of full or total measure of the Holy Spirit was given only to Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry. This measure, he notes, empowered Christ to raise the dead, cast out demons, heal diverse sicknesses, supply material things, subject nature to his command (i.e. walking on the sea) and know people's present, past and future thoughts. This power and full measure of the Spirit went with Christ hence the promise of a comforter. The baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit is also known as the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This was specifically promised to the apostles and was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. With this measure the apostles were able to speak in tongues, healed the lame, cast out demons, raised the dead, heal all forms of sicknesses and diseases, and impart spiritual gifts.⁶¹

Impartation measure of the Holy Spirit, according to Josiah, was received through the laying of the apostles' hand on the recipient. Recipients include the seven deacons in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6: 1-6) and some Christians in Samaria, Ephesus, and Corinth (Acts 8: 12-1; 19: 1-7). Recipient of this measure could not transfer it to others, but were

⁵⁹E. G. Josiah. 2008. *The Holy Spirit and Miracles*, Lagos: Mac J Series Ltd., 12.

⁶⁰Josiah. *The Holy Spirit and Miracles*, 13.

⁶¹Josiah. *The Holy Spirit and Miracles*, 17-39

able to heal the lame, cast out unclean spirits, spoke in tongues, prophesied, possessed abundant spiritual gifts like wisdom, knowledge, faith, prophecy, discerning spirit, speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues. Indwelling Measure of the Holy Spirit, according to Josiah, is non-miraculous in nature. Every Christian receives it at the point of baptism. It dwells in Christians. It is by this measure that all Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit. According to Josiah, this is the measure of Holy Spirit available to all Christians in this age. Hence Christians today do not have the measure of Holy Spirit required to perform miracles.⁶² On the question of whether or not true miracles ceased? Josiah answers the question in the affirmative.

Josiah's interpretation of the New Testament on Holy Spirit and Miracles will ever remain controversial given man's penchant for miracles to resolve existential problems and the general position of Christian denominations on the subject of miracle. It is true that miracles have been widely abused by some so-called men of God, the situation which prompted the ban of display of miraculous prowess of pastors on radio and television by the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission. However, one hopes that Josiah and his ilk are not saying that God has ceased to be a miraculous God. Although the view expressed in the work is unpopular and perhaps contestable, nevertheless he provides a thought-provoking insight on the subject of Holy Spirit, providence and miracle.

The most recent publication on Churches of Christ in Nigeria was written by D.T. Alaje⁶³. The two-part, twenty-two chapters and 404-page general interest text titled *Churches of Christ and the Printed Page* was a compendium of information on Churches of Christ generally with special emphasis on important events and developments among Churches of Christ in Nigeria. Issues addressed in the first part include, the origin of writing and print medium, objectivity and subjectivity in writing, the power of the printed page, Voodoo Journalism (unprofessional practices of some editors of Churches of Christ publications) and from the archives (review of Churches of Christ publications from home and abroad). The second part takes on issues like the controversies behind obtaining certificate of registration by the trustees of the Church of Christ in Nigeria,

⁶²Josiah. *The Holy Spirit and Miracles*, 41-53

⁶³D. T. Alaje. 2009. *Churches of Christ and the Printed Page*. Iree: JAB Ojo & Sons (Nig) Enterprises.

eulogy of Young Owukiabo, conversation with late George Oginni, biography of James A. Garfield, the doctrine and organization of Churches of Christ, the restoration plea and some interesting facts of life.

The strength of the book lies on its thorough evaluation of Churches of Christ's publications and suggestions for improved editorial quality and financial support to sustain the publications as most members are averse to paying for their copies of the publications. He articulates poor health or death of the author/editor, lack of funds, high cost of production and penchant for freebies as the bane of the publications. Another high point of the text was in accentuating the proclivity of members of Churches of Christ to contend for the faith through writing. The book also contains several nuggets of useful information on Churches of Christ generally and Nigeria in particular. The interview with George Oginni was a researcher's delight on information on Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria. The section on the restoration plea and the nature/organization of the New Testament Church and the biography of James Garfield-former President of the United States and a member of the Disciples of Christ/Churches of Christ are interesting and informative inclusions in the book.

Be that as it may, there were several flaws in the book which should also be mentioned. In the first instance, the book was more of a compilation of materials rather than articulated narrative of the issues addressed. The author hero-worshipped Young Owukiabo and made him the standard for the resolution of several issues concerning the church and the controversies about the Board of Trustees of the Church of Christ-Nigeria. Moreover, most of the information on the Certificate of Incorporation controversy included in the book is of little or no edificational value apart. Likewise, what was the rationale for the chapter on the origin and religion of Yoruba people in a book of this title/genre? Add this to the quality of printing which is obviously less than the norm and was not in any way reflective of the quality of publications among Churches of Christ in Nigeria in this 21st Century. Nevertheless, Alaje, by this publication, has contributed his part in assuaging the problem of paucity of information on Churches of Christ in Nigeria. The above survey of materials on the historical development of the Church of Christ both in America and Nigeria bring us to another review of scholarly works on the biographies of Church of Christ leaders in the next section.

2.2 Biographies of Church of Christ Leaders

Richard T. Hughes in his work titled, *Reviving the Ancient Faith* chronicles biographical sketches and contributions of leading members of the Restoration Movement and Churches of Christ in America covering different epochs in the history of the church. Of Alexander Campbell (1788-1866), Hughes observes that Campbell through his two publications; the *Christian Baptist* (1823-1830) and the *Millennial Harbinger* (1830) which were widely circulated across America moulded the enduring character of Churches of Christ. According to Hughes, Campbell's core message in the *Christian Baptist* was that the restoration of primitive Christianity was the only antidote to the unity of all Christians which will by extension usher in the millennial age. Hughes notes further that Campbell bequeathed to Churches of Christ rational, legal and exclusive perspectives, which ironically many who became spokesmen of the church in the 19th century never fully understood Campbell's ecumenical intent. Nevertheless, Hughes insists that "one of Alexander Campbell's chief contributions to Churches of Christ as a mind-set--a worldview--that focused on restoring and maintaining the true church and that prized a profoundly sectarian spirit."⁶⁴

Next in the line of Restoration Movement/ Church of Christ's leaders documented by Hughes was Walter Scott (1796-1881). Described as the fountainhead of the radical Campbell tradition, Scott, according to Hughes was reared a Presbyterian in Scotland before he migrated to America in 1818. When he arrived in America, Hughes notes that Scott was influenced by George Forrester who had been discipled into the restorationist teachings. With this influence, Scott, according to Hughes, was deeply impressed by this brand of restorationist Christianity and was baptised by immersion into the Church of Christ. Scott met Campbell in 1821 and the two men recognized one another to be of the same mind. With this encounter, Scott became one of Campbell's closest friends and most trusted colleagues. In the context of the emerging character and theological development of Churches of Christ, Hughes informs that the 'plan of salvation' central to the conversion process in the Churches of Christ owed its origin to Scott. According to

⁶⁴R. T. Hughes. 1996. *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Williams B. Herdmans Publishing Company, 24.

Scott, the plan of salvation requires man to: a) believe Jesus as the Messiah, b) repent of his sins and c) submit to baptism by immersion for forgiveness of sin. According to Scott, God then complements man's effort by: a) forgiveness of man's sins, b) bestowing the gift of Holy Spirit and c) the gift of eternal life. Scott, Hughes says later moderated the six steps by collapsing the last to points into one. This process metamorphosed into what Scott called 'five-finger exercise' by placing each of the five points on his fingers to explain the plan of salvation.⁶⁵

Hughes listed the contributions of the following pioneers to the emerging character and theological development of Churches of Christ. Moses Lard (1818-1880), he notes, contributed substantially to the rational mind-set of Churches of Christ by insisting that the Movement was faithful to the Scriptures and conformed itself to the revealed will of Christ with absolute precision. Similarly, Hughes observes that Tolbert Fanning (1810-1874) did more than anyone in the brotherhood to shape the historic undenominational self-understanding of Churches of Christ in America. Fanning, Hughes says, was greatly convinced that Churches of Christ had faithfully reproduced primitive Christianity and therefore had no human creed, no human theology and no human history. For Benjamin Franklin (1812-1878), Hughes says he stood out as one of the leaders of Churches of Christ in the 19th century who identified primitive Christianity with the lower socioeconomic class prejudices. Franklin according to Hughes, believed that the true church was democratic, plain and poor.

Those who seek to understand the sectarian origin of Churches of Christ, Hughes insists, can ill afford to focus exclusively on Alexander Campbell since Campbell's perspective constitute only half of the story. The other half he says belongs to Barton W. Stone (1782-1844). Stone, Hughes explains, maintained his allegiance to the kingdom of God which he believed will ultimately triumph over the earth. For this perspective, Hughes says, Stone bequeathed to Churches of Christ an ethical and spiritual reform that focused on inner piety and outward holiness. Hughes went on to make a distinction of the apocalyptic perspectives of both men. While Campbell viewed the kingdom of God (the church) as a constitutional monarchy in the here now, Stone held that the kingdom of

⁶⁵ Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, 48-54.

God transcends the church on earth. Stone, Hughes maintains, envisioned the kingdom as God's final triumphant rule which will be consummated in the last age. For Stone then, ultimately the kingdom of God is not on earth, the church is only a gathering place for the candidates of the ultimate kingdom.

Hughes biographical sketches and documentation of the contributions of pioneering leading members of the Restoration Movement/Churches of Christ provide instructive insights on how these men contributed to the revival of the ancient faith. It also confirms the position of this study that while Churches of Christ rightly affirm the sacred nature of Scriptures, the same cannot be said of her hermeneutics. The church's hermeneutical presuppositions emerged from interpretational perspectives of her leading members particularly, Alexander Campbell. Their views or interpretation of the Scriptures cannot therefore be said to be fallible. Although Hughes' coverage was not as elaborate as one would have expected of a work of this nature, it nevertheless provided nuggets of information on specific contributions of leading members of the Restoration Movement/ Churches of Christ in America. His work is also a far cry of the present study premised on appraising selected teachings and practices of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria.

Dabney Phillips' *Restoration Principles and Personalities* contained broad background information on 19th century Restoration Movement leaders like Alexander Campbell, Barton Warren Stone, John Smith, Walter Scott, Moses Lard, J. W. McGarvey, Isaac Errett and Daniel Sommer. Phillips also provided adequate background information on the contributions of those he termed as 20th century giant of faith like, James A. Harding, T. B. Larimore (1843-1929), Grover Cleveland Brewer and H. Leo Boles (1874-1946). On Alexander Campbell, Phillips gave account of his birth in Antrim Ireland, his elementary education, how he worked as a labourer on the farm, how he grew up in a home that had respect for the Bible, how he became interested in spiritual matters as a teenager, the shipwreck on the journey to meet his father in America, his enrolment at the University of Glasgow for one year, how he arrived in America on time to meet the father's famous *Declaration and Address*, how his father became the architect of the Restoration Movement through the address and how Alexander propagated and defended the principles of the movement enunciated by his father, how he married Margaret Brown

on March 12, 1811, his penchant for writing and publication and the legacies he bequeathed the Christian movement, most especially, Churches of Christ.⁶⁶

Similarly, Phillips described Barton Stone as the man had the the honour of organizing the first congregation to use the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice and to wear the name Christian. Stone, according to Phillips, was born in Port Tobacco, Maryland, USA, on December 24, 1772. His father died when he was three years old while his mother moved her large family to Pittsylvania County Virginia when Stone was seven years of age. Phillips further illustrates how Stone got his share of his father's inheritance at the age of sixteen, how he used his share of inheritance to pursue legal education, how he was sprinkled as an infant in the Church of England, how he got converted into the Presbyterian Church, how he studied theology and got lincenced to preach in the Presbyterian Church, how he continued to have trouble with the Presbyterian doctrine, how he began to preach that the gospel is for all not just the elect against Calvinism, how he married Eliza Campbell in 1801, how he was tried with other ministers for preaching non-Calvinistic doctrines, how Stone and his dismissed colleagues organized their own Springfield Presbytery, how the Springfield as disbanded nine months after, how he published the famous "Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery" on June 28, 1804, how the publication contained the plea for men to hold fervently to the Bible alone as the standard of faith and conduct, how Stone and his group determined to be known and addressed as Christians, how he met with Alexander Campbell in 1824, how he began the publication of *The Christian Messenger* in 1826, his invaluable contributions towards restoration of primitive Christianity and how death came on November 9, 1844.⁶⁷

In as much as Phillips' accounts of the biographies of pioneering leaders of the Church of Christ provided excellent information about the family background and early childhood of the leaders on parade, this was however done at the expense of their spiritual contributions to the realization of the church's cardinal objective of restoring primitive Chistianity.

⁶⁶D. Phillips, 1975. *Restoration Principles and Personalities*. University of Alabama: Youth in Action Inc., 37-54.

⁶⁷ Phillips, 1975. *Restoration Principles and Personalities*, 85-101.

In his work titled, *Makers and Molders of the Restoration Movement*,⁶⁸ J. J. Haley documents the biographies of ten men whose character and work he thinks greatly contributed to the restoration of primitive Christianity in the 19th century. Halley described Thomas Campbell as the creative personality of the 19th century union movement; Alexander Campbell as the prophet and leader of the reformation movement; Barton W. Stone as the prophet of evangelism and piety in the reformation movement; Walter Scott as preacher and teacher; Isaac Errett as the major prophet of the second generation of disciples; Moses Lard as the prophet of radicalism, literalism and conservatism in the second generation of the reformation movement; Winthrop Hopson and George Longan as two representative types of leadership in the middle period of restoration history; and John W. McGarvey and Alexander Procter as two representatives of conservative and progressive leadership. Haley's epitaphs describe the contributions of each individuals to the ideals of the movement from the author's perspective. While Haley prides himself as being a contemporary of most of the leaders whose biographies⁶⁹ he wrote, his work can only be described as an abridged version of the biographies of the leaders under focus.

N. E. Nsentip and Bokime Bassej in their study titled, *The New Testament Church and its Restoration in Nigeria*, dedicated a section for the profiles of some pioneer Christians who worked diligently towards the establishment of the Church of Christ in Nigeria. According to the authors, since the church is a spiritual and not a human organization, their purpose was not to praise-sing but to recognise the contributions of the pioneers in enthroning the New Testament Church in Nigeria. The criteria for listing according to the authors include active faith, diligence, zeal and commitment to keeping the unity of faith. The profile according to the authors highlights the antecedents, character, emotions and contributions of the leaders to the growth of the

⁶⁸ J. J. Haley. 1914. *Makers and Molders of the Movement: A Study of Leading Men among the Disciples of Christ*. St. Louis, MO: Christian Board of Publication.

⁶⁹For more works biographies of leaders of Restoration Movement/Churches of Christ in America, see P.H. Welshimer. *Concerning the Disciples: A Brief Resume of the Movement to Restore the New Testament Church*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing Foundation; A. M. Fitch Jr. 1970. *Alexander Campbell: Preacher of Reform and Reformer of Preaching*. Austin Texas: Sweet Publishing Company; and John Rogers. 1847. *The Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone*. Cincinnati: J. A. & U. P. James.

church, particularly in Nigeria.⁷⁰ The pioneers include, Andre Isiip (1947), B.N. Okure (1932), Benjamin Oladeinde Bafunso (1928), C.O Ogwuru (1933), C. A. O. Essien (1915-1960), David Anako (1916-1998), Dennis David Isonguyo (1928-1984), E. J. Ebong (1927-1997), E. E. Ekpe (1938-1994), E. Y. Owukiabo (1935-2006), E. N. Ozemelah (1943), Essien Ekanem (1920-1973), E.E. Okon (1939), Etim Asuquo (1939-2000), Ezekiel Akinyemi Akinyemi (1936) Jackson Olise (1927-1996), Jacob Achinefu (1943), and a host of others. The authors were correct in referring to their compilation as a profile. It was far from a biography as a result of the brevity of the entries. Nevertheless, the work provides first hand information on pioneer leaders of the Church of Christ in Nigeria. To the review of scholarly works on Christian doctrines and practices we turn in the following segment.

2.3 Christian Doctrines and Practices

Ronald E. Heine notes that the word ‘doctrine’ is borrowed from the Latin word *doctrina* which means teaching or instruction. Heine avers further that the word doctrine is not peculiar to religion as every branch of learning has its doctrine which constitute the essence of that discipline’s self-understanding and which all practitioners of the discipline adhere to. Christian doctrine, then, Heine maintains, consists of common core of Christian teaching that determines Christian self-understanding and what it means to be a Christian. He sees record of the historical Jesus as documented in the Bible as the data of Christian doctrine. In other words, “the Bible provides both the foundation on which doctrine is built and the aleyriterion by which doctrine is judged.”⁷¹ For George A. Lindbeck Christian or church doctrine is a communally authoritative teaching of beliefs and practices that are considered indispensable to the identity and the welfare of a faith community.⁷² This is saying that a doctrine consists of teachings or instructions that affirm basic beliefs of a religious group or body. It is the theoretical component of a religious experience.

⁷⁰ Nsentip and Basse, *The New Testament Church and its Restoration in Nigeria*, 119.

⁷¹ Heine, “What is Christian Doctrine,” 50.

⁷² G. A. Lindbeck. 1984. *The Nature of Doctrine*. London: SPCK, 74.

Christian theology, according to Alister McGrath, consists of doctrines of God, Christ, man, salvation, church and eschatology.⁷³ McGrath in this description of Christian theology extends the frontier of the discussion to cover the gamut of Christian understanding of God, Christ, man, salvation, church and the things to come which forms the essential elements of Christian doctrine. T. Scannell defines Christian doctrine as “the act of teaching or imparting the knowledge of the elements of the Christian faith in preparation for initiation into Christianity.”⁷⁴ According to him what is taught is a body of instructions or principles of the Christian faith. Doctrines are therefore, codified rules of religious instruction determining how people come to faith, maintain their faith and carry out ethical demands of their faith. Doctrines, he notes, also determine the dos and don’ts among people of common faith and inform the terms of fellowship or relationship with people outside their doctrinal parameters. Scannell observes further that what constitutes doctrine and its teaching were mentioned in the Gospels, Acts and some Pauline corpus. This was also referred to by Luke when introducing the purpose of his writing in Luke 1: 4. In Acts 18: 25, Apollos who has been well versed in the way of the Lord (Christian doctrine) taught the Ephesians about Jesus. Paul variously referred to teaching of doctrine in 1 Corinthians 14: 19 and Galatians 6: 6.⁷⁵

Wayne Gruden defines Christian doctrine as what the Bible directly teaches about some particular topic. According to him, Christian doctrine could be seen from either a broad or a narrow perspective. He went on to categorize broad doctrines to include doctrine of God, doctrine of man, doctrine of Christ, doctrine of Holy Spirit, doctrine of redemption, doctrine of the Church and doctrine of the future. Narrow doctrines, he notes, include God’s eternity, doctrine of Trinity, doctrine of God’s justice, etc.⁷⁶

⁷³A. E. McGrath. 1995. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, (second edition), Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 21.

⁷⁴T. Scannell. 1909. “Christian Doctrine” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company, *New Advent*. Retrieved June 22, 2010 from <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05075b.htm> 1 of 29.

⁷⁵Scannell, “Christian Doctrine” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1 of 29.

⁷⁶W. Gruden. 1994. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 25.

It should be observed that the term doctrine in the Christian context is often used interchangeably with the word dogma. This is the sense in which Jaroslav Pelikan defines dogma as a term used to designate the official doctrinal teaching of a church. According to him, the term is employed in a looser sense to emphasize the particular doctrinal emphasis of a church.⁷⁷ Dogma, according to Pelikan signifies a religious truth established by divine revelation and defined by the church. While doctrines are general in scope, dogmas are specific designating official teachings of a particular church. Whereas doctrine has to do with theoretical component of a religious experience, dogma is a form of the abiding vitality of the deposit of faith in the church which is always the same.

This distinction notwithstanding, Pelikan notes further that doctrines and dogmas are roughly used synonymously. Doctrines are usually designed to serve as catalytic inklings to religious insight while dogmas are those doctrines which a church declares to be the most essential contents of its faith profession. Generally, doctrines and dogmas function as rational conceptualization of religious truth that aid theological reflection. They help religious enthusiasts interpret the sacred scripture; understand their religious duties and obligations; safeguard the lines between allowable diversity and actual error and chart religious pathway to wisdom, rectitude and wisdom. Doctrines and dogmas are also used for the defense of faith against misinterpretation and error within or without a religious tradition given the pluralistic nature of theological reflections. Moreover, there is a constant concern for identity and continuity of a particular tradition against contrary doctrinal claims and challenges of secular wisdom and unbelief. Doctrines and dogmas are therefore, “a theological necessity which designates the ‘true faith’ against detractors and unbelief.”⁷⁸ Pelikan’s comprehensive analyses of the similarities and differences between doctrines and dogmas leads us to the discussion on the complementariness of Christian doctrines or what modern scholars refer to as systematic doctrine.

Gerard Loughlin attests to the complementary nature of Christian doctrines. He notes that doctrines support and inform one another as one can start from any one doctrine and work down to the rest. This complementariness, according to him, is not

⁷⁷J. Pelikan. 1958. Dogma. *A Handbook of Christian Theology: Essential Information for Every Christian*, Marvin Halverson and Arthur Cohen ed. Great Britain: Meridian Books, 85.

⁷⁸Pelikan, *A Handbook of Christian Theology*, 85-86.

surprising given the fact that all doctrines centers on the love of God-everything comes from the Father through the Son in the Spirit. Loughlin avers that St Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologiae* is paradigmatic of the interconnectedness of Christian doctrines where any one part is ultimately related to all other parts. Loughlin avows further that doctrine has no proper starting point as there is no one doctrine that is the basis upon which others rest, but each doctrine supports and is supported by all the other doctrines. Doctrine, Loughlin claims, is pericentric as it centers on the story of Jesus. Technically, Loughlin sees doctrine as the grammar of Christian discourse and the director of the church's performance of the gospel. He concludes that doctrine rests on nothing other than the ecclesial tradition of discipleship and it is only in so far as doctrine brings the church to the point of judgment and conversation worked out through encounter with the story of Jesus that it finds its proper basis and function.⁷⁹ Loughlin's conception of Christian doctrine is as systematic as it is functional. Christian doctrine, he claims, complements one another, centers on God's love, has no starting point, it centers on the story of Jesus, it determines the activities of the church and instructs the disciples to follow the footsteps of Jesus in good deeds. Loughlin's systematization of Christian doctrine leads us to definite review on elements of Christian doctrine that follows.

Carl E. Braaten sees the Christian doctrine of salvation as the zenith of the church's proclamation as it addresses man's deepest need. Braaten identifies the multi-dimensional nature of the theology of salvation as the supreme act of God in Christ involving the entire spectrum of the saving events in the gospel story of Jesus, his birth, his life and teachings, his death and resurrection, his ascension and session at the right hand of God, and his final coming in glory to judge the living and the dead. He further maintains that other elements of Christian doctrine like the doctrine of God, Christ, church, sacraments, eschatology and the like are interpreted from the perspective of salvation. Braaten goes on to itemize elements of Christian doctrine of salvation to include the belief that: only God can save; God's only saving bridge to the world is Jesus Christ; an understanding of the atonement must take seriously the polarity between the justice and the love of God; the whole life of Christ from incarnation through resurrection

⁷⁹Gerard Loughlin. 1997. The Basis and Authority of Doctrine. The *Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. Colin Gunton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 52-54.

must be taken into account; the atonement is a once-for-all act which is inherently and antecedently valid, prior to any subjective response on the part of believers; the human condition consists in sin as a guiltiness before the living God which can be rectified only by divine forgiveness; God's way of salvation is by identification with sinful humanity; in Christ God saves the whole human race, not one individual at a time; God in Christ bears the whole guilt of sin and all its consequences; and the cross of Christ as a victory over the tyrants who oppress the world.⁸⁰

Braaten concludes by insisting that the Christian doctrine of salvation is in conflict with all other systems of salvation presented by the ideologies and religions of the world and its uniqueness is seen in its universal significance of the promise of salvation through Christ alone. This biblical promise of salvation, he notes, cannot be equated with Buddhist illumination, Hindu unification, nor with any variant of human potential movement, with the Marxist transformation of the world through revolution or any other form of salvation based on vague feeling of human fulfillment.⁸¹

Eugene F. Klug launches into Christian doctrine of man and explains the futility of philosophical systems to define the nature of man and offer explanations for man's bewilderment concerning his origin and destiny. Klug listed some of the philosophical systems to include: Idealism- which bravely maintains faith in man and his capacities; Naturalism- which views man as a highly developed animal with tremendous capacity to improve his lot; Romanticism- which insists that man is inherently good and needs only to let the power of good come to expression through his innate mystical resources; Modern psychology- which pictures man's effort to deal with his predicament through various mechanism; Existentialism- which holds no hope for man other than using his freedom to act by doing what is right at a particular moment to achieve authentic existence or self-realization; Marxist socialism- which preaches that man is not inherently evil except for the evil that estranges him from nature, self and others leaving God

⁸⁰ C. E. Braaten. 1981. "The Christian Doctrine of Salvation" *Interpretation* 35. 2: 126-127.

⁸¹ Braaten, *The Christian Doctrine of Salvation*, 131.

completely out of the picture. Tried as these philosophical systems did, Klug posits that none could adequately offer solution to man's moral flaws before God.⁸²

Klug observes further that the Bible and not any man-made philosophical propositions can give accurate information on the nature and destiny of man. The scriptures, he maintains, provide precise testimonies concerning the origin, meaning and the destiny of man. The scriptures, he notes, established the fact that man originated from God, created for God's pleasure and destined for eternal fellowship with God through the redemption that Christ provided. Klug pithily encapsulates the Christian doctrine of man thus: "There is nothing amidst all the contradictory pictures and philosophies which men themselves have proposed which can compare with the truth, grace, and glory of God which now is ours in the face of Christ Jesus in whom we believe."⁸³

George Newlands examines the complexities of Christian doctrine and how contemporary Christian theologians have benefited from the historical narratives of the Old Testament. He explains that adequate understanding of the New Testament requires awareness of the contents of the Old Testament and that the doctrine of the early church consisted to a very large extent of scriptural exegesis of the Old Testament. Newlands observes that the Old Testament acquires its special place in Christian doctrine due to its historical witness to the development of a covenantal relationship between God and his people, the unique source of the law and the fact that it was within the world which it brings to expression that the gospel arose. Moreover, historical framework within which Jesus understood his mission was the world and the documents of the Old Testament, hence the saying that Christ is the key to the understanding of the Old Testament.⁸⁴

Newlands avers further that through the Old Testament and God's relationship with Israel, Christians are able to theologically reflect on the human situation and the communication between man and God which ultimately resulted into the incarnation. The revelation of the interaction between God and man, Newlands remarks, is one of the Old Testament's most valuable aids to the construction of Christian doctrine. Moreover,

⁸²E. F. Klug. 1984. The Doctrine of Man: Christian Anthropology. *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 48. 2-3:142-143.

⁸³Klug, The Doctrine of Man 151.

⁸⁴G. Newlands. 1973. The Old Testament and Christian Doctrine *Modern Churchman* 16. 4: 239-241.

Newlands considers the Old Testament's imagery of the majesty and the mercy, the holiness and the righteousness of the one God who keeps faith and asks for faithfulness, justice and mercy in his creatures as a data that cannot be found elsewhere. While grounding the indispensability of the Old Testament in the construction of Christian doctrine, Newlands concludes,

The story of redemption is ultimately linked with the story of creation and the story of relations between God and his people may help us to see something of the nature of reconciliation, and of the structures, the tasks, the elements of moral concern that must shape the concrete activity of Christians, both in God's present and in his future.⁸⁵

Albert C Sunderberg Jr. in his explication of the Bible canon and the Christian doctrine of inspiration opines that the concepts of Bible canon and inspiration are virtually used synonymously in Protestant thought such that Protestant doctrine on biblical inspiration has been a corollary consequent to the accepted circumstances of canonization of both Testaments. Sunderberg, therefore, underscores the need for clarification in the understanding of canonical history which entails a concomitant and commensurate revision of the doctrine of inspiration. This clarification, he says, is important in view of the fact that the church inherited 'scripture' and not 'canon' from Judaism as the Jewish canon was not defined until A. D. 90 and if accurate history of the canon in the church must be written, the term 'scripture' and 'canon' should be differentiated and not used synonymously. Sunderberg proposed that the term 'scripture' should be used to describe writings that are regarded as authoritative and 'canon' to designate a closed collection of scripture to which nothing can be added or subtracted.⁸⁶

Concerning the Christian doctrine of inspiration, Sunderberg posits that it is no longer possible for Protestant Christians to argue for the validity of the Jewish canon for the Christian Old Testament as the early church had no Old Testament canon until the fourth century. Similarly, in view of an avalanche of historical evidences that contradicted the authenticity of Canon Muratori as a second century document containing

⁸⁵ Newlands, *The Old Testament and Christian Doctrine*, 243.

⁸⁶ A. C. Sunderberg Jr. 1975. *The Bible Canon and the Christian Doctrine of Inspiration*, *Interpretation* 29. 4: 352-356.

the core of the New Testament canon, Sunderberg argues that the Christian doctrine of inspiration could not serve as a criterion for canonization as its use in the church was so broad and not limited to the canon of the scripture. He maintains that the understanding of the early church on the Christian doctrine of inspiration was different from the commonly held view that the books of the Bible are different from all other writings because they are inspired and that inspiration is determinative as well as synonymous to canon. Whereas the early church held that there was no doctrine restricting inspiration to a particular era or particular persons, except heretics; that God pours out his spirit upon Christians and the church. Sunderberg concludes that the Christian doctrine of inspiration comes from God, parallels biblical inspiration, complementing it and opening every Christian age to theological verisimilitude.⁸⁷

Jaroslav Pelikan in his discourse on the historiography of Christian doctrine notes that the development, legitimacy and limit of Christian doctrine cannot be appreciated until the process by which doctrines have been developed was charted with greater accuracy. He admits that the process of development of doctrine has not been adequately investigated as one of the most important frontiers in church history. This task, he insists, is too important to be left to theologians or historians of theology, but an assignment to be undertaken by church historians as the study of the development of Christian doctrine needs total immersion in the concrete life of the church's past since doctrine develops from earlier doctrine within the context of the total life of the church. Pelikan remarks further that the historian is most interested in the change rather than in the continuity of the developmental process of doctrine, emphasizing the novelty of the change. The interest in change, he explains, takes the form of an examination and analysis of theological controversy and speculation brought about by the change. The church historian, he maintains, ranges the speculative alternatives across the battlefield, detailed the thrusts and counter-thrusts and described the eventual victory of orthodoxy. Pelikan asserts that it is when the process of development rather than its legitimacy and limits

⁸⁷Sunderberg Jr., *The Bible Canon and the Christian Doctrine of Inspiration* 364-371.

become the object of historical research that the problem of the development of doctrine is lifted from the arena of polemical theology.⁸⁸

On what should be the attitude of the church historian in the task of historical reconstruction of the development of Christian doctrine, Pelikan counsels,

Church history is always more than the history of doctrine, but it should not be less. The historian of doctrine must continue to do his own work, but he must do it as a historian. He will, of course, find theological questions in history of doctrine ineluctable; and in this sense he, too, will have to speak as a theologian.⁸⁹

Paul M. Harrison explains how sociological concept of functional theory can be used to interpret religious beliefs and organizational systems. He notes that functional analysts observe how organizations and social systems meet human needs, how social systems can decline and die when they fail to meet the needs of the people and how a distinction can be drawn between purpose and functions of social systems. Harrison explains further that functional analysis has often been used to interpret religion to explain how it integrates, harmonizes and provides society with its highest ideals; and how religion as a generalized phenomenon in relation to the society can be both eufunctional and dysfunctional. The purpose of the sociologist, he notes, is therefore, to carefully analyze the social functions of religion.⁹⁰

Applying functional theory to Christian doctrine, Harrison avers that the purpose and function of social system or belief activity of a particular social system or religious group is to meet the needs of the people. These needs are called functional requisites, the lack of which the social system will decline or die. Harrison applied this theory to religious groups and declares that a religious group like any social system must recruit members if it is to survive over time or decline and die out. Similarly if the beliefs of a

⁸⁸Jaroslav Pelikan. 1966. An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, *Church History*, 35. 1: 5-9.

⁸⁹Pelikan, An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, 11.

⁹⁰P. M. Harrison. 1962. Functional Theory and Christian Doctrine, *Theology Today* 19.1: 59-60.

social group oppose the fulfillment of the functional requisites, the group must either adjust its beliefs or decline and die out.⁹¹

Harrison illustrated the theory from the perspective of the Quakers whose classic beliefs do not permit them to fulfill the functional requisite of role or leadership assignment. Since no social system can operate without provision for leadership and division of labour, the Quakers have declined in influence as a religious group except a section of the group in Mid-West America that have altered their doctrine and beliefs to allow for ministerial leadership. Harrison also applied functional theory to organizational structure of religious groups and opined that larger and more extensive religious groups require a more complex and highly rationalized organizational system than the smaller intimate fellowships of believers. Thus, sectarian groups which attain denominational status will be forced to change the pattern of their beliefful activity as a result of internal institutional requirements. Harrison concludes that while the sociologist is in no position to judge the validity of competing doctrinal claims of religious groups, he can make an estimate of the functional effects of these beliefs.⁹²

James Leo Garrett Jr. in his discourse on the history of Christian doctrine defines doctrine as any and all Christian teachings within the God-man dimension held by any segment of the Christian movement who expressed and emphasized these teachings in creeds, confessions of faith and conciliar actions. Garrett then begins his analysis of the history of Christian doctrine by reviewing writings that preceded and pointed to the rise of formal study of the history of dogma at the end of eighteenth century and the general studies of Christian doctrinal history since the end of the eighteenth century. Garrett identifies the following as literary works that preceded and pointed to the rise of formal study of doctrine at the end of the eighteenth century: catalogues of heresies and heretical writers; catalogues of orthodox writers; the writings of post-Reformation period during which patristic literature came under the scrutiny of historical and literary criticism; and eighteenth century literature especially in Germany that gave greater attention to sectarian movements in Christianity. Furthermore, Garrett listed literature of general

⁹¹Harrison, *Functional Theory and Christian Doctrine*, 62-64.

⁹²Harrison, *Functional Theory and Christian Doctrine*, 65-69.

studies on the history of Christian doctrine since the end of the eighteenth century to include, literature on Christian doctrine by German protestants, writings on Christian doctrine by Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox authors, histories on Christian doctrine by American authors, histories of Christian thought by American authors, histories of theology and surveys of periods within the history of Christian doctrine.⁹³

The following arguments, according to Garrett, are advanced against the propriety and significance of the history of Christian doctrine in contemporary Christian enterprise: (a) some look at doctrines of Christianity as obstructive to a Christianity which is construed primarily as individual religious experience; (b) others read Christian doctrines, especially as formulated in creeds and confessions as inconsistent with the ethical teachings of Jesus; (c) there are those who regarded doctrinal development as a perversion of original Christianity and (d) those who implicitly or explicitly posited that the history of Christian doctrine is an irrelevant sideline for New Testament Christians who prefer to 'leapfrog' across the centuries in order to reproduce the beliefs and practices of first century Christianity.⁹⁴ In his response to the above dissenting voices, Garrett admonished the student of the history of Christian doctrine to "recognize fully the roles of piety and ethics, the legitimacy of prophet and dissenter, and the commandingly unique authority of biblical revelation."⁹⁵

Similarly, Garrett identifies the basic problems in the interpretation of the history of doctrine as: the absence of consensus between the Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and the Protestants on the infallibility of the church as institution in respect to the definition of dogmas; the manner of relating Christian doctrinal history to the teachings of primitive Christianity; the perspectives and outlook of Christian doctrine historian and the problem of distinguishing between primary or fundamental doctrines on the one hand and the debatable or non-essential doctrines on the other. Contemporary writer and student of the history of Christian doctrine, Garrett warns, must be cognizance of these challenges and meticulously navigate his way through them. On what should define the scope of modern

⁹³J. L. Garrett Jr. 1971. History of Christian Doctrine. *Review & Expositor* 68. 2: 243-247.

⁹⁴Garrett Jr. History of Christian Doctrine. 248-251.

⁹⁵Garrett Jr. History of Christian Doctrine. 252

history of Christian doctrine, Garrett admonishes that the older delimitation should be abandoned for it obscures modern doctrinal history of Christianity, discriminates against the teachings of Christian denominations and accords no recognition to other ecclesial communities. Furthermore, contemporary history of Christian doctrine should benefit from insights of related disciplines like history of biblical hermeneutics, history of Christian apologetics, history of Christian ethics and history of Christianity's confrontation with non-Christians. On the methodology to be adopted by contemporary historian of Christian doctrine, Garrett advances a method that treats the history of Christian doctrine according to the major confessional traditions (Eastern Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant) with the approach of men, movements, councils, and creeds being followed under each confessional division. This method, he thinks, will preserve the integrity of the pre-Chalcedonian era and integrate the theological history of the major confessional traditions which have been in fragments⁹⁶

So far, the discussion of Christian doctrines began with a panoramic survey of definitions of doctrine, characteristics of Christian doctrine and the similarities and the differences between doctrine and dogma. The conversation graduated into an analysis of the complimentary nature of Christian doctrines and the importance of doctrines in the life of the church. The discussion was later narrowed down to specific Christian doctrines like soteriology, anthropology, inspiration, history of the development of Christian doctrine and the history of historiography of Christian doctrine. Each of the work under review had its strengths and weaknesses but all the same added its unique dimension to the discussion on Christian doctrine. But as insightful, informative and illuminating as these contributions were none of these works impinge the frontier of this study which looks at selected teachings of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria. The review of relevant literature for the task of this study continues as we turn to review scholarly works on Christian practices in the next segment.

⁹⁶Garrett Jr. History of Christian Doctrine. 253-259.

Craig Dykstra defines practice⁹⁷ as participation in a cooperative formed pattern of activity that emerges out of a complex tradition of interactions among many people sustained over a long period of time. Dykstra went on to describe Christian practices as patterns of communal action that create openings in the lives of believers where the grace, mercy and presence of God may be made known.⁹⁸ For Craig Dykstra and Dorothy Bass, Christian practices are “things Christian people do together over time to address fundamental human needs in response to and in the light of God’s active presence for the life of the world.”⁹⁹ According to Dorothy Bass Christian practices are meant to heal and shape Christian communities and address fundamental human needs. They are not treasured only for their outcomes; they do it not just because it works but because it is good.¹⁰⁰ Bass posits further, “people at practice do things, from one practice to another, oil is rubbed in, food is set out, water is splashed, embraces are shared. Every practice is made up of very small gestures like these. One thing about practices is that they are down-to-earth.”¹⁰¹ In regards to specific Christian practice, Bass pithily declares that every Christian practice requires prayer, as Christians do things together they attune themselves to take part in God’s risky activities.¹⁰²

To summarize the above thoughts, Christian practices could be said to be what Christians do regularly to actualize their faith. Like doctrines, Christian practices vary between denominations, individual church and individual Christian. Some practices such as Baptism, Confirmation, Sunday Services, Prayer, Bible Study, Evangelism and

⁹⁷Similarly, *New World Dictionary*, New York: Warner Books Inc., 462, variously defines practice as what is engaged in frequently, to make a habit of something or what is done repeatedly so as to become proficient

⁹⁸C. Dykstra. 1997. Reconciving Practice in Theological Inquiry and Education, *Virtues & Practices in Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics after Macintyre*, ed. Nancy C. Murphy, Brad J. Kallenberg, and Mark Naton. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 170.

⁹⁹C. Dykstra and D. Bass. 2002. A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices, *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 18.

¹⁰⁰D.C. Bass. Ed. 1997. *Practicing our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 6-7.

¹⁰¹Bass., *Practicing our Faith*, 8-9.

¹⁰²Bass., *Practicing our Faith*, 202.

Missions, Ordination, Marriage, Healing, Naming, Funerals and other rituals are common to virtually all forms of Christianity. Virtually all Christian denominations attend worship services on Sundays and items of worship in most cases include singing, prayer, sermon, giving and thanksgiving. Justin Martyr in his description of a second century church service alludes to the following components of Sunday worship: Scripture readings from the Old Testament, one of the Gospels or an Epistle; a sermon, congregational prayer and thanksgiving; the Eucharist or Holy Communion and Collection or offering in which people are asked to contribute money.¹⁰³

Practically, almost all Christian traditions affirm that Christian practice should include acts of personal piety such as prayer, Bible reading and meditation, morally upright lifestyle, feeding the hungry and the homeless and love for one's neighbors, non-Christians and even enemies. Martyr notes further that by sharing in Christ's life, death and resurrection, Christians believe that they die to sin and can be resurrected with him to new life.¹⁰⁴ Christian practices also include fasting, observation of holidays and feasts like Christmas, Easter and Lent.

Robert Muthiah in his discourse on Christian practices, congregational leadership and priesthood of all believers avers that there is often a gap between a theology of priesthood of all believers and the on-going life of the local church. He therefore, posits that the priesthood of all believers can be re-conceptualized through denominational practices to re-invigorate limp and pallid congregations to live as true believers actively engaged in the work of the Lord. Christian practices, he notes, are not just a way to prepare for the fullness of God's kingdom or filler activities in which we engage while we await the kingdom; it is experienced and extended through Christian practices. Muthiah focuses on witness, discernment and confession as Christian practices. He established the connections between these practices and the priesthood of all believers

¹⁰³Justin Martyr (First Apology, chapter LXVII). Retrieved February 18, 2011 from <http://www.experiencefestival.com/a/Christianity - Worship and practices/id/4923399> 1-2 of 4.

¹⁰⁴Justin Martyr (First Apology, chapter LXVII), 1 of 4.

and insists that these practices are best nurtured by implemental, relational and interpretative congregational leaders with focus on interpretation and meaning-making.¹⁰⁵

Leif Kehrwald in his discussion on families and Christian practice observes that when it comes to growing in faith, many families are guilty of passive responsibility even if they are deliberate and intentional about other matters of life. Kehrwald reminds Christian families that belief in God is not a passive but an active and intentional enterprise as Christian heritage and theology have always recognized necessity for intention with respect to faith. Accordingly, he notes that a key to family faith development must be intentionality-families choosing to engage in practices and activities that enrich their well-being and enhance their faith. Hence, like a physician who practices medicine, or an attorney who practices law, Christians are called to practice their faith.¹⁰⁶

Kehrwald maintains that the Christian tradition has always invited and challenged believers to engage in proven activities that enhance their faith and spirituality such as prayer and Bible study. In individual and communal prayers, Kehrwald observes that Christians attempt to stay tuned to the movement of the Spirit and the will of God in their lives and in Bible study they recognize the source of God's great revelation through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. He listed other traditional Christian practices to include: worship, communal sharing, examination of conscience, works of mercy and justice, celebration of the sacraments, rituals and devotions amongst others. On the question of what intentional practices should mean to families, Kehrwald finds the answer in a Christian family's intentional choice to live as disciples. This concept of family discipleship, he says, is characterized by the following elements: Call- a family's sense of mission and call to place themselves at God's disposal in a minor or major way; Commitment-a promise of faithfulness to God and each other; Values-family decisions are rooted in core Christian values such as compassion, love, self-sacrifice and community; Trust-placing their lives in God's hands and in each other's; Practice-like the attorney and the physician, they practice their faith; Discipline- they seek to live their

¹⁰⁵R. Muthiah. 2003. Christian Practices, Congregational Leadership, and the Priesthood of all Believers *Journal of Religious Leadership* 2. 2: 167-194.

¹⁰⁶L. Kehrwald. 1999. Families and Christian Practice. *Journal of Family Ministry* 13. 4: 48-51.

faith, even when they will prefer to do otherwise; Prayer, Ritual and Worship-they seek to connect with Jesus; Service, Compassion and Generosity-no matter how trying times may be, there are others who are less fortunate than us; Communion- we seek to connect with others who share our faith; and Reflection-we take moments to look back at our day, our week, our year, our key events to see if we can discern God's gracious activities in our lives.¹⁰⁷

Edmund Afagbegge in his call to practice Christian prayer as a way of life sees prayer not as what we do but as a mode of being- a relationship between the 'I and Thou.' He explains that the right understanding and attitude toward prayer as essentially a mode of being-the exercise of prayer as the actualization of who he or she is. According to Afagbegge, when Christians say 'let us pray,' it means, 'let us enter into a relationship with God,' or 'let us deepen the relationship we have.' Prayer therefore is the Christian response to God's presence and love in his or her life. Similarly, Afagbegge observes that prayer and faith are inseparable and are instinctively connected such that prayer is said to be the consequence of faith and vice versa. Faith then gives prayer its true and authentic Christian character.¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, Afagbegge perceives Christian prayer as an encounter with God and chronicles instances of prayer in the Old Testament where individuals and communities like Moses, Jeremiah, Esther and even the Psalmist encountered God through prayer. Likewise, he notes that in the New Testament, the Gospels, particularly, Luke portrayed Jesus as prayer personified. He identifies the Scripture as an important source for Christian prayer through which God speaks to humanity through his words. Genuine Christian practice of prayer, he notes, must be made in Spirit, through the Son to the Father; is essentially 'being' and not 'doing' and requires basic disposition and attitudes such as silence, discipline and openness to the formation of mystery. Afagbegge concludes by encouraging Christians to practice prayer as a way of life.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷Kehrwald, Families and Christian Practice, 52-54.

¹⁰⁸E. Afagbegge. 1998. A Call to Practice Christian Prayer as a Way of Life *African Ecclesial Review* 1:55-57.

¹⁰⁹Afagbegge, A Call to Practice Christian Prayer as a Way of Life, 58-61.

Bemoaning the infinite demands of the materialistic and consumerized society on the finite man to make ends meet and sustain his relationship with his Creator, Dorothy C. Bass calls for a revival of the Christian practice of keeping the Sabbath. According to Bass, we live in an economy and society that demands too much from the people, but the historic practice of setting one day a week for rest and worship promises peace to those who embrace it. While admitting that the practice stands at the heart of Judaism, Bass insists that the practice is also available to Christians in different forms. Christians, she says, celebrate each Sunday with a feast of communion, looking back to Jesus' passion and resurrection and forward to the great banquet that would occur at the end of time. Joining the assembly of Christians for the celebration of Word and sacrament, Bass observes, will remind Christians that Sabbath keeping is not about taking a day off but about being recalled to our knowledge of and gratitude for God's activity in creating the world, giving liberty to captives and overcoming the power of death.¹¹⁰

Bass went on to list activities that are inappropriate and those that are appropriate for Christian Sabbath. The inappropriate ones include: Work, Worry and Commerce-to act as if the world cannot get along without our work for one day in seven is a startling display of pride that denies the sufficiency of God. While it may be difficult to banish worries from human mind altogether, we can refrain from activities we know will ignite worry. The appropriate things on Christian Sabbath according to Bass include: Worship-for Christians every Sunday is Easter Sunday, a time to gather together with song and prayer, to hear the Word proclaimed and to recognize Christ in the breaking of the bread. It is a festival, a spring of souls; a day of freedom not only from work but also from condemnation; spending quality time with loved ones-time used on the pleasure of being together; quiet time- hours of solitude, hours for sleep, reading, reflection, walking and prayer, and inviting lonely ones to our table.¹¹¹

Bass asserts that good Sabbaths make good Christians by regularly reminding us of God's creative, liberating and redeeming presence; not only in words but also through a practice we do together in response to that presence. Sabbath also allows for regular

¹¹⁰D. C. Bass. 1997. Keeping Sabbath: Reviving a Christian Practice *Christian Century* 114. 1: 12-14.

¹¹¹Bass, Keeping Sabbath: Reviving a Christian Practice, 15-16.

and disciplined attention to the spiritual life as the foundation of faithful Christian living. It also helps members of a worshipping community to help one another to step off the treadmill of work-and-spend into the circle of gratitude for the gifts of God. On Sabbath, Bass avows, Christians celebrate the world as it is; overworked humans need rest and are reminded that they do not cause the grain to grow and that man's greatest fulfillment does not come through the acquisition of material things.¹¹²

Delving into specific denominational practices, David Bennett annotates that the Catholic Church recognizes seven sacraments and many other distinctive practices that are known as sacramental or devotions. The sacraments according to him are Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, Reconciliation and Penance, Anointing the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony. Baptism indicates entrance into the church and into the life of God. It is done in the name of the Trinity and brings about regeneration, illumination, new birth and embosses the new Christian with a permanent sacramental seal that unites him with the church. Baptism also cleanses the taint of the original sin even though the effects remain. Bennett observes further that Eucharist is the church's expression of thanksgiving wherein members partake of the body and the blood of Christ. Also known as the Mass, it is believed that once properly sanctified, the bread and the wine become the body and blood of Christ. In the sacrament of Confirmation, the Catholic Church believes that Christians are sealed with the sign of the cross, baptismal grace is completed, and Christians become perfectly bound to the church enriched by the Holy Spirit. Reconciliation or Penance or Confession as it is variously called is the sacrament that avails Christians who sinned after their baptism the opportunity of forgiveness and be reconciled to God and the Church. By the sacrament of anointing the sick by the priest, the whole church commends the ill to the suffering and glorified Lord, that they may be healed and saved. Holy Orders are the sacrament of those to whom Christ has entrusted his ordained ministry. The three degrees of this sacramental ministry are: Bishop, Priest/Presbyter and Deacon with clearly defined roles and are exclusively for men. Matrimony sacrament admits a man and a woman into a life-long commitment blessed by

¹¹² Boss, *Keeping Sabbath: Reviving a Christian Practice*, 16.

the church to effectively serve God as a uni-duality and to raise children.¹¹³ The sacramental elements of Catholic practices include, devotion to Mary, praying with the rosary, pilgrimages, monastic life, holy water, exorcism, canonization and veneration, amongst others.¹¹⁴ It should however be noted that several aspects of Catholic practices like devotion to Mary, celibacy, veneration, exorcism, purgatory and canonization have come under the klieg-light of public criticism for want of biblical authority.

From Craig Dykstra through Dorothy Bass to Justin Martyr, Robert Muthiah, Heif Kehrwald, Edmund Afagbegge and David Bennett, Christian practices have been variously defined, described, explained and contextualized. Specific contexts of how Christian practices can be used to invigorate limp and pallid congregations through the instrumentality of priesthood of all believers; how Christian practices can be used to develop the faith of Christian families; how Christians can practice prayer as a way of life and how the practice of Christian Sabbath allows for regular and disciplined attention to the spiritual life as the foundation of faithful Christian living were appropriately reviewed. The review culminated into the description of various practices of the Catholic Church. As incisive and perceptive as this review on Christian practices was, the vacuum of scholarly works on practices of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria is yet to be filled, thus justifying the necessity for this study. To the review of relevant literature on the Church of Christ we turn in the subsequent section.

Conclusion

So far, this section has reviewed existing relevant literature on the history of the Church of Christ, biographies of Church of Christ's leaders and Christian doctrines and practices. This scholarly discourse started with the history of the Church of Christ and biographies of Church of Christ's leaders. Available scholarly works Christian doctrines and Christian practices were equally reviewed. As incisive, informative, insightful, pragmatic and scholarly as these works were, none has invalidated the purpose of this work. Some of the materials were written from American perspectives and context.

¹¹³D. Bennett. Sacrament: Meeting God in Our Own World. Retrieved February 17, 2011 from <http://www.ancient-future.net/sacraments.html> 4 -5 of 6.

¹¹⁴Bennett, Sacrament: Meeting God in Our Own World, 6

Several have also been written on the Church of Christ in Nigeria, but none specifically appraised the teachings and practices of the church in Southwestern Nigeria. This vacuum is filled by this study.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST: A BACKGROUND STUDY

3.0 Introduction

The task of this chapter is to account for the emergence and growth of the Church of Christ in Nigeria. This however, cannot be done without tracing the American origin of Churches of Christ and thereafter align it with the history of the Church in Nigeria. The Nigerian section of the story traces how the Church of Christ started in Akwa Ibom State and from there spread to other states of the Federation with particular emphasis on the emergence and the spread of Churches of Christ in the six states that constitute the South-western region of Nigeria.

The Church of Christ emerged on the religious scene of Nigeria in the late 1940s as a result of the Bible correspondent course of the Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee, United States of America, enrolled by Coolidge Akpan Essien from Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The correspondence course which was essentially on the teaching of the New Testament, Church drastically changed Essien's initial perspective of the Bible, the Church and the Christian faith. Essien scored very high grade at the completion of the course after which he began to put what he learnt into practice. This resulted into the establishment of the first Church of Christ in Nigeria in Essien's village, Ibiaku, Ikot Usen in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

3.1 American Origin of the Church of Christ

The American Revolution of 1776 was the result of a series of social, political and intellectual transformations in the early American society. American colonies rejected the authority of the Parliament in Great Britain to govern them from overseas without representation. A motivating force behind the revolution was the American embrace of the political ideology of republicanism which required men to put civic responsibilities ahead of their personal aspirations and desires. Other harbingers of the revolution which constituted what was known as American Enlightenment were the concepts of liberalism,

democracy and religious tolerance. In the religious sphere, dissenting non-Church of England churches (Congregationalist, Baptist and Presbyterian) became 'school of democracy' preaching revolutionary themes advocating that the Bible taught all men to be equal and that the true value of a man lies in his moral behavior, not his class. This position was a far cry from the attitude and behavior of most ministers of the Church of England who continued to preach loyalty to the King.¹¹⁵ The above scenario created by the American Revolution brought about restoration sentiment through which many turned their backs on traditional religion and sought to recover the primitive church and the ideal of primitive Christianity.¹¹⁶ This was the kind of environment that produced the Restoration Movement from which Churches of Christ, the Independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) emerged. This development also confirmed the often forgotten or denied fact that Churches of Christ surfaced out of specific historical contexts and that her beliefs and practices have been equally shaped by the social, cultural, economic and even religious circumstances of early American nationhood. It also confirms the extent to which social change on account of the American Revolution affected structures of religious belief and organization.¹¹⁷

Leonard Allen and Richard Hughes identify five factors which made the restoration ideal immensely popular and appealing in the early years of American nationhood. Firstly, the new nation is uncorrupted and undefiled by human impositions and offers the perfect environment for the colonies and countless immigrants to recover pure, uncorrupted and original Christianity. Secondly, it was reasoned that America's new democracy seems to be the type of government which God had in mind when he created the heavens and the earth. And if founders of American nation had restored God-intended form of government, nothing less is expected of Christians and the church to abandon age-long traditions and customs and return to the wellsprings of the Christian faith. Thirdly, the pristine state of the new nation led many to believe that it will dawn the

¹¹⁵ N. O. Hatch. 2000. "The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People" *American Origins of the Churches of Christ*, Douglas A Foster ed. Abilene, TX: A.C.U. Press, 19.

¹¹⁶E. S. Gaustad. 1976. "Restitution, Revolution and the American Dream." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 44 (March), 77- 86.

¹¹⁷G. S. Wood. 1974. "The Democratization of Mind in the American Revolution," *Leadership in the American Revolution* (Washington,), 63-89.

very much anticipated millennial age of justice, righteousness and peace from tyrannies and oppressions. The nation has therefore provided American Christians with a highly instructive example to discover the pattern of the primitive church, to rebuild the church in the new American nation and to fast track the millennial age. Fourthly, the offer of liberation from religious jingoism through imposition of time-worn traditions and man-made creeds perpetuated by European churches, particularly the Church of England. Thousands of American Christians renounced Christian history and freed themselves to interpret the Bible in their own way apart from 'orthodoxy' promoted by any particular denomination. Fifthly, the concept of primitive Christianity and the need to return to it appealed to many Americans as it provides assurance of being right in the midst of myriad claims of competing denominations. Rather than vetting opposing denominational claims to discover the authentic one, American Christians dismissed all denominational claims and stood firmly on the Bible.¹¹⁸

The above mentioned factors motivated Americans to take the Bible alone as the only guide for Christian faith and practice. To champion this reform movement were, Elias Smith in New England, James O' Kelly in Virginia, Barton Stone in Kentucky and Alexander Campbell in Pennsylvania. This diverse squad working independently arrived at a common conclusion of the need for only the Bible to be the standard guide for Christian faith and practice and for freedom from the shackles of the old religious order for a new kind of institutional church premised on a new form of Biblical hermeneutics which accommodates the inalienable right of the common people to interpret the Bible on their own. Elias Smith was a Calvinist Baptist; James O' Kelly was a Methodist while Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell were from the Presbyterian Church. They all abhorred traditional sources of religious authority and found themselves leaning toward egalitarian religion insisting that priesthood of all believers means religion of the people, by the people and for the people.¹¹⁹

In New England, Elias Smith and Abner Jones were itinerant preachers with a message laced with the language of politics challenging their prospects to re-examine

¹¹⁸C. L. Allen and R. T. Hughes. 1988. *Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ*, Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 90-93.

¹¹⁹Hatch, *The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People*, 14.

their spiritual state. Denouncing formal religion of any type, Smith resigned as the preacher of Woburn Baptist Church, Massachusetts and began to propagate the political ideology of republicanism in religious sphere with disdain for catechism, creeds, hierarchies or superstitious priests. He published *Herald of Gospel Liberty* in 1808 which became the first religious newspaper in the United States. From the platform of the newspaper, pamphlets and sermons, Smith and his followers known as Christians launched attacks on Baptists, Methodists and other religious persuasions. *Herald of Gospel Liberty* was widely circulated across the country with hundreds of subscribers and soon became the means of communication for the likes of Smith who were moving independently to the conclusion of a Christianity that is solely based on the Bible and premised on the inalienable right of everyone to understand the Bible on their own.¹²⁰

In Virginia and North Carolina, O’Kelly, like Smith, contended for Bible government, freedom and equality in the church. He was not pleased with the bishopric of Francis Asbury and what he called ‘ecclesiastical monarchy’ of the Methodist Church. He responded by establishing Republican Methodist Church in 1794¹²¹ with over thirty Methodist ministers and as many as twenty thousand members. O’Kelly’s Republican Methodists later merged with Smith’s forces under the name simply known as ‘Christians’ in 1809. In Kentucky, Barton Stone, having participated in and been influenced by the Cane Ridge Revival of 1801, opposed Calvinistic rigid predestination and opted out of the Presbyterian Church denouncing their doctrine and church government style. Stone with other five ministers formed the Springfield Presbytery but within a year later dissolved the Presbytery to become “Christians only” on the promptings of Rice Haggard. They determined to bear no name other than ‘Christian’ and uphold the New Testament as the rule of Christian faith and practice.¹²² Restoration for Stone and his group implied extolling Christian ethics and holy living and restoration of

¹²⁰*The Search for the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement 1849-1865*, 1-11.

¹²¹Scholars are not at consensus as to when Republican Methodist Church was established by the O’Kelly’s group. While Hatch dates the establishment back to 1794 as cited above, West was more specific by citing December 25, 1793 at a conference held in Manakintown, Powhatan County, Virginia. 9. For Allen and Hughes, it was 1792. 102.

¹²²*The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People*, 15-18.

the primitive church with its attendant rejection of all encumbrances of history embodied in creeds, clerics and ecclesiastical traditions. Stone and his men advocated the restoration of primitive Christianity as the basis of Christian unity which in return will fast track the millennial age.¹²³

Thomas and Alexander Campbell complete the quartet of the restoration precursors. Thomas Campbell was a minister of the Seceder Presbyterian Church in his native land of Ireland. He migrated to America in 1807 and started preaching for the Seceder Presbyterian Church in Southwest Pennsylvania. For associating with Presbyterians of other stripes, he was relieved of his ministerial duties by the church and he formed a study group known as the Christian Association of Washington. Thomas produced the charter for the group known as *The Declaration and Address*¹²⁴ in which he premised Christian unity on restoration of primitive Christianity as recorded in the Scripture and abrogation of creeds and tradition of Christian history. Alexander, Thomas' son, arrived in America in 1809 to assume the leadership of the group. In 1823 he edited a Christian journal titled, *The Christian Baptist* through which he advocated restoration of primitive Christianity through rationalistic and systematic reconstruction of apostolic communities. Restoration of apostolic communities according to Alexander Campbell required a distinction between the essential and non-essential practices of primitive Christianity. Essential practices, according to Campbell included, congregational autonomy, plurality of elders in each congregation, weekly communion and baptism through immersion for remission of sins.¹²⁵

Alexander Campbell was the only College graduate among the leadership of the four Christian groups and the Campbells were the only ones who were not part of the American Revolution. Alexander Campbell's theology fell into the same pattern of theology that was emerging in the early period of American nationhood exemplified by the messages of Smith, O'Kelly and Stone. In 1830, Campbell's movement merged with Stone's Christians and by 1860 the group's membership was about 200,000. In all, the

¹²³*Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ*, 104-105.

¹²⁴See Appendix B for the text of the address.

¹²⁵*Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ*, 106-108.

message of the 'Christians' as the whole groups were later called hammered on sin, grace and conversion and their fellowships resisted social distinctions and denounced religion that was characterized by creed. The Christians called for a change of order in the church that would affirm priesthood of all believers; rejection of religious orthodoxy and a new view of history that welcomes enquiry and innovation; and a populist hermeneutics premised on the right of the individual to read, understand and interpret the Bible.¹²⁶

Encouraged by the events of the American Revolution, the French Revolution and the conviction that America's political regeneration demands a comparable ecclesiastical renovation, the Christians employed strategic moves to achieve their purpose. This stratagem included all efforts to displace the powers that be in the church; popular communication through publication of Newspapers and tracts; appropriating the rhetoric of civil and religious liberty; demand for the right of individuals to read and understand the Bible and abolition of the traditional distinction between the clergy and the laity; dissolution of institutional controls of any kind (association, presbytery, synod, etc.); opposed any ecclesiastical names not found in the New Testament; repudiation of what they considered rarefied doctrines like unconditional election; called for a new dispensation of gospel liberty radically discontinuous with the past; suggested egalitarian models for a new age reminiscent of the early church considered as a republican society with a New Testament constitution; tenaciously clung to the sanctity of the New Testament without any addition, abridgement, alterations or embellishment; embraced hermeneutic principles devoid of systematic theology but allowed people to hear the voice of God directly and enables the common man to open the Bible and think for himself; stupefied the respected clergy and made nonsense of his homily with coarse language, biting sarcasm and common sense reasoning that makes sense to the uneducated.¹²⁷

Some of the slogans employed by the Christian Movement include the following: "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent," "The Church of Jesus Christ is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one," "In

¹²⁶Hatch. *The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People*, 19-20.

¹²⁷*The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People*, 19-38.

essentials, unity; in opinions, liberty; in all things love,” “no creed but Christ, no book but the Bible, no law but love, no name but the divine” and “call Bible things by Bible names.”¹²⁸

On the whole, the Christian movement successfully appropriated the reform that was widespread in the popular culture to the church by attacking the tyranny of the clergy, the foolishness of abstract theology and the burden of church discipline. By this also, they succeeded to a reasonable extent in harmonizing denominational traditions with egalitarian values. The Christian movement also elevated public opinion as a source of religious authority and the fact that biblical authority could emerge from the will of the people- a theology of the people. The Movement promoted value systems that endowed common people with dignity and responsibility and the people gladly embraced this theology that addressed them without disparagement, balked at vested interests, reinforced feelings of volitional allegiance and self reliance. On the reverse side, the activities of the Christian Movement was smear of popularity rather than virtue, their progress was measured more in numbers than spiritual quality of their followers. Unfortunately, the Christian Movement along the way became fragmented which led to the extinction of the Christian connection of Elias Smith and James O’Kelly and the remnant Disciples of Christ fractionally denominated and became the symbol of the sectarian strife which they sought to eliminate.¹²⁹

The remnants of the Christian Movement-Disciples of Christ¹³⁰ remained nominally united until the U. S. Bureau of Census in 1906 separately listed the Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ as separate entities. Before this time, all has not been well with the Movement in the last fifty years. The Movement has been fragmented into factions as a result of disagreement on a number of issues. Church historian from the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) generally believe that issues which created tension between the two groups included open communion, the title Reverend (not biblical), one-man pastoral leadership, the use of creeds, the use of musical instruments in

¹²⁸N/A. “Christian churches and churches of Christ” Retrieved March 20, 2012 from http://www.Christian_churches_and_churches&oldid=478630168 6 of 7.

¹²⁹*The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People*, 39-43.

¹³⁰Until the official division in 1906, the Disciples of Christ were also known as the Restoration Movement or Stone-Campbell Movement.

worship and missionary societies. Churches of Christ historians generally point to the use of musical instruments in worship and establishment of missionary societies as the two main reasons responsible for the fracture of the Movement which was made official in 1906.¹³¹

To many who were well versed in the history of the movement, it is too simplistic to attribute the fracture in the edifice of the Restoration Movement to just two main reasons or clusters of reasons, the issue is more complex than that. According to David Edwin Harrell, the Movement from inception was made up of men who have different ideas of realizing the twin desire of the Movement of restoring the ancient order of things and Christian unity. The movement according to Harrell was made up of people of conflicting sociological and psychological backgrounds; it was therefore inevitable that the discordant elements will go their different ways, the doctrinal differences notwithstanding. Moreover, majority of the early reformers believed that the twin goals of the Movement will be accomplished before the beginning of the millennium; extremely sectarian elements gave priority to the restoration of legalistic principle while liberal elements believed that Christian unity should be accorded the highest priority.¹³² Can a house divide against itself stand?

The Movement was also characterized by institutional loyalties. The liberals and proponents of the American Christian Missionary Society have the North based journal titled the *Christian Standard* as their mouthpiece while the South domiciled *Gospel Advocate* emerged as the mouthpiece of the conservatives. Other sectional bifurcations of the Movement included Churches of Christ being associated with the Southern conservatives and the Northern liberals labeled Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); divergent position on slavery, opposing stance on the civil war; sectional theological convictions characterized by theological conservatism associated with the South and theological liberalism related to the North; economically prosperous North against

¹³¹R. T. Hughes. 1996. *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 117 -134; L. Garrett. 1981. *The Stone-Campbell Movement*. Joplin: College Press, 307-308; 364.

¹³²D. E. Harrell, Jr. 2000. The Sectional Origins of Churches of Christ. *American Origins of the Churches of Christ*, Douglas A Foster ed. Abilene, TX: A.C.U. Press, 46-52.

economically impoverished South; predominantly urban North against largely rural South; industrial North versus agricultural South and anti-aristocracy South against pro-affluence North. Harrell concludes that what will be later known as Churches of Christ “are the spirited offspring of the religious rednecks of the post bellum South.”¹³³

Looking at the whole issue from another perspective, Richard T. Hughes thinks that emergence of Churches of Christ was not a matter of the crack in the Disciples camp but a product of the coalition of the worldviews of Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell. This school of thought posits that the apocalyptic perspective of Barton Stone found goodwill with the sectarian mentality of Alexander Campbell as expressed in the *Christian Baptist* (1823-1830) to shape a section of the Stone-Campbell movement which will later be known as Churches of Christ. The apocalyptic perspective of Stone emphasized radical separation from the world and its values for a transcendent vision of the Kingdom of God. This kingdom manifests the character and attitude of primitive Christianity and would ultimately triumph over and judge all earthly kingdoms. In view of Stone and his followers’ passionate craving for this kingdom they would not have anything to do with the civil government. They refused to vote in elections and would not fight in wars. On the other hand, Alexander Campbell’s sectarian perspective was interpreted by many of his early followers to mean that Churches of Christ constituted the one true church outside which there is no salvation. Although Campbell never categorically said Christians outside the Movement were lost, his early expression pointed toward this direction.¹³⁴

In addition to the separationist and apocalyptic tradition of Barton Stone, Hughes calls attention to the pivotal role of the cultural split that occasioned the difference between the followers of Stone and the followers of Campbell in determining the emergence of Churches of Christ. Coming with the American Revolution was the postmillennial perspective that celebrated uninhibited human potential and boundless human advancement in the modern world. “The party of hope” as those who subscribed to this thinking were called, believed that man can restore the primeval epoch and attain

¹³³Harrell, *The Sectional Origins of Churches of Christ*, 64.

¹³⁴R. T. Hughes. 2000. *The Apocalyptic Origins of Churches of Christ and the triumph of Modernism. American Origins of the Churches of Christ*, Douglas A Foster ed. Abilene, TX: A.C.U. Press, 65-67.

the highest good through his own efforts. This good and perfections will be appropriated in the future of America making it the kingdom of God on earth. On the other side of this divide were those who were in radical opposition to this perspective. This minority group avowed a pessimistic and anti-modern worldview and was referred to as the “party of memory.” This party was mainly primitivists who were skeptical about human potential to repeat the perfection of the first age but instead pledge their allegiance to a kingdom of God imminent in the impending millennium on God’s initiative. Hughes posits further that the fracture in the edifice of the Christian Movement which bifurcated it into the Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ was deeply rooted in the ideological polarization between the “party of hope’ and the “party of memory.” While the Disciples of Christ (“party of hope’) represented the postmillennial, modernizing progressivism of the mature Alexander Campbell, Churches of Christ (“party of memory”) to a large extent represented the separatist and anti-modern perspective of Barton Stone. Alienated from the modern world, by World War 1, Churches of Christ has however moderated this position in line with the spirit of modernity by abandoning Barton Stone’s anti-modern apocalyptic primitivism for Alexander Campbell’s rational, progressive primitivism leaving the old order to the fundamentalists among them¹³⁵ It is instructive to note that the few fundamentalists who stubbornly held to the separatist and anti-modern perspective of Barton Stone will continue to be a torn in the flesh of the majority through their anti-modern dispositions.

In addition to the above, the issue of the fracture in the Restoration Movement or the Stone-Campbell Movement in early nineteenth century has attracted very robust scholarly discussions.¹³⁶ Ron Petter provides what seems to be the most probable and

¹³⁵Hughes. The Apocalyptic Origins of Churches of Christ and the triumph of Modernism, 68-107.

¹³⁶For more perspectives on the factors responsible for the opening up of crevice in the restoration edifice see, W. C. Gilpin, Common Roots, Divergent Paths: The Disciples and the Churches of Christ. Retrieved February 6, 2012 from www.christiancentury.org 3-4 of 8; N/A, Restoration Movement. Retrieved on March 28, 2011 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_Movement 12-13 of 24; Douglas A. Foster. 2006. The 1906 Census of Religious Bodies and Division in the Stone-Campbell Movement: A Closer Look. *Disciplina* 66. 3: 83 – 93; Henry E. Webb. 2006. Geographical Factors in the 1906 Division. *Disciplina* 66.3: 75-82; David E. Harrell, Jr. 1976. From Consent to Dissent: The Emergence of the Churches of Christ in America, *Restoration Quarterly*, 19. 20: 98-111; Bill Humble. 1969. *The Story of the Restoration*, Austin, Texas: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 63-68; John Mark Hicks, *The Struggle for the Soul of Churches of Christ (1897-1907): Hoosiers, Volunteers and Longhorns*. Retrieved March, 2011 from <http://johnmarkhicks.files.wordpress.com/2009/06/full-casey-article.doc> 1-20

constructive explanation for splinter when he explains “the driving force in this fracture was the Restoration hermeneutic that relied on the interpreter’s ability to read and understand scripture while making no allowance for personal experiences and opinion.”¹³⁷ Petter notes further that the Movement’s history has revealed that although the Bible can be read and understood by everyone, it is a misnomer to think or assume that perfect and complete understanding can be attained by everyone. Restoration hermeneutic assumed that through inductive reasoning God’s will would be revealed to contemporary Christians through command, example and necessary inference and that removal of creeds will unite Christians and restore first century Christianity. But the general lack of strong and broad theological education by succeeding generations of leadership in the Movement apart from the influence of ‘editor bishops’¹³⁸ with considerable education led to a situation where everyone was a Bible exegete in his own right. Conservative elements felt that silence of the New Testament on innovations like instrumental music and missionary societies amounted to denial hence the aphorism, “we speak where the Bible speaks and silent where the Bible is silent.” The liberal elements

and Victor Knowles. “Going Separate Ways: What Really Happened in 1906? Why Churches of Christ and Christian Churches Served God Apart in the 20th Century. A paper presented at the 63rd Annual Bible Lectures, Pepperdine University, Malibu, California, May 2-5, 2006, retrieved March 20, 2012 from www.poeministeries.org 1-8, and Roger Huston, “Women’s Movement vs. Restoration Movement: The Founding of Churches of Christ.” Retrieved March 20, 2012 from <http://testifychurchofchrist.community.officelive.com> 1-17, insisted that while no one absolute cause can be attributed as the main cause of the fissure as it was more of a process than an event; the Women’s Movement was the most overarching schismatic issue between churches of Christ and Disciples of Christ. While the conservatives rejected women’s rights in the society and women’s leadership role in the church, the liberals favored women’s right movements and mellowed on their scriptural interpretation of the role of women in the church.

¹³⁷Petter. *The Role of the Restoration Hermeneutic in the Fractures of the Churches of Christ in the Twentieth Century*. 7. Restoration hermeneutic presupposes that the Bible taught by the tripartite formula of command, example and necessary influence. It also presumes that a simple reading of any passage will lead to a correct understanding of the Bible which will allow the interpreter to replicate his reading in contemporary Christian practice without any ambiguity.

¹³⁸Leadership in the Stone-Campbell Movement after the death of Alexander Campbell in 1866 began to be built on the authority of editors of the Movement’s popular publications against their much cherished belief that ecclesiastical authority should be built on the elders of each local church. The editors through their publications were able to shape and influence opinions on issues and direction of events. David Lipscomb, editor of the *Gospel Advocate* was accused to have single-handedly responded to the enquiry from the U. S. Census Bureau in 1960. His response to the enquiry from the Census Bureau led to the listing of Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ as separate entities. Even though there have been disagreement on issues within the Movement long before this time, the absence of any authority figure made it difficult if not impossible for the fracture to have been formalized until 1906.

felt that silence of the scriptures means approval. Lack of consensus on the application of restoration hermeneutic and the intolerant and sectarian attitude found in Alexander Campbell's early writings (*Christian Baptist*) made the split inevitable. Petter aptly summarizes the process of the fissure this way, "This fracture was initiated by a desire to restore the first-century church and was brought to fruition by the inability to resolve different practices using the Restoration hermeneutic."¹³⁹ This ghost of lack of hermeneutical consensus and sectarian disposition of young Alexander Campbell will continue to haunt Churches of Christ after the fracture and throughout the twentieth century and beyond.¹⁴⁰

Two Christian bodies initially emerged out of the Stone-Campbell Movement. The U. S. Census Bureau listed the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Churches of Christ as two entirely separate religious entities in 1906. Later, the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ also known as the Independent Christian Churches separated from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The breakup was attributed to controversies surrounding theological modernism and open membership (acceptance into fellowship of individuals who had not been baptized by immersion).¹⁴¹ Suggestions for the actual date of this separation range from 1926 to 1971. Most historians of the Stone-Campbell Movement date the separation to the inauguration of the North American Christian Convention in 1927. Unlike the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) that has thrown caution to the wind and become a liberal mainline denomination repudiating their restoration heritage, the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ to a very large extent remain loyal to the restoration motif apart from the use of instruments of music in worship and annual convention which also distinguishes them from Churches of Christ.

Available statistics show that Churches of Christ emerged from the division strongest compared with other two heirs of the Restoration Movement. Between 1945

¹³⁹Petter. *The Role of the Restoration Hermeneutic in the Fractures of the Churches of Christ in the Twentieth Century*, 38.

¹⁴⁰Petter. *The Role of the Restoration Hermeneutic in the Fractures of the Churches of Christ in the Twentieth Century*, 22-26.

¹⁴¹V. Knowles. 2006. *Going Separate Ways: What Really Happened in 1906? Why Churches of Christ and Christian Churches Served God Apart in the 20th Century*. A paper presented at the 63rd Annual Bible Lectures, Pepperdine University, Malibu, California, May 2-5, 2006. Retrieved March 20, 2012 from www.poeministeries.org 1 of 8.

and 1965 Churches of Christ were said to be one of the fastest growing religious movements in America.¹⁴² By 1961, Churches of Christ were estimated to have a membership of about 2,250,000 according to the 1964 edition of *Yearbook of American Churches*.¹⁴³ Furthermore, Flavil Yeakley Jr. in his analysis of the publication titled, *Churches and Church membership in the United States 1990*, observes that Churches of Christ have 13,097 congregations, 1,280,838 members and 1,681,013 adherents compared to Christian Churches and Churches of Christ's 5,238 congregations, 966,976 members and 1,213,188 adherents and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)'s 4,036 congregations, 677,223 members, and 1,037,757 adherents.¹⁴⁴ The same study ranks Churches of Christ as 12th of the 15 largest groups in America ranked by number of adherents, followed by the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ in the 13th position and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the 15th position. Of the 15 largest religious groups in America ranked by decadal growth rates (1980-1990), Christian Churches and Churches of Christ were ranked 5th with 7.56% growth rate, Churches of Christ ranked 6th with 5.20% growth rate and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) ranked 15th with the largest decline of -14.45%.¹⁴⁵

Coming down to their specific peculiarities, Churches of Christ believed that Jesus Christ established one church and that the present diversity in the body of Christ is not in line with the purpose and intention of God for his church. They insist that Christian unity can only be restored by Christians doing Bible things in Bible ways and calling Bible things by Bible names. In other words, Christian unity must be premised on the Bible.¹⁴⁶ Richard Hughes listed characteristic features of Churches of Christ to include the following:

¹⁴²R. R. Paden. 1992. *From Churches of Christ to the Boston Movement: A Comparative Study*. B.G.S., University of Kansas (MA), 16.

¹⁴³Harrell, Jr. "The Sectional Origins of Churches of Christ" 47.

¹⁴⁴F. Yeakley Jr. 1995. Recent Patterns of Growth and Decline among Heirs of the Restoration Movement. *Restoration Quarterly* 37. 1: 45.

¹⁴⁵Yeakley Jr. "Recent Patterns of Growth and Decline among Heirs of the Restoration Movement." 46-47.

¹⁴⁶B. B. Baxter. "Who are churches of Christ and what do they believe in? Retrieved April 13, 2012 from <http://church-of-christ.org/who.html> 2 of 8.

- i) Traced their origin to two principal leaders in the persons of Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell
- ii) Fused Stone's pietism and apocalypticism—commitment to the kingdom of God which will triumph over human progress and civilization with rationalism, legalism and sectarianism perceived in Campbell's *Christian Baptist* defined the emergence of Churches of Christ
- iii) By the inception of the World War 1, churches of Christ leaders began to repudiate the Stoneite side of their secularism and began to make peace with the values of the surrounding culture amidst protest of sectarian dissenters within
- iv) Churches of Christ's democratic governance (no clergy, no power structure, and no organization other than plurality of elders in each local church) reflect the radical democratic sentiment that pervaded early American nationhood particularly before the American civil war
- v) Churches of Christ remain the heir of the Stone-Campbell Movement resolutely committed to the recovery of primitive Christianity.¹⁴⁷

Churches of Christ sought to recreate the New Testament church and found the pattern for this recreation in the church portrayed in the early chapters of the book of Acts while other scriptures in the New Testament are intermittently cited to justify the model found in Acts. Baptism by immersion is at the heart of faith professed by Churches of Christ. It is inextricably tied to salvation and seen as a trusting response to God's grace preceded by faith, repentance and confession and simultaneously adds the believer to the universal and the local fellowship of the saved. The Lord's Supper or Communion is a major item of corporate worship observed on Sundays and open to all who have been baptized through immersion. The Lord's Supper is made up of unfermented grape juice and unleavened bread. Teaching and preaching are prime elements of corporate worship including freewill giving as the church frowns at tithes or any form of fundraising. Singing is a cappella devoid of instruments of music while the church polity recognizes

¹⁴⁷Hughes. *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America*, 1-14.

plurality of elders or bishops as having biblically derived spiritual authority in the local church. Recognition is also given to Deacons and Evangelists as church office holders. Churches of Christ employ the term 'priesthood of all believers' to erase the distinction between the clergy and the laity insisting that each member is blessed with one spiritual gift or the other for the edification of the entire body. Autonomy of each local church is stressed while cooperation among congregations on an informal level is encouraged but abhors formalized cooperative ventures that will impinge the autonomy of the local church. Educational institutions affiliated to Churches of Christ are managed by board of directors made up of members of the church while conventions and synods are anathema.¹⁴⁸

Generally, Churches of Christ stress a strong dependence on the New Testament for polity and practice. No creeds or confessions are entertained as they are seen as human innovations. Products of graduate seminaries are increasingly finding their way to the pulpit of most Churches of Christ but formal ordination is not widely practiced and carries no special status. Official recognition is not accorded to the clergy in Churches of Christ since it is believed that each believer has access to God through prayer and devotion. Paid ministers are either called ministers or evangelists while titles like reverend or pastor are not allowed for ministers. Ministers work under the oversight of lay elders who are also called pastors or bishops. Male spiritual leadership is emphasized while no role is assigned to women in corporate worship of the church. While there are no formal denominational structures, journal and magazines provide connective ties between congregations. These have been replaced in recent times by annual Bible lectures of colleges and universities affiliated to the church as avenue for fellowship among members and providing links between congregations.¹⁴⁹

Churches of Christ experienced about three decades of relative peace following the division with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This tranquility was attributed to the mentally traumatic and physically devastating experience of the fissure

¹⁴⁸J. Howard. The Concept of 'Church' among Churches of Christ. A paper presented at the Southern Baptist-Churches of Christ Convention, Pepperdine University, January 26-27, 1996. Retrieved March 23, 2012 from <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/issues/howard.html> 8-9 of 18.

¹⁴⁹M. A. Matson. The Churches of Christ (Non-Instrumental). Retrieved April 8, 2012 from <http://www.milligan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1287> 2-5 of 5.

and the inclement economic atmosphere of the time. This tranquility will however not last long as members soon engaged in disputes and heated debates over array of issues the heart of which was on the application of Restoration hermeneutic. Jim Jonas sadly encapsulates this development in the following words,

It seems that harmful argumentation and unnecessary division has been the legacy of Churches of Christ. Reactionary thinking, emotional arguments, unfounded prejudices and other ignoble attitudes have clouded judgment and promoted perpetual warfare. Yet the combatants always seem to justify themselves as ‘defending the truth.’¹⁵⁰

Jonas went further to list some of the disputes that characterized Churches of Christ in the 1930s to include: objections to the use of baptistery for baptism as some insisted on running water because Christ was baptized in River Jordan; objections to the use of individual cups for serving the Lord’s Supper; objections to having a plate for the bread; objections to the preacher extending a gospel invitation instead of waiting for the sinners to ask what they should do to be saved; objection to singing any song that is not addressed ‘in words’ to the Lord amongst others.¹⁵¹

While Jonas rightly hits at the motives of the contending parties and the fact that this development has embossed the stigma of perpetual upheavals on the church, Dun Mcclish observes that the disputes emanated over differences on ascertaining biblical authority for what some perceived to be unauthorized human innovations. He puts the blame on the doorstep of ‘anti’ elements within the church that treat matters of opinion and human judgment as matters of scriptural law and obligation. Personal scruples (sense of right and wrong) rather than actual dictates of the Bible become the standard of doctrine and behavior. Mcclish avers that the “antis” make basic mistake in biblical interpretation by alleging that they have found an “exclusive pattern” for their way of doing things when there is none and for elevating incidental matters to the level of essential matters. He maintains that the problem was more complex than what Jonas

¹⁵⁰J. Jonas. 2001. A Report on Churches of Christ from World War II to the Present. Retrieved October 22, 2011 from http://ricebug.homestead.com/files/Church_History.pdf 12 of 110.

¹⁵¹J. Jonas. A Report on Churches of Christ from World War II to the Present, 11-12 of 110.

depicted. He listed the following as manifestations of 'Anti-ism' among Churches of Christ:

- i) Anti-Located Preachers - opposition of the one-man pastor system which made some to reject the practice of congregations employing located preachers to serve under the oversight of their respective elders outrightly.
- ii) Anti-Bible College-those who failed to separate Colleges that existed for the purpose of educating preachers from the production of a pastor/clergy class.
- iii) Anti-Sunday Schools – those who failed to see Sunday School as an expedient way of teaching the Bible to various age groups conducted by individual, autonomous congregations as compared to denominational 'Sunday school model' controlled by separate organizational hierarchy separate from the local church
- iv) Anti-Uninspired Literature in Bible Classes –those who oppose the use of printed Bible lessons or any other material other than the Bible to teach Bible classes.
- v) Anti-Baptistery –those who oppose the use of baptistery other than flowing river for baptism
- vi) Anti-Multiple Cups – those who contend that the Lord use one cup to institute the Lord's Supper and that there is no biblical precedent for using more
- vii) Anti-Women Teaching Children Class – those who oppose women teaching children Bible classes
- viii) Anti-Congregational Cooperation – those who contend that no two congregations could scripturally cooperate in anything without violating each other's local autonomy
- ix) Anti-Orphan Homes – those who claim that there is no scriptural authority for the church to support orphan homes.
- x) Anti-Eating Physical Meal Inside Church Building - those who claim that it is sinful to eat a physical meal inside church building

- xi) Anti-Meeting Physical Needs of Non-members –those who say it is sinful for the church to meet the physical needs of non-Christians. Saints’ money, they insist, must be only for the saints.¹⁵²

To some scholars, debates that raged within the household of Churches of Christ from the mid-twentieth Century, like the one at the dawn of the century, was a product of theological challenge of dealing with biblical silence arising from application of Restoration hermeneutic. This school was ably represented by Ron Petter. Petter notes that Restoration hermeneutic presupposes that a simple understanding of the scripture would provide answers to the issues in conflict. But applying Restoration hermeneutics led the factions to different conclusions. The conservatives insist that scriptural silence is prohibitive. The liberals argued that silence of the scriptures means freedom in interpretation. The stage is set for conflict involving different issues, different combatants and different social conditions. The combatants were enmeshed in issues bordering grape juice or wine for the Lord’s Supper, order of Worship, pacifism, pre-millennialism, black and white churches and institutions.¹⁵³ The disagreement was so intense and variegated that apart from basic doctrines of the Christian faith and the issues which caused the fissure between Churches of Christ and the Disciples of Christ, factions within the church disagree on virtually every other issue.¹⁵⁴ The fact that there exists today fellowships within the fellowship of Churches of Christ is a manifestation of the failure of the Restoration hermeneutic to provide a common ground for the resolution of these debates and disagreements. Michael Weed shares this sentiment and pragmatically asserts,

Churches of Christ have failed to devolve an adequate approach or system for resolving doctrinal conflicts and addressing significant issues. We are not, contrary to impressions, more disputatious than

¹⁵²D. Mcclish. A History of ‘Anti-sm’ from the 19th Century to the Present. Retrieved December 9, 2011 from <http://www.scripturecache.com/resources/HISTORY+OF+ANTI-ISM.pdf> 1-25.

¹⁵³Petter. The Role of the Restoration Hermeneutic in the Fractures of the Churches of Christ in the Twentieth Century, 51-55.

¹⁵⁴J. D. Murch.1962. *Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement*. Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 310.

other groups. We simply have no adequate way of dealing with controversies or finding functional solutions.¹⁵⁵

While nothing is farther from the truth as presented by Weed, it should also be noted that the concept of republicanism and democratic theology advocated and obtained by the restorers at the inception of the Restoration Movement has turned out to be an encumbrance on Churches of Christ. Priesthood of all believers that empowers each member to be a Bible exegete in his own right made it practically impossible to arrive at consensus on both doctrinal and ridiculously trivial issues. The result will be the evolution of several factions of the same tradition.

The Encyclopedia of American Religions listed eight wings of this tradition that have evolved over time as a result of lack of consensus in resolving these controversies and doctrinal differences.¹⁵⁶ The foremost Churches of Christ historian, Richard Hughes identifies six divisions of this tradition: Mainstream Churches of Christ, Pre-millennial Churches of Christ, the Non-Class Churches of Christ, the One-Cup Churches of Christ, the Anti-Institutional Churches of Christ and the International Churches of Christ (Boston Movement).¹⁵⁷ Historians of this tradition are usually not at consensus on the number of splinter groups that traced their origin to Churches of Christ wing of the Restoration Movement.¹⁵⁸ The one-cuppers were the first to emerge by the 1920s, the non-Sunday School and the premillennialist factions in the 1930s, the antis and several other splinter groups in the 1960s and International Churches of Christ (the Boston Movement) in the 1970s.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ M. R. Weed. 1991. "A Tradition at Risk," *Christian Studies*, Spring: 52.

¹⁵⁶ *The Encyclopedia of American Religions*. 1991. Ed. J. Gordon Melton, vol.2. Tarrytown, New York: Triumph Books, 98-100.

¹⁵⁷ Hughes. *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America*, 1.

¹⁵⁸ For instance, J. G. Melton. 1996. Churches of Christ (Non- Instrumental) *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 5th ed. Detroit: Gale Research, 478-481, listed six groups of Churches of Christ to include, Churches of Christ (Non-Instrumental, Non-Class, One Cup); Churches of Christ (Non-Instrumental, Premillennial); Churches of Christ (Non-Sunday School); Churches of Christ (Non-Institutional); Churches of Christ (Non-Instrumental, Conservative) and Churches of Christ (Pentecostal).

¹⁵⁹ Paden. *From Churches of Christ to the Boston Movement: A Comparative Study*, 17.

In the United States, the mainstream Churches of Christ constitute about 87% of the entire body and consist of members sharing consensus on practice and theology. The antis or the non-institutional group are made up of roughly 2,055 congregations. The non-Sunday School faction consists of approximately 1100 congregations. The One-cup is made up of approximately 550 congregations and the Boston Movement with about 130 congregations.¹⁶⁰ One important fact to note is that apart from the International Churches of Christ (the Boston Movement), there is nothing to distinguish between the mainline Churches of Christ, the non-institutional Churches of Christ, Non-Sunday School Churches of Christ and One-Cup Churches of Christ. No official designation such as signs, letterhead or other distinctive official documents exists.

The antis or the non-institutional basically held that the early church operated without the aid of any other institution, hence the existence of para-church institutions and human innovations are unbiblical. This group also emphasise strict autonomy of the local church which forbids her to embark on any project beyond her financial capacity to accomplish and makes a strong distinction between individual work and the work of the church.¹⁶¹ The antis were alleged of making basic mistakes in biblical interpretation by insisting to have found exclusive pattern for their ways of doing things where in fact there were none and for elevating incidental matters to the level of essential matters.¹⁶²

The Non-Sunday School Churches of Christ posited that Sunday school is without scriptural precedence; a violation of the Bible teaching for disciples to come together as one body on the first day of the week for mutual edification under the oversight of the elders; lacks divine sanction as it constitutes a separate institution apart from the local church; use of women teachers for Sunday school classes as

¹⁶⁰D. A. Foster and A. L. Dunnivant. 2004. *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*” *Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, Churches of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing, 120.

¹⁶¹For a comprehensive discussion of this wing of Churches of Christ see F. Jenkins, Please Don’t Call Us ‘Anti’ (An Update on the Non-Institutional Churches of Christ, 55th Anniversary Pepperdine University Bible Lectures, May 1, 1998. Retrieved May 23, 2012 from <http://www.gate.net/~jenkins> 3 of 11.

¹⁶²Mcclish, A History of ‘Anti-sm’ from the 19th Century to the Present, 3.

unscriptural; Sunday school deprives parents their God-given responsibility of religious education of their children and the fact that even if Sunday school was born of expediency, it was expediency misapplied.¹⁶³

The one-cup group consists of brethren within the non-instrumental Churches of Christ who insists that the Bible accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper indicate that in the original observance Jesus took a loaf of unleavened bread and a cup (one) containing fruit of the vine. This being the case, the use of multiple cups is antithesis to this divine pattern. Hughes notes that by 1990, one cup congregations were as many as 530 concentrated in Texas, Oklahoma, California and Missouri.¹⁶⁴

The International Churches of Christ or the Boston Movement emerged out of the effort to revitalize traditional Churches of Christ from alleged spiritual stagnation, spiritual inertia of preachers and lack of commitment on the part of members. To realize this vision, the movement adopted a discipling method of intense training and close personal supervision of the Christians to be disciplined. The disciplers received special training which made them to be superior to mere Christians being trained. The training takes the form of one-on-one relationship in which the discipler instructs, mentors and monitors the one being disciplined what it takes to be a committed Christian.¹⁶⁵ But before long, the movement digressed into practices that were foreign to the tradition they sought to revitalize. By the 1990s the Boston Movement had virtually nothing in common with traditional Churches of Christ as the movement embraced practices and organizational structure radically different from the parent tradition.¹⁶⁶

In spite of the multiple fractures and unresolved disagreements, non-instrumental Churches of Christ were described in 1949 as "the most rapidly growing

¹⁶³L. Hart. 1979. Brief History of a Minor Restorationist Group (The Non-Sunday-School Churches of Christ) *Restoration Quarterly*, 22. 4: 220-221.

¹⁶⁴Hughes. *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America*, 219. See also, A Brief history of the One-Cup and Non-Sunday School Movement. Retrieved April 23, 2012 from http://www.freedominchrist.net/Sermons/Lord%27s%20Supper/One%20cup_non-Sunday%20School%20Movement.htm

¹⁶⁵Paden, From Churches of Christ to the Boston Movement: A Comparative Study, 25-26.

¹⁶⁶Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America*, 361-363.

denominational group in the south, both in membership and in new church building.”¹⁶⁷ This rapid growth was attributed to their literalistic devotion to biblical texts; devotion to belief in the rightness of their cause and their evangelistic enthusiasm. Moreover, the post Second World War period witnessed greater modernization and institutionalization among Churches of Christ in areas such as education, missions and general acculturation.

Concerning education, this period witnessed proliferation of colleges and universities affiliated to Churches of Christ. There was also increased enrolment in colleges and universities as many of the war returnees came back to begin or complete their university education. This development initiates positive developments in the church driven by well educated and better informed members. On missions, the post war period also exposed Churches of Christ to mission opportunities which impelled enthusiastic interest in taking the gospel beyond American shore. For instance, the Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee, started a Bible correspondence course in 1944 widely circulated to war fronts in Europe, Asia and Australia to edify their members in military service and also reach out to prospects in these areas. This period also witnessed substantial domestic evangelistic initiative by Churches of Christ through the radio and television program tagged “Herald of Truth.”¹⁶⁸ Expectedly, the biblical propriety of using church funds to finance the Colleges and the support of missionaries and the mass media programs through the “sponsoring church” were queried by the anti-institutional elements within the tradition as unauthorized human innovation.

Generally, the 1950s witnessed Churches of Christ dropping the garb of aliens in a strange and foreign land which had defined their attitude to the world around them for the toga of ‘settlers’ identifying with the values of the dominant culture and taking their place among reputable religious organizations of the period. Members of the church were no longer comfortable with makeshift compartments as church building. They embarked on building projects in choice areas of the city attracting not

¹⁶⁷ A. W. Taylor, 1949. Church of Christ Growing Rapidly. *The Christian Century* 66. 38: 1113.

¹⁶⁸ Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America*, 223-224.

only the poor, but the affluent and influential members of the community.¹⁶⁹ Goodbye to the apocalyptic heritage, denomination here they come! On the other hand, events of the post Second World War period not only marked a turning point on the attitude and activities of Churches of Christ to the world around them, it also fired mission consciousness leading to massive missionary activities starting from Europe to the outermost part of the world including Africa. Today, Churches of Christ is significantly represented in several African countries like Nigeria, Malawi, Ghana, Gambia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, South Africa, Kenya, amongst others. To Nigeria we shall now turn.

3.2 Historical Scenery of Church of Christ in Nigeria

The origin of Churches of Christ in Nigeria is traced to Bible correspondence course initiated by Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee, United States. The local congregation started a Bible correspondence course on May 2, 1944, to minister to the spiritual welfare of her members serving in the United States Army and Navy Corps, far removed from the influence of the church and constantly exposed to evils of camp life while serving across the world during the Second World War. The Bible correspondence course contained twenty six lessons which scanned through the entire Bible and adapted to fit all levels of education. By September 1944, the lessons have spread to far theaters of the war with responses from France, New Guinea, Paris, Syria, Fiji Island, India, Hawaii, Australia, Belgium, Germany and Italy. The Bible correspondence course became immensely popular within a very short time more than anyone could have imagined. This success encouraged its sharing to civilians at the end of the war.¹⁷⁰

Anna-Maria Braun, a German, was one of the recipients of the Bible correspondent course from Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ who regularly exchange correspondence with the elder/minister and coordinator of the correspondent course, Gordon H. Turner. She operates a Bureau that promotes learning of various languages,

¹⁶⁹Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America*, 224.

¹⁷⁰R. C. Goff. 1964. *The Great Nigerian Mission*, Nashville, TN: Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ, 2-6.

particularly English through letter writing between pen-friends. Coolidge Akpan¹⁷¹ Essien from Ibiaku, Ikot Usen, Ibiono, in the present Itu Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom state was one of the correspondence students of Miss Braun. In one of his correspondences with her, he had asked her to recommend a good Bible correspondence course to him for which she gladly recommended the Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ correspondence course. The Bible lessons were subsequently sent to Essien and his first lesson was returned to the United States for grading on August 2, 1948. Lawrence Avenue church records show Essien's enrolment number as 4665, out of the 26 lessons, he scored 100 percent in 24 of the lessons, 95 percent in lesson 12 and 96 percent in lesson 13.¹⁷²

According to Etim Iyang, C. A. O. Essien was born on April 15, 1915 at Ibiaku, Ikot Usen in Ibiono Ibom Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria into the family of Chief Okon Essien Ukpong. His mother's name was Adiaha Inyang Antia. He was educated up to standard seven which is equivalent of Junior Secondary School (JSS 1) in the present Nigerian secondary school system. He enrolled in the Royal Police Force under the colonial government and served meritoriously until he voluntarily retired to devote himself to the study of the word of God. Inyang described Essien as a sociable person whose amiable personality attracted him to many people who later became his converts when he started the preaching of New Testament Christianity.¹⁷³ E. J. Ebong described Essien as "a tall, black, well-built man with always smiling countenance. He was a kind, sympathetic and approachable man. He was always patient with people in discussing and answering questions."¹⁷⁴ Similarly, Rosa Lee, wife of one of the pioneering American missionary, Jimmy Johnson described Essien as a quiet fellow who "seems to know about most any given situation one might one to ask him and seems to

¹⁷¹Some sources refer to Essien's middle name as Asuquo.

¹⁷²Goff, *The Great Nigerian Mission*, 5-8.

¹⁷³E. Iyang. 2004, *The History of Restoration Movement of Church of Christ in Nigeria* Ikot Ekpen: Noble Printers, 19-20.

¹⁷⁴E. J. Ebong. 1985. *History of the Church of Christ in Nigeria during the Second Generation*, Mushin, Lagos: Ola Bamgbose Press Co., 13.

have been very thorough in his teaching and preaching. He is quite an energetic person and works night and day practically.”¹⁷⁵

Essien heard the gospel of Christ for the first time at the Church of Scotland Mission¹⁷⁶ in his village at Ibiaku Ikot Usen. He subsequently obeyed the gospel and was baptized and became a member of the church. But Essien was neither convinced nor satisfied with the teaching of the church. He soon withdrew his membership from the Church of Scotland Mission to join Pentecostal Assemblies of World Missions (P. A. W. of M). At P. A. W. of M, Essien was re-baptized by immersion since he realized that his earlier baptism was unscriptural. He was also ordained a pastor of the P. A. W of M.¹⁷⁷

With the P. A. W. of M., Essien was not still pleased with their doctrine. He continues his search for the truth through correspondence courses. He soon left the P. A.W. of M to establish the Apostolic Church of Christ with his colleagues who were devoted to the study of the Scripture like him. Inyang recollects that Essien and his men were able to establish over fifty congregations of the Apostolic Church of Christ, the first of which was established in his own village, Ikot Usen. The doctrine of the Apostolic Church of Christ was characterized by prophecy, instruments of music in worship and interpretation of dreams. But as soon as Essien and his men started receiving the correspondence lessons from Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ, they began to correct their doctrines and church practices to conform to the New Testament. This made them to change the name of the church from the Apostolic Church of Christ to the Church of Christ. As they continued to study and plant congregations they realized their biblical and doctrinal inadequacies hence the clarion call to the Lawrence Avenue Church to send missionary families to Nigeria to preach and teach them the way of the Lord more rightly.¹⁷⁸ This clarion call was eloquently articulated in this famous statement generally

¹⁷⁵Goff, *The Great Nigerian Mission*, 17.

¹⁷⁶Some other accounts refer to the Church of Scotland Mission as the Presbyterian Church.

¹⁷⁷Goff, *The Great Nigerian Mission*, 7-8.

¹⁷⁸Inyang, *History of Restoration Movement*, 7.

credited to Essien, “We can teach our people but we need teaching ourselves. Send men to teach us and we shall take Nigeria for the truth.”¹⁷⁹

Prior to the arrival of the American missionaries, Essien and his men worked tirelessly preaching the gospel of Christ to convert individuals, denominational pastors and in some situations, converted the whole church to the Church of Christ. Among the pioneer native evangelists that worked with Essien included: P. A. Alfred, D. E. Akpan, E. S. Etuk, O. E. Ene, J. I. Chuku, A. W. Akpan, J. R. Eton, D. D. Isungunyo and a host of others.¹⁸⁰ Over 45 congregations were established by these men among Efik people. There was also an unverified claim of 113 congregations planted among Igbo people. Some of these congregations in Abak district include: Ikot Usen (80 Members), Usuk Ibiaku Uran (180 members), Ikpedip (60 members), Okobo Ibiono (65 members), Ntak Ekere (140 members), Ibiaku Ikot Oku (96 members) among others.¹⁸¹ Okon Mpong observes that with the restoration whirlwind that started through the religious curiosity of one man (Essien), in less than 30 years, the Churches of Christ were established among all ethnic groups in Nigeria.¹⁸²

Meanwhile, while Essien had been baptized in various Christian denominations like the Presbyterian Church, PAWM, and the ACOC, he was yet to be baptized into the Church of Christ, and many souls were baptized through his hands. Nsentip E. Nsentip and Bokime Basseyy observe that Essien saw the need for his own baptism but was ashamed to do it publicly for it not to have any adverse effect on his converts who assumed he was already baptized before baptizing them. Like Nicodemus, under the cover of darkness, Nsentip and Bokime wrote that Essien secretly approached Nnanah Robinson Umanah, his personal secretary and one of his converts to baptize him about

¹⁷⁹ Goff, *The Great Nigerian Mission*, 7.

¹⁸⁰ Iyang, *History of Restoration Movement*, 7.

¹⁸¹ Goff, *The Great Nigerian Mission*, 13.

¹⁸² Okon Mpong “History of Church of Christ in Nigeria with Particular Reference to Akwa Ibom State” in A Video Documentary on the Church of Christ, Uyo, Nigeria: Builder’s Voice International.

7pm on March 12, 1952. Essien was baptized in the Sawmill Beach at Esin Ufot Oron. This was before the arrival of the first resident missionaries on November 24, 1952.¹⁸³

C. A. O Essien was persistent in his call to the Lawrence Avenue church to send copies of the Bible, tracts, study materials and missionary families to help extend the frontiers of emerging Churches of Christ in Nigeria. The Lawrence Avenue church responded to Essien's persistent requests initially by sending Bibles, tracts, communion wares and teaching materials. In response to the request for missionary families, the church commissioned Boyd Reese and Eldred Echols, (two American missionaries already working in Southern Rhodesia (now known as Namibia) and Johannesburg, South Africa respectively) to visit Nigeria to verify the claims of Essien and his men. The investigative party arrived in Lagos on August 7, 1950 and spent a whole week visiting congregations, gathering information on living conditions, costs and other important information that would facilitate the work of the expected missionary families. Reese and Echols observed that unlike in Southern Africa where initial impetus for the establishment of congregations were taken by white evangelists, the reverse was the case with what they met on ground in Nigeria. Part of their report reads:

In Nigeria the initiative was taken by the people themselves when they requested the Bible Correspondence Course from Lawrence Avenue. Their fervor is evidenced by the fact that in three and half short years they have established more congregations than we have in the whole of Southern Africa after 30 years of labor by white evangelists.¹⁸⁴

The Reese-Echols report to the Lawrence Avenue Church gave every detail of what will be required for the missionaries to have a successful and worthwhile mission in Nigeria. The party was also impressed with the zeal and enthusiasm of Essien and his men as they attested to and marveled at the fact that every congregation planted already had their own meeting places, even though they were made with mud and thatch. The report also acknowledged the phenomenal growth of the churches and the enthusiasm of the leaders to learn. In as much as the leadership was in favor of "speaking where the Bible speaks," they were still not very sure of what the Bible says. Although they have a

¹⁸³Nsentip E. Nsentip and Bokime Bassey. 2001. *The New Testament Church and Its Restoration in Nigeria: A Study of the One Christian Church*, Ikeja, Lagos: Bytex Publishers, 51.

¹⁸⁴Goff, *The Great Nigerian Mission*, 8.

good idea about the scriptural organization of the church and breaking of bread every Lord's Day, they used sugarcane juice for wine and cake for bread and some of the congregations still cling to their denominational creeds. The party also observed that the present mushroom growth needed to be developed into solid and doctrinally sound churches. Reese and Echols concluded their report by recommending that,

The actual presence of experienced white preachers to further instruct, train and strengthen the native Christians is now essential to the growth of the church in Nigeria. The development of a strong, active and independent church in Nigeria is contingent upon this factor. The American churches cannot afford to ignore this challenge. Nigeria and West Africa lie within our grasp; we have only to reach out and take hold.¹⁸⁵

While the Lawrence Avenue Church was ruminating and putting necessary machinery in place to accede to the request of Essien and his men as verified by the report of Reese and Echols, Essien continued to flood the mail with unpronounceable names of new congregations being established throughout the district. On January 1, 1951, the Lawrence Avenue church began to support Essien with \$63 for him to engage in full time preaching. Towards the end of the same year, P. A. Alfred was also engaged to assist Essien. In early 1952, Essien wrote that 1642 souls were baptized between August and December 1951 and 340 people converted at a three day gospel meeting held in May 1952. The great door of opportunity opened by the Nigerian situation remained ineffectively explored until November 24, 1952, when the first missionary family from Lawrence Avenue landed at Port Harcourt. Jimmy Johnson and his wife, Rosa Lee; and Howard Horton and his wife, Mildred with their two daughters, Ann and Angela constituted the first set of missionary families to arrive Nigeria in response Essien's "Macedonian Call." Until he accepted to pioneer the Nigerian work, Howard Horton was the minister at the Ridgedale Church of Christ in Chattanooga, USA, while Jimmy Johnson was a student of David Lipscomb College in Nashville, with limited experience in preaching but with great courage and devotion to the cause of the kingdom.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Goff, *The Great Nigerian Mission*, 13.

¹⁸⁶ Goff, *The Great Nigerian Mission*, 14.

The missionaries came in with their sleeves rolled up. Their task was daunting, yet they were determined to bestride the task like a colossus. In their first Sunday worship in Ikot Usen, 571 were in attendance while 16 souls were baptized.¹⁸⁷ The missionaries were also thrilled by the worthiness, zeal, and the commitment of the local evangelists. Ebong described Horton as a great man, a teacher, an adviser, a trainer and the right kind of man for the job given his servanthood disposition to become all things to all men in order to gain some.¹⁸⁸

Within the six months of the arrival of the missionaries, over sixty congregations were visited, about 2000 people baptized and 15 new congregations established. The extent of the natives' receptivity to the gospel was so overwhelming that Horton had to fly back to the States on August 11, 1953, to report on the progress of the Nigerian work to the elders of Lawrence Avenue Church and to ask for more assistance. Horton requested for more missionaries, support for more native preachers; establishment of a Bible training school to train the native evangelists and management of secular village schools. Horton's meeting with the elders yielded fruitful results in terms of more support for native preachers and mobilization of more missionary families to strengthen the work in Nigeria. The Lawrence Avenue church worked so hard to accede to the requests of Horton by asking for support from congregations and individuals to meet the Nigerian challenge. These efforts yielded positive results with the arrival of missionary families of Eugene and Glenna Peden with their two daughters on October 12, 1953 and Elvis and Emily Huffard with their three children on December 4, 1953. On February 1, 1954, a two-year Bible training program was started at a new site at Ukpom to replace the three-month program earlier started at Ikot Usen. Other missionaries who later came to be part of the Nigerian work included: Lucien and Ida Palmer and their two children; Burney and Louanna Bawcom and their three sons; the Wendell Broom family and the family of J. W. Nicks.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Goff, *The Great Nigerian Mission*, 16-17.

¹⁸⁸ Ebong, *History of the Church of Christ in Nigeria*, 14.

¹⁸⁹ Goff, *The Great Nigerian Mission*, 20-26.

The history of the establishment of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria was not without challenges. Howard Horton reported the prevalence of polygamy among the new converts. He scorned at the practice, describing it as a cancerous moral blight which should be abhorred. Horton also expressed concern about the mushroom-like growth of these churches as many of the conversions were fickle and weak reminiscence of the Galatians. Some of the new converts also came into the church with their pet ungodliness, and idolatrous superstitions like the Corinthians. Some were said to come to the church for personal aggrandizement in search of “loaves and fishes” while others were desirous of positions like the sons of Zebedee. Obviously, Horton’s report was laden with typical western bias when appraising issues or events concerning Africans or the Third World in general. Christ said he came for sinners and the lost and if this being the case, the missionary should not expect that his prospects or new converts should be all clean without one form of blemish or the other. Since they were new converts, there is the tendency for them to struggle with elements of their past life until they gradually come to spiritual maturity. As Horton himself noted, this was equally characteristic of the Corinthians, Galatians and even Americans. The above notwithstanding, Horton was hopeful and expressed this optimism:

We are convinced that the power of God is finding souls as anxious as the man of Macedonia, as noble as the Bereans, and as ready to hear as the Gentile house of Cornelius. It is for these Corneliuses, Eunuchs, Lydias, Jailors; yes, even Simon the Sorcerers that we would spend and be spent.¹⁹⁰

Meanwhile, the gospel continued to spread across the nooks and corners of Eastern Nigeria. Powered by the resilience and indefatigability of the native evangelists and the evangelistic ingenuity of the missionaries, there were mass conversions of denominational churches to the Church of Christ. Nsentip and Bokime mentioned Christian Apostolic Churches in Uyo and Itu areas, the Nazarene Church in Abak and the First Century Negro Church of Christ also in Abak that were converted to the Church of Christ with all their members. Graduates of the Bible training program at Ikot Usen also took the gospel to villages and towns like Use Ndon, Oron, Eket, Aba, and Calabar to

¹⁹⁰ Goff, *The Great Nigerian Mission*, 18.

mention but a few. Essien's evangelistic train also took the gospel to Akpabuyo and other villages in Calabar environs and in Calabar city (Cross River State) where several churches were planted.¹⁹¹

The train moved from Ikot Usen to other parts of Eastern Nigeria. Native evangelists of the Igbo stock like J. I. Chuku and A. K. Onwusoro who were students of the Ikot Usen training program were the means through which Churches of Christ spread to Igboland. In 1951, the evangelistic train led by Essien succeeded in planting the gospel in Elugwu Mba and Abam Ubakala areas of the present Abia State. Continuous bombardment of the Igbo hinterland with the gospel machinery yielded bountiful dividends with many souls won into the kingdom and several congregations planted in Abia, Imo, Anambra, Ebonyi, and Enugu States. Native evangelists instrumental to the spread of the gospel in Igboland, apart from J. I. Chuku and A.K. Onwusoro included, Chuku Ogwuru, Josiah Akandu,¹⁹² Jonathan Ezurike, Stephen Nwadike and a host of others.¹⁹³

The spread of the gospel in Igboland was greatly facilitated by the establishment of a Bible college at Onicha Ngwa. Situated on twenty acres of land, the college began with a classroom block, a dormitory and two residential blocks. The initial faculty included J. W. Nicks, James Finney and Dennis D. Isonguyo. The first entrance examination was conducted on January 26, 1957, with expectations for 40 students for the first class. The triumph of the incursion of Churches of Christ into Igboland was summarized in Billy Nicks' report of January 1957: "More than forty churches are now in Igboland, with approximately 2,000 members. The membership has doubled since we have begun to concentrate our efforts there."¹⁹⁴

Various efforts at planting Churches of Christ in Eastern Nigeria in the 1950s witnessed phenomenal success as a result of the ideal synergy between native evangelists

¹⁹¹Nsentip and Bassey, *The New Testament Church and Its Restoration in Nigeria*, 55-64.

¹⁹²Josiah Akandu was posthumously honored for his pioneering role in spreading Churches of Christ in Igbo land when Churches of Christ in Nigeria hosted the African Claiming Africa for Christ Conference in 2008 at ASCON, Badagry, Lagos.

¹⁹³ Nsentip & Bassey, *The New Testament Church and Its Restoration in Nigeria*, 68-73

¹⁹⁴Goff, *The Great Nigerian Mission*, 29.

and resident missionaries. Souls were converted, churches were planted, Bible training programmes at Ukpom and Onicha Ngwa provided the needed manpower, secular schools which offered opportunities to offer Bible lessons were established and managed. A Christian hospital at Aba was also an added blessing.¹⁹⁵ The zenith of these accomplishments was the official recognition of the Church of Christ by the government of Nigeria through the issuance of a certificate of incorporation number 387, dated July 23, 1955, with Howard Patrick Horton, Robert Eugene Peden, Elvis Henry Huffard and E. Lucien Palmer as trustees.¹⁹⁶

As it was with Thomas Campbell's restoration experience in USA in the 19th Century with the Brunch Run church starting with a single elder, the Nigerian experience also encountered some challenges of improvisation until the missionary came to put things right. For instance, the nascent church at one point observed the Lord's Supper using sugar-cane juice for wine and flat cake for bread and at another point used burnt sugar and water as 'fruit of the vine' and cookie as 'bread.' Also of interest was the humorous interpretation of Revelation 3: 20 as reported by Jimmy Johnson, one of the very first set of missionaries to arrive in the country:

In Nigeria when a visitor calls at your home, on your front porch he lightly claps his hands and clears his throat. Why doesn't he knock? No one but a thief knocks upon your door in Nigeria. The thief knocks, and if there is no response he enters the house. No honest man would dare knock upon your door. The Efik Bible does not read, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock,' for that would make Jesus a thief; but it reads, 'Behold, I stand at the door and call.'¹⁹⁷

Churches of Christ got to Northern Nigeria by accident rather than design. The church planting process started with a member of the church from the Ikoyi congregation in Lagos who was transferred by his employer to Kano. On getting to Kano, he found out

¹⁹⁵See Bill Nicks .Early History of Nigerian Christian Hospital. Retrieved April 24, 2012, from http://www.ihcf.net/docs/NCH_history.pdf 1-2of 2 for a comprehensive history of the establishment of the hospital located at Aba, as part of missionary activities of Churches of Christ in Eastern Nigeria.

¹⁹⁶Iyang, *History of Restoration Movement*, 16

¹⁹⁷Goff, *The Great Nigerian Mission*, p. 30. The current edition of the Efik Bible reads, "I stand at the door and knock." This is another example of western trivialization or inexactitude in their assessment of issues or events in Africa.

that there was no Church of Christ for him to worship on Sunday. He thereafter sent an SOS message to members in Lagos to help save the situation. Consequently, Nathaniel S. Udom, an employee of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs in Lagos and a faithful and committed Christian in the Ikoyi church volunteered to help sow the seed of the kingdom in Kano during his next annual vacation.¹⁹⁸

On October 15, 1970, Udom embarked on the journey to Kano armed with tracts, Bible literature, Communion wares and other items needed for Sunday worship. On getting to Kano, Udom spent the first few days to do preliminary work and invite people for worship in the home of his in-law with whom he was staying. On Sunday, October 25, 1970, the church met for the first time in the home of Udom's in-law. Udom's in-law and four of their neighbors obeyed the gospel and by the time he was ready to return to Lagos 10 days later, 16 converts had obeyed the gospel. Udom soon returned to Kano to help nurture the new congregation and was later persuaded to resign his appointment with the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs on November 30, 1971, to take up full-time preaching appointment with the budding congregation. Through the resilience and determination of Udom and others, the gospel spread from Kano to other towns and cities in the North like Minna, Kastina, Funtua, Gusau and states like Sokoto, Borno, Kaduna, Plateau, Niger, Kwara and Bauchi.¹⁹⁹

The mission to the North was boosted with the support of preachers particularly from Lagos who paid periodic visits to congregations in the North to participate in evangelistic campaigns and edification programmes aimed at strengthening the congregations. American missionaries who contributed to the growth of Churches of Christ in the North included Ralph Perry, Steve Worley, Ken Kline and a host of others who made periodic visits to Northern Nigeria. A major characteristic of the church in the North in the early days was the fact that emerging congregations were transplants of churches in the South ministering to the spiritual needs of traders, members of the Armed Forces, Police, and Civil Servants of Southern origin working in the North. This was as a result of the fact that the North was dominated by Hausa/Fulani who were predominantly

¹⁹⁸Ebong, *History of the Church of Christ in Nigeria*, 29.

¹⁹⁹ Ebong, *History of the Church of Christ in Nigeria*, 30.

Moslems. Consequently, reaching indigenous Northerners with the gospel was a Herculean task. Dough Wheeler however observes that the situation has greatly improved with the efforts and activities of the School of Biblical Studies in Jos and the World Bible School at reaching the nooks and crannies of the North with the gospel through evangelistic campaigns and the activities of WBS follow-up evangelists.²⁰⁰

Steve Worley concurs with Wheeler that many indigenous northerners were converted and the church is beginning to have northern flavour as the church can today boast of hundreds of brethren of Northern origin who are faithful members.²⁰¹ According to Sunday Monofi, the success of Churches of Christ in permeating Northern Nigeria with New Testament Christianity is evidenced by the fact that the church is now represented in virtually all the states of Northern Nigeria.²⁰² A. D. Bamiduro,²⁰³ D. Adenugba²⁰⁴ and J. Nwankwo²⁰⁵ who started their Christian race in the North attested to the fact that the Church of Christ is fast growing in the region to the extent that the church is represented in all the geo-political zones of the North. As at August, 2012, it was estimated that there were 189 congregations of the Church of Christ with 11,023 members in the Northcentral geo-political zone of Nigeria made up of Niger, Nassarawa, Kogi, Kwara, Plateau and Benue states. The Northeastern zone made up of Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Taraba, Bauchi and Gombe states have 73 congregations of the Church of Christ with 3,152 members. The Northwest region constituted by Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi, Kastina, Jigawa, Kano and Kaduna states have 27 congregations of the Church of

²⁰⁰ Dough Wheeler, *Interview Respondent*, Missionary, January 31, 2012.

²⁰¹ Steve Worley, *Interview Respondent*, Missionary and Director of Development, School of Biblical Studies, Jos, Plateau State, December 5, 2010.

²⁰² S. Monofi, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher Church of Christ, Ekute Quarters, Ado-Ekiti, February 6, 2012.

²⁰³ A. D. Bamiduro, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher Church of Christ, Ayedu Quarters, Ondo, January 29, 2011.

²⁰⁴ D. Adenugba, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher Church of Christ, Abusoro, Ondo, June 2, 2012.

²⁰⁵ J. Nwankwo, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher Church of Christ, Kajola-Ado Road, Ado-Ekiti, July 17, 2011.

Christ with 1,687 members while the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja has 27 congregations with 2,946 members.²⁰⁶

3.3 ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN SOUTH-WESTERN NIGERIA

The first attempt to extend the frontiers of Churches of Christ to what used to be Western region of Nigeria was carried out by C. A. O. Essien between the months of June and July 1958. This missionary trip took Essien to Sapele and Benin City respectively. At the end of the 13-day exercise, a soul was converted at Sapele while seven souls heeded the gospel in Benin City.²⁰⁷ A major attempt at planting Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria was pioneered by Lesslie Diestelkamp, an American missionary from the Church of Christ in the United States. Diestelkamp and his family arrived in Nigeria on June 30, 1959,²⁰⁸ to join other American missionaries who had earlier arrived Eastern Nigeria on the request of Essien and his native colleagues. After about five month of working in the company of other American missionaries like Wendell Broom, Bill Nicks, James Finney, Rees Bryant, amongst others, Diestelkamp decided to start a new work in Lagos. Diestelkamp summarized his ministry in Eastern Nigeria this way, "In four months about 350 were immersed as a result of our work and five new churches were started."²⁰⁹ Diestelkamp arrived Lagos on November 30, 1959. Why did Diestelkamp withdraw from the East and decide to move to the West? Diestelkamp himself provided the answer:

This has always been our desire to go into new places, even in America, and also here in Africa, again saying as did Paul, "Lest I should build upon another man's foundation" (Rom. 15:20). So we

²⁰⁶Oji O. Oji. "The Nigerian Report" as presented by Biodun Owolabi at the Africans Claiming Africa for Christ Conference, Lusaka, Zambia, 8-12 August, 2012.

²⁰⁷ Ebong, *History of the Church of Christ in Nigeria*, 39.

²⁰⁸There seems to be a conflict in the date of arrival of the Diestelkamps in Nigeria. While Reda Goff, "The Nigeria Mission," documented June 30, 1959, Diestelkamp wrote, "... at Lagos, where our ship, the 'Accra' docked July 22." L. Diestelkamp, "Report from Nigeria" *Truth Magazine* 4.1, October 1959: 12.

²⁰⁹L. Diestelkamp. Report from Nigeria (No.3). *Truth Magazine* 4. Feb. 5, 1960: 4.

have come west with the hope that this Western Region, and these great cities in the west, may also have the pure gospel.²¹⁰

But Bill Nicks thought otherwise, “Leslies withdrew from us on the basis that we believed in church cooperation.”²¹¹

From Nicks’ comment, it is easy to decipher that Diestelkamp was from the non-institutional bloc of Churches of Christ from the United States. Nick’s statement presupposed that the Nigerian mission work was an initiative of mainstream Churches of Christ of which the Lawrence Avenue church was one. Compared with the mainstream churches, non-institutional churches insist on absolute autonomy of each local church and forbid congregations pooling resources together for any cause. The non-institutional churches also prohibit the establishment of any institution other than the local church to carry out the works of the church. In this light, Bible colleges, Bible correspondence courses and orphan homes are seen as human innovations which must be avoided. Similarly, non-institutional Churches of Christ declare it unscriptural and sinful for the church to render physical aid to anyone who is not her member. Since the pioneer missionaries who started planting Churches of Christ in South-western Nigeria were from the non-institutional group, it is not surprising that the churches they planted developed this characteristic.

On hand to receive Diestelkamp was a group of Christians from the East working in Lagos who have been trying to preach the gospel in their own little way. There was also Raphael Williams, a native preacher who was already working in Lagos prospecting among between 2,000 and 3,000 people from the West, especially Lagos, already taking the Bible correspondence course sent out from the East.²¹² The work in Lagos started with Diestelkamp and his men preaching from house to house and gathering people on the streets for public preaching. Within one week of arrival in Lagos, four people with

²¹⁰Diestelkamp, Report from Nigeria (No.3) 3.

²¹¹B. Nicks, “Early History of Nigerian Christian Hospital. Retrieved April 25, 2012, from http://www.ihcf.net/docs/NCH_history.pdf 1 of 2.

²¹²L. Diestelkamp. Truth and Freedom in Nigeria. *Truth Magazine* 3: 12, Sept. 12, 1960: 14.

whom Williams had been studying were baptized.²¹³ This notwithstanding, Diestelkamp anticipated that the challenges in the West will be greater than they experienced in the East:

We have come west with the hope that this Western Region, and these great cities in the west, may also have the pure gospel. We know the work will be slower here, and baptisms will be one-by-one instead of in droves, but we believe the work will be healthier as a result of greater understanding by the converts.”²¹⁴

The above statement testified to Churches of Christ's alienation of other Christian denominations as perverts of primitive Christianity. The sins of other Christian denominations from the perspective of Churches of Christ were that they have developed creedal statements as human addition to the Bible; developed hierarchical ecclesiastical traditions disregarded biblical truth and developed names of human origin like Methodist, Anglican, Baptist, instead of names like Church of Christ, Church of God, etc. Diestelkamp's statement also anticipated that the mission to the West will be more challenging in view of the educational attainment in the region which will require the missionaries to earn the right to be heard through convincing and properly articulated messages. The differences in contexts, method and attitudes will go a long way in shaping the character of churches that will eventually emerge out of these pioneering efforts.

Diestelkamp discovered that Western Nigeria was full of terrific challenges as they settled down for evangelism and discipleship. One of the challenges they faced was that of speaking in the language that the people will understand. Since Nigerian preachers that came from the East could not speak Yoruba language, it became expedient for the team to look for a way of overcoming the problem. According to Diestelkamp, this problem was solved by hiring “some men on different occasions. Two of them, E. O. Abimbola, a secondary school teacher at Ibadan, and George Oginni, a contractor in the Lagos area, have been converted.”²¹⁵ Armed with capable interpreters, the team were

²¹³L. Diestelkamp. Report from Nigeria (No. 2). *Truth Magazine* 4: 3, Dec. 3, 1959: 21.

²¹⁴Diestelkamp, Report from Nigeria (No. 3), 4.

²¹⁵L. Diestelkamp. From Nigeria, No. 7. *Truth Magazine* 1. Oct. 1960: 8.

thrilled at the level at which the people were willing to listen to them, but they were too few to take advantage of most situations, “Knowing that large audiences will listen in every place, and that many honest ones will obey, it is frightening to know that we must pass up most of the places because we are too few in number to take advantage of them.”²¹⁶

In the course of the team’s evangelistic itinerary, Ebong notes that they came across and baptized one Jacob Onobote who was a Bible Correspondence course student operating a barbing shop along Agarawu Street in Lagos.²¹⁷ Under the leadership of Diestelkamp, the Lagos team made Ajegunle their base and planted the first church in the area. Ebong notes that the choice of Ajegunle was informed by its cosmopolitan nature as it had a mixed population of Ibo, Ibibio, Yoruba, Ijaw and a host of other tribes from Southern Nigeria. Diestelkamp described Ajegunle as a “dark, dirty, congested residential area, where there are many, many people living in a small, compact place.”²¹⁸ It is ironic that over fifty year after Diestelkamp’s description, Ajegunle remained largely as described. Nothing or little has changed!

From this location, the team goes out in the evening into the streets with lantern and began to preach to people who gave them attention. Within few minutes, a crowd of 50 to 200 would have emerged. Tracts were shared to them and after about an hour of preaching, another hour was used for questions and answers. The street meeting was usually concluded with someone or more requesting baptism. Sometimes, the crowd just won’t gather. Sometimes those who gather asked same questions two or three times; some questions may be very important while some may be irrelevant and even unfair. Diestelkamp and his men were encouraged by the outcome of their efforts in spite of the challenges such that within six weeks 91 people were baptized including two women.²¹⁹

George Oginni, one of the interpreters was baptized in 1960 by Diestelkamp to become the second Yoruba man to become a member of the Church of Christ apart from

²¹⁶Diestelkamp, “From Nigeria, No. 7.” 8.

²¹⁷Ebong, *History of the Church of Christ in Nigeria*, 24.

²¹⁸L. Diestelkamp. Report from Nigeria (No. 4). *Truth Magazine* 4. April 7, 1960: 2.

²¹⁹Diestelkamp, Report from Nigeria (No. 4), 2.

Onobote who was converted through a correspondence course. Oginni had this to say on his baptism, "I'm the first Yoruba convert into the Lord's church in Nigeria. I was baptized May 1960 about 5 months to Nigeria's independence."²²⁰ But according to Diestelkamp's account, Jacob S. Onobote, (obviously a Yoruba man by this name) has been taking Bible correspondence course in Lagos before the arrival of the American missionaries in Lagos. The ship bringing the Diestelkamps from the US docked in Lagos on July 22, 1959. The Diestelkamps, Billy Nicks and some native evangelists who came from the East to meet the Diestelkamps encountered Onobote who was baptized by Okon E. Udoh on Sunday July 26, 1959, in the waters of a little inlet from the Atlantic Ocean.²²¹ If Oginni was baptized in May 1960, he could not have been the first Yoruba convert of the Church of Christ. Apart from the account of Ebong that when the church started at Orodu, Ajegunle, he came to worship from Lagos Island, nothing else was heard of Onobote since then. Consequently, it seems safer to refer to Oginni as the first Yoruba preacher of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria.

Meanwhile, Oginni, being a Yoruba man was instrumental to the acquisition of a land for church building at Ajegunle. Oginni reminisced on his involvement in the acquisition of a landed property for the Ajegunle church on Orodu Street, "I also bought land for Orodu church in Lagos. Diestelkamp asked me to build it fast. I did that with my own hands."²²² Before his encounter with the Church of Christ, Oginni had been a pastor of The Apostolic Church for sixteen years. He rose through the ranks to become the secretary of the Area Council of the church. After his conversion, Oginni became so much involved in church activities that he abandoned his contractor work for full time preaching.

Subsequently, the evangelism team moved out of Ajegunle to spread the gospel to other parts of Lagos. Of the pioneering team, D.D. Isonguyo was left behind to tender

²²⁰Alaje, *Churches of Christ and the Printed Page*, 263.

²²¹L. Diestelkamp. Report from *Nigeria Truth Magazine* 4.1. October, 1959: 12

²²² Alaje, *Churches of Christ and the Printed Page*, 265.

the new church at Ajegunle while Raphael Williams moved down to Surulere²²³ and E. J. Ebong to Lagos Island to start new efforts in these areas which eventually led to planting of congregations.²²⁴ From Lagos Island and Surulere, the Churches of Christ soon spread to other parts of Lagos through the unrelenting evangelistic activities of the American missionaries and the budding and ever effervescent native evangelists. Churches were planted in such areas like Ebute-Metta, Palm Grove, Olodi-Apapa, Mushin, Iwaya, Oshodi, Ikeja, Shomolu and a host other places on the outskirts of Lagos.²²⁵

Ebong attested to the blessing of God upon the efforts of the native evangelists and the American missionaries as they moved to different directions in Lagos for the purpose of propagating the Gospel. On Lagos Island, God blessed the efforts of E. J. Ebong and his men with the establishment of the first church on the Island in April 1960. The meeting place was located in the premises of New Age School along Lewis Street, Lagos.²²⁶ The people of Maroko village, a suburb of the Island responded positively to the gospel, a situation which led to the establishment of what Ebong called “one of the strongest churches in Nigeria.”²²⁷

Abasiono Ufot attests to Ebong’s view on the strength of the Maroko church when he avers that the church was the first in Lagos to be scripturally organized before its extinction in the early 1980s as a result of the demolition of Maroko slum by the Lagos State Government. Residents of Maroko relocated to other parts of Lagos.²²⁸ Ufot also notes that brethren meeting at the church in Maroko formed the nucleus of the church presently meeting at Ilasan Low Cost Housing Estate, Lekki Lagos.²²⁹ God also used the

²²³The Church of Christ was planted in Randle area of Surulere, and started on December 20, 1959. By January 3, 1960 (three weeks later); the school room was not big enough to accommodate about 71 people who came for worship.

²²⁴ Ebong, *History of the Church of Christ in Nigeria*, 25

²²⁵ Ebong, *History of the Church of Christ in Nigeria*, p. 25

²²⁶ The meeting place for the Lagos Island church was secured with the cost of 3 pounds per month. Fifteen people met for the first worship on April 24, 1960. Within one month, attendance rose to 21. Twenty eight people were baptized on the Island within three months.

²²⁷ Ebong, *History of the Church of Christ in Nigeria*, p. 25

²²⁸ Abasiono Ufot, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ Ibeshe, Lagos, April 7, 2012.

²²⁹ Oji, *Interview Respondent*, June 26, 2012.

group led by Ebong to plant another church at Apapa Road in the Mainland. The church was the antecedent of the church presently meeting at Iponri Housing Estate, Lagos.

Reminiscent of similar experience in the East at the inception of Church of Christ in the region, denominations were converted en-mass to the Church of Christ. Nsentip and Bassey note that two of such denominations were The Apostolic Church and the Cherubim and Seraphim Movement.²³⁰ Ade Ajetunmobi hints that the Church of Christ formerly meeting at 20, Akorohunfayo Street, Igbobi, Lagos, consisted of converts from The Apostolic church. While the church at Akorohunfayo Street, Igbobi is now in extinction, her members dispersed across the city of Lagos to establish new congregations at Ipaja, Mile 12 (Ketu), Onipanu, Ikorodu, Remo and Jaleoyemi - Oniyere, Ibadan²³¹

James Majekodunmi²³² observes that the spread of Churches of Christ across Lagos was rapid and consistent as the church moved in the direction of the population. Majekodunmi recalls that as new areas develop due to the ever increasing population and rapid urbanization of Lagos, churches were planted as church members moved into these new areas from existing congregations. In addition to planting new congregations in the areas where existing members relocated, Z. Idowu²³³ and E. Adesanya²³⁴ assert that deliberate evangelistic efforts were carried out by existing congregations to plant new churches in the emerging communities. By 1980, the Church of Christ had congregations in locations such as Badagry, Ikotun-Egbe, Egbeda, Olowora, Ikorodu, Lawanson, Ijeshatedo, Bariga, Akodu, Alakuko and a host of other places. On the whole, there were more than 40 Churches of Christ scattered around Lagos as counted by Ebong in 1995.²³⁵

²³⁰Nsentip and Bokime Bassey, *The New Testament Church and Its Restoration in Nigeria*, 76.

²³¹Ade Ajetunmobi, Interview Respondent, Elder, Egbeda Church of Christ, Lagos, January 4, 2011.

²³²J. Majekodunmi, Interview Respondent, Preacher, Church of Christ, Adiyon/Agbado. Ogun State, December 25, 2010.

²³³Z. Idowu, Interview Respondent, Elder, Church of Christ, Igbein, Abeokuta, March 25, 2011.

²³⁴E. Adesanya, Interview Respondent, Elder, Church of Christ, Idiaba, Abeokuta, June 12, 2012.

²³⁵Ebong, *History of the Church of Christ in Nigeria*, 33-34.

As at December 2011, there were about 110 Churches of Christ in Lagos State.²³⁶ In addition to those mentioned above, Oginni identified brethren like Samuel Odewunmi, Emmanuel Bafunso (1928-2004), James Majekodunmi, Ezekiel Ajayi, Albert Adeniji, and Sunday Omotosho among several early Yoruba converts to the Church of Christ who were very active as preachers and interpreters for American missionaries in preaching the gospel and planting of congregations in Mushin, Igbobi, Palm-Grove and Agege, and other parts of Lagos²³⁷

Diestelkamp notes that as the work progressed, the team comes to a greater understanding of their opportunities and responsibilities such that during the first anniversary of the work in Lagos, the work has grown this much: "In the twelve months just ended, more than seven hundred fifty people have been baptized as a result of our work, and nine churches were started."²³⁸ As a result of this bountiful harvest, Diestelkamp sought and got support from fellow American preachers and missionaries who joined in the Western Nigeria mission. The list included Sewell Hall, Aude Mckee, Paul Earnhart, George Pennock, Jim Sasser, Robert Speer, Jim Gay and Wayne Payne who were actively involved in evangelistic activities and church planting in Lagos, Ibadan, Sapele and other key towns in the old Western region. The missionaries were involved in the work in these areas between 1960 and 1970. The missionaries did so much in mentoring native converts to take responsible leadership positions in the nascent churches being planted.²³⁹

Some of the tools employed by the missionaries and native evangelists in evangelizing Lagos were lanterns,²⁴⁰ charts and tracts. The crowd usually gathered round the lantern that provided illumination on the street while preaching was going on. Diestelkamp relayed his experience regarding the use of lantern in evening street evangelism, "There was no pulpit and not even a street light, but the large crowd gathered

²³⁶Directory of Churches of Christ in South-Western Nigeria, compiled by West Nigeria Christian College and School of Biblical Studies, Abeokuta, February 2012.

²³⁷ Alaje, *Churches of Christ and the Printed Page*, 263.

²³⁸Distelkamp, *From Nigeria*, No. 7, 8.

²³⁹Ebong, *History of the Church of Christ in Nigeria*, 26.

²⁴⁰Similar to American Coleman Lantern

so closely around the lantern that I had to ask them to step back so that all could see the charts being used and so that I could get sufficient air.”²⁴¹ The charts were usually made of poster card material, 2 x 2 ½ feet with beautiful graphics conspicuously placed where the crowd could easily see it. Tracts were also printed in thousands, initially in English language and later in Yoruba language. Diestelkamp observed that “these people grab tracts like a hungry child grabs a candy bar”²⁴² and in less than one year of the work in Lagos, a total of 140,000 tracts have been printed locally and another 30,000 sent in from America.²⁴³ Tracts printing remained the most recurrent expenses on the missionaries’ monthly expenditure. Diestelkamp had the following testimony to make about the use of tracts for evangelism:

We give away thousands of tracts, yet in the whole year I have seen only three places where even one was thrown away or deliberately torn. Even in those three places it was only one or two rowdy boys who did so. Most everyone will clutch the tracts as precious possessions. Many, many times when we go again to the same place, after a few days or even after weeks, we see signs of the tracts in the pockets of people, or they produce one and ask a question about it.²⁴⁴

Bible correspondence course was another vital evangelistic tool in the hands of the American missionaries in planting Churches of Christ in different places across Southwestern Nigeria. Since the inception of the Nigerian work in the late 1940s, thousands of correspondence courses were mailed from Uyo in the East to other parts of the country. The correspondence courses became the pathfinder leading the missionaries and the native evangelists to prospects that were subsequently converted. From Lagos to Abeokuta, Ibadan and Benin City, the story was the same. The efficacy of Bible correspondence course as a means of conversion was confirmed by Aude Mckee, “Through this course we were able to contact many people with a good background of

²⁴¹ L. Diestelkamp, Report from Nigeria, 13.

²⁴² L. Diestelkamp. Report from Nigeria (No. 4) *Truth Magazine* 4. 9. June, 1960: .5.

²⁴³ Diestelkamp, Report from Nigeria (No. 4), 7.

²⁴⁴ L. Diestelkamp. Report from Nigeria, No. 7. *Truth Magazine* 5. 1. October, 1960: .9.

unadulterated Bible teaching, and, in many cases, the task of leading them to obedience to the truth was quite easy.”²⁴⁵

The American missionaries and the native evangelists encountered several oppositions in the course of preaching the gospel on the streets of Lagos. Diestelkamp recalled one or two occasions when some Jehovah’s Witnesses attempted to disrupt the street preaching, but their frolics were overcome by stressing the vital truths of the kingdom as against their doctrinal practices.²⁴⁶ There was another encounter with a Muslim who denied that Christ is the Son, but a servant of God. When he would not be persuaded with scriptural answers provided, he challenged Diestelkamp to a debate with his Imam which was quickly organized. The debate took place for four consecutive periods on the streets of Lagos with each session lasting two or three hours and from two to three hundred people in attendance at each session with majority of them being Moslems. After series of altercations, the Imam concluded that the Koran is more authentic than the Bible and that Mohammed was the true and last of the prophets of God. Diestelkamp also insisted that the Bible is the complete will of God for man today and that Christ is the only begotten Son of God. At the end of the debate sessions, there was no victor, no vanquished, but Diestelkamp was pleased by the opportunity and the experience: “It has been a great opportunity to preach Christ to the multitudes of unbelievers, and it has been a very thrilling experience for me to do so.”²⁴⁷

Another strategy employed by the missionaries and the native evangelists to evangelize Lagos and sustain the work was the organization of Bible training sessions to train potential native evangelists who would be able to teach others and continue with the work when the missionaries leave. Diestelkamp evaluated the options before the missionaries as follows. The first option, he said, was to convert a few and then concentrate on teaching and training them so that they can carry on in the future. The second option was to emphasize only the work among the lost, stress baptism and leave them on their own. The third option was to continue preaching to the lost and still devote

²⁴⁵A. Mckee. Report from Nigeria (No. 4) *Truth Magazine* 6: 8. May, 1962: 5.

²⁴⁶L. Diestelkamp. Report from Nigeria (No. 6) *Truth Magazine* 4: 10. August, 1960: 11.

²⁴⁷ L. Diestelkamp. Report from Nigeria, No. 9. *Truth Magazine* 5:5. August, 1961: 15.

much time to “teaching them to observe all things.” The first two options were simple and very easy to accomplish. The third option was comparatively difficult but seemed to be the best of the options in the long run. Having decided that this was the best way to go, the native preachers and preachers in training were kept busy in teaching, visiting, training and involved in reaching more lost souls.²⁴⁸

The history of the spread of Churches of Christ in Lagos was not without the distractions, chaos, stealing, hustling and bustling and commotions characteristic of a city as diverse as Lagos. Diestelkamp recounted three of such distractions in his itinerary preaching on the streets of Lagos, at Surulere Roundabout, Evans Street, Lagos Island and Boundary Street in Ajegunle. At Surulere Roundabout, he recalled that while he was preaching, “then we all heard the loud crash and crunch of a motor accident on the other side of the roundabout, and immediately about seventy-five percent of the crowd left me to go look at the accident.” Another night while he was preaching on Evans Street in Lagos “with many listeners when a mob of people ran by shouting "Ole, ole, ole" (thief, thief, thief). These people cannot resist such a chance, so most of them ran after the mob until the thief was caught.” Yet, another chaotic experience while preaching on Boundary Street Ajegunle:

The crowd was unusually large and response was imminent. Then an extra zealous "Jehovah's Witness" pressed some questions too aggressively, and the crowd turned against him with such a frenzy that the meeting had to close with disappointment to us, even though it was really the friends who broke it up with their over enthusiastic opposition to the "Witness."²⁴⁹

Diestelkamp and his men were more successful in converting more people compared with missionaries from Christian denominations in Lagos at this time as a result of their proactive approach to ministry by going into highways, byways, markets and street corners in search of the lost. The white man was also a point of attraction to the people as the crowds on the streets are much larger when a white man was speaking. Diestelkamp attested to the fact that they were bountifully rewarded by the level of

²⁴⁸L. Diestelkamp. Report from Nigeria (No. 6). *Truth Magazine* 5. 10. August, 1960: 13.

²⁴⁹L. Diestelkamp. Report from Nigeria (No. 10). *Truth Magazine* 5.7. April, 1961: 22.

response from their prospects: “We can never fail to marvel at the receptiveness of these people and to be truly grateful that we have had this privilege of sharing the pure gospel of Christ with so many honest souls.”²⁵⁰

It was part of the vision of Leslie Diestelkamp to preach the gospel in all the major cities of Southwestern Nigeria beginning from Lagos. Even though Lagos served as the gateway to Western Nigeria, Diestelkamp was very conscious of the potentials of Ibadan and had his eyes there, “Lagos is the capital of Nigeria and its chief city, though Ibadan, 85 miles away from Lagos is larger. The University of Nigeria is at Ibadan. The two cities present a great challenge to open up the Western province and to perhaps then reach on into Ghana and other nearby countries”²⁵¹ Even before Diestelkamp set about this task late 1959, thousands of Bible correspondence courses were sent out from Uyo to all major cities in the West including Ibadan to prepare the ground for eventual evangelization of the city. After the work in Lagos has reasonably stabilized with congregations in Ajegunle and Surulere and another in the offing in Lagos Island, Ibadan, one of the the biggest city in West Africa, began to receive the attention of the missionaries.

After initial prospecting of the city, the missionaries on getting to Ibadan found out that the city was so densely populated that they hardly found a place for street and open-air preaching. But in a few places where they had opportunity to preach, they received the kind of attention they received in Lagos until they eventually got a place to hire for the church to meet regularly. All this while, Diestelkamp and his family temporarily relocated to Ibadan and stayed in the Government Guest House. The Church of Christ met for the first time in Ibadan, Oyo State, on the first Sunday of May, 1960, with ten people in attendance. As the work progressed, the landlord of the rented apartment who also owns and manages a secondary school was converted. One of the teachers in the secondary school, E. O. Abimbola who was initially hired as an interpreter was also converted. Native evangelists from the East that were involved in planting the Church in Ibadan included E. Ekanem and Solomon Etuk. Ekanem had relocated to

²⁵⁰Diestelkamp, Report from Nigeria (No. 10), 24.

²⁵¹Diestelkamp, Truth and Freedom in Nigeria, 16.

Ibadan with his family to prepare the ground for the commencement of the church. He was later joined by Solomon Etuk. Help further came for Diestelkamp and his Nigerian team when reinforcement came from America with the arrival of Sewell Hall's family on September 19, 1960.²⁵²

Sewell Hall added value to the existing work by co-teaching with Diestelkamp at the training class for potential preachers in Lagos and also secured a commercial time with Western Nigeria Broadcasting Service (WNBS) Ibadan, for radio broadcast of the gospel. The fifteen-minute programme was scheduled for 3.p.m on Sundays. The programme generated considerable interest and was heard across the West. Hall equally maintained a column of gospel message published in the newspaper every fortnight. Apart from disseminating the gospel through the newspaper many questions and requests for information were received through the newspaper publication. It should be observed that the arrival of Hall brought the incorporation of the use of mass media as a means of evangelism among Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria. Until now, the news of the kingdom have been communicated through tracts, charts, street preaching, house-to-house preaching, and open-air preaching²⁵³

As preaching of the gospel was intensified in the city, such activities at Oke-Ado area led to the baptism of thirteen people from the Cherubim and Seraphim Church. After an intensive study of the Bible lasting for about one month, these prospects were convinced to renounce their former faith and become members of the Church of Christ. A place of worship was organized in the area and on Sunday, February 2, 1964, the Church of Christ met for the first time in Oke-Ado area of Ibadan with more than sixty people in attendance.²⁵⁴ The success at Oke-Ado served as elixir to energize the evangelism team to move to other parts of the city. Mokola was the next port of call and intensive evangelistic itinerary of the missionaries and indigenous evangelists led to the establishment of another congregation at Mokola area of Ibadan.

²⁵²L. Diestelkamp. Report from Nigeria, No. 8. *Truth Magazine* 5. 2. December, 1960: .21.

²⁵³ L. Diestelkamp. Report from Nigeria -11. *Truth Magazine* 5. 9, June, 1961: .22.

²⁵⁴G. Pennock. Nigerian Report. *Truth Magazine* 9. 2. November, 1961: 14.

Early converts in Ibadan included, Ezekiel Akinyemi, Alice Malomo²⁵⁵, Gabriel Babarinsa, Adeosun and the host of others.²⁵⁶ Another strong influence in the propagation of the gospel particularly in Ibadan and across the Western region is Sunday Ayandare. Sunday Ayandare, his father, Samuel Ayandare and his younger brother were baptized the same day by Oginni²⁵⁷ From Ibadan, the gospel was taken to other towns and villages in the West including Ondo, Okitipupa, Akure, Ado-Ekiti, Ile-Ife, Oshogho, Ilorin to mention but a few. Emmanuel B. Abolarin notes that the native evangelists who were to become ministers of the congregations being planted across the West started as interpreters to the missionaries in their evangelistic itinerary. They matured from interpreters to teachers and from teachers to ministers.²⁵⁸

From the humble beginning in the premises of a private secondary school in Ibadan, Churches of Christ spread across the nooks and crannies of the ancient city and other parts of the state like Oyo town, Ogbomosho, Oke Ogun area and a host of other major towns in Oyo state. The Church of Christ is represented today in the ancient city in places like, Challenge, Koloko, Kube, Bodija, Eleiyele, Apata, Ajeigbe, Temidire Market (New Ife Road), Ogere Oloba, Olaogun, Ejioku, Moga Eleta, Abadina (University of Ibadan), Moniya, Odo-Ona, Aba-Agbo, Ajibode, Akobo, Agbowo and a host of others.

The process that led to the emergence of Churches of Christ in Ogun State was initiated by a young man resident in Abeokuta, who requested for baptism after completing the Bible Correspondence course. Diestelkamp wrote back to the prospect and arranged to preach the gospel in the city. Diestelkamp accompanied by George Oginni and some other members of the team left for Abeokuta to baptize the young man and conducted a street preaching. Diestelkamp reported that a large crowd heard them

²⁵⁵Young Owukiabo described Malomo as a childless widow and “a fervent Christian woman” who transferred the unprecedented zeal of her former faith (Cherubim and Seraphim) to bear on her new faith.

²⁵⁶Nsentip E. Nsentip and Bokime Bassej, *The New Testament Church and Its Restoration in Nigeria*, 80.

²⁵⁷George Oginni’s interview with D. T. Alaje, November 24, 2003.

²⁵⁸E. B. Abolarin, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Ado-Odo, Ogun State, May 11, 2012.

that Sunday evening and at the end of the exercise two people were baptized.²⁵⁹ After the meeting, arrangements were made for another meeting for June 13-14, 1960 during which they planned to start a congregation in the rock city.

The meeting for June 13-14, 1960, took place as scheduled and culminated into the planting of the Church of Christ in Abeokuta. On that Sunday morning, twenty-two people gathered to worship in Abeokuta for the first time. Between the space of one month counting from the first encounter with the city by the middle of April, 1960, fourteen people had been baptized among whom was one old man who claimed to have been to two denominations and was grateful for finding the truth.²⁶⁰ To help the new congregation, Oginni traveled from Lagos every weekend to preach and nurture the new congregation. Whenever he was in the company of an American missionary, the missionary preached while he interpreted for him. This situation continued until Oginni was appointed the minister of the congregation now meeting in Igbein, Abeokuta. It was from Igbein, Abeokuta that Churches of Christ spread to other parts of the city and across Ogun State.

Oginni identified early converts and giants of the gospel in Abeokuta to include Matthew Sonola Adebayo,²⁶¹ James Olusanya Orekoya²⁶² and Beckley Olorunsogo Matanmi. Oginni pioneered the work as the preacher, sent Matanmi who succeeded him as preacher for training in Ibadan while he moved on to his home town, Ilesha to start the Isokun church when Matanmi returned from training.²⁶³ From Igbein, the church spread to other places in Abeokuta such as Ija-ofa, Olorombo, Kemta Idi-aba, Oluwo Adigbe, Osiele, WNCC Campus church, Oke Yidi (Lantoro), Mile Six Ajebo Road, Obantoko, Kajola and Odo-Ijesha. The Church of Christ is today visibly present in other parts of

²⁵⁹Diestelkamp, Report from Nigeria (No. 6), 13.

²⁶⁰Diestelkamp, Report from Nigeria, No. 7, 9.

²⁶¹Pa Sonola died on Wednesday, December 3, 2008 and was buried on Saturday, December 6, 2008. He was 88 years old. It was interesting to observe that his convert, B. O. Matanmi, preached at his funeral and also had the privilege of committing him to mother earth.

²⁶²'The Optimist' and 'Jesu Nki O (Christ greets you), as Bro. J. O. Orekoya was variously called, died on Friday November 28, 2003 at the age of 74. He was buried in Imagbon in Odogbolu Local Government area of Ogun State on Saturday, February 21, 2004.

²⁶³George Oginni's interview with D. T. Alaje, November 24, 2003.

Ogun State like Ota, Owode Titun, Iyana Ilogbo, Ifo (three congregations) Itori, Shagamu, Ijebu Ode, Remo, Imagbon, Owode Egba, Ado-odo, Owode Yewa, Oke-Odan, Ihunbo, Ilaro, Aiyetoro, Imala and a host of other communities in Ogun State.

The establishment of West Nigeria Christian College and School of Biblical Studies in Abeokuta in 1999 marked a turning point in standardizing preparations for potential ministers of the gospel among Churches of Christ in Western Nigeria. WNCC & SBS was a collaborative effort between the African Christian Schools Foundation, Nashville, Tennessee, U. S. A. and like minded Christians across congregations of the Church of Christ in Western Nigeria under the name, “The Committee of Saints.”²⁶⁴ Mainly sponsored by the ACSF who is also the proprietor of NCBC Ukpom, WNCC was established to replicate NCBC in the West by preparing men to actualize the objective of committing the faithful words into the hands of faithful men who will in turn teach others. Situated on about 30 acres of land, WNCC according to Larry Mathis was meant and is indeed a catalyst for church growth in the West like the existing schools at Ukpom, Onicha Ngwa and Jos in Eastern and Northern Nigeria respectively.²⁶⁵

Furthermore, James Beckloff observes that WNCC was established to prepare ministers to meet the challenges of the modern society. He notes that world population is growing with the need for trained Christians to preach the gospel to ever increasing population. If this is not done, he avers, the world of tomorrow will not be a Christian world. He adds further that there is a rapidly rising educational level in the world. The educational trend is upward with no signs of leveling off. Beckloff recalls Paul’s admonition that Christians must work to “demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). This he said was the underlying biblical principle upon which the existence of WNCC can be justified.²⁶⁶ Henry Huffard²⁶⁷ and Trent Wheeler²⁶⁸

²⁶⁴The Committee of Saints is presently registered as Christian Restoration Heritage Foundation.

²⁶⁵Larry Mathis, *Interview Respondent*, Missionary, Former President of the African Christian Schools Foundation, Nashville Tennessee, USA, April 12, 2010.

²⁶⁶James Beckloff, *Interview Respondent*, Missionary, West Nigeria Christian College, Abeokuta, September 10, 2011.

²⁶⁷Henry Huffard, *Interview Respondent*, Missionary and former President of the African Christian Schools Foundation, May 16, 2012.

agreed with Beckloff, they observed that Bible Colleges are catalyst for church growth as they supply the manpower needed for the propagation of the gospel and spiritual edification of the local church.

Unlike other training programmes in the West before WNCC, David Apata notes that WNCC offers basic two-year training in Bible which leads to the award of diploma in Biblical Studies. In 2005, he observes that the College introduced a one-year advance diploma in Christian ministry for graduates of the diploma programme to further prepare them to confront ever excruciating challenges of congregational ministry.²⁶⁹ WNCC also organizes annual Preachers and Church Leaders' Workshop to address contemporary issues in the church, update and sharpen biblical skills of serving ministers and ministers in training. The College also organizes annual Sisters and Youths seminars for spiritual edification of these segments of the church. The College's annual Bible lectureship offers fresh insights to biblical teachings and also serves as an evangelistic outreach to non-Christians in addition to the annual Southwest youths' retreat organized during the Easter holiday in conjunction with *The Likeminds*, a youth group with membership cutting across congregations of Churches of Christ. These annual programmes provide avenues for interaction and mutual edification among members of Churches of Christ, and also enhance mutual edification and healthy Christian fellowship amongst the youths. The Southwest School of Evangelism also came on board in 2005. It was located in Ibadan with the basic objective of preparing men for evangelism.

According to M. O. Obakemi,²⁷⁰ Owo town was the first port of call of Churches of Christ in Ondo State. The congregation started as result of the evangelistic campaign conducted in the city from 8-21 June, 1964, by George Pennock and E. O. Abimbola from Ibadan and George Oginni from Abeokuta. The team was later joined by Samuel Odewunmi during the first week and John Oluyemi in the second week. At the end of the two-week exercise, 103 people obeyed the gospel. The first worship service of the

²⁶⁸Trent Wheeler, *Interview Respondent*, Missionary and President of the African Christian Schools Foundation, May 22, 2012.

²⁶⁹David Apata, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Ado-Badore, Ajah, Lagos, April 7, 2011.

²⁷⁰M. O. Obakemi, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Lawanson, Lagos, April 12, 2011.

Church of Christ in Owo was conducted on June 21, 1964. One hundred and five people attended the morning worship even as one hundred and twenty-nine attended the evening service. By June 24, 1964, the number of baptized people had increased to one hundred and twenty-two, a situation which led to the arrangement for Abimbola to remain in the town to work with the new church for the rest of June and for Oginni to come back and take over from Abimbola for the month of July.²⁷¹

From Owo, Churches of Christ spread to other parts of Ondo State like Ikare, Ondo town, Okitipupa, Ilaje amongst others. The works at Ilaje and Okitipupa area were at the initiative of David Olugha, an Ilaje man converted in Abeokuta. Olugha constantly pressurized his minister, George Oginni of the need to preach the gospel to his people. Oginni finally yielded to pressure and visited Ilaje in August 1968. The trip was very successful as Oginni found the people to be very receptive to the gospel. In September, D. O. Martins, the preacher of the church meeting in Akinbode, Lagos, followed up and built on the foundation laid by Oginni among Ilaje people. American missionaries also deemed it necessary to visit the area having been encouraged by reports of previous visits. George Pennock and Wayne Payne accompanied by local evangelists, embarked on a campaign of the Ilaje area from October 2-14, 1968. The trip took them to Odun Oyingbo, Okitipupa, and Aiyetoro. At the end of the campaign, 40 people were baptized, existing congregations were encouraged and plans made to further open up the area by acquiring a canoe with a canopy and an outboard motor to power it.²⁷² In addition to the above, Churches of Christ are represented in virtually all major cities and towns in Ondo State such as Akure, Ore, Idanre, Igbotako, Ode-Irele, Ile-Oluji, Ilara-Mokin, Federal University of Technology, Akure, amongst others.

There are two accounts of how Churches of Christ got to Osun State. The first account traced the establishment of the first Church of Christ in Osun State to the evangelism and teaching programme in Ilesa between 1966 and 1967 organized by Ezekiel Akinyemi from Ibadan. As soon as the first church was planted, Julius Ajayi

²⁷¹Pennock, Nigerian Report, 14.

²⁷²G. Pennock. Preaching the Gospel in Nigeria. *Gospel Guardian* 21.1. May, 1969: 12b.

relocated from Akure to nurture the new church as the preacher.²⁷³ The second source traced the first Church of Christ to the church located at Isokun planted by George Oginni who was then preaching in Abeokuta but an indigene of Ilesa.²⁷⁴ Ayandare maintains that the church at Isokun only started in 1972 when George Oginni returned from Abeokuta and couldn't have preceeded the efforts of Akinyemi and his group in 1967. From all indications it would appear that Oginni's statement that he moved from Lagos to Abeokuta then "came to my home town, Ilesha, began Isokun church as the first congregation in Ijeshaland"²⁷⁵ couldn't have been correct, except he was misquoted.

Be that as it may, there were unrelenting efforts aimed at spreading the Church of Christ across Osun State. For instance, the Church of Christ started in Osogbo, the current capital of the state when Bassey Umoh, a staff of the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) was posted to Oshogbo. What started as a house fellowship methamphosed into a full fledged congregation and was coordinated by Umoh until Sunday Ayandare took over from him as the preacher in 1972.²⁷⁶ The new congregation after moving from one temporary location to the other finally secured a permanent meeting place near Grace Baptist Church, Osogbo. As at 1990 the church had about 40 members. The number increased to about 100 in 2003.²⁷⁷ The church meeting at 32, Alasela Street, Igboya area of Ile Ife is one of the oldest congregations of the Church of Christ in Osun State. In addition to the above, Churches of Christ meet in other locations in Osun state including Osu, Iragbiji, Ila-Oragun, Ipetumodu, Modakeke, Gbongan, Obafemi Awolowo University Campus, Ile-Ife, amongst others.

The Church of Christ first emerged on the religious landscape of Ekitiland on the campus of the Federal Polytechnic situated in Ado-Ekiti. The church started as campus fellowship and was strengthened when Sunday Monofi, a staff of the Polytechnic was transferred from Akure to Ado-Ekiti. In 1987, church members from Ibadan led by

²⁷³Sunday Ayandare, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Koloko, Ibadan, Oyo State, July 16, 2011.

²⁷⁴Alaje. *Churches of Christ and the Printed Page*, 264.

²⁷⁵Alaje. *Churches of Christ and the Printed Page*, 264.

²⁷⁶Alaje. *Churches of Christ and the Printed Page*, 265.

²⁷⁷D. T. Alaje. Osogbo. *Christian Restoration Voice* 5. 4. Oct-Dec. 2003: 19-20.

Ezekiel Akinyemi and Isaac Ogunmoroti, both indigenes of Ekiti organized an evangelistic campaign in Ado-Ekiti during which several people were baptized.²⁷⁸ Subsequently, the campus church moved out to a rented location on 124a Ajilosun Street, Ado-Ekiti. An indigene of Ekiti, named Ariyo, was sent from Ibadan to nurture the young congregation as the preacher.²⁷⁹ The church on Ajilosun Street has since moved to their present and permanent location at Ekute quarters, Ado-Ekiti.

Another congregation of the Church of Christ in Ekiti State was planted in Ijero Ekiti on May 11, 1991. The work was spearheaded by Debo Olayisade, a preacher from the Church of Christ in Lagos and an indigene of Ekiti. While the new church was being nurtured by Sylvester Adewunmi as the preacher, Olayisade moved on to Ido-Ekiti to plant another congregation of the Church of Christ. The church at Ido-Ekiti met for the first time on February 14, 2001. From this humble beginning, Churches of Christ continue to spread to various parts of Ekitiland such that the church is today represented in various parts of the state such as Odo-Ado, Ise-Ekiti, Ilupeju-Ekiti, Oye-Ekiti, Efon-Alaye and other locations.

The evangelism strategies employed for the planting of Churches of Christ in Ekiti state was not different from what was employed in Lagos, Ogun, Oyo and other states of the Southwest. Bible correspondence courses were sent out and at the completion of the course, one or two of the prospects will request for baptism. Church members from the congregations from where the correspondence courses were sent out will arrange to baptize the prospects and organize a street preaching or open-air preaching in the area. Those who will obey the gospel through baptism will form the nucleus of a new congregation. However, one significant development that was peculiar to spreading of Churches of Christ in Ekitiland was the involvement of the indigenes in evangelizing their state. For instance, Sunday Monofi came in from Akure and strengthened the campus fellowship in the Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti; Ezekiel Akinyemi and Isaac Ogunmoroti came in from Ibadan to organize the evangelism that transformed the campus fellowship to a vibrant congregation; Ariyo also came from

²⁷⁸Debo Olayisade, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, May 3, 2012.

²⁷⁹ Ayandare, *Interview Respondent*, July 16, 2011.

Ibadan to become the Minister of the first congregation meeting at Ajilosun street while Debo Olayisade relocated from Lagos to start the congregation in Ijero Ekiti and several other congregations thereafter.

It is appropriate at this juncture to document the itinerary of American missionaries who labored in the spread of Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria in the early stage of the work. Leslie Diestelkamp and his family pioneered the Western work when he got to Lagos in November 1959. He was the only American missionary for nine months before he was joined by Sewell Hall who had previously worked for two years in the Eastern region. Sewell's brother, Bill Hall came for six months. It was at this point that Aude Mckee and his family came in to replace the Diestelkamps. Sewell and Bill Hall returned home as Paul Earnhart came in to assist Mckee. When Mckee returned home, George Pennock came in to support Earnhart. Earnhart stayed ten months longer than scheduled as Jim Sasser's family came in to strengthen the work. Earnhart and Pennock departed for home in early 1965 as Robert E. Speer came in to support Sasser in June 1965. Sasser returned home around mid-year in 1966 and was replaced by James L. Gay and Leslie Diestelkamp. It was a home coming for Diestelkamp after he returned to America in 1961 after pioneering the mission work in the West in 1959. It is instructive to note that in the early years of the work, it was a relay affair from one American missionary to the other, there was never a vacuum of American missionaries.²⁸⁰ While some missionaries came to serve for two years as characteristic of most American mission work associated with Churches of Christ in Nigeria, others came in for a short period of six months or less.

It is also interesting to note that the evangelistic itinerary of the above mentioned American missionary and the Nigerian evangelists was not limited to Western Nigeria. The gospel was extended to areas used to be known as Mid-western Nigeria. Churches of Christ were planted in Benin City, Sapele and Warri. It was also from Lagos that Wendell Broom, Sewell Hall and some Nigerian evangelists embarked on an evangelistic trip to Ghana. It was on this trip that John Gaidoo, the first Ghanaian convert was baptized. Gaidoo was later invited to Lagos for the preachers' training classes conducted by the

²⁸⁰Sasser, *Western Nigeria, -Past, -Present, -And Future*, 6.

American missionaries. Within the first year of Gaidoo preaching in Ghana about fifty people were converted and five small congregations started thus fulfilling Diestelkamp's vision of spreading the gospel from Western Nigeria to other surrounding regions and neighboring West African countries²⁸¹

Southwestern Nigerians were receptive to the gospel message of the Church of Christ as propagated by the American missionaries and indigenous evangelists from Eastern Nigeria. From Lagos to Abeokuta, from Abeokuta to Ibadan, from Ibadan to Owo, from Owo to Ilesa and from Ilesa to other towns and villages in the region, it was the same story of people heeding the call of the gospel and perfecting obedience through water baptism. The work so blossomed that within two years Diestelkamp recorded 1,300 conversions and 14 congregations planted.²⁸² It should also be noted that conversion is only the first step into the Christian race, the new converts needed to be indoctrinated and grounded in the doctrine of the Church of Christ. But as the new churches settled down into the business of edification and discipleship, they began to reflect the anti-institutional belief of the American missionaries who pioneered the work in the West.

The following evidences attest to the fact that Diestelkamp and other Americans that evangelized the West in the early days of the work were of non-institutional group within Churches of Christ or the 'antis' as they are called in America. For instance, when Diestelkamp was shopping for another American to replace him in Nigeria after his initial two years, he was bent on a successor that will not depart from his anti institutional disposition. This he found in Aude Mckee. He averred, "We are building no schools here, we are not establishing "mission stations" and we are depending entirely on the power of gospel to convert souls. Brother Mckee agrees with this principle and determines to

²⁸¹Diestelkamp, Report from Nigeria, No. 9. 16.

²⁸²L. Diestelkamp, Report from Nigeria – No. 12, *Truth Magazine* 5. 10. July 1961: 16. See also L. Diestelkamp, Diestelkamp Return to Nigeria, *Truth Magazine* 10. 4. January 1966: 14. Diestelkamp also listed the native evangelists that worked with the missionaries across Western Nigeria and their supporters as: Raphael Williams, supported by Lamar Ave. Church, Paris, Texas, D. D. Isong Uyo, supported by the Aurora, Illinois Church, E. J. Ebong, supported by the Plainfield, Indiana, Church, Solomon Etuk, supported by Robert Phillips, Grand Prairie, Texas, E.O. Abimbola, supported by Orange Highway Church, Port Arthur, Texas, E. Ekanem, supported by the Kenosha, Wisconsin Church and Edet Inyang, supported by the Midland Bolvard Church, Fort Smith, Arkansas. As at this period, George Oginni goes each weekend to Abeokuta, preaching and interpreting, and Samuel Odewumi teaches and interprets in Lagos. These latter two were not supported by any church but received wages from Diestelkamp's work fund.

continue this kind of work.”²⁸³ Also referring to their model of training native preachers Diestelkamp declares, “We have no school organization, no diplomas. We are just Christians trying to follow Paul’s instructions in 2nd Timothy 2: 2.”²⁸⁴

Unlike in the West, American missionaries from the Churches of Christ that pioneered the work in the East through whom Diestelkamp first came to Nigeria offered a wholistic ministry by preaching the gospel and also attending to the physical needs of the people by establishing secular schools, Bible Colleges, Orphanages and engaging in other activities aimed at taking the people from where they are to where God wants them to be. James Sasser, one of the missionaries working in the West was vehement in his condemnation of the plan to build a Church of Christ hospital in Eastern Nigeria. He enthused, “We that are working in the Western and Midwestern Regions of this country are opposed to any and all unscriptural work that the church might engage in. . . The Bible does not permit churches to build and maintain secular institutions.”²⁸⁵ The American missionaries also ensured that the native evangelists they trained sustain their anti disposition. Billy Moore confirmed this fact when he commented on the biblical presupposition of American missionaries that pioneered the establishment of Churches of Christ in Western Nigeria, “These men were conservative in their application of biblical principles and the older native preachers with whom I worked reflected the thinking of these men.”²⁸⁶

It is no wonder then that the character of Churches in Southwestern Nigeria until recent times was that of non-institutional mien. As mentioned earlier, the anti-institutional group within Churches of Christ believed that it is unbiblical for any other institution or para-church organization to co-exist with the church or for the church to support Bible Colleges or Seminaries, establish secular schools, hospitals, orphanages or spend church money on non-members. They are also adamant on the absolute autonomy of each local church that no church should embark on any project beyond its financial

²⁸³Diestelkamp, Report from Nigeria, No. 8, 22

²⁸⁴Diestelkamp, Report from Nigeria, No. 9, 16

²⁸⁵J. Sasser. Church of Christ Hospital in Eastern Nigeria. *Truth Magazine* 10: 7. April, 1966: 13.

²⁸⁶B. Moore. The Work in Nigeria. *Truth Magazine* XLV. 5. March, 2001: 22.

capacity to accomplish. Nsentip and Bassey observe this trend among Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria manifested in the extreme application of the concept of congregational autonomy, overzealousness of preachers in pleasing their American supporters, the penchant to declare almost every thing unscriptural without deep understanding of what the Bible actually says and the tendency to sever all relationships with non-Christians other than preaching the gospel.²⁸⁷

Since the concept of absolute autonomy forbids coming together of congregations to embark on radio, television and other mass media publicity and the fact that the church had nothing else to offer her prospects apart from the Bible, the church remains in obscurity. Moreover, most members made up of artisans and semi-educated people in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s were either ignorant of the need for such balance or not strong in their knowledge of the Scripture to challenge their American supported ministers. The minister, even with his limited knowledge, acts as if he knows everything and his interpretation of the Scripture is taken hook line and sinker. As most congregations could not afford a meeting place of their own, it is typical for most Churches of Christ to meet in public schools, rented shops and apartments. And by the time the church thinks she has saved enough to acquire landed property, what is saved is most of the time not sufficient to acquire land in choice areas, hence Churches of Christ are mostly located in obscure and hidden corners of the town.

Another character of Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria was the belief that it is not biblical to use church money to build hospitals, schools, Bible Colleges, Seminaries or any other activities that will physically benefit the larger society. It is also conceived to be unbiblical to spend church money on non-members, thus the saying, "saints money only for the saints." The situation is such that there is no single school, hospital, orphanage, in the whole of Southwestern Nigeria traceable to Churches of Christ.

Although there are no statistics or documented record of church growth among Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria in the early stage of the work apart from reports of American missionaries, one is tempted to conclude that several of the early converts reverted to their former faith when they find the teachings and practices of the

²⁸⁷Nsentip and Bokime, *The New Testament Church and its Restoration in Nigeria*, 80-82.

church highly undercontextualized. The initial growth could not be sustained as some of the new Christians settled down to discover that here were no material benefits apart from the gospel. The next step was to find their way out. This undercontextualization was also reflected in the liturgy of the church. Choruses rendered in local languages were not entertained. Songs have to be rendered from the English hymn book or interpreted from the English hymn book. Similarly, names of early converts like Jacob S. Onabote, David Olugha and a host of several others went into oblivion. For instance, Oginni could claim to be the first Yoruba convert when Onabote who was the first convert was nowhere to be found.

It is no surprise then that although the church is well represented in all the six states constituting the Southwest region of Nigeria, yet most people within the region were not aware of the existence of it even though the first congregation in the Southwest was established as early as 1959. The situation of Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria validates the postulation of John Bright that the strength of the church lies in the gospel that it proclaims, that no church can be greater than the gospel it proclaims. Bright postulates further that the future of the church is her preaching and if she cannot find a better way of making her witness she will soon become irrelevant if she is not irrelevant already. It is obvious that the gospel of absolute autonomy, 'saints' money only for the saints,' and splendid isolation with the world for whom Christ died have contributed to relative obscurity of Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria. Seeing people in a deplorable human condition and looking the other way is paradigmatic of the attitude of the Priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan, an attitude that is antithetical to the teaching and practice of Christ during his earthly ministry. The need for Churches of Christ to revisit this hermeneutical presupposition and make necessary adjustments which will enable her to make the desired impact in the society cannot be overemphasized.

Stephen Bradd's analysis of liberalism and Antiism throws light on the danger of both concepts. While liberalism consists of an attitude that seeks to go beyond the word of God and shows disdain for the authority of the word of God, antiism manifests a disposition that makes laws for God. Those who are doctrinally liberal treat matters of doctrine as matters of opinion thus vitiating the word of God to make it do-able for them.

The doctrinally antis treat matters of opinion as matters of doctrine. The Christian duty, Bradd says, is not to ignore the laws of God or to make laws, but to obey God's law which is the position of mainstream Churches of Christ. Bradd's illustration robustly explains the dangers of liberalism and antiism and the need to simply just obey God's laws. This illustration is instructive for Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria:

A farmer wants his three cows staked out in a field so that they will be able to eat within a particular area. He doesn't want them to eat beyond it, but neither does he want them to be tied so short that they cannot go all the way out to it. There are many valuable plants that they need to eat within this particular area. On the other hand, he doesn't want them to go beyond the limit he has set because there are some poisonous things out there he doesn't want them to consume. So, the farmer, who has three sons, calls his boys and gives them each a long rope. He tells them how far he wants the cows to be able to graze in the field. He tells them specifically: "When you stake out the cows, be sure you use a length of 100 feet." Well, the first boy goes out and decides he will take the liberty of making it 110 feet. He doesn't see what harm could come from allowing his cow a little wider area to graze than his father had instructed. He doesn't realize this means that the cow can eat some things the farmer doesn't want her to eat. The second boy goes out, and he decides that he will be cautious and stake his cow out at only 90 feet. He doesn't see what harm could come from restricting the cow even more than his father had instructed. This means there are many things that the farmer wants this cow to eat that she isn't going to be able to get to. Finally, the third boy went out and staked his cow the exact length the father wanted to be used, 100 feet, simply because that's what the father instructed. This cow could eat everything the farmer wanted her to eat, and yet she was unable to eat the things that could be detrimental to her.²⁸⁸

The first son in the illustration represents the liberal, the second son characterized the antis and the third son stands for the Christian that will neither add to nor subtract from the laws of God.

From the late 1980s, with more educated and middle class members in the church, there were conscious efforts toward moderating the anti-institutional character of Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria. With the emergence of second generation Christians within the congregations, several with a university degree, enlightened

²⁸⁸S. R. Bradd. Liberalism & Antiism. Retrieved May 8, 2012 from <http://thegospelhour.weebly.com/liberalism-and-anti-ism.html> 1-2 of 3.

members began to question the position of their preachers on most of the issues which tended to divide or limit the capacity of the church in fulfilling her mission. Added to this was the influx of members of the Church of Christ from the East who came to Lagos in search of greener pastures. Others were Federal government employees posted to the West who began to compare practices of Churches of Christ in the East with that of the West. Church members from the East who found themselves in the West did a lot to mitigate church practices which tended toward anti disposition among Churches of Christ in the Southwestern Nigeria.

The founding of Lagos School of Preaching at the premises of Lawanson Church of Christ at Odemuyiwa Street, Ikate, Lagos, also helped to neutralize the anti character of Churches of Christ in the West. The school was supported in early 1970s from the United State and the teachers were American missionaries from the mainstream Churches of Christ and native evangelists trained at the Bible Colleges in the East. Native preachers and church leaders produced by the school included Jackson Olise, Ayobami Dahunsi and a host of others who worked assiduously to change the antagonistic character of Churches of Christ in the West.

The establishment of West Nigeria Christian College and School of Biblical Studies in Abeokuta in 1999 as mentioned earlier also contributed immensely in mitigating the impact of the antis in the West. In addition to the above, propagation of the gospel was also strengthened in the West through the activities of the World Bible School. The WBS is a Bible Correspondence School based in Texas, USA. The school sends Bible correspondence courses to nations across the world including Nigeria. The organization engages the services of voluntary Bible teachers who grade these courses and return them to the students. Native follow-up evangelists are engaged to follow the prospects at the completion of their courses for baptism and assistance in identifying the nearest Church of Christ to their residence. The first coordinator of the World Bible School in the West was Sunday Ekanem who later handed over to Etim Asuquo using the premises of the Church of Christ meeting at 3, Odemuyiwa Street, Ikate Surulere, as the base. There was also an effort to quarantine the non-institutional group in Western Nigeria as was attempted without success in the United States. Ayandare reports an instance when the Board of trustees of the Church of Christ in Nigeria under the

chairmanship of Eno Utoyo instigated the Nigerian Immigration authorities to deny Leslie Diestelkamp and Jim Sasser (two prominent non-institutional missionaries) entry visa into Nigeria in 1969 on account of doctrinal differences between the non-institutional group and mainstream Churches of Christ.²⁸⁹

While most Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria have to a large extent repudiated the anti-disposition, some congregations still operating under the ambit of their preachers still held stubbornly to their antism with support from individuals and congregations from the United States. They are however, in the minority mostly concentrated in Ibadan, Oyo state and a handful of congregations across the region

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has been preoccupied with the emergence of Churches of Christ in Nigeria. It traces Churches of Christ to the Restoration Movement that emerged in America and Europe from the 1800s with the twin purpose of restoring primitive Christianity and fostering Christian unity on the basis of the Bible. The Movement could not achieve its purposes as restoration hermeneutics employed to actualize this vision accorded every Christian with equal capacity and intelligence to interpret the Bible alike. The confusion that resulted from such hermeneutics led to the fissure which divided the Disciples as they were initially known into the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) representing the liberal wing of the Disciples and Churches of Christ, representing the conservative wing of the Disciples. The Church of Christ emerged in Nigeria in the late 1940s when C.A.O. Essien from Akwa Ibom State as converted through a Bible correspondence course. From Akwa Ibom State, Churches of Christ spread to other parts of Nigeria including the Southwestern part of the country. The work in the West began in November 1959 with the planting of the first congregation at Orodu Street, Ajegunle. From Ajegunle, congregations were planted in Surulere, Lagos Island, and other parts of Lagos State. From Lagos, Churches of Christ spread to Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Ekiti States.

The chapter also posits that Churches of Christ in the Southwestern Nigeria, unlike most Churches of Christ in Eastern and Northern parts of the country developed an

²⁸⁹ Ayandare, Sunday. "History of Board of Trustees, Nigeria" *Truth Magazine* LI. 8. August, 2007: .26.

anti-institutional disposition opposing the establishment of any institution apart from the local church to carry out the works of the church and were also averse to any local church embarking on any project beyond her financial capacity to accomplish. These are considered to be against the teachings of the Bible and are therefore products of human innovation. This was the belief and teaching of American missionaries who started the work in the Southwest. This trend was continued by the native preachers trained by the missionaries who were supported and are still being supported to perpetuate this mien.

Things began to change when the church was able to attract sufficiently educated members and infiltration of members from the Eastern part of the country. Other spirited efforts aimed at salvaging Churches of Christ in the Southwestern Nigeria from the clutches of anti-institutionalism included the establishment of Bible Colleges and the activities of the World Bible School. Today, the anti-institutional group is in the minority while most Churches of Christ in the Southwest reflect the character of the mainstream of the tradition. With the above, the stage is prepared for a discussion on selected teachings of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria to which we turn in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER FOUR

SELECTED TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

4.0 Introduction

A church's doctrine is a function of her hermeneutics. Doctrinal beliefs are the product of biblical interpretation; how the church interprets the Bible is a contraption of her understanding of the will of God as documented in the inspired Scripture and this understanding is expressed in the teachings and practices of the church. Churches of Christ are no exception. Churches of Christ not only inherit the Bible from God by claiming to speak where the Bible speaks and silent where the Bible is silent, they also inherit the way they read and interpret the Bible mostly through the legacies of Alexander Campbell. Alexander Campbell had a significant impact on how the Stone-Campbell Movement and Churches of Christ read and interpret the Bible. There seems little question that Alexander Campbell was the more dominant figure for Stone-Campbell/Churches of Christ's hermeneutics.²⁹⁰ The chapter explores selected teachings of the Church of Christ and the presupposition for the teachings. These teachings are juxtaposed with beliefs of the early church as unearthed through the writings and teachings of the early church fathers.

4.1 The Church of Christ As the Only True Church

Churches of Christ conceive of themselves as the only true church. As Phillips Myers rightly notes, the belief that they alone constituted the one true church was an unchallenged article of faith and had become a cardinal tenet in the unwritten creed-book

²⁹⁰David Steward. 1966. Alexander Campbell and the Churches of Christ. *Restoration Quarterly* 9. 3: 133-142, catalogues Alexander Campbell's major influences on Churches of Christ to include, hermeneutical distinction between the Old and the New Testament, Baptism for remission of sins, dissemination of religious view through the printed pages and establishment Christian liberal arts colleges. Steward however condemns the penchant for Churches of Christ to provide Campbell's answer to questions that are being asked by the contemporary generation.

of the church.²⁹¹ The Church of Christ claims to be the church that Christ promised to build in Mathew 16: 18 which came to fulfillment on the Day of Pentecost. By this claim Churches of Christ, according to Allen and Hughes, assume that their roots are entirely sacred and not profane, entirely apostolic and not historical, entirely biblical and not cultural thereby elevating themselves above the level of common humanity and in essence constituting themselves into gods.²⁹² Churches of Christ also set the following marks to identify the true and authentic church that Christ founded:

- a) Time of Establishment – this must not be earlier or later than the Day of Pentecost (AD 33) and birth place must be Jerusalem
- b) Terms of Admission- believe, repent, confess and baptism by immersion for remission of sins
- c) Law and Discipline – teachings of the apostles and other inspired men as documented in the New Testament
- d) Name - no group could be true church without wearing a name that was used by the first century church, like “Church of Christ,” “Church of God,” “Kingdom of God,” etc, but not Methodist, Baptist, Anglican, Lutheran, etc.
- e) Church Government- absolute sovereignty of the local church with leadership consisting of elders, deacons and evangelist/preacher. There should be no ecclesiastical authority above that of the local church
- f) Worship-includes weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper, teaching, preaching, giving and singing devoid of the use of instruments of music.²⁹³

In the understanding of Churches of Christ, a true church is one that meets the above requirements and they are the only one that possessed these identifying marks and are therefore the only one true church.

If Churches of Christ claim that the church has been in existence since Pentecost, one cannot but ask the following pertinent questions: where was the church from the

²⁹¹P. Myers. 1983. A Historical Study of the Attitude of the Churches of Christ toward other Denominations. *Baylor University* (PhD Dissertation), 98.

²⁹²Allen and Hughes, *Discovering Our Roots: The Ancestry of Churches of Christ*, 8.

²⁹³Myers, *A Historical Study of the Attitude of the Churches of Christ Toward other Denominations*, 137-143.

second century until the nineteenth century when she resurfaced? Where was the church in the post apostolic age? Where was the church during the Dark Ages? Where was the church during the sixteenth century Reformation? Where was the church during the 17th and 18th century Evangelical Reawakening?

Historians and leading spokespersons of Churches of Christ over time have attempted to answer some of the above questions by dividing the history of Christianity into four main periods of purity, apostasy, reformation and restoration. J. W. Shepherd²⁹⁴, L. G. Thomas²⁹⁵ and F. W. Mattox²⁹⁶ advocated restoration ecclesiology which was grounded on the fact that the primitive church forsook the pure doctrine and went into apostasy during which the true church was eclipsed by the Roman Catholic Church. The sixteenth century reform agenda of the Reformers were not far reaching enough creating the need for restoration of the “ancient order of things.”

Myers observes further that while historians and spokespersons of Churches of Christ agreed that the church was not completely extinct after the apostolic era they did not agree as to the manner of its conservation. While some believed without historical evidence that few congregations of the church did exist in the midst of the apostasy,²⁹⁷ some were of the view that the Church of Christ continue to exist from the time of the apostles to the present time with individuals who faithfully adhered to the New Testament teaching on baptism rather than subscribing to the corrupted patterns of organized churches. Although the true church as a visibly organized body had gone into extinction, it was nevertheless being preserved by those who devotedly held to baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.²⁹⁸ The third group²⁹⁹ which are obviously in the

²⁹⁴J. W. Shepherd. 1958. *The Church, the Fallen Away, and the Restoration*. Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co.

²⁹⁵L. G. Thomas. 1941. *Restoration Handbook: A Study of the Church, the Falling Away, and the Restoration*. Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co.

²⁹⁶F. W. Mattox. 1961. *The Eternal Kingdom: A History of the Church of Christ*, rev. ed. Delight, Arkansas: Gospel Light Pub. Co.

²⁹⁷This school was ably represented by W. B. West, Jr., 1940. *The Existence of the Kingdom of Heaven Past, present, and Future. Abilene Christian College Bible Lectures 1940*. Austin: Firm Foundation Pub. House, 24.

²⁹⁸E. M. Borden. 1939. *Church History*. Austin: Firm Foundation Pub. House, i, 89, 111, shared this view.

majority held that the true church had been preserved through the ages by “the seed of the kingdom,” the word of God. According to this school, “the seed of the kingdom” that is, the word of God which was supplanted through human innovation was unearthed and replanted in good and honest minds which led to the restoration of the true church. As the pure gospel produced the true church in the first century, the same could also be replicated if it is replanted, they argued. In other words, the true church was preserved in the seed/the New Testament. When the seed was replanted, it produced the pure apostolic church-the Church of Christ.³⁰⁰ It is interesting to know that as brilliant and apologetic as these arguments were they all crumbled under the klieg light of historical scrutiny. To this scrutiny we shall now turn.

It is interesting to note that Churches of Christ surfaced out of specific historical contexts and that their beliefs and practices have been equally shaped by the social, cultural, economic and even religious circumstances of the early American nationhood. The Restoration Movement that produced Churches of Christ emerged out of the attempt to replicate in the church the concept of Republicanism which was one of cardinal objectives of American War of Independence (1775-1783). With the declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, Americans were not satisfied with government of the people by the people and for the people, republicanism was extended to the church as people began to demand for the dissolution of priestly hierarchies, installation of “Bible government” and the theology of the people by the people and for the people. The Restoration Movement which produced the Church of Christ was actively involved in the Christian Movement and Churches of Christ are major beneficiary of this heritage as reflected in their hermeneutics and ecclesiology.³⁰¹

Moreover, it is preposterous for a single church or group to claim to have the only correct understanding and interpretation of the Bible while condemning others to the

²⁹⁹Represented by F. E. Wallace, Jr., 1931. *The Church Lost and Found*, Gospel Advocate 73 January 1, p.1; J. T. Hinds. 1937. *A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*. Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co, 186 and N. B. Hardeman. 1923. *Hardeman’s Tabernacle Sermons*, vol. 2. Nashville: McQuiddy Printing Co., 196-197.

³⁰⁰Myers, A Historical Study of the Attitude of the Churches of Christ toward other Denominations, 101-109.

³⁰¹Hatch, *The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People*, 10-43.

compost of human innovation, and yet, her members were not listed as interpreters of any major versions of the canonical Scripture. Moreover, this study reveals that most hermeneutical suppositions of the church were traceable to Alexander Campbell, a leading member of the church's precursor- the American Restoration Movement. It is equally incongruous for a church to set the criteria of establishment, terms of membership, law and discipline, name, church polity and mode of worship and on this basis shut out the gate of salvation to others upon her condition and interpretation of the scripture. The Church of Christ has not offered any tenable historical evidence for their existence between the Pentecost (AD.33) and the 1800s when the Restoration Movement emerged.

Furthermore, the Restoration Movement also variously known as the Disciples, Stone-Campbell Movement, the Christian Movement started as a single entity but later fragmented into three different churches in the Disciples of Christ, Churches of Christ and Independent Churches of Christ. How come a product of a group that later split up into three churches claim to be the only true church? As James DeForest Murch cogently puts it,

There must be admission that the New Testament church has not yet been perfectly restored anywhere within the Restoration movement. The division into three bodies and the lack of complete unity within each of them are proof that the Disciples have yet much to learn about what it takes to realize the answer to Christ's prayer in John 17.³⁰²

The claim of the Church of Christ to be the only true church was tested in a research question to her members and the following are the result of the research finding:

Table 7: Church of Christ is the only true church that has her teachings and practices directly traceable to the early church

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Response</i>			
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
Church of Christ is the only true church that	395	38	37	470

³⁰² James DeForest Murch, *Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement*, 366-367.

has her teachings and practices directly traceable to the early church				
	84%	8.1%	7.9%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2011

From the table above, 84% of the respondents validate the claim that the Church of Christ is the only true church and that her teachings and practices are directly traceable to the early church; 8.1% of the respondents disagreed, while 7.9 % were neutral. The response of the respondents indicate that majority of the members believe that their church is the only true church.

The above position of the church could not be substantiated from the writings of the early church fathers. There was no historical evidence that the church started on the day of Pentecost and that it is the only true church. There was neither historical nor patristic evidence from the writings of the early church fathers like Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-215), Irenaeus (A.D. 130-202), Tertullian (A. D.160-225), Eusebius (A.D.263-339), Jerome A. D. 347-420), amongst others to support the claim to be the only true church. Moreover, there was no historical evidence of the existence of the church from the post Apostolic Age through the Dark Ages to the 16th Century Reformation and beyond. The church was neither Catholic nor Protestant as nothing was heard of it until the 19th century. Unlike Eastern and Western Europe, America from where the church emerged had no strong footing in ecclesiastical history until the eighteenth century. It therefore amounts to historical and ecclesiastical fallacy for a church that emerged in the 19th century to claim to be the only true church thereby discarding other Christian denominations to be products of human imagination and innovation.

As stated earlier, one cannot but reiterate the fact that Churches of Christ emerged out of specific historical, social, cultural, economic and religious circumstances of the early American nationhood. The Restoration Movement that produced Churches of Christ emerged out of the attempt to replicate in the church the concept of Republicanism which was one of the cardinal objectives of American War of Independence (1775-1783). With the declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, several Americans were bent on replicating the republican ideology in the church. This movement demanded for the

dissolution of existing priestly hierarchies, installation of “Bible government,” restoration of primitive Christianity and the theology of the people for the people and by the people.

Consequently, the claim to be the only true church is vitiated by the avalanche of historical evidences to the contrary. The claim is also anachronistic to the spirit of ecumenism advanced by Christ for his disciples.

4.2 Belief in the Theology but Non-Celebration of Christmas and Easter

Churches of Christ believe that Christians are not commanded to celebrate Christmas and Easter. The presupposition for this belief is premised on the conviction that the Bible did not command Christians to celebrate the birth and resurrection of Christ unlike the Lord’s Supper that was specifically instituted by Christ to be observed weekly to remember his sacrifice for the sins of the world. While acknowledging Christ as heaven’s best to save humanity and affirming the theology of Easter as paradigmatic of the hope of Christians and the heart of the Christian faith, they declare that the Scripture never asked Christians to annually celebrate these historic events.

The hermeneutical presumption for this belief could be traced to Alexander Campbell’s restoration of ancient order of things based on his “true and rational” approach to the Bible. This “true and rational” approach have two important features: a dispensational approach to the Bible and a constitutional view of the New Testament. In his dispensational approach to the Bible, Campbell made a sharp distinction between the Old and the New Testaments and divided the Bible into the Patriarchal, the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations.³⁰³ The patriarchal age spanned from Adam to Moses (Genesis 1 through Exodus 19), mosaic age from Moses at Sinai to Peter on Pentecost (Exodus 20 through Acts 1) and Christian age starting with Pentecost and ending on final judgment (Acts 2 through Revelation 22). Based on this hermeneutical substructure, Campbell posited that Christians do not live under Mosaic covenant and are not obligated in any way to obey its laws and institutions. Consequently, any argument appealing to the Old Testament to support tithes, Sabbath observation, holy days like Christmas and

³⁰³For a detailed discussion on the distinction between both covenants as posited by Campbell and contrasted with the Reformed theology of covenant of works and covenant of grace see Everett Ferguson, “Alexander Campbell’s ‘Sermon of Law’ A Historical and Theological Examination” *Restoration Quarterly*, 29 no 2 1987, pp. 71-85.

Easter, national conventions are completely hideous and repugnant to Christianity. While recognizing valuable teachings and essential lessons to be drawn from the historical narratives of the Old Testament, Campbell denied its legitimacy to regulate Christian faith and practice.³⁰⁴

Similarly, Campbell's constitutional view of the New Testament sees the kingdom of God, the church, of consisting the following elements: the constitution—the plan of God from inception to redeem humanity; the king—Jesus Christ whose reign began on the Day of Pentecost; the subjects—born again citizens of the kingdom; the territory—the whole earth and the laws—the New Testament, specifically Acts and the Epistles, and the apostles as legislators of the kingdom. This constitutional view of the kingdom and dispensational division of the Bible led Campbell to the conclusion that the teaching of Christ before the Pentecost do not carry as much weight and authority for the church as much as the teachings of the apostles after the Pentecost as Jesus' teachings in the gospel belonged to the Mosaic/Jewish dispensation and predated the establishment of the kingdom. For Campbell, Jesus' miracles and his teachings in the Gospels are meant to confirm his messiahship after which they should be relegated to the background and prominence given to Acts³⁰⁵ and the Epistles as the functional equivalent of the New Testament. Consequently, the Acts and the Epistles are seen as the legal code of the church and it was upon this that Campbell established the basis for the “ancient order of things.”³⁰⁶

This order of things upon which the New Testament church operates includes: congregational autonomy, baptism for remission of sins, weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, plurality of elders and deacons in each local church and a simple pattern of worship which includes, teaching, sermon, singing, observance of the Lord's Supper and giving. Biblical justification for the above can only be found in the Acts and the Epistles. Based on the above, any practice of the New Testament church without apostolic

³⁰⁴Allen, *Things Unseen: Churches of Christ in (and After) the Modern Age*. 51-52.

³⁰⁵Ben Hughes. Acts in the Restoration Movement. Retrieved January 24, 2012 from <http://www.brenhughes.com/Research/Acts.pdf> 1 of 18, avers that American Restoration Movement rescue the book of Acts from obscurity to a treasure chest where the patterns of restoration could be found. See also Howard, “The Concept of ‘Church’ Among Churches of Christ,” pp. 4-5 of 13.

³⁰⁶Allen, *Things Unseen: Churches of Christ in (and After) the Modern Age*, 52-53.

command or example is unauthorized and can only fall under the realm of human innovation. Dispensationalism and constitutional view of the New Testament as conceived by Campbell fundamentally shaped the belief of Churches of Christ on subjects like tithes, celebrations like Christmas and Easter, congregational autonomy, baptism for remission of sins, weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, plurality of elders and deacons in each local church and a simple pattern of worship.

To start with, attestations from the writings of early church fathers did not support the position of the Church of Christ that the Old Testament is invalid as a guide for Christian faith and practice. The position of the church is reminiscence of the postulation of Marcion, a Christian from Sinope, a costal city in Northern Asia, in 140 A.D, who made a distinction between God of the Old Testament and God of the New Testament. For Marcion, the law and the prophets of the Old Testament were inspired by an inferior God while Jesus in the New Testament represents the good Unknown Father.³⁰⁷ Marcion also saw an irreconcilable antagonism between the Old and the New Testaments and outrightly rejected the Old Testament as a result of several elements in it which he considered contrary to the Christian faith.³⁰⁸ Early church fathers like Tertullian (A. D. 160-225) and Clement of Alexandria (A. D. 150-215) doughtily rose to defend the unity of the Scripture. Clement of Alexandria maintained that the Old and the New Testaments were from one single, good, loving and just God arguing that severity is not necessarily inconsistent with goodness but born of the ultimate desire to rescue fallen humanity from sin and damnation.³⁰⁹ Also in his response to Marcionism, Tertullian elaborately defended the unity of God-the Creator of all, the integrity of the Scriptures and the harmony of the Old and the New Testaments.³¹⁰

Hence, the following conclusions can be inferred on the position of the early church fathers on the unity of the Scriptures:

- a) Attestations of early church fathers in their response to Marcion's distinction between the God of the Old and New Testaments in 140 A.D.

³⁰⁷Boer, *A Short History of the Early Church*, 60-61.

³⁰⁸Fatokun, *History and Doctrne of the Early Church*, 123-124.

³⁰⁹Fatokun, *History and Doctrne of the Early Church*, 212-213.

³¹⁰Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* Vol. 2, 831.

did not support the position of the Church of Christ that the Old Testament is invalid as a guide for Christian faith and practice.

- b) Early church fathers like Clement of Alexandria (A. D. 150-215) and Tertullian (A. D. 160-225) doughtily rose to defend the unity of the Scripture in their writings.
- c) Clement of Alexander maintained that the Old and the New Testaments are from one single, good, loving and just God arguing that severity is not necessarily inconsistent with goodness but borne out of the ultimate desire of a loving God to rescue fallen humanity from sin and damnation.
- d) Tertullian elaborately defended the unity of God-the Creator of all, the integrity of the Scriptures and the harmony of the Old and the New Testaments.
- e) Early church fathers copiously quoted the Old Testaments in their teachings and writings. St. Cyprian in his *Testimonia* regarded the Old Testament as the Christian prophecy. St. Justin in his *Dialogue with Trypho* proved the truth of Christianity from the Old Testament
- f) The church fathers also made allegorical use of the Old Testament in their writings. For example, Origen was reputed for his allegorical use of the Old Testament in his writings. Origen was responsible to a great extent for the strength of the biblical spirit in the entire patristic theology. He did much more for an average believer by making the Bible accessible to him. He steadily introduced the Old Testament into his preaching. He helped the average Christian to read and use the Old Testament for their edification. He always stressed the unity of the Bible bringing both Testaments into a closer relation and made a new attempt to build the whole doctrine of God on a biblical basis.³¹¹
- g) The church fathers also made use of the Old Testament in their proclamation of the gospel. Both Alexandrian presumptions and

³¹¹A. G. Florovsky. 1939. The Old Testament and the Fathers of the Church. *The Student World*, 32. 1: 284.

Antiochene exegesis have a high view of the Old Testament as having universal application. The main presupposition of the Alexandrian School was premised on the fact that God meant the Bible to be the universal guide for all mankind; hence a standing interpretation of the Old Testament was authorized. The Antioch School also had a special concern for the old prophecies and stories. The historical exegesis of the Antioch School was most manifest in the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, St. John Chrysostom and Hexaemeron of St. Basil.

- h) The Patristic attitude towards the Old Testament was also reflected in the history of Christian worship. The Psalms were inherited from the Jews and they became a pattern of Christian hymnography in the early church. Origen's and St. Gregory of Nyssa's commentaries on the Song of Songs accentuate the use of the Old Testament in the public worship of the early church.

Finally, Florovsky succinctly encapsulates the Patristic attitude towards the Old Testament in the following words,

The Scriptures are not merely historical documents. They are really the word of God, the Divine message to all generations. And Christ Jesus is the Alpha and Omega of the Scriptures, both the climax and the knot of the Bible. This is the standing message of the Fathers to Church Universal about the Old Dispensation³¹²

Similarly, the position of Churches of Christ on Christmas celebration is also at variance with most Christian denominations with the exception of the Jehovah Witness and a handful of other churches who do not celebrate Christmas on the grounds that the celebration is materialistic and commercialized, the Scripture did not specifically authorize it, the New Testament forbids celebration of days, and that it was from pagan origin and tradition. But the Catholic Church and virtually all churches of the Reformed tradition continue to celebrate Christmas annually with pomp and pageantry to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ. The following are the arguments of the proponents of the celebration: a) Even though Christmas is commercialized, secularized, distorted and misrepresented, you don't throw things away merely because the world

³¹²Florovsky, "The Old Testament and the Fathers of the Church," 288.

distorts them; b) even though the Bible did not specifically authorize it, hyperliteralism--an intense devotion to the details of the Bible in such a way that one misses the spirit and essential thrust of a passage results in making a mountain out of a mole hill; c) Colossians 2: 16-17 in no way forbids believers to celebrate the birth of Christ. It is done out of love, devotion and the joy the season brings particularly when the season is used in focusing on the Saviour. The issue, they insist, is not the observance, but the reason, the attitudes and the spirit in which it is done; d) even if the Scripture is silent about Christmas tradition, the freedom of Christians under the covenant of grace gave them the liberty to celebrate Christmas.³¹³

An enquiry into history reveals that celebration of Christmas was a 4th Century phenomenon. The earliest reference to December 25 as the date for the birth of Jesus was traced to a *Philocalian Calendar* which referred to Romans observance in 336 A.D. Christmas celebration in Rome was said to be a move to ‘Christianize’ a plethora of pagan festivals held on December 25 when Emperor Constantine was converted to Christianity.³¹⁴ Schaff confirms that Christmas festival is of comparatively late institution and attributed the following reasons for this lateness. First, unlike Easter and Pentecost, there was no corresponding festival for the Christmas in the Old Testament. Second, the day and month of birth of Christ were not documented in the gospel history and cannot be certainly determined. Third, the church was more preoccupied with the events of the death and resurrection of Christ which were at the heart of their weekly worship. Four, the earlier feast of Epiphany³¹⁵ afforded a substitute.³¹⁶

³¹³ J. H. Keathley III. 1966. Should Christians Celebrate Christmas? *Biblical Studies Press*. Retrieved June 1, 2012 from <http://www.bible.org> 2-5 of 10.

³¹⁴ There are several versions of the story on the emergence of Christmas celebration in the fourth century. For a few of the different versions see, Susan K. Roll. 2007. What Really Is Christmas All About? *Liturgical Ministry* 16: 78-84; Jerry Solomon. “Is Christmas Necessary?” Retrieved June 3, 2012 from <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/christma.html> 1-9; Frank C. Senn. 1981. The Christmas Cycle: Historical Origins, Traditional Practices, and Contemporary Possibilities. *Currents in Theology and Mission* 8. 6: 325-333; Bainton, Roland Herbert. 1960. On Celebration of Christmas. *Christian Century* 77. 51: 1491-1495 and Chadwick Owen. 1969. *The Early Church*. Middlesex, England: Penguin, 126.

³¹⁵ Christian festival held on January 6, in memory of time the Magi came to visit baby Jesus in Jerusalem.

³¹⁶ Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* Vol. 3, 396.

Unlike Epiphany that spread from East to West, Christmas celebration took the opposite course and was first celebrated in Rome on December 25, 360 A. D. by bishop Liberius. Christmas were subsequently celebrated in Antioch in 380 A. D. and in Alexandria in 430 A. D. Chrysostom who delivered the Christmas homily on December 25, 386, described Christmas as the fundamental feast-the root from which all other Christian festivals emerged. Other church fathers like Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, Leo the Great and several others validate the symbolic reference of Christmas, “the Sun of righteousness, the light of the world, to the birth-festival of the unconquered sun which on the twenty-fifth of December, after the winter solstice, breaks the growing power of darkness, and begins anew his heroic career.”³¹⁷ By this affirmation, the church fathers seemed to have confirmed the fact that Christmas celebration was Christian transformation of a series of heathen festivals.

Concerning Easter, it is within the Catholic and Protestant traditions to celebrate Easter as a memorial of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from death.³¹⁸ While this is the dominant position, some Christian denominations like the Mormons and a wing of the Seventh Day Adventists like Churches of Christ affirmed the theology of Easter but insist that Christians are not commanded to celebrate it. Moreover, they argued that “Easter” was a name of a pagan goddess of spring and fertility and the name was said to be emblematic of its origin.³¹⁹

In the early church, Christ’s death and resurrection were historically connected to the Jewish Passover. The yearly festivals celebrated by the early church were Easter, Pentecost and Epiphany. According to Schaff, Easter or the Christian Passover naturally grew out of the Jewish Passover, as the Lord’s Day grew out of Sabbath and the paschal lamb is paradigmatic of a prophetic type of Christ-the Lamb of God slain for the sins of

³¹⁷Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* Vol. 3, 396-397.

³¹⁸For an exposition on the theology of Easter and the position of Catholic and Protestant traditions on celebration of Easter see Gustav Stahlin, “‘On the Third Day’: The Easter Traditions of the Primitive Church” *Interpretation*, 10 no 3 JI 1956, pp.282-299. See Gunther Wittenberg. 2009. The Tithe- An Obligation for Christians? Perspectives from Deuteronomy. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 134: 82-101.

³¹⁹For a summary of arguments against celebration of Easter see B. Thiel. Did Early Christians Celebrate Easter? Retrieved May 2, 2012 from <http://cogwriter.com/easter/htm> 1-17.

the world. Easter he observes, is certainly the oldest and most important festival of the church traceable to the first century and was universally observed by the middle of the second century. Easter, Schaff asserts further, was based on the view that Christ crucified and raised from death is the centre of faith.³²⁰ Several attestations of the church fathers like Irenaeus, Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria, and Hippolytus during the Quartodeciman controversy testified to the celebration of Easter as early as the first century.

The debate that raged in the early church from the 2nd to the 4th centuries between Western and Eastern churches was on the day for the celebration of Easter. This controversy came to be known as Quartodeciman controversy derived from the term used to describe the practice of celebrating Easter on the 14th Nisan, the day of Jewish Passover. Churches in Jerusalem and the East have been celebrating Easter on the day of Jewish Passover regardless of whether it was on a Sunday or not. While the Eastern churches insisted on celebrating Easter on the traditional Passover day, the Western churches including Rome celebrated Easter on Sunday, the first day of the week. At the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., the Eastern churches were persuaded to observe a common date for Easter like the Western churches. Under the influence of Constantine, the proposal was adopted and by 364 A.D. at the Council of Laodicea, both the Passover and the Sabbath were completely abolished.³²¹

The position of the Church of Christ on the celebration of Christmas and Easter was tested in a research question and the following are the responses of the respondents:

Table 8: Celebration of Christmas and Easter is unchristian because they were not taught by the early church

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Response</i>			
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
Celebration of Christmas and Easter are	439	21	10	470

³²⁰Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* Vol. 2, 207.

³²¹W.F. Dankenbring. The Early Church and the Quartodeciman Passover. Retrieved April 12, 2012 from www.triumhpro.com/passover-quartodeciman.pdf 9 of 9. For some other perspectives of the Quartodeciman controversy see Dagmar Heller. 1996. The Date of Easter: A Church Deciding Issue? *Ecumenical Review* 48.3: 392- 400 and Keith Hunt. Quartodeciman Controversy: Polycarp and the Asia Minor Churches. Retrieved June 4, 2012 from <http://www.keithhunt.com/Quarto.html> 1- 4.

unchristian because they were not taught by the early church				
	93.4%	4.5%	2.1%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2011

From the figures above, 93.4% of the respondents agreed with the research question that celebration of Christmas and Easter were not taught by the early church, very few of the respondents (4.5%) disagreed with this view while 2.1% of the respondents could not make up their mind. It is clear from the figures that most members of the Church of Christ hold the view that celebration of Christmas and Easter is unchristian.

Contrary to the position of the Church of Christ, the earliest reference to December 25 as the date for the birth of Jesus was traced to a *Philocalian Calendar* which referred to Romans observance in 336 A.D. Christmas was celebrated in Rome on December 25, 360 A. D. by Bishop Liberius. Christmas was subsequently celebrated in Antioch in 380 A. D. and in Alexandria in 430 A. D. Chrysostom who delivered the Christmas homily on December 25, 386, described Christmas as the fundamental feast-the root from which all other Christian festivals emerged. Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa and Leo the Great confirmed the fact that Christmas celebration was Christian transformation of a series of heathen festivals. The above impregnable historical attestations confirmed that Christmas was celebrated from the fourth century.

Similarly, and contrary to the position of the Church of Christ on Easter celebration, attestations of church fathers like Irenaeus, Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria and Hippolytus during the Quartodeciman controversy testified to the celebration of Easter as early as the first century. Easter is certainly the oldest and most important festival of the church traceable to the first century and was universally observed by the middle of the second century. The controversy about Easter (Quartodeciman controversy) had to do with the date of celebration and not the legitimacy of the celebration. Church of Christ's abhorrence of Easter celebration was a function of her peculiar doctrinal belief without parallel from the writings of the early church fathers.

4.3 Belief in the Seal of Miracles

While Churches of Christ do not deny the miracles of creation, the flood, the walls of Jericho story and the virgin birth of Christ or his resurrection, Churches of Christ according to Claude A. Guide, believes that New Testament miracles confirmed the sonship of Jesus and were written to confirm that Christ is the Son of God (John 20: 31). The Church of Christ however believes that Bible miracles were like scaffolding which is a temporary platform for workmen on a new building; that miraculous gifts were temporary to enable the early church to mature and grow (Ephesians 4: 13).³²²

This view on miracle was inherited from the perception of Alexander Campbell on the subject. Campbell taught that God in this Christian age works through secondary channels like natural law and the Bible. He was a child of Enlightenment and the eighteenth century postmillennial views that Christ's return was imminent after the millennium. Consequently, Christians began to view history gravitating towards a perfect order driven by science and moral means. With this, it was believed that the kingdom of God could be enacted on earth. With this postmillennial worldview and his exquisite confidence in the world order, Campbell rejected any place for miracles in the modern world. It is interesting to note that Campbell's view on miracles contrasted sharply with that of his co-worker in the restoration vineyard, Barton Stone. Stone's apocalyptic worldview informed his belief in God's miraculous workings in the world. Stone insisted that there was no authority in the Scripture to support the claim that miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit has been withdrawn from the church.³²³ Stone's view notwithstanding, Campbell's position on miracles is one of his hermeneutical legacies among Churches of Christ

Churches of Christ believe that ability to perform miracles is a function of the measure of Holy Spirit in the miracle worker and goes on to identify the following measures of Holy Spirit:

- a) Full or Total Measure of the Holy Spirit. This privilege was given only to Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry. This measure empowered him to raise the dead, cast our demons, heal diverse sicknesses, supply material things, subject nature to

³²²C. A. Guide. 1981. Believes the Miracles of the Bible Times are no Longer Available. *Introducing the Church of Christ*. Fort Worth, Texas: Star Bible Publications Inc., 168.

³²³Allen, *Things Unseen: Churches of Christ in (and After) the Modern Age*, 105.

- his command (i.e. walking on the sea), know people's present, past and future thoughts. This power and full measure of the Spirit went with Christ hence the promise of another comforter.
- b) **Baptismal Measure of the Holy Spirit.** This is also known as the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This was specifically promised to the apostles and was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. With this measure the apostles were able to speak in tongues, healed the lame, cast out demons, raised the dead, healed all forms of sicknesses and diseases, and impart spiritual gifts.
 - c) **Impartation Measure of the Holy Spirit.** This measure of Holy Spirit was received through the laying of the apostles' hand on the recipient. Recipients include the seven deacons in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6: 1-6), Some Christians in Samaria, Ephesus, and Corinth (Acts 8: 12-1; 19: 1-7). Recipients of this measure could not transfer it to others, but were able to heal the lame, cast out unclean spirits, prophesied, possessed abundant spiritual gifts like wisdom, knowledge, faith, prophecy, discernment of spirit, speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues.
 - d) **Indwelling Measure of the Holy Spirit.** This is non-miraculous in nature. Every Christian receives it at the point of baptism. It dwells in Christians. It is by this measure that all Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit. This is the measure of Holy Spirit available to all Christian in this age. Hence Christians do not have the measure of Holy Spirit required to perform miracles today.³²⁴

As to the question, have true miracles ceased? Churches of Christ provide an emphatic yes to this question. This yes is premised on the fact that since those upon whom the apostles laid hands on to receive the Holy Spirit could not transfer it to other persons and that Christians in this age only receive an indwelling measure of the Holy Spirit, the power to perform miracles ended with the apostles and early Christians of the first century. It is believed that no one today can scripturally claim to have such miraculous power from God. Moreover, since miracle has served its purpose of helping

³²⁴Josiah, *The Holy Spirit and Miracles*, 14-53.

in providing the Scripture, its purpose has been accomplished and there's no need for miracles again.³²⁵

Belief in the seal of miracles is distinctively Churches of Christ teaching without precedence or antecedent in church history. Members of the Church do not even agree on this subject. Barton Stone, one of the leading figures of the Restoration Movement protested on his brethren's position that miracles stand sealed: "I see no authority in the scripture why we should draw the conclusion that the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit according to the will of God is withdrawn from the church." Stone went on to explain how miracles are manifesting daily in the life of faithful Christians and that denying miracles amounts to denying divine providence and interposition which destroys the spirit of prayer and thanksgiving. Finally, he admonished his colleagues, "wake up my brethren to re-examine this subject."³²⁶ Stone's counsel, given over a century ago (1836), is still begging for actualization among Churches of Christ today.

A survey of the writings of the church fathers reveals abundant evidences to prove that miraculous happening have characterized the history of the Christian church. For instance, Irenaeus included in his *Against Heresies* 5: 6: 1 (A.D. 185) testimonies of Christians within the church during his time who possess prophetic gifts and who through the spirit speak all kinds of languages illuminating things hidden to men and declaring the mysteries of God. Augustine of Hippo (A. D. 354-430), who initially believed like Churches of Christ that miracles have ceased with the apostolic age later changed his perspective on miracles. This change precipitated public display of miraculous healings in North Africa with Augustine giving verified reports of healing maximum publicity and demanding a written report from everyone who claimed to be healed. This report also known as Libellus was read publicly in the church in the presence of the writer and would later be stored in his library. These reports were documented in chapter eight of the last book (Book 22) of his *City of God* with reports of healings of blindness, multiple rectal fistula, cancer of the breast, gout, paralysis and hernia of the scrotum. The book also

³²⁵Josiah, *The Holy Spirit and Miracles*, 55-59.

³²⁶Allen, *Things Unseen: Churches of Christ in (and After) the Modern Age*, 104-105.

contains records of miracles in which farm animals were cured, demons exorcised and the dead were raised.³²⁷

Riss also reviews Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, written in A. D. 731 which is considered to be one of the greatest works on church history. Bede's work is said to be saturated with accounts of miracles and the events it described woven unmistakably into the tapestry of history. Of particular interest was his account of a letter dated A. D. 601 sent to Augustine of Canterbury by Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome in which Gregory accepted miracle as a fact of life and encouraged a right attitude to it. Miraculous manifestations were also associated with Bernard of Clairvaux (A. D. 1090-1153), Hildegard of Bingen (A. D. 1098-1179), Dominic (A. D. 1170-1221), Francis of Assis (A. D. 1182-1226), Anthony of Padua (A. D. 1195-1231) and several others. The Great Awakening, the Second Great Awakening and the revivals of 1857-1859 have been characterized by miraculous manifestations.³²⁸

The position of the Church of Christ on the seal of miracles was tested in a research question and the following are the responses of the respondents:

Table 9: There can be no genuine miracle in the contemporary church because miracles have ceased after the era of the Apostles

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Response</i>			
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
There can be no genuine miracle in the contemporary church because miracles have ceased after the era of the Apostles	360	86	24	470
	76.6%	18.3%	5.1%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2011

Of the 470 respondents, 360 representing 76.6% agreed with the position that genuine miracles have ceased after the apostolic era, 86 respondents, representing 18.3% disagreed with this view while 24 respondents representing 5.1% were neutral. It goes to

³²⁷R. M. Riss. 1996. *Miracles through History*. Retrieved June 26, 2012 from http://www.grmi.org/Richard_Riss/evidences 1 of 3, See also Peter Brown 1967. *Augustine of Hippo* Berkeley: University of California Press, 415.

³²⁸Riss, *Miracles through History*, 3.

show that the respondents were not unanimous on the subject since a quarter of the respondents either disagree with the view or were indecisive.

Contrary to the position of the Church of Christ that miracles have ceased with the apostles and as enumerated above, there are enthralling evidences³²⁹ from early Christian writings to debunk this position. For instance, Bishop Clement's Letter to the Corinthians, written by Bishop of Rome (A.D.100) attested to continuing manifestation of supernatural work of the Holy Spirit among early Christians. The church manual, also known as the *Didache* (A.D. 110) made references to the expression of prophetic gifts in the early church. Similarly, the Shepherd of Hermas (A. D. 110) contains reference to speaking in tongues and prophecies in the early church. Irenaeus in his treatise, *Against Heresies*, titled, "The Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge Falsely So Called (A. D. 185) recorded several manifestations of gifts and supernatural works like people being raised from the dead and driving out of demons and evil spirits and the beneficiaries of these miracles becoming members of the church.

Furthermore, Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho* in A. D. 165 referred to several supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit manifesting in the daily life of the second century church. Tertullian in A. D. 215 also described supernatural visions and prophetic gifts of the Holy Spirit as a recurrent phenomenon in the third century church. Origen in his book *Against Celsus* written in A. D. 250 described the gifts of the Holy Spirit continuing in the life of the church manifesting in excision of demons and divine healings. Novatian of Rome (A.D. 270) wrote in defense of the Trinity and the role of the Holy Spirit in the supernatural empowerment of the church. Lastly, St. Augustine (A. D. 354-430), Bishop of Hippo who initially believed that miracles have ceased by the end of the lives of the apostles was forced to change his stand by compelling evidences of well-attested miracles during religious revivals among churches across North Africa. Augustine thereafter documented these miracles in the last section of his classic work, *The City of God*.

With this avalanche of incontrovertible evidences, the seal of miracles stand of the Church of Christ crumbles at the altar of historical substantiation of the continuing

³²⁹G. R. Jeffrey. The Mystery of When Miracles and Healing Ceased. Retrieved June 26, 2012 from <http://www.grantjeffrey.com/article/mystery> 1-3 of 5. See also Francis Gumerlock. 2004. Tongues in the Church Fathers. *Reformation and Revival Journal* 13. 4: 23-138.

miraculous manifestations in the post-apostolic church as chronicled in early Christian writings cited above.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined basic teachings of the Churches of Christ. The church's claim to be the only true church, the belief that the early church did not celebrate Christmas and Easter and the belief in the seal of miracles in the post-apostolic church were examined. The hermeneutical assumptions and historical development of these beliefs were equally analyzed. These beliefs were examined in the light of the writings and attestations of the early church fathers. Virtually all the beliefs considered failed the historical testimony of the early church fathers. From the findings, there was no historical evidence to support the claim to be the only true church. There were also abundant historical proofs that Christmas and Easter celebration had their origin in the first five centuries of Christianity. The belief in the seal of miracles could not be substantiated in view of available evidences to the contrary from the writings of the early church fathers.

With this appraisal of the teachings of the Church of Christ in relation to the early church, the stage is set to examine the practices of the church in the light of the evidences provided by patristic writers. To this we shall turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

SELECTED PRACTICES OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

5.0 Introduction

Christian practices are logical corollary of doctrinal teachings. Doctrines are theoretical expression of faith while practices are faith in action. Faith is expressed in practice--in the daily life of the church as community of faith. This is also true of Churches of Christ. Selected doctrinal teachings of the church discussed in the previous chapter are followed by how these beliefs are expressed in the life of the church. What follow is an exposition of selected practices of the Church of Christ.

5.1 Aversion for Use of Musical Instruments in Worship

Churches of Christ hold the view that the practice of worshipping with instruments of music is unchristian positing that the practice was unknown to the early church. This belief is premised on the conviction that there is neither command nor precept for the practice in the Scriptures. With reference to Bible passages like Acts 16: 25; Romans 15:9, 1 Cor. 14; 15; Eph. 5: 19 Col. 3: 16; Heb. 2: 12 and James 5: 13, the church claims that every single New Testament reference to music in divine worship refers to singing devoid of instruments (*Acappella*). It is argued further that the New Testament law of worship is set forth in John 4: 24 which states that God is Spirit and there could be no worship that can be right unless it is done in spirit and in truth. Hence Churches of Christ conclude that instrumental music in worship violates God's commandment on worship articulated in John 4: 24.³³⁰

Churches of Christ further maintain that examples of the use of instrumental music in worship in the Old Testament do not justify its use in the contemporary church because the Old Testament is no longer binding on Christians as a system of religious

³³⁰J. M. Tolle. 1981. Like the Early Christians She Worships in Song. *Introducing the Church of Christ*, Fort Worth, Texas: Star Bible Publications Inc., 46. See also L. Rushmore. Why Do Churches of Christ Not Use Instrumental Music in Worship? *Gospel Gazette* 7.10. Oct. 2005: 1-5 and L. Rushmore. Music of the First Century. *Gospel Gazette* 8. 6. July, 2006: 1-6.

doctrine and practices as it has been nailed to the cross for the New Testament to come to force (Heb. 10: 9-10; Col. 2: 14). The Old Testament therefore, is not the appropriate place to look for what God authorized in worship for Christians. This position is informed by the Church of Christ's dispensational approach to biblical interpretation. Under this hermeneutical method, the Bible is divided into three epochs: Patrichal, Mosaic and the Christian. Consequently, it is argued that the Old Testament covered the patrichal and the mosaic eras and since Christians are not under those epochs, they denied the legitimacy of the Old Testament to regulate Christian faith and practice but recognized and valued instructive lessons and teachings in its narratives (Romans 15: 4). Churches of Christ went further to justify this hermeneutical presupposition historically by positing that the first appearance of instrumental music in Christian worship was in the sixth century A. D; that there was not a solitary reference to the use of instrumental music in any congregation of the Lord's people during the entirety of the apostolic age.³³¹

Unlike Churches of Christ, most Christian denominations employ the use of instruments of music in worship services with the exception of the Presbyterian Church, the Plymouth Brethren, Old Regular Baptists, Primitive Baptists,³³² Mennonites, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Christian Church and a handful of others. Most Christian denominations like the Catholic Church, Protestant Churches, Pentecostal Churches and many others justify their position on the ground that the New Testament is silent on the subject and that there is an ultimate connection between music and the Scripture. This school further extols instrumental music in worship by claiming that it helps to communicate the intellectual and emotional message of the biblical text and make the liturgy of the church accessible to everyone.³³³

Available historical evidences point to the fact that the first century church did not use instruments of music in worship. A survey of historical sources from the first five

³³¹ Tolle, Like the Early Christians She Worships in Song, 48-49.

³³²For an irenic discussion on the inappropriateness of instrumental music in Christian worship from the perspective of the Primitive Baptists, see Z. G. Elder, Instrumental Music in the New Testament Worship. Retrieved June 19, 2012 from <http://pb.org/pbdocs/music.html> 1-11.

³³³C. P. St-Onge. Music, Worship and Martin Luther. Retrieved June 19, 2012 from www.stonge.intheway.org 4 of 10.

centuries indicates that the early church fathers found *a cappella* music pleasing to God than music accompanied with instruments and generally regarded musical instruments as inappropriate in Christian worship.³³⁴ The second century saw the beginning of allegorical references to musical instruments in the writing of the fathers but there were no drastic changes in the opinion of the fathers on the absence of instruments of music in worship. For instance, Ignatius of Antioch (AD 50-110) made allegorical references to musical instruments; Justin Martyr in a description of worship in his *Apology* rejected instruments in worship; Anthenagoras (AD 175) expressed the need for music to be in harmony with spiritual discipline rather than any emphasis on instrument while Irenaeus (AD 130-200), Bishop of Lyons, made an allegorical representation between the Church's reaction to music and Roman Gnosticism.³³⁵

Opposition to the use of instruments grew into a significant movement in the third century. Clement of Alexandria (AD 165-215) in his allegories argued for a spiritual use of music rather than for licentious purposes. Novatian (AD 258), Tertullian (AD 160-220) and Origen (AD 185-251) all argued that the musical instruments of the Old Testament are not compatible with Christian worship. The general disdain of the early church fathers for the use of musical instrument continued through the fourth and the fifth century. James McKinnon avers that the church fathers' vehemence in their polemic against instruments was borne of the fact that it was associated with sexual immorality and closely connected to false religion.³³⁶

The following factors were said to have influenced the early church fathers' disdain for the use of musical instruments. First, Judaism banned instrumental music since the destruction of the temple to mourn the obliteration. In order for those who listen to their homilies on the psalms not to complain about the prohibition of instrumental

³³⁴E. Werner. 1959. *The Sacred Bridge: The Interdependence of Liturgy and Music in Synagogue and Church during the First Millennium*. New York: Columbia University Press, 336. See also John Price. 2005. *Old Light on New Worship: Musical Instruments and the Worship of God, A Theological, Historical and Psychological Study*. Avinger, Texas: Simpson Publishing, 82, corroborates Werner's view that musical instruments were not featured in Christian worship during the apostolic era.

³³⁵E. Routley. 1950. *The Church and Music: An Enquiry into the History, the Nature and the Scope of Christian Judgment on Music*. London: Duckworth & Co., 50.

³³⁶J. McKinnon. 1998. *The Temple, the Church Fathers and Early Western Chant*. Brookfield: Ashgate Variorum, 69.

music, the fathers resorted to the use of allegories. Second, the fathers also opposed instrumental music to curb the corruptive influence of the Roman culture which flourishes in music and reveling in baths, arenas, theaters and private homes. Third, the fears of the fathers that Christians could be influenced to accept philosophical benefits of pagan art and the propensity of instrumental music to cause social decay explained their lackadaisical attitude towards its use. Fourth, is the need to preserve unity between the eastern and the western churches as the anti-instrument sentiment was so strong in the East.³³⁷

Church historians are not at consensus as to the specific date of the adoption of instrumental music in Christian worship, but all agreed that it was several centuries after the New Testament was completed. Philip Schaff provides the following testimony,

The use of organs in churches is ascribed to Pope Vitalian (657-672). Constantine Copronymous sent an organ with other presents to King Pepin of France in 767. Charlemagne received one as a present from the Caliph Haroun al Rashid, and had it put up in the cathedral of Aixia-Chapelle... The attitude of churches toward the organ varies. It shared to some extent the fate of images, except that it never was an object of worship... The Greek Church disapproved the use of organs. The Latin Church introduced it generally, but not without the protest of eminent men, so that in the Council of Trent a mention was made, though not carried, to prohibit the organ at least in the mass.³³⁸

From the testimony of Schaff above, although organs were donated to Pope Vitalian, Emperor Constantine Copronymus and Charlemagne between seventh and eight centuries, the Eastern Orthodox Church opposed any use of organ or any other instruments in their worship. In fact, opposition to the use of musical instruments in worship was one for the reasons for the schism of 1054 among other factors like the supremacy of the Pope, celibacy and the use of three-dimensional statues in worship. Thomas Aquinas (AD 1274) testified in his *Bingham's Antiquities* that instruments were not used in the churches he worshipped. The Reformers in the sixteenth century at first rejected the use of instruments, but later slowly reintroduced it. Although Martin Luther

³³⁷D. VanBrugge. An Analysis of the Ancient Church Fathers on Instrumental Music. Retrieved June 19, 2012 from www.biblicalspirituality.files.wordpress.com 13-19 of 24.

³³⁸P. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* Vol. 4, 439.

(1484-1546) was quoted as saying that “the organ in the worship is the insignia of Baal,” there were other statements attributed to him that encouraged the use instruments in worship.³³⁹ St-Onge notes that Luther was a trained musician who enjoyed singing and playing his lute at home and “approved of using of instruments to enhance the music of the church’s liturgy, including Organ.”³⁴⁰

There were testimonies that Luther’s contemporaries in the Reformed Movement like John Calvin (1509-1564) who insisted that “musical instruments in celebrating the praise of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, the restoration of other shadows of the law” and Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), also a trained musician versatile in the use of several instruments but insisted that instruments were a shadow of the old law and using it today amounts to “wicked perversity.” Erasmus (1466-1536) deplored the use of instruments in worship while the Bishops of the Church of England voted in 1562 against the use of instruments of music in worship until Queen Elizabeth I overruled them in 1564. John Wesley was quoted as saying, “I have no objection to instruments of music in chapels provided they are neither heard nor seen”³⁴¹

Traces of organ accompaniment of music in Christian worship were seen in the Latin Church after the eight century but were not common among the Protestants until the eighteenth century. Abundant quotations and evidences could be mounted from church history to support the fact that *a cappella*³⁴² is the highest type of church music.³⁴³ As

³³⁹P. D. Haynie. A Brief History of Instrumental Music in Christian Worship. Retrieved June 19, 2012 from <http://www.harding.edu/phaynie/instrumentalmusic.htm> 1-7.

³⁴⁰St-Onge, *Music, Worship and Martin Luther*, 3.

³⁴¹ Haynie, A Brief History of Instrumental Music in Christian Worship, 4-5.

³⁴²“*A cappella*” is an Italian word which means “in the manner of the chapel” that has come to be used to denote exclusively vocal music in contradistinction to the use of instruments of music.

³⁴³For some of these quotations and evidences see, N/A, Instrumental Music in Worship-Historical Quotations. Retrieved June 19, 2012 from www.kc-cofc.org/Articles/Quotes 1-11; William Woodson, History of Instrumental Music. Retrieved on June 19, 2012 <http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1271-history-of-instrumental> 1-5; Danny Corbitt, The Early Church on Instrumental Music. Retrieved on June 19, 2012 from <http://wineskins.org> pp.1-4; W. M. Green. 1957. Ancient Comment on Instrumental Music in Psalms. *Restoration Quarterly* 1.1: 3-8; W. M. Green. 1966. The Church Fathers and Musical Instruments. *Restoration Quarterly* 9.1: 31-42 and W. M. Green. 1969. New Material on New Testament Musicology. *Restoration Quarterly* 12. 2: 114-118.

Everett Ferguson insightfully observes, “Historians may not agree on an exclusive stand, but they do agree that this is the classic form of church music”³⁴⁴

The position of the Church of Christ that the practice of worshipping with instruments of music was not known to the early church was tested in a research question and the following are the responses of the respondents:

Table 10: The practice of worshipping with instruments of music is unchristian because the early church did not make use of such.

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Response</i>			
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
The practice of worshipping with instruments of music is unchristian because the early church did not make use of such	449	15	6	470
	95.5%	3.2%	1.3%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2011

The above figures show that 95.5% of the respondents agreed that the practice of worshipping with instruments of music is unchristian and was unknown to the early church, 3.2% of the respondents disagreed with this view and 1.3% were neutral. The figures reveal that most members of the church hold the view that the use of instruments of music in worship is unchristian.

A survey of historical sources from the first five centuries as reviewed above indicates that musical instruments were generally regarded as inappropriate to Christian worship. Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165) in a description of worship in his *Apology* rejected instruments in worship. Athenagoras (AD 175) expressed the need for music to be in harmony with spiritual discipline rather than any emphasis on instruments. Irenaeus (AD 130-200), bishop of Lyons, made an allegorical representation between the Church’s reaction to music and Roman Gnosticism. Clement of Alexandria (AD 165-215) in his allegories argued for a spiritual use of music rather than for licentious purposes.

Similarly, Novatian (AD 258), Tertullian (AD 160-220) and Origen (AD 185-251) all argued that the musical instruments of the Old Testament were not compatible with Christian worship. The church fathers’ vehemence in their polemic against

³⁴⁴E. Ferguson. *Lifting Our Voices. Gospel Advocate*. February 2000: 12-13.

instruments was born of the fact that it was associated with sexual immorality and the need to curb the corruptive influence of the Roman culture which flourishes in music and reveling in baths, arenas, theaters and private homes. Accordingly, the odd was against the use of instruments of music in the public worship of the early church, although instruments of music was introduced around the eighth century but not commonly used until the eighteenth century. There were overwhelming evidences from the writings of the church fathers to support the position of the Church of Christ that the classic form of music in the public worship of the early church was *A cappella*-music devoid of the use of musical instruments. And it is on this ground that I take my stand.

5.2 Absolute Congregational Autonomy under Plurality of Elders

The Church of Christ believes that each local congregation of the church must be completely autonomous of the other. The church advocates that absolute or unbridled autonomy of the local church must be respected in every activity of the church including evangelism, edification and benevolence. Each local church is seen as a complete organization within itself as it is believed to be the functional unit through which God's work is carried out and the Great Commission actualized. Ordained elders in each local church are to superintend the work of the local church as they are expected to give account to Christ on how they run the local church. The elders' authority is limited to their local church and had neither authority nor responsibility over another congregation. It is feared that cooperation may foster corruption of a pure church by a spiritually corrupt congregation hence the sovereignty of each local church. By this concept of unbridled congregational autonomy each local church is not expected to embark on any project beyond her financial capacity bear that will warrant soliciting for fund from other congregations or any other sources. It is believed that the unity that the Holy Spirit advocates is the unity of teaching and practicing the same doctrine in different autonomous congregations. It is equally affirmed that congregational cooperation destroys the independence and equality that should exist among autonomous congregations. This form of congregationalism is said to be the best form of church government as it is claimed to have been inherited from the early church.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁵Tuner, *Introducing the Church of Christ*, 76.

Churches of Christ are quick to cite New Testament passages which made specific reference to the office, work and qualifications of men to be appointed as elders to oversee the affairs of the church. References are often made to Acts 20: 28-30; 1 Tim 3: 17; 5: 17-19; Titus 1: 5-16 and 1 Peter 5: 1-4. Churches of Christ avow that plurality of eldership and autonomy of each local congregation is the norm in the New Testament and it made no provision for cardinals, archbishops, conferences, councils, conventions, or ecclesiastical policy-making boards or conclaves. The early church, they claimed, was congregational in form; it had no centralized authority other than Christ as the lawgiver and the scriptures as the divine authority.³⁴⁶

The conjecture for Churches of Christ's affirmation on absolute congregational autonomy superintended by elders was derived from Alexander Campbell's constitutional view of the New Testament. According to Campbell, the kingdom of God consists of five elements which include: the constitution, the king, the subjects, the territory and the laws. The constitution was the plan of God to save mankind, the king or constitutional monarchy was Jesus Christ, the subjects were born again people, the territory was the whole earth and the laws were basically found in the New Testament, specifically Acts and the Epistles through which the king made his apostles the legislators of the kingdom. This format, according to Campbell, was the basis for restoring the ancient order of things which comes to reality through: congregational autonomy, baptism for remission of sins, weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, a plurality of elders and deacons in each local church and a simple pattern of worship.³⁴⁷

Consequently, Churches of Christ conceive of the word "church" both in the universal and local senses in the New Testament. The church in the universal sense comprises of all saved on the earth (Matt. 16:18. 1 Tim. 3: 15; Eph. 1: 22-23).³⁴⁸ The church in the local sense has the following nomenclature:

- a) An established order (Acts 14:23), in "every church" (Titus 1: 5).

³⁴⁶ Tuner, *Introducing the Church of Christ*, 76.

³⁴⁷ Allen. *Things Unseen: Churches of Christ in (and After) the Modern Age*, 52-53.

³⁴⁸ Roy E. Cogdill. 1959. *The New Testament Church*, Lufkin, Texas: The Gospel Guardian Company, 45-46.

- b) An independent self-governing unit, always spoken of as separate units - “Churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1: 2) and “churches of Judea” (Gal. 1: 22) comprising of several independent churches in one district, but without district organization.³⁴⁹
- c) A plurality of elders in every church – “ordained elders in every church (Acts 14: 23).
- d) Deacons – Elders and Deacons of the Philippian church (Phil. 1: 1).
- e) Members- Individual identification with a local church (Rom. 12: 4, 1 Cor. 12: 27).³⁵⁰

Contrary to the above position, church historians testify to the existence of Episcopacy and Presbyterianism as other forms of church polity in addition to Congregationalism traceable to the early church. According to Leon Morris, episcopacy is derived from the Greek word *episcopos* meaning Bishop. It refers to the type of church government in which the principal officer is a Bishop.³⁵¹ Morris notes further that episcopacy as a form of church government is characterized by the presence of one bishop assisted by Presbyters and Deacons in each diocese. Although he is the supreme officer, the Bishop is expected to govern with the consent of other officers. As the ordaining officer, the Bishop officiates at all ordinations. His work has varied considerably through history gravitating between parish minister, evangelist, missionary and royal counselor. His essential functions are to pastor his flock, supervise his diocese and perform rites like confirmation and ordination.³⁵² It is viewed that the church in the New Testament followed this pattern. Those who trace the Episcopal system to the New Testament make reference to the function of the apostles which they passed on to the bishops they ordained. However, some have objected to this school of thought by arguing

³⁴⁹For a comprehensive summary of the nature of the local church in New Testament Times, see Collins, *The Local Church in New Testament Times*, 126-35.

³⁵⁰ Cogdill, *The New Testament Church*, 46.

³⁵¹Leon Morris. 1988. Episcopacy. *Baker's Dictionary of the Theology*, ed. Everett F. Harrison, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 184.

³⁵²Morris, Episcopacy,” 184.

that the New Testament made no distinction between the bishop and the Presbyter as both were used interchangeably.³⁵³

Presbyterianism on the other hand, is a form of church government made up of several elected presbyters or elders chosen by church members and confirmed by governing board of members in the congregation or the regional body of elders or the Presbytery. Under this arrangement, local congregations are connected with each other under the authority of the Presbytery and all Presbyteries in turn are under the jurisdiction of the general assembly of elders from the entire church.³⁵⁴ Leon Morris explains that advocates of Presbyterianism as a form of church government traceable to the New Testament are quick to point at exhortations in Heb. 13: 17, 1 Thess. 5: 12-13 and the account of the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 where the Presbyters occupied a prominent role at the premier levels in the early church as natural justifications for this system.³⁵⁵

Congregationalism is the third pattern of church government noticeable in the New Testament. This is also the pattern advocated by Churches of Christ. The chief scriptural validations for this position are the beliefs that Christ is the head of the church (Col. 1: 18, Eph. 1:22, 23; 4: 15; 5:23; Col. 2:10), the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2: 9) and autonomous self governing congregations. According to Andreas Kostenberger, congregationalism affirms that local congregations are to govern their own affairs unlike Episcopacy and Presbyterianism. Many variations are identifiable within the scope of congregationalism that specifies the relationship between the local church members and their leaders. Within the congregational model some local churches have elders whose jurisdiction is limited to the local church while others opt to associate with other congregations or agencies in form of conventions without authority over individual congregations.³⁵⁶

³⁵³ Morris, Episcopacy, 126.

³⁵⁴ Greg L. Bahnsen. Church Government Briefly Considered. Retrieved May 19, 2012 from <http://opc.org> 2-3 of 4.

³⁵⁵ Leon Morris. 1988. Presbyterianism. *Baker's Dictionary of the Theology*, ed. Everett F. Harrison, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 127.

³⁵⁶ Andreas Kostenberger. Church Government: Congregationalism. Retrieved January 11, 2011 from www.biblicalfoundation.org 1 of 4.

Kostenberger further recognizes two other models of congregationalism as the single-elder/pastor leadership and plural-elder leadership. In the single-elder model, the church elects a senior pastor³⁵⁷ to oversee the congregation while the congregation retains the final authority. The single elder is assisted by chosen deacons who in some cases supervise the pastor and in other cases deacons form a board playing the role of a body of elders. In the plural-elder model, several elders/pastors are chosen to oversee the affairs of the congregation. Within this model, some construe the notion of priesthood of all believers to mean that no individual Christian has authority over other believers while others see the elders as deriving their authority from Christ and to whom they are accountable.³⁵⁸

The above described patterns of church government notwithstanding, some have vehemently argued that there is no pattern of church government authorized by the New Testament³⁵⁹. For instance, E. M. B. Green notes that Christ only left behind the apostles and gave them a few general principles for the exercise of their ruling function in the church, that “the New Testament provides no detail code of regulations for the government of the church, and the very idea of such a code might seem repugnant to the liberty of the gospel dispensation.”³⁶⁰ Similarly, J. Kostlin observes that in the Apostolic Church, elders stood at the head of the churches and deacons were charged with the responsibility of taking care of the needy. While these church officers were formally appointed and ordained, there are no laws in the New Testament that prescribed this course. Accordingly, church offices were determined by the needs of the church.³⁶¹

³⁵⁷This model assumes that the senior pastor wields substantial authority due to his public teaching responsibilities.

³⁵⁸Kostenberger, Church Government: Congregationalism, 1-2 of 4.

³⁵⁹For more discussion on patterns of church government in the New Testament, see Rod Parrott. 1980. New Testament Elders in their Context. *Impact* 4: 27-37 and Ed Glasscock. 1987. The Biblical Concept of Leadership. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 144. 73: 66-78.

³⁶⁰E. M. B. Green. 1962. “Church Government” *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas, Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 231.

³⁶¹J Kostlin. 1958. Church Government. *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. Samuel Macaulay Johnson, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 79.

Eugene H. Peterson lends his voice to the discussion on non-availability of church government blueprint in the New Testament when he notes,

Christians sometimes come to these texts in the Pastorals to find a biblical mandate on how to organize a church. Along with most commentators, I don't see this letter to Titus (or either of the letters to Timothy) giving us an authoritative scheme for church order. All we can conclude is that developing church order is essential—we just don't know the particular form that order is to take. There is no biblically authorized church order. We're never given enough information to systematize one.³⁶²

L. Morris concurs,

It is better to recognize that in the NT church there were elements that were capable of being developed into the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Congregational systems and which in point of fact have so developed. But while there is no reason that any modern Christian should not hold fast to his particular church polity and rejoice in the values it secures to him, that does not give him license to unchurch others whose reading of the evidence is different.³⁶³

From the standpoint of church history, Samson A. Fatokun annotates that in the early days of the Christian church there were no attempts to organize the church as we have in most denominations today. This was because early Christians were preoccupied with preparations for the return of the Lord which they thought was imminent. Most of the churches operated independent of one another but as time went by these autonomous congregations started coming together to repel persecution and refute heresy. Fatokun observes further that the earliest churches were modeled after the Jewish Synagogues with apparent lack of distinction between the clergy and the laity but towards the second half of the second century, episcopacy emerged as a form of church polity and by the close of the century was widely practiced especially among churches in Asia.³⁶⁴

³⁶²Eugene H. Peterson. 2000. "Titus: Starting Out In Crete". *The Unnecessary Pastor: Rediscovering the Call*. Marva Dawn and Eugene Peterson ed. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 201.

³⁶³L. Morris, Church Government, 3 of 4.

³⁶⁴S. A. Fatokun. 2011. *History and Doctrine of the Early Church: An African Touch*. Ibadan: Enicrownfit Publishers, 37-38.

Harry R. Boer agrees with Fatokun that there were no elders, deacons, bishops, synods, districts, parishes, councils, assemblies or delegates in the early church at the dawn of the second century as the Jerusalem church was patterned after Jewish synagogue. Administrative structures, according to him, began to emerge as the need arose. For instance, references were made in the New Testament to bishops and deacons in the Gentile churches. The Elders or Bishops, he notes, administer each local church assisted by deacons. The leading elder in the congregation later emerged as the Bishop or the head of churches in the city, thus the surfacing of monarchical (rule by one) Bishops.³⁶⁵ Boer attributed the following for the emergence of the monarchical Bishop:

- i) With the infiltration of heresy and persecution, the circumstances of the early church required the need for one within a council or board to assume leadership as administrative head and spokesperson for the group;
- ii) There was a need to centralize church authority for administrative purposes to handle issues like teaching, discipline, correspondence among churches and coordination of welfare package for the poor and needy;
- iii) The rise of persecution necessitated the need for leaders who could act on behalf of the church and her members;
- iv) The permeation of heresy into the church required a discerning and articulate leader to defend and uphold the doctrine of the church and repel heretics and heretical writings.³⁶⁶

Philip Schaff acknowledged episcopacy as ancient church polity that was widely adopted in the second century as the supreme spiritual office that is also retained even till today by the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Evangelicals and a host of several others. Episcopacy, according to Schaff, emerged instinctively amidst obscure and critical transition period between the end of the first and middle of the second century. Schaff notes that Ignatius in his writings prodded the clergy as an indispensable medium for the laity to access God in the first quarter of the second century. On the question of whether or not episcopacy is of apostolic or post apostolic

³⁶⁵H. R. Boer. 1976. *A Short History of the Early Church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 27-28.

³⁶⁶Boer, *A Short History of the Early Church*, 29-30.

origin, Schaff advanced argument for both positions. The arguments in support of apostolic origin of episcopacy included the following:

- i) The position of James as the head and the Bishop of the Jerusalem church lends credence to apostolic origin
- ii) The office of assistants and delegates of the apostles like Timothy, Titus, Epaphroditus, Mark, Luke, etc who played supervisory function over several churches
- iii) The angels of the seven churches of Asia, if they were individuals, played the role of Bishops
- iv) The testimony of Ignatius, a disciple of John presupposes episcopacy as an already existing institution
- v) The attestation of Clement of Alexandria that John instituted Bishops after his return from Patmos and the testimonies of Irenaeus, Tertullian, Eusebius and Jerome that John ordained Polycarp as Bishop of Smyrna.
- vi) The tradition of Eusebius that the surviving apostles and disciples after the destruction of Jerusalem elected Symeon Bishop of the city and successor of James.
- vii) The tradition of the churches of Antioch and Rome that traced their line of Bishops back to the apostolic tradition
- viii) The philosophical argument that the widespread of episcopate in the second century cannot be explained without the presumption of at least an indirect sanction of the apostles³⁶⁷

On the other hand, those who argue in favour of the post-apostolic origin of episcopacy posit as follows:

- i) The irrefutable identity of Presbyters and Bishops in the New Testament confirmed by reliable attestations of church fathers like, Jerome, Chrysostom and Theodoret;
- ii) Towards the end of the first century and at the beginning of the second century, the word 'elder' and 'Bishop' were used interchangeably for the same

³⁶⁷Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 2, 133-138.

office. The *Didache* also mentioned Bishops and Deacons without reference to Presbyters;

- iii) Jerome’s testimony that at the inception the Presbyters were equal until when one of them was elevated above others to prevent division
- iv) The tradition of the church in Alexandria where the twelve Presbyters elected one of their members as President and designated him as Bishop.³⁶⁸

The position of the Church of Christ that absolute congregational autonomy under plurality of elders was the form of church government operated by the early church was tested in a research question and the following are the responses of the respondents:

Table 11: Absolute congregational autonomy under plurality of elders was form of church government operated by the early church.

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Response</i>			
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
Absolute congregational autonomy under plurality of elders was the form of church government operated by the early church	402	44	24	470
	85.5%	9.4%	5.1%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2011

From the above data, 85.5 % of the respondents agreed that the early church operated as autonomous local congregations, 9.4% of the respondents were opposed to the view and the remaining 5.1% could not make up their mind. The figures imply that most members of the church strongly believe that the early church operated as autonomous congregations.

Historical sources from the second century like Clement of Rome (A.D 96), the *Didache* (A. D. 110), *The Shepherd of Hermas* (A.D 100-160), Polycarp (A.D 69-155), Irenaeus of Lyons (A.D 130-202), Clement of Alexandria (A.D150-215), Tertullian (A.D

³⁶⁸Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* Vol. 2, 139-141.

160-225), Apostolic Church Order, Origen (A.D 185-254) and Eusebius (A.D 263-339) confirmed that the early church started as autonomous congregations. The Didache described the ministry of the Bishops and the Deacons in the local church; the letter of Clement of Rome was written to deal with certain disturbances in the Corinthian church leading to the deposition of some of the elders in the church; The Shepherd of Hermas confirms Clement's evidence of plurality of Elders/Bishops in the church; Polycarp admonished different groups in the church including wives, widows, younger men, deacons and elders on righteousness while Clement of Alexandria spoke of Presbyters, deacons and laymen in listing the composition of the church.

However, as the church continued to grow, there were challenges of coordinating the affairs of the congregations in the battle to ward off heresies that had started to emerge from the second century. Consequently, Episcopalianism emerged out of expediency as the church polity in vogue from the second century—thus the emergence of the offices the monarchical Bishop and metropolitan Bishop. Ignatius (A.D. 50-110) in his writings confirmed Episcopalianism as was practiced in his home church in Antioch and the churches in Asia Minor. Ignatian model of one Bishop, multiple elders and deacons was common among churches by the second half of the second century. Irenaeus of Lyons (A.D 130-202), Tertullian (A.D 160- 225), Cyprian of Carthage (died A.D. 258) in their writings variously confirmed the attestation of Ignatius that Episcopacy as a form of church government emerged in the early church from the second century as a result of the need for the church to defend its teaching against heresies.

It was also argued that the position of James as the head and the bishop of the Jerusalem church and the office of assistants and delegates of the apostles like Timothy, Titus, Epaphroditus, Mark, Luke, etc who played supervisory function over several churches lend credence to apostolic origin of episcopacy. There was also the attestation of Clement of Alexandria that John instituted Bishops after his return from Patmos and the testimonies of Irenaeus, Tertullian, Eusebius and Jerome that John ordained Polycarp as Bishop of Smyrna and the tradition of Eusebius that the surviving apostles and disciples after the destruction of Jerusalem elected Symeon Bishop of the city and successor of James favored Episcopacy as the prime church polity in the early church.

Church of Christ's claim that absolute congregational autonomy was the only form of church government in the early church was not entirely true. Historical evidences support the fact that the early church started with congregationalism but graduated to Episcopacy which became the prime polity widely embraced from the second century till date by virtually all Christian denominations. At best, the Church of Christ's default to congregationalism perhaps reflects her American background with strong emphasis of democratic governance. As Schaff pithily posits, "Whatever may be thought, therefore, of the origin and the divine right of the episcopate, no impartial historian can deny its adaptation to the wants of the church at the time, and its historical necessity."³⁶⁹

5.3 Pharisaical Exclusivism towards other Christian Denominations

Churches of Christ assume a posture of sectarian exclusivism towards other Christian denominations. They claim to be the only true church and that there is no assurance of salvation outside their ranks. This spirit of sectarian exclusivism was premised on doctrinal emphasis on baptism and their identity as the truly restored church. On baptism, they believe that the only type of baptism that is acceptable to God and the norm in the New Testament is baptism by immersion done for remission of sins. It is believed that those who were baptized through other forms rather than by immersion and for remission of sins should not be regarded as fellow Christians. Secondly, Churches of Christ were led to the position of sectarian exclusivism by their view that a church must conform perfectly to the apostolic pattern in order to be the true church. In other words, a church whose gospel does not conform to the "ancient gospel" and whose teachings and practices do not conform to the "ancient order of things" cannot be the true church and its members cannot be regarded as true Christians. This sectarian spirit informed their attitude towards other Christian denominations insisting that no one could worship or serve God acceptably outside the "Lord's church" as they often describe themselves.³⁷⁰

Churches of Christ's grouse with other Christian denominations include the following:

³⁶⁹Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* vol. 2, 144.

³⁷⁰Myers, *A Historical Study of the Attitude of the Churches of Christ toward other Denominations*, v-vii.

(a) Development of Creedal Statements: Churches of Christ claim that Christians should be able to find agreement by standing on the Bible itself instead of on the opinions of people about the Bible. They believe that to subscribe to any creed other than the New Testament as the rule of the Christian faith and practice is adding to or taking from the teachings of Christ (Galatians 1: 6; Revelation 22: 18-19). The church legitimizes the New Testament's position that God has vested all authority in Christ (Mathew 28: 18), and that Christ serves as God's spokesman today (Hebrews 1; 1-2). Since the New Testament alone sets forth Christ's instruction to his disciples, it alone must serve as the basis for all religious teaching and practice. The Church of Christ believes that the teaching of the New Testament without modification is the only way to lead men to become Christians. Churches of Christ maintain that Christians today must return to the simplicity and purity of the early church, plant the same seed the primitive Christians planted and be Christians only as they were. That nothing should be required of people as acts of faith except that which is evident from the scriptures.³⁷¹

(b) Disobedience to Biblical Commands: Churches of Christ often accuse other Christian denominations of what they call 'disregard for biblical truth.' This disobedience, they note, is characterized by, first, the assertion that if a man is sincere, he is right. This position, they insist, allows for any and every religious belief and doctrine regardless of how foreign it may be to the teachings of the Bible. The second assertion, upon which division thrives according to the Churches of Christ, is the doctrine of expediency-that whatever the Bible has not specifically condemned, and which seems a desirable addition, is allowed in the worship of God. Since an expedient is a course dictated by practical wisdom, adoption of this principle, they persist, throws the floodgates open to admit into the worship of God and into the organization and practice of the church anything and everything that passes the court of human judgment. They note that practically every digression that has 'laid waste and destroyed' the church of God, and divided Christendom into a thousand warring factions has been justified upon the ground of expediency. The church maintains that when God gives a command and specifies the

³⁷¹Edward C. Wharton. 1970. *The Church of Christ; A Presentation of The Distinctive Nature and Identity of the New Testament Church*, West Monroe, La.: Howard Book House, 15.

ways in which that command should be obeyed, every other way is excluded. To do otherwise, would not be abiding in the doctrine of Christ, and “whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God” (2 John 9).³⁷²

(c) Development of Hierarchical Ecclesiastical Traditions: Churches of Christ uphold the view that Christians should be able to find common ground by following the practice of the early church. The church believes that churches in the New Testament times were independent of one another originally, yet they were bound together by a common faith and fellowship. Every church she claims, was under the direct authority of Christ (Acts 11: 29-30; 2 Corinthians 8: 4).³⁷³ Churches of Christ claim that local churches in the New Testament had apostles and prophets as temporary church officers. The apostles³⁷⁴ were personally chosen by the Lord, and had no successor (Matthew 10: 1-4; Acts 1:3; 13: 31; 2 Peter 1: 16; John 20: 22-23) while the prophets were inspired teachers (Acts 11: 27-28; 13: 1-2; Ephesians 4: 11). Churches of Christ claim that the apostolic and prophetic offices ceased when the New Testament was completed (1 Corinthians 13: 8-10). Churches of Christ conceive of the elders, deacons and evangelists as permanent officers of the church. The above position informs the church’s claim that ecclesiastical traditions such as church hierarchies like Pope, Apostle, Archbishop, General Overseer,³⁷⁵ Venerable, Superintendent and nomenclatures like dioceses, districts,

³⁷²Eldred L. Echols. 2002. *Removing the Ancient Landmarks*, Arlington Texas: Mission Printing Inc., 8-10.

³⁷³ Echols, *Removing the Ancient Landmarks*, 5.

³⁷⁴According to Jack W. Hayford. 1991. *Spirit-Filled Life Bible: A Personal Study Bible Unveiling All God’s Fullness in all God’s Word*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1686, in his exposition of Romans 1: 1, notes that apostles refers to the unique officers in the early church who had the power to govern the churches with absolute authority (Gal. 1: 8-9; 1 Thess. 4: 8; 2 Thess. 3: 6, 14), and to speak and write the very words of God without error (2 Cor. 13: 3; 1 Thess. 2: 13; 4: 15), words which would become part of the Scripture (1 Cor. 14: 37; 2 Pet. 3: 15-16). Hayford enumerates qualifications for being an apostle as: having seen the risen Christ with one’s own eyes (Acts 1: 22; 1 Cor. 9: 1) and having being commissioned by Christ as an apostle (Matt. 10: 1-7; Acts 1: 24-26; 26: 16-17; Gal. 1: 1). He further explains that in this founding sense, there are no more apostles today, for no one today can write more Scripture. Hayford however observes that some people now use the word apostle in a broader sense to denote ‘a specially anointed’ church planter or a church leader commanding widespread respect and authoritative oversight.

³⁷⁵For a description of distinctively Churches of Christ position Apostles, Reverend and General Overseers, see, J. A. Koranteng. Is it Scriptural Today to Wear the Titles: Apostles, Reverend or General Overseer? *Christian Restoration Voice* 8. 2. 2006: 5-9.

conventions, presbyteries, synods, and headquarters are not in line with the practice of the early church.³⁷⁶

(d) Evolvement of Names of Human Origin: Churches of Christ identify names of human origin as a source of division and plead that Christians should find common ground by using biblical names for the church (i.e., “Christian Church,” “Church of God,” or “Church of Christ” as opposed to “Methodist,” “Anglican,” “Redeemed,” etc.). For the unity of the disciples prayed for by Christ and encouraged by Paul to be fulfilled, Churches of Christ maintain that there must be an agreement as to the name by which the church should be known and called. And that only a scriptural name found in the scripture can be accepted (Roman 16: 16). The Church of Christ then concludes that if Christ is the head of the church (Colossians 1: 18); and the church the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5: 23-27); and the church the possession of Christ (Matthew 16: 18); and the church the body of Christ (Ephesians 1: 22; 1 Corinthians 12: 12); then the church must be rightly named after Christ.³⁷⁷

Churches of Christ also claim that the true church is not a denomination but simply the body of Christ. This presupposition according Jesse Sewell was premised on the understanding that the word church was used in three senses in the New Testament: local congregation, churches within a region and the church in the universal sense. Sewell posits further that it was only in local capacity that the church was organized. Each congregation cooperated with sister congregations as fellow Christians and individual members constitute the universal body headed by Christ. Different denominations, according to Sewell were strange to the New Testament as the local congregations were organized with elders and deacons devoid of any other organizational structure. Sewell concludes by asserting that:

My brethren are Christians only. They have joined nothing of any kind.
They have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and in Him they worship God

³⁷⁶P. H. Welshimer. 1979. *Concerning the Disciples: A Brief Resume of the Movement to Restore the New Testament Church*, Cincinnati, Ohio: The Standard Publishing Foundation, 72.

³⁷⁷ Welshimer, *Concerning the Disciples*, 75.

and serve fellows. . . We are separated from all denominational believers by the walls which they have erected around themselves. They are separated from each other by the same walls. Our plea is for these walls be torn down, for all who believe in Christ to be left free under God in their local congregations to study, understand and practice the word of God, without the intervention of denominational authority or consideration for denominational creeds and confessions.³⁷⁸

Sewell's sectarian retrospection of the early church's ecclesiology opened the flood gate for similar sentiments from spokespersons of Churches of Christ. Batsell Baxter, M Norvel Young³⁷⁹, and G. C. Brewer³⁸⁰ stoutly defended Sewell's position that the Church of Christ was not a denomination as they had no creed, headquarters and universal organizations. Furthermore, they insist that they often write church with a small *c* to indicate that they are not a fraction of but the universal body of Christ. Implanted with the psychology of undenominational Christianity, Churches of Christ began to make a contrast between what they perceived as the "Lord's church" and man-made denominations. As Myer rightly notes, "To them the church was that distinct group or fellowship which was identical to the New Testament church in contrast to many churches or groups which have deviated from the divine pattern."³⁸¹ The signs of divine pattern as defined by Churches of Christ include: time of establishment which should not be earlier or later than Pentecost dated A.D. 33; terms of admittance which must include believe, repent, confess and baptism via immersion for forgiveness of sins; law or discipline of the church which is solely made up of the teachings of the apostles and other inspired disciples documented in the New Testament other than man-made confessions and creeds; the name which must have semblance with names used to designate the church in the early church like, "Church of Christ," "Church of God", etc, not man-made names like "Lutheran" or polity designation like Presbyterian;" church polity based on

³⁷⁸J. P. Sewell. 1923. Undenominational Christianity. *Abilene Christian College Bible Lectures 1922-23*. Cincinnati: F. L. Rowe, 131-140.

³⁷⁹B. B. Baxter and M. N. Young. eds. 1960. *New Testament Churches of Today*, vol. 1. Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 4.

³⁸⁰G. C. Brewer. 1922. *Is the Church of Christ a Denomination?* Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co.

³⁸¹Myers, A Historical Study of the Attitude of the Churches of Christ toward other Denominations, 133.

congregational autonomy and designated church officers like elders, deacons and the preacher/minister without any governing body higher than that of the local congregation and worship which is strictly based on the pattern that they saw in the New Testament which included, weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, praying, teaching, sermon, giving and singing devoid of the use of instruments of music.³⁸²

Churches of Christ believe that the above are the marks of identity of the church that Jesus established and they alone possessed it. This made them to refer to themselves as members of *the* church rather than as members of *a* church. In view of the above perception of themselves, Churches of Christ see other Christian denominations as human organizations and products of apostasy. They vehemently opposed any involvement in any type of cooperative endeavor with them and treat them like pagans rather than fellow Christians.³⁸³ This self imposed 'splendid isolation' position was articulately espoused by L. L. Brigrance as follows:

One of the first evidences of "liberalism" is a disposition to fraternize with sectarians. To cooperate with them in their religious activities, to call on them to "lead in prayer," to exchange pulpits with their preachers, to join their ministerial associations, etc., is either to recognize them as Christians or to deceive them. If the Bible contains the will of God to man, and if there is laid down in it the "law of pardon," the "conditions of salvation," it follows, then, that only those who have complied with them are Christians. Is baptism a condition of salvation? Is immersion only scriptural baptism? If so, none who have not been immersed are Christians. To recognize them as such is to deceive them to take liberties with the word of God that neither man nor angel has a right to do . . . Certainly they are good people . . . but they have not done what God requires people to do in order to become Christians.³⁸⁴

The above sectarian venom expressed about seventy years ago is still very much prevalent among Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria. The following experience

³⁸²Myers, A Historical Study of the Attitude of the Churches of Christ toward other Denominations, 137-142.

³⁸³Myers, A Historical Study of the Attitude of the Churches of Christ toward other Denominations, 144-148.

³⁸⁴L. L. Brigrance. Studies in Restoration: Liberalism. *Gospel Advocate* 83. April 17, 1941: 364.

of the researcher perfectly illustrates the disposition towards pharisaical exclusivism by members of the Church of Christ. On Saturday, June 18, 2011, this researcher attended a wedding ceremony at Oluyole Metropolitan Baptist Church, Ibadan, between a male member of the Church of Christ and a lady from the Baptist Church who was recently converted to the Church of Christ. The bride's parents were from the Baptist Church and insisted that the wedding should take place in their church as a mark of honour for them. The Baptist Church encouraged the groom to invite ministers from his Church of Christ to be part of the officiating ministers. The researcher and a minister from the Church of Christ joined ministers of the Baptist Church to officiate the wedding service. The minister from the Church of Christ delivered the sermon while the researcher read the exhortation and charge.

After the wedding ceremony, the Minister of the local congregation of the Church of Christ where the groom and the researcher worship went to the press using the medium of one of the widely circulated publication of the church to condemn and demand for the excommunication of the Minister and the researcher who officiated with 'denominational Reverends, Priests and Deaconesses at the wedding.' In the publication, the said Minister poured venom and vituperation on the researcher who is also the Director of Studies of a Bible College associated with the Church of Christ for officiating a wedding in a Baptist Church:

It baffles me when I see brethren dominate, denominate and denominalize the doctrine and the body of Christ. I feel disturbed when I see leading members, preachers, and even directors of Christian Bible Schools who are supposed to be a good example to the younger generation distort the ethics of the Church of Christ by practice and teaching.³⁸⁵

The Minister asks further,

Are our leaders today not leading our youths into marriage union with denominations, by not opening their mouths to speak against this very movement into apostasy? Will they not be charged as first

³⁸⁵I. G. Ossai. When Reverends, Priests and Deaconesses Bless Christian Marriages. *Arise* 7. 2. Oct. /Nov. 2011: 8.

and most capital offenders who played the harlot and partook of their sacrifices? . . . yet my brother, a deacon and director of a Christian school says he can prove it from Genesis to Revelation that there is nothing wrong in going to denomination to officiate marriage union of Christians under the auspices of worldly religious leaders.³⁸⁶

The Minister finally appeals, “Let us remove this little leaven before it saturates the whole lump.”³⁸⁷ Ironically, after the publication and the hullabaloo it generated, the bride’s mother became a member of the Church of Christ to the vindication of the researcher and the minister who officiated at the wedding. This event goes to demonstrate the fact that the church is not called to live in splendid isolation with the ‘world’ or other Christian denominations but to have a transforming engagement with them without loosing her distinctive identity as the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

From the above, it is not surprising that the Church of Christ does not belong to any religious association including the Christian Association of Nigeria. It is obvious that the church’s splendid isolation of other Christian denominations was as a result of their peculiar hermeneutical method discussed in the previous chapter. However, a cursory look into the history of the Christian faith shows that there was no historical precedence for such practice. For instance, the New Testament is replete with instances of Jesus relating with Pharisees and the Sadducees who were staunch opponents of his Ministry and teachings. Christ also eats with a tax collector and sinner.³⁸⁸ Similarly, Apostle Paul said he became all things to all men for him to save some.³⁸⁹ Moreover, the ecumenical councils that started from the fourth century provided the forum for Christians from the East and West to define the substance of their faith and to defend it against heresy. Between A.D. 325 and A.D 787, seven ecumenical councils were convened to clarify and affirm Christian beliefs or refute heretical teachings. Few instances will suffice, the

³⁸⁶Ossai, When Reverends, Priests and Deaconesses Bless Christian Marriages, 8.

³⁸⁷Ossai, When Reverends, Priests and Deaconesses Bless Christian Marriages, 8.

³⁸⁸Luke 19: 1-9 documents the event of Christ’s visit to the home of Zacchaeus, the Tax Collector who was considered to be a sinner.

³⁸⁹1 Corinthians 9: 19-24.

Council of Nicea (A. D. 325) issued the original Nicene Creed rejecting Arianism (that Christ is a created being) and affirmed that Christ is fully divine; of one being with the Father. The Council at Constantinople (A.D.381) affirmed that the Spirit is divine while the Council at Ephesus (A. D. 431) condemned Nestorianism (that Christ has two separate natures). The Council of Constantinople II (A. D. 553) condemned aspects of Antiochene theology emphasizing Christ’s humanity at the expense of his deity. The Council of Constantinople II (A.D. 680) also opposed monothelitism (that Christ has single will) and affirmed that Christ had a human will and a divine will that functioned in perfect harmony.³⁹⁰

The position of the Church of Christ that denominationalism is not a true Christian practice as it has no root in the early church was tested in a research question and the following are the responses of the respondents:

Table 12: Denominationalism is not a true Christian practice as it has no root in the early church

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Response</i>			
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
Denominationalism is not a true Christian practice as it has no root in the early church	282	139	49	470
	60%	29.6%	10.4%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2011

Table 16 above shows that 60% of the respondents agreed that denominationalism is unchristian and could not be traced to the early church, 29.6% of the respondents disagreed with this position while as much as 10.4% of the respondents were irresolute. It can be inferred from the figures that marginal majority of the church’s members still held to the traditional sectarian exclusivism posture while as much as 40% of respondents either disagree or are indecisive. The relatively high level of disagreement could be explained in the fact that educated youths within the church are beginning to raise

³⁹⁰ N/A “A Brief History of Creeds. Retrieved June 10, 2012 from <http://www.pbcc.org> 1 of 2.

objections to the traditional exclusivist position of the church on relationship with other Christian denominations. This explanation is substantiated by the fact that 57% of the respondents were between the ages of 18-30, 57.6% were single and 58.1% possessed higher education.

Contrary to the pharisaical exclusivism and anti-ecumenical disposition of the Church of Christ, writings of the Greek and Latin Fathers like Eusebius of Caesarea (A.D 263-339), Athanasius the Great (A.D 293-373), Basil the Great (A.D 330-379), Gregory of Nyssa (A.D. 335-394), Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D 313-386), John Chrysostom A.D 347-407), Ambrose (A.D. 330-397), Jerome (A.D 347-420), Augustine (A.D 354-430) amongst others confirm that ecumenical councils that started from the fourth century provided the forum for Christians across the world to define the substance of their faith and to defend it against heresy. For instance, the Nicene Council (A. D. 325) was attended by 318 bishops, large number of priests, deacons and acolytes to settle Arian controversy and establish the doctrine of true divinity of Christ. Similarly, the Council meeting held at Constantinople (A. D. 381) which was attended by 150 bishops enlarged the Nicene confession to accommodate the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit. The Council meeting held at Ephesus (A. D. 431) was attended by 198 bishops including papal delegates from Rome. The meeting condemned the error of Nestorius on the relationship between the two natures of Christ. The Council meeting held at Chalcedon was said to be variously attended by 520 and 630 bishops. The meeting fixed the orthodox doctrine of the person of Christ. Two subsequent Council meetings were held at Constantinople (A.D. 553) and (A. D. 680) and the second Council meeting at Nicea (A. D. 787) to clarify ambiguities concerning Christian doctrines and practices and to put heretics in their place.

In view of the above, the need for a review Churches of Christ's 'splendid isolation' from other Christian denominations cannot be overemphasized.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined selected practices that are peculiar to Churches of Christ. The practices examined include aversion for use of musical instruments in worship, absolute congregational autonomy under plurality of elders and pharisaical attitude towards other Christian denominations. The presupposition and justification for these practices from the perspective of Churches of Christ were examined. The chapter goes further to juxtapose these practices with that of the early church. Findings reveal that Churches of Christ practices like absolute congregational autonomy under plurality of elders and pharisaical attitude towards other Christian denominations were at variance with church practices in the first five centuries of Christianity. On the use of musical instrument in worship, findings confirmed the position of the Church of Christ that *Acappella* (music unaccompanied with instruments of music) was the norm in the early church. While historians do not agree to its exclusive use, worship devoid of use of instruments of music was the classic form of church music in the early church.

Historians often posit that for every cause there must be an effect. The same is also true of teachings and practices of religious organizations. To the strengths and weaknesses of the teachings and practices of the Church of Christ we shall turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF SELECTED TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

6.0 Introduction

The peculiar teachings and practices of Churches of Christ are not without their strengths and weaknesses. As reiterated earlier, Churches of Christ did not only inherit the Bible, they also inherited a particular way of interpreting it. It is from this interpretation that the church's teachings and practices evolved. This chapter looks at the strengths and weaknesses of the doctrinal emphases and practices of the Church of Christ.

6.1 Strengths

The story of Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria is not all that of a mismatch between conviction and conduct. While the self-imposed tasks of restoring Christianity to "ancient order of things" and fostering Christian unity on the basis of the Bible remain utopian, the church has challenged the Christendom on the need to maintain the standards in both doctrine and practice by remaining faithful to the Christian code of conduct as contained in the holy writ. The following is an examination of the strengths of the doctrinal teachings and practices of the Church of Christ with a view to appropriating the implicit and explicit lessons for other Christian denominations.

6.1.1 Insistence on Doing Bible Things the Bible Ways

Churches of Christ are reputed for their insistence on rightly dividing the word of truth by rigidly following the letter and the spirit of the Scripture in their teachings and practices. They claim to speak where the Bible speaks and silent where the Bible is silent. Another cliché that is characteristic of the church is the penchant for doing Bible things the Bible ways and calling Bible things by Bible names. Reference is often made in many of their literature and tracts to Peter's statement in 1 Peter 4: 11- "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God" to affirm their so called fidelity to the Scripture. With

reference to Roman 16: 16,³⁹¹ they pride themselves as the only church mentioned in the Bible. Although the hermeneutical presupposition for this emphasis may be branded as myopic and sectarian, they are meant to underscore their emphasis on the Bible as the *raison deter* for what Christians profess and practice.

The position of the church on the importance of the Bible as the true judge of Christian faith and practice is graphically illustrated in the following correlation by J. D. Tant:

But before two can agree there must be some standard in this world by which both will agree to be governed. Two men may lift a sack of corn, and disagree as to the weight; but if both will agree to leave their feelings in the background and agree to believe what the scales say about it, and weigh the corn, then no longer can they disagree on its weight. Two men may disagree as to the length of a stick. Each claims it is so long; but when they agree to let the stick be measured by the square, and accept its measurement, then no room for disagreement can exist. But should you find a man who knows a sack of corn weighs so much, and a stick is so long, and he knows it is right, and that his father and mother before him felt just like he did about the matter and will not submit them to correct measurement, you may know there is something wrong with that man or with his feelings. Yet we find many people just that way religiously today. Then is it not better to have a standard of measurement in the settlement of our troubles today?³⁹²

The Church of Christ’s teaching of doing Bible things the Bible ways was tested in a research question and the following are the responses of the respondents:

Table 13: Church of Christ’s teaching of doing Bible things the Bible way is commendable although the church tended towards the extreme

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Response</i>			
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
Church of Christ’s teaching of doing Bible things the Bible way is commendable although the church tended towards the extreme	433	24	13	470
	92%	5%	3%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2011

³⁹¹“Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you.”

³⁹²J. D. Tant. 1933. *The Gospel X-Ray*. Austin, Texas: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 204-205.

From the figures above, 92 % of the respondents agreed that the Church of Christ's penchant for doing Bible things the Bible way is commendable, 5% of the respondents disagreed while 3% of the respondents were unsure. The figures also imply that most of the church members were favorably disposed to obeying the scripture to the letter even though this is often overstressed.

The extent of perversions or apostasy that Christianity as a religion has witnessed in recent times underlies the need for the Christian church to maintain the balance of sanity and purity. While it is presumptuous for Churches of Christ to claim to have the right interpretative formula to the Bible and insist that others must fall in line, Christian denominations need to conduct periodic tests to know whether or not they are still in faith. Few examples of areas where Christian denominations can benefit from the teachings and practices of Churches of Christ will suffice.

First, Christian denominations have often come to grapple with cantankerous succession disputes and the tendency to turn a church started in the name of God to family business/empire. A model of church polity with plurality of leaders both at local and higher levels which also recognize the right of members to participate in the process that will lead to the emergence of their leaders is instructive for the contemporary church. Adoption of this model will reduce succession disputes at the demise of a leader who is only *primus inter pares* (first among equals). The tendency for such leader to be succeeded by his wife or child or church's properties be appropriated by his family will be reduced if not completely eliminated.

Likewise, the carnality and health hazard that accompanied the so called praise worship in Christian denominations calls for moderation. While the Church of Christ was not favourably disposed to the use of instruments of music in worship, the current trend of unmediated revelry that made no distinction between a place of worship and night clubs or party centers calls for serious consideration. If God is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth we need to determine if the use of talking drums and the mimicking that goes with it or the wild dancing that has become the norm in most Christian denominations connote spirituality. In some cases, about half of the congregation is tired and fagged out or even sleeping through the sermon after they have dissipated so much energy dancing during praise worship. The health implication of heavy music in an air-conditioned

church hall should also be given strong consideration as we might be inadvertently raising a generation of hearing-impaired Christians.

Similarly, several church leaders in recent times have placed much emphasis on tithing and material contributions of members more than the salvation of their souls. Church leaders accept donations from members without minding the sources of such donations. Many are more interested in meeting their weekly financial budget than the spiritual conditions of their members. Some even go to the extent of making an interpretational overkill of Malachi 3: 8-10 by placing curses on members who default in tithe payment rather than just appealing to them to give as the Lord has prospered them. Several surreptitious measures of raising funds are crafted to amass wealth in the name of God for personal aggrandizement and to build family empires. The scourge of corruption and corrupt practices that has eaten into the very fabric of our nation today would not have been this much if our religious institutions are up and doing in discouraging donations from dubious sources and simply encouraging members to give from their honest labour and as the Lord has truly prospered them.

A corollary to the above is the flagrant display of affluence and conspicuous consumption by the clergy class which should give the contemporary church some serious concern. The rise in the power of the metropolitan Bishops from the second century came with it the secularization of the office of the Bishop characterized by lax in penitential discipline, avarice and corruption which brought reproach to Zephyrinus and Calistus, two Roman Bishops that were in office between 202- 223 AD. There was also the case of Bishop Paul of Samosata who was deposed for his moot doctrine and questionable moral character. In addition to the above, Schaff notes that “Origen complains that there are, especially in the large cities, overseers of the people of God, who seek to undo the pomp of the heathen potentates, would surround themselves, like the emperors, with a body-guard, and make themselves terrible and inaccessible to the poor.”³⁹³

The situation described above remains largely the same if not worse today. While appraising the issue of some Nigerian pastors’ acquisition of private jets while most of

³⁹³P. Schaff. 1966. *History of the Christian Church* Vol. 2. Peabody, Massachusetts: Henrickson Publishers, 134.

their flock go about hungry and bare-footed, Anthony Akinola notes the irony of a nation which is one of the most religious and sadly is also one of the most corrupt in the world. He therefore charged the church to be “ideologically responsible to engage in the war against corruption and a moral one to discourage materialism and ostentatious living which Jesus himself so much detested in the predispositions of the Pharisees.”³⁹⁴ Akinola concludes that “it will be sad if Nigerians now aspire to the leadership of the church, as they do in politics, solely because it is perceived as an avenue leading to influence and flamboyance.”³⁹⁵ Akinola was not alone in the condemnation of the conspicuous consumption and ostentatious living of the Nigerian clergy class. Abimbola Adedokun describes some Nigerian pastors as sellers of 21st Century Indulgences and merchant-pastors that are actively complicit in the dysfunctionality of Nigeria. According to her, “religion, exploitation and subsequent scandals will not go away. Not in this generation. Not even in this world. As long as there is that primitive instinct in man to seek the supernatural, to seek God and the fear of death is constantly shaken before our eyes, people will continue to subject themselves to exploitative pastors to be used as they like.”³⁹⁶ While Adedokun could be right in a way, the fact remains that plurality of bishops or leaders as practiced by Churches of Christ is instructive for other Christian denominations to curb the flamboyance, greed and excesses of the clergy class.

Finally, while it amounts to limiting God and putting him in a box to assume that miracles have ceased, it is equally repugnant to common sense to attribute all miracles to God, after all, Pharaoh Magicians initially were able to replicate Moses’ miracles before Pharaoh. The preponderance of phantom miracles in Christian circles today calls for serious concern. The social, economic and political situation in Nigeria today has come to validate Karl Marx’s maxim of religion as the opium of the people. Karl Marx posited that when people are confronted by existential problems beyond their capacity to bear, they seek solace from a greater power. This void is filled through religious activities and our so-called men of God are using the prevailing socio-economic situation of the

³⁹⁴A. Akinola. Religion and the Flying Pastors. *The Punch*. Nov. 19, 2012: 20.

³⁹⁵Akinola. Religion and the Flying Pastors.

³⁹⁶A. Adedokun. Jail is too good for Nigerian pastors. *The Punch*. Nov. 22, 2012: 64.

country to cash in on people seeking solution to their problems. Christian denominations have adopted miraculous displays as ‘unique selling proposition’ to solicit for members and to outdo one another. The situation prompted the National Broadcasting Commission on April 30, 2004, to enforce the otherwise dormant sections 4.4.1g & 7.5.1a of the NBC Broadcasting code which oblige that a programme or advertisement promoting religion in any form to present its claim, especially those relating to miracles, in such a manner that is verifiable, provable and believable.³⁹⁷ Similarly, section 4.16 of the code of Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) specifies that:

Advertisements/promotions of any religious product or service shall: i) avoid exaggeration in its claims pertaining to miracles on the adherents of the religion through the use of spurious testimonials likely to deceive the audience; ii) avoid promise of financial prosperity; iii) not cast aspersion on any other sect or religion; vi) not coerce, cajole or otherwise compel anyone to become an adherent of a particular sect of belief.³⁹⁸

With the invocation of existing broadcasting and advertising codes, religious leaders seeking to broadcast miracles of any type are required to provide the following:

- a) A valid medical report of a patient's condition before an alleged healing took place
- b) A video evidence of the healing process itself
- c) A second medical report confirming that the earlier diagnosed condition no longer exists.

As Ukah rightly noted, if regulating the broadcast of miracles on television is being likened to aggressive crackdown by National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) on fake drugs and being related with vices like money laundering, advance fee fraud and other sundry corrupt practices, it behooves the Christian church to put its house in order and stop bringing the name of the Lord into disrepute. This should be done by “testing and all spirits” and holding on to that which is true and by so doing protecting innocent citizens from being hoodwinked by unscrupulous preachers.

³⁹⁷A. Ukah. 2011. Banishing Miracles: Politics and Policies of Religious Broadcasting in Nigeria. *Politics and Religion Journal* 5.1. Retrieved July 10, 2012 from www.politicsandreligionjournal.com 47.

³⁹⁸ Ukah, Banishing Miracles: Politics and Policies of Religious Broadcasting in Nigeria” 48

6.1.2 Effectiveness of Bible Correspondence Course as a means of Disseminating the Message of the Church

Bible Correspondence course has been proven to be a veritable means of disseminating the message of the gospel by Churches of Christ. The history of the church over the years has been characterized by the use of Bible correspondence courses, tracts and other Bible related literature to disseminate religious information. Since the church claims to have no founder, General Overseer, headquarters or earthly headquarters, publications by leading members have, over the years been devised to communicate doctrinal and other fellowship matters to a vast number of adherents of the church scattered across local congregations all over the world. As noted earlier, communication of religious views through publications is one of the legacies inherited from Alexander Campbell by Churches of Christ. Campbell started with *The Christian Baptist* in 1823 and by July 4, 1830, when the publication was rested, he had published not less than forty-six thousand volumes of the publication.³⁹⁹ The *Christian Baptist* was replaced with *The Millennial Harbinger* in the same year. Campbell's publications in the *The Christian Baptist*, the *Millennial Harbinger* and his debates were estimated to be over sixty thousand volumes. Such was his prodigy that David Stewart notes that "The Restoration Movement has scarcely produced another man who can match Campbell's energy in writing and publishing."⁴⁰⁰

The potency of Bible Correspondence Course as a veritable means of disseminating the teachings and practices of the Church of Christ was tested in a research question and the following are the responses of the respondents:

Table 14: Bible Correspondence Course program of the Church of Christ has proved to be a good tool for disseminating the teachings and practices of the church

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Response</i>			
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
Bible Correspondence Course program of the Church of Christ has proved to be a good	389	55	26	470

³⁹⁹Stewart, Alexander Campbell and the Churches of Christ, 137-138.

⁴⁰⁰Stewart, Alexander Campbell and the Churches of Christ, 138.

tool for disseminating the teachings and practices of the church	82.8%	11.7%	5.5%	100%
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Source: Field Survey, 2011

From the table above 82.8% of the respondents confirmed the effectiveness of Bible Correspondence Courses as a means of disseminating the teachings and practices of the church, 11.7% of the respondents disagreed with this position while 5.5% of the respondents were irresolute. The figures affirm that most of the respondents attest to the potency of Bible Correspondence Course as tested means of publicizing the message of the church.

Moreover, Churches of Christ since the Second World War started the use of Bible correspondence course to edify their members in the military serving in the battle fields across Europe. It was one of such Bible correspondence courses developed by Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee, USA, that was sent to C. A. O. Essien through his German Pen Pall friend that got him converted as the first convert of the Church of Christ in Nigeria. After completing the course in the late 1940s, Essien started recruiting members and establishing churches and when the work has grown beyond him he sought assistance from the church in Nashville, USA, leading to the arrival of the first missionary families of Churches of Christ in Ukpom, Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria in 1952.

As soon as the work in Eastern Nigeria stabilized, correspondence courses and other Bible literature were dispatched from Uyo in Akwa Ibom state to other regions of Nigeria. Leslie Diestelkamp, the American Missionary who pioneered the work in Western Nigeria reports, “The Western Province is a very promising place. Already there are 2,000 or 3,000 people taking Bible Correspondence Course sent out from Box 48, Uyo. Evidently the people of the West are interested in Bible study.”⁴⁰¹ Diestelkamp’s report confirms the fact that thousands of prospects enrolled in the Bible correspondence courses leading to their conversion and the establishment of the Church of Christ in their

⁴⁰¹L. Diestelkamp. Truth and Freedom in Nigeria. *Truth Magazine* 3.12. Sept, 1960:15.

areas. The planting of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria was preceded by Bible correspondence courses. Besides, the first spiritual assignment of Diestelkamp upon arrival in Nigeria was his being part of the crew that baptized the first convert to the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria through Bible correspondence course:

Our first gospel work in Nigeria was done more than 500 miles from here, at Lagos, where our ship, "the Accra," docked July 22 and where we were met by the Billy Nicks family. Lagos is the capital of Nigeria and its chief port. There we were able to locate a few Christians, and also one man who had taken a correspondence course in the Bible and who was ready to be baptized. Sunday morning, July 26, we watched as Brother Okon E. Udoh immersed Jacob S. Onobote in the waters of a little inlet from the Atlantic Ocean.⁴⁰²

The use of Bible correspondence courses was also instrumental to the penetration of Churches of Christ into the hinterland of Southwestern Nigeria from Lagos. Another report from Diestelkamp attests to the fact that Bible Correspondence course preceded the establishment of the Church of Christ in Abeokuta:

A young man in Abeokuta, a city of nearly 100,000 people that is 63 miles Northwest of Lagos, took the Bible Correspondence course and requested baptism. I wrote him and arranged to preach there. Last Sunday evening we took an interpreter and went there. A very large crowd heard the gospel. Two were baptized. We made appointment to go there again June 13, 14. So the church is started in another great and congested city. Pray for us that our strength fail not for all of these many tasks and that we be wise for the most fruitful work for Christ.⁴⁰³

Aude Mckee, the missionary that succeed Diestelkamp in Southwestern Nigeria also confirmed the efficacy of Bible correspondence course as a successful means of evangelism:

Considerable effort has been put into the work of teaching by Bible Correspondence Lessons by Bro. Sewell Hall and the brethren in Eastern Nigeria. The good effects of that work could clearly be seen in Benin City. Through this course we were able to contact many people with a good background of unadulterated Bible teaching, and, in many cases, the task of leading them to obedience to the truth was quite easy.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰² L. Diestelkamp. Report from Nigeria. *Truth Magazine* 4.1. Oct.1959: 12

⁴⁰³ Diestelkamp, Report from Nigeria (No. 6), 16.

⁴⁰⁴ Mckee, Report from Nigeria (No. 4), 5.

In addition to the above, reports from the World Bible School, a Bible Correspondence Ministry associated to Churches of Christ further confirms the efficacy of Bible correspondence courses as a viable means of acquainting the world with the gospel. J. Waddey reports that WBS has an enrolment of approximately one million students annually from 141 nations across the world with an average of 26,000 conversions every year.⁴⁰⁵ Waddey then wonders, “If WBS did not exist, hundreds of congregations of the Lord’s church would not exist and hundreds of thousands of members of the church would never have learned the gospel way of salvation.”⁴⁰⁶

From the discussion and the evidences above, it could be seen that Bible Correspondence courses have proven to be an effective means of conversion as successfully employed by Churches of Christ. This method can equally be employed by other Christian denominations to reach millions of prospects across the world and ultimately leading them to become citizens of the kingdom of God.

6.2. Weaknesses

Challenges resulting from the teachings and practices of Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria as discussed above include, myopic hermeneutical assumptions, relative obscurity of the church, the albatross of congregational autonomy and paucity of ordained elders. These are discussed as follows.

6.2.1 Myopic Hermeneutical Assumptions

The bulk of the Church of Christ’s hermeneutical presuppositions were inherited from Alexander Campbell. Campbell’s hermeneutics was premised on a dispensational approach to the Bible and a constitutional view of the New Testament. In his dispensational approach to the Bible, Campbell made a sharp distinction between the Old and the New Testament and divided the Bible into the Patriarchal, the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations. The patriarchal age spanned from Adam to Moses (Genesis 1 through Exodus 19), mosaic age from Moses at Sinai to Peter on Pentecost (Exodus 20 through Acts 1) and Christian age starting with Pentecost and ending on final judgment

⁴⁰⁵J. Waddey. 2010. *Lawmakers and Judges*. Mushin, Lagos: Fola Press Company, .58.

⁴⁰⁶Waddey, *Law Makers and Judges*, 70.

(Acts 2 through Revelation 22). Based on this hermeneutical substructure, Campbell posited that Christians do not live under Mosaic covenant and are not obligated in any way to obey its laws and institutions. Consequently, any argument appealing to the Old Testament to support tithes, Sabbath observation, holy days like Christmas and Easter, national conventions are completely hideous and repugnant to Christianity. While recognizing valuable teachings and essential lessons to be drawn from the historical narratives of the Old Testament, Campbell denied its legitimacy to regulate Christian faith and practice.

Similarly, Campbell's constitutional view of the New Testament sees the kingdom of God, the church, as consisting the following elements: the constitution –the plan of God from inception to redeem humanity; the king- Jesus Christ whose reign began on the day of Pentecost; the subjects-born again citizens of the kingdom; the territory-the whole earth and the laws- the New Testament, specifically Acts and the Epistles and the apostles as legislators of the kingdom. This constitutional view of the kingdom and dispensational division of the Bible led Campbell to the conclusion that the teaching of Christ before the Pentecost do not carry as much weight and authority for the church as much as the teachings of the apostles after the Pentecost as Jesus' teachings in the gospel belonged to the Mosaic/Jewish dispensation and predated the establishment of the kingdom. For Campbell, Jesus' miracles and his teachings in the Gospels are meant to confirm his messiahship after which they should be relegated to the background and prominence given to Acts and the Epistles as the functional equivalent of the New Testament.

Consequently, the Acts and the Epistles are seen as the legal code of the church and it was upon this that Campbell established the basis for the "ancient order of things." This order of things upon which the New Testament church operates includes: congregational autonomy, baptism for remission of sins, weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, plurality of elders and deacons in each local church and a simple pattern of worship which includes, teaching, sermon, singing, observance of the Lord's Supper and giving. Biblical justification for all above can only be found in the Acts and the Epistles. Based on the above, any practice of the New Testament church without apostolic

command or example is unauthorized and can only fall under the realm of human innovation.

Likewise, Restoration hermeneutics assume that the Bible is a collection of facts that could be read, understood and applied by everyone to practical situations. It presupposes that anyone with the ability to read and write without the need for a teacher or guidance of the Holy Spirit could approach the Bible, read, understand and appropriate its teachings to his life. While it is true that the Scripture can be read by any one, it is misleading to assume that perfect and complete understanding is available for everyone. While it is also true that the Bible is complete and written through the inspiration of God, this does not remove the imperfection of human understanding.⁴⁰⁷ Moreover, restoration hermeneutics foreclose the need for a good understanding of Bible backgrounds and the genre of its various books and take training for proper exegesis and application of the Bible for granted. The liberty of everyone and anyone to go to the Scripture and come out with his own interpretation and seek to impose it on others has been the source of many in-house-fighting, fissure and conflict within local congregations of Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria.

The assertion that the peculiar method of interpreting the Bible by the Church of Christ affected her growth and acceptability by other Christians was tested in a research question and the following are the responses of the respondents:

Table 15: The peculiar method of interpreting the Bible by the Church of Christ affected her growth and acceptability by other Christians

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Response</i>			
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
The peculiar method of interpreting the Bible by the Church of Christ affected her growth and acceptability by other Christians	295	122	53	470
	62.8%	25.9%	11.3%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2011

⁴⁰⁷Petter, The Role of the Restoration Hermeneutics in the Fractures of the Churches of Christ in the Twentieth Century, 19-20.

Table 20 above indicates that 62.8% of the respondents agreed that the peculiar method of interpreting the Bible by the Church of Christ affected her growth and acceptability by other Christian denominations, 25.9% disagreed with this position while 11.3% were hesitant. The above statistics indicate that a sizeable percentage of the respondents confirmed the assertion that the church's method of interpreting the Bible has constituted a stumbling block to the growth of the church and acceptability by other Christians.

Friday Edim,⁴⁰⁸ Peter Adaramaja⁴⁰⁹ and Stephen Adeogun⁴¹⁰ concur with the above evaluation. They note that the assumption that each member of the church is a Bible exegete in his own right has led to various conflicts within the local church. Apart from the fact that Church of Christ members believe that each member is a minister in his own right and has a right to his interpretation, individual opinions and perceptions are often imposed on the whole church and any attempt to reject imposition of personal views or misinterpretation on the whole church often leads to conflict. Edim notes further that often times, those who insist on imposing their views on others are neither scripturally trained nor spiritually matured to be respected for such views, more so, when the views were repugnant to both common sense and the scripture.⁴¹¹ Ken Alabi cited the example of the debate about the scripturality of using money from the church's treasury to support an unbeliever or a non-member. Alabi opines that it is unthinkable for anyone who truly knows what Christianity is all about to refuse to help anyone in dire need. Alabi insists that if Christ during his earthly ministry saw people in awful condition and helped them out of their predicament, the church cannot be said to truly belong to Christ if its attention is mainly focused on its members. Yet, some members of the church, according to Alabi, will insist that the church's primary benevolent obligation is towards its members.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁸ Friday Edim, *Interview Respondent*, Deacon, Church of Christ, Lawanson, Lagos, April 6, 2012.

⁴⁰⁹ Peter Adaramaja, *Interview Respondent*, Elder, Church of Christ, Idi-aba, Abeokuta, May 26, 2012.

⁴¹⁰ Stephen Adeogun, *Interview Respondent*, Member, Church of Christ, Kube, Ibadan, June 14, 2012.

⁴¹¹ Friday Edim, *Interview Respondent*.

⁴¹² Ken Alabi, *Interview Respondent*, Deacon, Church of Christ, Kemta Idi-Aba, Abeokuta, May 27, 2012.

Alabi's position constitutes only a dimension of the story. Gbenga Fabunmi,⁴¹³ Toyin Lamina⁴¹⁴ and Charles Solotan⁴¹⁵ are of the view that the church has no business caring for the physical needs of non-members. They variously posit that the church's obligation to the world is to preach the gospel, no more, no less. They argued further that the instruction in the Great Commission did not include caring for the existential needs of the prospects.

O. Aladekomo⁴¹⁶ introduced another dimension to the discussion as he deplors the tendency for some members of Churches of Christ to make a distinction between the church and individual Christians. The likes of S. Ajetunmobi,⁴¹⁷ S. Ojeva,⁴¹⁸ L. Lawal⁴¹⁹ and C. Ebong⁴²⁰ argue that it is biblical for an individual Christian to support or financially help an unbeliever in his personal capacity, but the Bible does not support rendering such help from the church treasury. Conversely, Aladekomo, O. Amos,⁴²¹ T. Akinmola,⁴²² S. Ayeni,⁴²³ D. T. Alaje,⁴²⁴ S. A. Adeola,⁴²⁵ T. Effiong,⁴²⁶ M. O. Enilolobo⁴²⁷ and G. Akinyoola⁴²⁸ abhor this 'false distinction' between the church as a

⁴¹³ Gbenga Fabunmi, Interview *Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Koloko, Ibadan, June 28, 2012.

⁴¹⁴ Toyin Lamina, Interview *Respondent*, Deacon, Church of Christ, Igbein, Abeokuta, May 12, 2012.

⁴¹⁵ Charles Solotan, Interview *Respondent*, Member, Church of Christ, Challenge, Ibadan, September 2, 2011.

⁴¹⁶ O. Aladekomo, Interview *Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Ado-Ekiti, May 11, 2012.

⁴¹⁷ S. Ajetunmobi, Interview *Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Odosida, Ondo, May 11, 2012.

⁴¹⁸ S. Ojeva, Interview *Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Oshogbo II, August 13, 2010.

⁴¹⁹ L. Lawal, Interview *Respondent*, Member, Church of Christ, Eleiyele, Ibadan, July 28, 2012.

⁴²⁰ C. Ebong, Interview *Respondent*, Member, Church of Christ, Ile-Ife, August 13, 2010.

⁴²¹ O. Amos, Interview *Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Ijebujesha, May 13, 2011.

⁴²² T. Akinmola, Interview *Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Leo, Ondo, February 8, 2012.

⁴²³ S. Ayeni, Interview *Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Ipetumodu, May 10, 2012.

⁴²⁴ D. T. Alaje, Interview *Respondent*, Member, Church of Christ, Iragbiji, May 23, 2010.

⁴²⁵ S. A. Adeola, Interview *Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Osiele, Abeokuta, June 2, 2012.

⁴²⁶ T. Effiong, Interview *Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Sangotedo, Ajah, Lagos, May 9, 2012.

⁴²⁷ M. O. Enilolobo, Interview *Respondent*, Elder, Church of Christ, Idiaba, Abeokuta, June 15, 2012.

corporate body and a Christian individual maintaining that there is nothing wrong biblically with an individual Christian helping someone in need in his individual capacity or the church as the people of God lending a helping hand. According to them, it does not matter from whose purse the help comes, either from the church or individual members, the bottom line is that somebody is in need and the people of God are able to rise up to the challenge. Aladekomo and S. B. Abolarin⁴²⁹ further justified this position by insisting that if Christ did not do a background check on all the people he healed or fed, it is superfluous for the church to be discriminatory in its benevolent activities particularly in situations where the need is crucial and critical.

Sunday Ekanem opines that disagreement ensues among members when a Christian makes a doctrine out of a matter on the realm of opinion and sought to impose it on the whole church. Ekanem notes further that since Churches of Christ have neither General Overseer nor ecclesiastical hierarchies or earthly headquarters to regulate doctrinal beliefs and practices, there is the tendency for outspoken members or members who have spent considerable years in a local church to want to dominate discussions and insist that things are done their own way. According to Ekanem, relatively new members may offer creative ideas to achieve better results which may be rejected by old members and classified as unscriptural, while there is nothing unscriptural about it.⁴³⁰ Ermer Morgan deprecates this tendency when he declares as follows:

Churches of Christ are unique. There is no hierarchy; no centralized government of the body that forces congregations into line. Each is independent and autonomous. Whatever influence is exercised over the "brotherhood" is exercised by the strength of character, rather than political pull. This is the most dangerous of all things. It makes it possible for an unscrupulous man to take a segment of the church with him, if they are willing to follow the man; and he is willing to be their leader. It makes the church at his mercy, if he finds reason to lead a split.⁴³¹

⁴²⁸G. Akinyoola, Interview *Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Oniyere, Abeokuta, May 13, 2011.

⁴²⁹S. B. Abolarin, Interview *Respondent*, Deacon, Church of Christ, Egbeda, Lagos, October 2, 2011.

⁴³⁰Sunday Ekanem, Interview *Respondent*, Member, Church of Christ, Abadina, UI, Ibadan April 28, 2010.

⁴³¹E. Morgan. 1993. *Sibling Rivalry in the Family of God* Fort Worth, Texas: Star Bble & Tract Corporation. 143.

At the root of this divisive predisposition and the tendency for a brotherhood savior to arise who thinks he has all the right answers and that everyone else is going to hell is the restoration hermeneutics which avows the right of everyone to read, understand and appropriate its teachings to their lives and the activities of the local church.

6.2.2 Relative Obscurity of the Church

Most often when the Church of Christ is introduced to members of the public particularly in Southwestern Nigeria, the response of most prospects have always been that all churches are Churches of Christ since all churches trace their root to Jesus. If the member goes further to inform his prospect that the Church of Christ is not a denomination, but the church that Christ promised to build and was inaugurated on Pentecost Day, the prospect still claims ignorance and start asking about the founder, the headquarters and other related questions. The above scenario suggests that Churches of Christ are not well known in most communities in Southwestern Nigeria more than fifty years after planting the first congregation of the church in the region. Even in neighborhoods where the church is domiciled, it cannot be said to be the church of the community.

The statement that the Church of Christ is relatively unpopular in Southwestern Nigeria as a result of her teachings and practices which are considered contestable by the generality of Christian public was tested in a research question and the following are the responses of the respondents:

Table 16: The Church of Christ is relatively unpopular in Southwestern Nigeria as a result of her teachings and practices which are contestable by the generality of Christian publics

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Response</i>			
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
The Church of Christ is relatively unpopular in South Western Nigeria as a result of her teachings and practices which are questionable to the generality of Christian publics	249	159	62	470
	53%	33.8%	13.2%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2011

As displayed in the table above, 53% of the respondents agreed with the statement that the Church of Christ is relatively unpopular in Southwestern Nigeria as a result of her teachings and practices which are considered contestable by the generality of Christians, 33.8% of the respondents opposed the statement while 13.2% of the respondents were irresolute. The figures indicate a marginal majority of the respondents confirmed that the Church of Christ is relatively unpopular in Southwestern Nigeria.

Ayobami Akanji notes that the fact that Churches of Christ remain in obscurity after over fifty years in Southwestern Nigeria could be attributed to some of the doctrinal beliefs and practices of the church. Akanji cited the concept of congregational autonomy as an example. He notes that this church polity allows each congregation to be autonomous of another while the activities of each local church are coordinated by its leaders without interference from other congregations and without control or coordination of any ecclesiastical hierarchy or authority. Akanji notes further that even in situations where congregations come together to organize evangelism program to preach the gospel and project the church to the public, there has always been questions on the coordination of the program without infringing on the autonomy of participating congregations. Akanji observes that at times such program dies on the drawing board if a compromise could not be reached on the modalities of implementation and in a situation where the program survives the planning stage, sustaining such program financially for a long haul has always been a major problem. He recounted the arguments and bickering that were at play before the television program anchored by preachers of Churches of Christ in Lagos came on board. Similar programs that were initiated in the past, he says, could not see the light of the day when disagreement over implementation without infringing the autonomy of cooperating congregations could not be resolved. Akanji concludes that disagreement over implementation of programs by congregations without infringing the autonomy of congregations involved was one of the factors inhibiting Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria from organizing programs beyond the financial capacity of a single congregation which will propagate the programs of the church and transmute it from obscurity.⁴³²

⁴³²Ayobami Akanji, *Interview Respondent*, Elder, Church of Christ, Isheri-Osun, Lagos, November 12, 2010.

L. Agada,⁴³³ S. Kumayon,⁴³⁴ O. Mesagan,⁴³⁵ M. Monomiye⁴³⁶ and D. Ogunjimi⁴³⁷ toe the line of Akanji by subscribing to the view that the Church of Christ is not well known in Southwestern Nigeria as a result of the peculiar doctrinal emphases of the church. With so much weight on the Bible and insisting on doing Bible things Bible ways, they argued that many of the church's prospects particularly those who are from other Christian denominations find it difficult to accept the position of the church on several issues pertaining to Christian faith and practice. James Ojo⁴³⁸ cited baptism and the use of instruments of music in worship as example. He notes that some prospects who have been baptized by sprinkling or sign of the cross on their forehead find it difficult to embrace the 'truth' when they are challenged that baptism by immersion for remission of sins is the form of baptism that was practiced by the early church. B. Okungbuwa⁴³⁹ explains further that some prospects or converts who were former denominational members find the worship of Churches of Christ boring and uninteresting since the worship is devoid of the use of instruments of music. According to Okungbuwa, if God desired to be worshipped in somberness, in spirit and in truth, those who chose to entertain God with instruments of music are entertaining themselves not God, for God is spirit and those who worship him acceptably must worship him in spirit and in truth. G. Oladiran⁴⁴⁰ concludes the discussion by insisting that it is impossible for man to make heaven on his own terms outside God's prescriptions in the Bible. This being the case, Oladiran warns that it behoves the world to follow the narrow way that leads to eternal life or choose to follow the wider path that leads to perdition.

⁴³³L. Agada, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Odogunyan, Ikorodu, Lagos, July 14, 2011.

⁴³⁴S. Kumayon, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Ondo Town, June 26, 2011.

⁴³⁵O. Mesagan, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Okitipupa, September 6, 2011.

⁴³⁶M. Monomiye, *Interview Respondent*, Member, Church of Christ, Abadina, UI, Ibadan, January 2, 2012.

⁴³⁷D. Ogunjimi, *Interview Respondent*, Member, Church of Christ, OAU Campus, Ife, August 15, 2011.

⁴³⁸J. Ojo, *Interview Respondent*, Member, Church of Christ, Odo-Ado, Ekiti, June 6, 2011.

⁴³⁹B. Okungbuwa, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Oshinle Quarters, Ondo, May 14, 2011.

⁴⁴⁰G. Oladiran, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Gbongan, May 10, 2012.

Still on the issue of relative obscurity of Churches of Christ compared to several other Christian denominations, David Apata posits that the tendency for the church to avoid what some call social gospel was part of the reason why the Church of Christ is not well known in Southwestern Nigeria. According to Apata, apart from preaching the gospel, Churches of Christ tend not to engage in any physical or social program to bless or alleviate the plight of the less-privileged within the community as a result of the belief that such is the responsibility of the civil government. According to Apata, while mainline denominations like the Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Baptist and several others build schools, hospitals, orphanages and embark on projects meant to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and the needy in the society, Churches of Christ view such gestures as unnecessary and at best a guise to entice members. Apata avers that people tend to identify with churches with holistic ministry, churches that are interested in taking care of both their spiritual and physical needs.⁴⁴¹

As a corollary to the above, Ephraim Hembraor opines that even within the neighborhood where the church is domiciled, very few of the residents obey the gospel and become a member. This situation occurs, according to Hembraor, as a result of the fact that Churches of Christ's penchant not to have any other relationship with the public apart from preaching the gospel. The situation, he says, is not helped by the commuter nature of most Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria. Most members of the church he notes, do not live within the neighborhood where the church is located. In most cases, apart from the preacher who lives within the church premises, most members, according to him, commute from other communities to the church a situation which makes the community to see the church as an outsider.⁴⁴² The researcher recalls a time that Advance Diploma students of West Nigeria Christian College and School of Biblical Studies, Abeokuta, were sent to congregations of Churches of Christ in Lagos to interview people in the church neighborhood on their perception of the church. Reports submitted by the students indicate that most Churches of Christ in the city are perceived by their neighbors as quiet, not constituting nuisance in the community, comes out once a month to preach

⁴⁴¹D. Apata, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Ado-Badore, Ajah, Lagos, April 7, 2011.

⁴⁴²E. Hembraor, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, WNCC Campus, Abeokuta, June 17, 2012.

the gospel, but hardly identify with developmental aspirations of the community unless the church will also benefit from such programmes. The summary of the reports indicate that Churches of Christ cannot be called the church of the community in their neighborhoods. The factors itemized above, according to Philip Okome,⁴⁴³ combined to place Churches of Christ in obscurity compared to mainline churches and other Christian denominations in Southwestern Nigeria.

6.2.3 The Albatross of Absolute Congregational Autonomy

Absolute congregational autonomy has had retrogressive effect on congregations of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria. There are congregations that have existed in a location for over thirty years meeting in a makeshift shed on a rented land. Such congregations believe that it violates their autonomy to seek financial assistance to own a property. While the value of landed properties appreciates in arithmetic progression, fund raising progresses in geometric progression and the chances are that they may never be able to raise enough money to acquire a place of their own. Such congregations are on the brink of extinction if reason does not prevail.

The subject of congregational autonomy and church cooperation has often featured in discussions within Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria. So much has been said, yet not much has been accomplished on what should be the nature of cooperation among local congregations without infringing on the autonomy of a local congregation. Virtually all contributors to the discussion affirm the autonomous status of a local church as conceived by Churches of Christ. The difference lies in whether the autonomy should be absolute or be moderated to accommodate symbiotic relationship between elements that constitute the church without necessarily impeding the right of the local church to determine their own affairs.

Advocates of absolute or unbridled autonomy argue that the autonomy of the local church must be respected in every activity of the church. This school argues as follows:

⁴⁴³P. Okome, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Idepe, Okitipupa, January 31, 2012.

- a) That each local church is a complete organization within itself and that the local church is the functional unit through which God's work is carried out;
- b) That God has no provision or structure for the universal church to function;
- c) That ordained elders are to superintend the work of the local church;
- d) That eldership of a local church will organize her evangelism and other programs exclusively;
- e) That elders of each congregation will give account to Christ of how they run the local church (Heb: 13: 17);
- f) That cooperation may foster corruption of a pure church by a spiritually corrupt congregation;
- g) That the unity that the Holy Spirit advocates is the unity of teaching and practicing the same doctrine in different autonomous congregations;
- h) That no church should assume a work larger than its capacity;
- i) That cooperation destroys the independence and equality that should exist among congregations;
- j) That secular understanding of autonomy cannot be compared with God's divine arrangement for the church in the New Testament.⁴⁴⁴

On the other hand, proponents of moderated autonomy anchor their argument on Christ's prayer for the disciples to work in unity (John 17: 20-21). This sentiment is also said to have been amplified by Apostle Paul that there should be no division among the disciples (1 Cor. 1: 10). This school further argues as follows:

- a. That the church is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12: 12-27) and that all components of the body must work together for the good of the whole body. While respecting the autonomy of each component of the body, congregations can work together in all scripturally defined good works aimed and expanding the frontiers of the Lord's kingdom;
- b. That the practice of autonomy in the early church was not absolute as it did not negate the unity of the Body or infringe on the right of voluntary cooperation among members of the Body of Christ;

⁴⁴⁴B. B. Baxter, Questions and Issues of the Day, 11-12.

- c. As a component of a body cannot claim self sufficiency, a local church cannot claim self sufficiency as it is just a small part of the body of Christ;
- d. That the universal church is self sufficient. What is lacking in a locality is made available by another locality;
- e. That the church is the family of God (I Tim. 3: 15). Family members work together to ward off external threats or aggression;
- f. That the church as a holy nation of God (1 Pet. 2: 9) is called to show the world the praises of Him who has called Christians from darkness into his marvelous light. This view insists that discordant and separatist voices cannot produce praises;
- g. Insinuates that advocacy of absolute autonomy is influenced by Western individualism.⁴⁴⁵

Anthony Ayoade notes that the inconclusive nature of this discussion has become an encumbrance on Churches of Christ in the region as valuable time and resources that should have been galvanized and appropriated to further the cause of the gospel are wasted on unprofitable discussions on which model best meet the New Testament requirement or who is right or wrong.⁴⁴⁶ Sola Omodara agrees with Ayoade and goes further to allege that the discussion is exacerbated by preachers working to defend the position of their American supporters rather than their personal conviction or what is biblically expedient.⁴⁴⁷

One major effect of absolute congregational autonomy is the infrastructural challenges confronting most Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria. Churches of Christ are reputed for locating their congregations in secluded areas in most of the cities where the church is represented. Where the church is able to acquire a property of its own from inception, the building is usually in a makeshift, neither attractive nor visitor friendly compared with those of other Christian denominations within the community. Characteristically, Churches of Christ usually begin their congregations from rented

⁴⁴⁵B. B. Baxter, *Questions and Issues of the Day*, 13.

⁴⁴⁶A. Ayoade, *Interview Respondent*, Member, Church of Christ, Lantoro, Abeokuta, April 7, 2012.

⁴⁴⁷S. Omodara, *Interview Respondent*, Member, Church of Christ, Ile-Ife, Osun state August 14, 2011.

shops and public schools as the need for the church to acquire properties or respectable meeting places is not ranked high in their list of priorities. The usual concern is just any place to meet for worship. Whenever the church now considers it appropriate to build a befitting worship place, the cost of properties would have become prohibitive beyond its financial capacity to acquire. A church could operate in a rented property for as long as twenty or thirty years without being conscious or too poor to indigenize itself in the area by acquiring a property of her own. The case of the Church of Christ meeting on the campus of the University of Ibadan is a good example. The church started in 1989 and meets regularly since then in one of the classrooms of the primary school at Abadina. Twenty-three years later, about 140 people compress themselves in a single classroom allotted to the church by the school authorities to worship every Sunday and during the mid-week Bible Class.⁴⁴⁸ This is usually the trend for most Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria particularly in major cities like Lagos, Ibadan, Abeokuta and a host of several other towns and cities.

Until now, it is often said that American missionaries were responsible for infrastructural challenges confronting most Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria. American missionaries were frequently blamed for encouraging congregations to start under trees, public schools, rented shops and makeshift enclosures. This study has however succeeded in unearthing irrevocable evidences to change this perspective. The truth is that pioneering missionaries encouraged the congregations they planted to acquire properties and meet in decent worship environment. The following excerpt from Diestelkamp's report indicates the desire of the missionaries for the new congregations planted in Southwestern Nigeria to have decent and permanent meeting places. Within the first anniversary of the work in Western Nigeria, after about seven hundred and fifty people have been baptized and nine congregations planted, Diestelkamp expressed the following concern about permanent meeting places for the nascent congregations:

These churches in these large cities are now growing to the point that they need their own buildings. This is a difficult problem, for land is expensive according to African standards. If we can get land, we believe we can get buildings. We are beginning to plan and work on this in one or two places. The last two months have been among the most fruitful, with 153 baptisms

⁴⁴⁸J. B Daniel, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Agbowo, Ibadan, July 1, 2012.

and with many more in attendance at worship assemblies. Widespread unemployment keeps contributions very low and the very low economy of those who do work also hinders the church work.⁴⁴⁹

On the same issue, Diestelkamp reported as follows six months later:

Right now we are attempting to erect our first building in this region. The Ajegunle church, where D. D. Isong Uyo, one of the native preachers, works, has grown sufficiently that they need permanent quarters badly. It has been very difficult to secure land in this crowded area, and the building will be expensive according to native standards. Perhaps a total of \$1400.00 or \$1500.00 will be needed to get a building and though this seems very little to readers of this report, it is a very high sum for these people, most of whom live on a salary of less than \$25.00 per month even here in the city. Surulere church, where Raphael Williams is the local preacher, also will need a building before too long and even Lagos, where E. J. Ebong preaches regularly, a permanent location will probably be necessary to expedite the teaching of the word most significantly. We pray these goals may soon be reached, and if we can get buildings in those three places, plus one in Ibadan, where Solomon Etuk is the native preacher, and where E. O. Abimbola also labors, then the work of these city churches will have been expedited significantly, and they will not be hindered by the likelihood of being evicted. Quarters that are rented are usually very dirty, noisy and sometimes disturbed by other occupants, children and neighbors.⁴⁵⁰

When the first church building was completed at Orodu Street, Ajegunle, Diestelkamp reported with a sense of relief and accomplishment, yet canvassing for more assistance for other congregations to have their own:

The Ajegunle (Apapa) church is now using the new building at 45A Orodu St. It is the first building secured by the churches in this Western Region except for the Idakan church in Ibadan, which was a denominational church with a building and which is now trying to put off denominational ties. The Ajegunle building will seat over 200 and rooms for the native preacher are attached. We realize that no soul was ever converted to Christ by a building, but we believe this meeting place will help to stabilize the work and promote development of the members. Two or three other new churches in this area are ready for a building, and need one badly, but

⁴⁴⁹Diestelkamp, From Nigeria- No. 7 October 1961, 9.

⁴⁵⁰Diestelkamp, Report from Nigeria (10), April 1961, 22-23.

though one can be built for about \$1,500.00, that much money is just not available.⁴⁵¹

From the reports above, it is very clear that the reasons for the lack-luster state of the church's infrastructures should not be put at the door step of American missionaries, but a product of pervasive poverty and absolute congregational autonomy as practiced by Churches of Christ in the region. The opprobrious remarks on the American missionaries is unjustified as recent findings reveal that the missionaries canvassed for funds from the United States to acquire landed properties for church buildings. The Americans were equally not pleased with several of the new churches meeting in filthy and noisy environment. The argument that absolute congregationalism as practiced by the Church of Christ impeded the growth and development of the church was tested in a research question and the following are the responses of the respondents:

Table 17: Absolute congregationalism as practiced by the Church of Christ impeded the growth and development of the church

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Response</i>			
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
Absolute congregationalism as practiced by the Church of Christ impeded the growth and development of the church	259	164	47	470
	55.1%	34.9%	10%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2011

Table 17 above shows that 55.1% of the respondents agreed that absolute congregational autonomy practiced by the Church of Christ impeded the growth and development of the church, 34.9% of the respondents disagreed with this position and 10 % were neutral. The data also shows that majority of the respondents confirmed that the concept of congregational sovereignty as adopted by the Church of Christ hindered the growth and development of the church.

⁴⁵¹Diestelkamp, Report from Nigeria (11), June 1961, 22.

6.2.4 Paucity of Ordained Elders over Congregations

Churches of Christ believe that the only form of church polity that could be found in the New Testament is the plurality of men selected on the basis of the qualifications as documented in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, to administer the affairs of the local church. Various known as Elders, Bishops, Pastors and Presbyters, their authority is limited to the congregation that appoints them. Their sphere of authority is also limited to administrative and matters of expediency. They are not to make laws but to maintain the law of Christ as given to the church in the New Testament. The elders are assisted by deacons and the preacher who serve the local church under their oversight. This is what is commonly known among Churches of Christ as scriptural organization of the church. A church is expected to be scripturally organized as soon as qualified men that met the requirements in the Pastoral Epistles can be identified and ordained. Pending the appointment of elders, the affairs of the local church is managed by members through the business meeting.

The statement that shortage of ordained elders affected smooth administration and expansion of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria was tested in a research question and the following are the responses of the respondents:

Table 18: Shortage of ordained elders affected smooth administration and expansion of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria

<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Response</i>			
	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
Shortage of Ordained elders affected smooth administration and expansion of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria	384	58	28	470
	81.7%	12.3%	6%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2011

The table above reveals that 81.7% of the respondents agreed with the statement that paucity of ordained elders affected smooth administration and expansion of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria, 12.3% of the respondents disagreed with this statement

while 6% of the respondents were neutral. The figures confirmed the paucity of ordained elders in congregations of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria.

Research findings confirmed a wide gap between conviction and conduct concerning appointment of elders in most Churches of Christ across Southwestern Nigeria. Between 1959 when the first Church of Christ was planted in the region and 2009 when the church marked its 50th anniversary, only 12 out of the over 200 congregations in the region representing 6% of the congregations have been able to ordain elders. Of the 12 only 7 congregations are presently under the oversight of elders: 3 in Lagos state, 2 in Ogun state and 2 in Oyo state. Congregations in Osun, Ondo and Ekiti states are without elders. Eldership in the remaining 5 has been dissolved for one reason or the other. From 2007 up till date none of the congregations in the region has appointed elders. Why this mismatch between conviction and conduct? Several reasons were attributed.

Debo Olayisade attributes the paucity of ordained elders in congregations of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria to the fact that much importance was not attached to the need for congregations to be scripturally organized from the inception of the church in the region. According to him, the American missionaries were more preoccupied with the need for the native preachers under their tutelage to be able to manage church affairs as soon as possible without instilling in them the necessity to develop leaders who will eventually take charge of the church according to the identified pattern in the New Testament. As a result of this inattention, the native evangelists did not consider it expedient from inception to prepare men to occupy leadership positions thereby putting the congregations on the path of scriptural organization. How could they have desired the office of elder if they have not been taught of its importance, Olayisade asks?⁴⁵²

Ayobami Akinde⁴⁵³ suggested that stringent eldership requirements specified in the Pastoral Epistles might have made it difficult for people to qualify for the office; Akanni Awotuyi says he does not subscribe to this view noting that biblical standard for

⁴⁵²D. Olayisade, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Ado-Ekiti, May 3, 2012.

⁴⁵³A. Akinde, *Interview Respondent*, Deacon, Church of Christ, Kemta, Idi-Aba, Abeokuta, March 30, 2012.

church leadership cannot be too difficult for a faithful Christian to meet. He cautions that the Lord is just and would not have saddled Christians with responsibilities beyond their capacity to accomplish. According to him, the difficulty arises if a Christian is incapable of putting his home in order by raising godly children or married to a woman that is submissive to him. Such a Christian, no matter how hard he desires the office, may not be able to meet the requirement as a result of the flaws of his wife and children. Awotuyi explains further that those who were converted into Churches of Christ in the early 1960s came in from different religious and denominational backgrounds and their lives already shaped to conform to their backgrounds. In most cases they did not embrace their new faith with their children who were already of age before their conversion. This situation, he says, makes it difficult for such Christians to meet the requirements for eldership.⁴⁵⁴

Olufemi Makinde itemized the following as factors responsible for paucity of elders in congregations of Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria apart from the ones discussed above. First, Christian men who do not marry early or at a reasonable age will find it difficult to meet biblical qualification of having believing children. This situation is common with church members from Eastern Nigeria where the cost of marriage is prohibitive or the fact that most of these men were married to their businesses and won't settle down for marriage until they are about or above forty years of age. Futhermore, he notes that some preachers either through ignorance or ego are not favorably disposed to preparing men and ordaining them as elders to administer the affairs of the local church probably for fear of loosing their hold on the local church. Some preachers, Makinde notes, were not humble enough to take instructions from those they have prepared to become elders and tend to procrastinate on it or outrightly frustrate the process. Finally, regardless of the years one might have been converted, if he makes no conscious effort to grow spiritually, Makinde notes that he won't be qualified for this leadership responsibility. Makinde opines further that there are several brethren across congregations of Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria who have been long in faith

⁴⁵⁴A. Awotuyi, *Interview Respondent*, Elder, Church of Christ, Isheri-Osun, Lagos, January 12, 2012.

but have failed to grow into spiritual maturity. Such people he notes frustrate efforts to put those who are qualified in place for fear of loss of influence.⁴⁵⁵

The above plethora of factors for paucity of eldership in congregations of Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria notwithstanding, the truth of the matter is that the church has not succeeded in matching conviction with conduct concerning this aspect of the church's teachings.

Are there things Churches of Christ might have done differently in the past which could have enabled her accomplish her mission more appropriately? Douglas A. Foster listed the following as things Churches of Christ might have done differently. First, Churches of Christ should not have allowed the issues of missionary societies and instrumental music in worship to have resulted in vilification and excommunication with the other heirs of the Restoration Movement. Similarly, the church should have realized that the controversies in the ranks of the Disciples were complex and went beyond the surface issues of instrumental music and missionary societies. Likewise, Churches of Christ should have avoided the vitriolic and inflammatory languages that often characterized arguments about doctrinal positions with fellow believers. These confrontations often came in form of personal assaults that ridiculed, reproached and dismissed others as enemies of God. Furthermore, Churches of Christ could have held strongly to her heritage of seeing themselves as 'Christians only but not the only Christians' rather than adopting a sectarian exclusive understanding of the church. The Church of Christ should have refused to act as if assent to a set of doctrinal beliefs is Christianity and constitute the Christian life, anyone who disagreed was denounced as outside the pale of salvation.⁴⁵⁶ One cannot agree less with Douglas Foster as the ghost of this disposition continues to pursue the church wherever she went including Southwestern Nigeria.

On the question: has the Church of Christ failed in her mission? A number of members of the church particularly from congregations under review generally agreed that much still need to be desired for Churches of Christ in the region to fulfil her

⁴⁵⁵O. Makinde, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Onikikoro, Ibadan, May 9, 2012.

⁴⁵⁶D. A. Foster. 2001. What Churches of Christ Might Have Done Differently in the Past. *Mid-Stream* 40. 4: 2-5.

mission. John Waddey surmises that the church has not failed in the full sense of the word. While he admits that the church has not accomplished as much as she wished to, she has had many significant successes. According to him, millions of souls have obeyed the gospel through the evangelistic activities of the church and innumerable families have been helped through their problems and their marriages saved by the advice of dedicated Christians. Waddey concludes: “Yes, we can do better. But we have not been a total failure!”⁴⁵⁷ In the specific context of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria, Aniekan Edet,⁴⁵⁸ T. Ekereke,⁴⁵⁹ B. Lawal,⁴⁶⁰ C. Ojo,⁴⁶¹ O. Olabisi,⁴⁶² E. O. Olatunde,⁴⁶³ T. Omodara⁴⁶⁴ and B. Omole⁴⁶⁵ variously scored the church less than fifty percent in fulfilling her mission of replicating primitive Christianity since the inception of the church in the region in 1959.

6.3 Conclusion

The chapter highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the teachings and practices of Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria. Aspects of the teachings and practices of Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria that are worthy of emulation by other Christian denominations were considered and appropriately recommended. Some of these highpoints include the insistence on doing Bible things in Bible ways which enables Christian denominations to align their doctrine and practices with the scriptures

⁴⁵⁷J. Waddey. Has the Church of Christ Failed? *Christianity Then & Now* 10. 1. Nov. 2010: 1, 4.

⁴⁵⁸A. Edet, *Interview Respondent*, Elder, Church of Christ, Lawanson, Lagos, September 6, 2011.

⁴⁵⁹T. Ekereke, *Interview Respondent*, Elder, Church of Christ, Lawanson, Lagos, September, 6 2011.

⁴⁶⁰B. Lawal, *Interview Respondent*, Member, Church of Christ, Eleiyeye, Ibadan, July 28, 2012.

⁴⁶¹C. Ojo, *Interview Respondent*, Member, Church of Christ, Odo-Ado, Ekiti, May 11, 2012.

⁴⁶²O. Olabisi, *Interview Respondent*, Member, Church of Christ, O. A. U. Campus, Ife, February 2, 2012.

⁴⁶³E. O. Olatunde, *Interview Respondent*, Preacher, Church of Christ, Ore, August 10, 2012.

⁴⁶⁴T. Omodara, *Interview Respondent*, Member, Church of Christ, Ile-Ife, August 14, 2012.

⁴⁶⁵B. Omole, *Interview Respondent*, Member, Church of Christ, Ekute Quarters, Ado-Ekiti, January 29, 2012.

and the potency of Bible correspondence courses as an effective means of conversion as demonstrated by Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria.

The chapter also examines the flaws in the church's hermeneutical presuppositions and the ambiguities of restoration hermeneutics as the formula for the actualization of the twin objectives of restoring the ancient order of things and uniting all Christians on the basis of the Bible. Other obstacles to the realization of these objectives like factors for relative obscurity of the church, the albatross of absolute congregational autonomy and paucity of ordained elders were discussed with a view to proffering appropriate solutions to these challenges in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND GENERAL CONCLUSION

7.0 Introduction

This chapter attempts a synopsis of the entire study reviewing the findings, clarifying the process which produced the findings and rationalization of the whole exercise. In view of these findings, recommendations are made on how the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria can fine-tune its teachings and practices to increase her capacity and meaningfully realize the purpose of reaching the world with the saving gospel of Christ. The contributions of the study to academic study were also highlighted and vistas for further studies on the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria suggested. The chapter concludes with the general conclusion of the entire study.

7.1 Demographic Data of Questionnaire Respondents

Table 1: Age Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents

<i>Variables</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
18 – 30 Years	268	57%
31 – 50	141	30%
51 – 70	57	12.1%
Above 70	04	0.9%
Total	470	100%

As could be seen from table 1 above, 268 (57%) of the respondents were within the age bracket of 18-30 years, 141 (30%) of the respondents were between 31-50 years of age, 57 (12.1%) between 51-70 years of age and 4 respondents representing 0.9% are above 70 years of age. This implies that slightly more than half of the respondents were youths, while the other half was made up of respondents that could be described as young

adults, semi-elderly and the elderly respectively. This figure truly reflects the fact that the youths were in the majority and active participants in the activities of most congregations of Churches of Christ under review.

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents

Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Males	248	52.8
Females	222	47.2
Total	470	100%

Table 2 indicates that 248 respondents representing 52.8% of the total figure of 470 were males closely followed by 222 female respondents representing 47.2% of the total figure. The figures clearly show that there were more male respondents than female respondents. This is not surprising given the doctrinal emphases of Churches of Christ which forbids female members from taking active participation in the corporate worship of the church. Compared with what it used to be, for as much as 47.2% of the respondents to be female points to the fact that young female members are increasingly becoming active in the affairs of the church.

Table 3: Marital Status Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents in the Church

<i>Variables</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Married	186	39.6
Single	271	57.7
Divorced	01	0.2
Widowed	12	2.5
Total	470	100%

Of the 470 respondents, 271 (57.7%) were single, 186 representing 39.6% were married, 12 (2.5%) are widowed while only 1 (0.2%) respondent was divorced. These figures corroborate the fact that most of the respondents were of the youthful age given the fact that as much as 57.7% are single. These figures also reflect the position of

Churches of Christ on divorce. Churches of Christ believe that divorce under any guise is unscriptural. The low figure on divorce could also be justified from the fact that most of the respondents were yet to marry.

Table 4: Duration in the Church Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents

<i>Variables</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
5 – 10 Years	192	40.8
11 – 20	153	32.6
21 – 30	73	15.5
30 and Above	52	11.1
Total	470	100%

Table 4 signifies that 192 (40.8%) of the respondents had been members of the church within the duration of 5-10 years, followed by 153 (32.6%) respondents who had been members for between 11-20 years, 73 (15.5%) for 21-30 years and 52 (11.1%) for 30 years and above. The figures imply that majority of the respondents had been members of the church for between five and ten years, closely followed by respondents between 11-20 years with a gap of 8.2% between them. About 26% of the respondents represented members who had been in the church 21-30 years and above. Since over 70% of the respondents had been members between 5-20 years, it is expected that their responses will reflect the true position of affairs in the church.

Table 5: Academic Qualifications Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents

<i>Variables</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Primary School	25	5.3
Secondary School	172	36.6
Higher Education	273	58.1
Total	470	100%

Table 5 above displays academic qualifications distribution of questionnaire respondents. The data demonstrates that 273 (58.1%) of the respondents possessed post-

secondary school qualification (higher education), 172 (36.6%) with secondary school education and 25 (5.3%) with primary school education. It implies that about 60% of the respondents held at least post secondary school academic qualification and as few as 5% of the respondents possessed the minimal primary school education. This is an indication that most of the respondents were reasonably educated. It should however be noted that secular literacy does not automatically translate to biblical literacy. People can be academically informed and are religious bigots or doctrinally indoctrinated.

Table 6: Status in the Church Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents

<i>Variables</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Elders	9	1.9
Deacons	5	1.1
Preachers	52	11.1
Members	404	85.9
Total	470	100%

From table 6 above, a whopping 404 (85.9%) of the respondents were lay members of the church, 52 (11.1%) of the respondents were ministers/preachers, 9 (1.9%) are elders and 5 (1.1%) are deacons. Understandably, church members were expected to be in the majority compared to church officers and ministers. The figures above denote that church members constitute about 86% of the respondents while the remaining 14% are shared between ministers and church officers. The figures also reflect the paucity of ordained church officers (elders and deacons) in Churches of Christ under consideration.

7.2 Summary of Findings

On the Church of Christ's claim to be the true church with exclusive historical connection with the early church, although 84% of the questionnaire respondents validate this claim, but the claim could not be substantiated from the writings of the early church fathers. Not even one of the church fathers like Tertullian, Irenaeus, Eusebius, Jerome, Clement of Alexandria, amongst others alluded to the existence of the church in their writings. There was also no historical trace of the church from the post apostolic age through the Middle Ages to the 16th Century Reformation and beyond. Rather, this work was able to unearth the fact that the Church of Christ emerged in the 19th Century as a by-product of American War of Independence when Republican ideology was extended to the church leading to the demand for the dismantling of existing ecclesiastical hierarchies of the church, restoration of primitive Christianity and enthronement of democratic theology (theology of the people for the people and by the people).

Similarly, the Church of Christ's position that there can be no genuine miracles in the contemporary church as miracles ceased after the apostolic era once miracles have validated the Bible as God's word and testified to the founding of the Christian church could not be corroborated from the writings of the early church fathers. Expectedly, 76.6% of the questionnaire respondents testified affirmatively that miraculous manifestations in the church ceased with the apostolic age. Although members were not unanimous on this belief, but the figures reflect the conviction of most members on the subject. The position of the church was however contradicted with evidences from patristic writings. Bishop Clement's letter to the Corinthians (A.D100), *Didache* (A.D. 110), *Shepherd of Hermas* (A. D. 110), Irenaeus in his treatise, *Against Heresies*, titled, "The Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge Falsely So Called (A. D. 185), Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho* in A. D. 165, Tertullian in A. D. 215, Origen in his book *Against Celsus* written in A. D. 250, Novatian of Rome (A.D. 270) and St. Augustine (A. D. 354-430) variously confirmed miraculous manifestations in the life of the early church. These evidences vitiated the position of the Church of Christ that miraculous manifestations in the life of the church ceased with the apostolic age.

Also worthy of mentioning is the Church of Christ's belief that each local congregation of the church must be completely autonomous of the other. The church

advocates that absolute or unbridled autonomy of the local church must be respected in every activity of the church including evangelism, edification and benevolence. Each local church is seen as a complete organization within itself as it is believed to be the functional unit through which God's work is carried out and the Great Commission actualized. This form of congregationalism is said to be the church polity bequeathed by the early church to the contemporary church. The questionnaire returns 85.5% of the respondents subscribing to the view that the early church operated as autonomous congregations.

Contrariwise, Patristic sources from the second century like Clement of Rome (A.D 96), the *Didache* (A.D. 110), *The Shepherd of Hermas* (A.D 100-160), Polycarp (A.D 69-155), Irenaeus of Lyons (A.D 130-202), Clement of Alexandria (A.D150-215), Tertullian (A.D 160-225), Apostolic Church Order, Origen (A.D 185-254) and Eusebius (A.D 263-339) attested to the position of the Church of Christ that the early church started as autonomous congregations. The same sources also confirmed that as the early church grew, there was the need for the congregations to work together to ward off heresies and better manage their affairs. This situation led to the emergence of the office of the metropolitan Bishop whose sphere of influence and authority covered all the congregations in a particular city.

It should also be noted that absolute congregational autonomy has had retrogressive effect on congregations of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria that subscribed to the practice. There are congregations that have existed in a location for over thirty years meeting in a makeshift shed on a rented land. Such congregations believe that it violates their autonomy to seek assistance to own a property when they cannot afford to acquire one. The chances are such congregations may never be able to raise enough money to acquire a landed property of their own as value of properties increase by the day. One day the owner of the land will take possession or decide to sell to the highest bidder. Such a congregation is on the brink of extinction if reason does not prevail. Another problem confronting Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria that is linked with absolute congregational autonomy has to do with infrastructural challenges. Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria are reputed to locate their congregations in secluded areas in most of the cities where the church is represented. Where the church is

able to acquire a property of her own from inception, the building is usually a makeshift structure, neither attractive nor visitor friendly compared with those of other Christian denominations within the community.

The study discovered that the Church of Christ considers other Christian denominations as apostates that have departed from the true Christianity. Consequently, it maintains a posture of sectarian exclusivism towards them. Responses from respondents of the questionnaire also reflect this disposition as 60% of the respondents justified the church's sectarian disposition since it is believed that denominationalism is unchristian and cannot be traced to the early church. The sectarian disposition could not however be justified in view of the writings of the church fathers like Eusebius of Caesarea, Athanasius the Great, Gregory of Nyssa amongst others who held that ecumenical councils provided the forum for Christians from the Eastern and the Western across sphere to define the substance of their faith and defend same against heresy.

Futhermore, findings discovered that the bulk of the Church of Christ's hermeneutical presuppositions were inherited from Alexander Campbell. Campbell's hermeneutics was premised on a dispensational approach to the Bible and a constitutional view of the New Testament. In his dispensational approach to the Bible, Campbell made a sharp distinction between the Old and the New Testament and divided the Bible into the Patriarchal, the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations. The patriarchal age spanned from Adam to Moses (Genesis 1 through Exodus 19), Mosaic Age from Moses at Sinai to Peter on Pentecost (Exodus 20 through Acts 1) and Christian Age starting with Pentecost and ending on final Judgment (Acts 2 through Revelation 22). Based on this hermeneutical substructure, Campbell posited that Christians do not live under Mosaic covenant and are not obligated in any way to obey its laws and institutions. Consequently, any argument appealing to the Old Testament to support tithes, Sabbath observation, holy days like Christmas, Easter, and national conventions are completely hideous and repugnant to Christianity. While recognizing valuable teachings and essential lessons to be drawn from the historical narratives of the Old Testament, Campbell denied its legitimacy to regulate Christian faith and practice.

Similarly, Campbell's constitutional view of the New Testament sees the kingdom of God, the church, of consisting of the following elements: the constitution –

the plan of God from inception to redeem humanity; the king- Jesus Christ whose reign began on the day of Pentecost; the subjects-born again citizens of the kingdom; the territory-the whole earth and the laws- the New Testament, (especially Acts and the Epistles) and the apostles as legislators of the kingdom. This constitutional view of the kingdom and dispensational division of the Bible led Campbell to the conclusion that the teaching of Christ before the Pentecost do not carry as much weight and authority for the church as much as the teachings of the apostles after the Pentecost as Jesus' teachings in the gospel belonged to the Mosaic/Jewish dispensation and predated the establishment of the kingdom. For Campbell, Jesus' miracles and his teachings in the Gospels are meant to confirm his messiahship after which they should be relegated to the background and prominence given to Acts and the Epistles as the functional equivalent of the New Testament. Campbell's hermeneutics form the basis of the Church of Christ's theology and ecclesiology. It also provided the justification for most teachings and practices of church. Unfortunately, while most members of the church particularly in Southwestern Nigeria proudly and rightly affirm the sacred source of their doctrine (2 Timothy 3: 16-17), they are oblivious of the human/fallible source of their hermeneutics.

Closely related to these hermeneutical assumptions of the Church of Christ is the issue of relative unpopularity of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria on the account of her teachings and practices that are considered contestable by the generality of the Christian publics. On this particular subject, it is interesting to note that 53% of the respondents agreed with the view that the Church of Christ is relatively unpopular in Southwestern Nigeria as a result of her teachings and practices, 33.8% of the respondents disagreed with this view while 13.2% of the respondents were neutral. The figures indicate that a sizeable number of members of the church did agree that the church is not making appreciable impact in the region as it should on the account of her teachings and practices.

Lastly, the Church of Christ advocates a congregational church polity which places the administration of the local church in the hands of plurality of elders ordained for that purpose. These men exercise authority on the sphere of expedients and the scope of their authority is limited to the local church. While this congregational polity is believed to have been inherited from the early church, it is surprising to observe a

mismatch between conviction and conduct concerning this practice among Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria. Of the over 200 congregations in the region only six (3 congregations in Lagos state, 2 in Ogun and 1 in Oyo state) are administered by elders representing only 3% of the church's congregations. This fact was confirmed by the respondents to the questionnaire, 81.7% of whom agreed that paucity of ordained elders over local congregations is impacting negatively on the smooth administration of the congregations of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria. This apparent mismatch between conviction and conduct calls for urgent rectification.

7.3 Recommendations

In view of the above research findings, the following recommendations are proposed aimed at proffering solutions to the problems disinterred by the study. It is hoped that the suggested recommendations will go a long way in assisting the Church of Christ to achieve its purpose of replicating primitive Christianity and effectively actualize the Great Commission. The recommendations cover the church's teachings like the claim to be the only true church, belief in the seal of miracles and absolute congregational autonomy. The recommendations also take account of identified weaknesses in the church's practices like myopic hermeneutical presuppositions, sectarian exclusivism towards other Christian denominations and paucity of ordained elders over congregations.

Firstly, the Church of Christ prides itself as the true church with exclusive historical connection with the early church. Since this claim cannot be substantiated with significant evidence in history, it is recommended that the Church of Christ should own up to her history by accepting that the church actually started in the 19th century out of the desire to restore primitive Christianity and unite Christians on the basis of the Bible. The fact that leading members of the Restoration Movement which metamorphose into the Church of Christ like Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone, James O'Kelly, Elias Smith, Abner Jones, etc, were from different Christian denominations like the Presbyterian, the Methodist and the Baptist attested to the 19th century origin of the church. The attempt to deny this fact has created a massive vacuum in the history of the church which often makes her message doubtful, unintelligible and unfathomable. It

should be realized that the church is not demeaned if she admits that she emerged out of a specific human context neither is she scorned through a mocking treatment of history. As Allen and Hughes, two leading historians of this tradition rightly observe, “If we assume that our roots are entirely sacred and not profane, entirely apostolic and not historical, entirely biblical and not cultural, then we have elevated ourselves above the level of common humanity and, in essence, made ourselves into gods.”⁴⁶⁶

The above recommendation reinforces the theoretical presupposition for this study that a church that imagines that it stands beyond history, beyond culture, beyond sin and beyond tragic understandings and miscalculations has little to offer the world. But a church that owns up to her blunders and humanness is a church that can receive and reflect the love and grace of God to the world around it and contributes mightily to the restoration and propagation of the saving gospel of Christ.

Furthermore, the Church of Christ posits that there can be no genuine miracles in the contemporary church as miracles ceased after the apostolic era once miracles have validated the Bible as God’s word and testified to the founding of the Christian church. But there are substantive evidences from Patristic writings as provided above that vitiated this position. In view of these findings, it behoves the Church of Christ to have a rethink of its position on the issue of miraculous manifestations in the life of the church. It is true that the Nigerian society is burdened with phantom and stage-managed miracles orchestrated by some so-called men of God to deceive the public and aggrandize themselves. It is equally true that some Christian denominations have adopted miraculous displays as unique selling proposition to solicit for members and out-do one another. This situation prompted the National Broadcasting Commission on April 30, 2004, to enforce its code which obliged religious programme or advertisement on the mass media to present its claims especially relating to miracles in a manner that is verifiable, provable and believable. The above misuse of miracles notwithstanding, to claim that miraculous manifestations have ceased seems to constitute another abuse. Are we saying that God has ceased to be a miraculous God? Barton Stone, one of the prominent figures in the Restoration Movement, the movement within which the Church of Christ emerged did not agree with his colleagues that miracles have ceased. He declared,

⁴⁶⁶Allen and Hughes, *Discovering Our Roots*, p. 8.

I see no authority in the scripture why we should draw the conclusion that the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit, is according to the will of God, withdrawn from the church . . . the denying of miracles leads to denying of divine providence and interposition-and this destroys the spirit of prayer and thanksgiving.⁴⁶⁷

Stone's plea made in 1844 for his brethren to wake up and have a re-think on the subject is still instructive to the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria in 2013, one hundred and sixty-seven years later.

On the practice of absolute congregational autonomy premised on the assumption that the universal church is composed of all local congregations, whereas the universal church consists of all Christians without regard to local church membership, Lewis Hale's following observation is helpful. Lewis Hale observes that as the universal church is made up of individual Christians, any cooperation among individuals would constitute a function of the universal church just the same way as churches of Galatia, Macedonia and Achaia cooperated to relieve poor saints in Jerusalem. Hale notes further that even though the universal church is made up of all Christians irrespective of their local congregation, every Christian is subjected to the elders of a local church. He cautions that while the church is competent and sufficient for its assigned duties, the word 'church' should be used to mean individual and cooperative work as "the church must not be thought of as being something apart from the members."⁴⁶⁸

The need for cooperation among congregations was the subject of Christ's prayer for his disciples in John 17: 20-21. This sentiment was also amplified by Apostle Paul that the church is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12: 12-27) and that all components of the body must work together for the good of the whole body. While respecting the autonomy of each component of the body, congregations can work together in all scripturally defined good works aimed at expanding the frontiers of the Lord's kingdom. The practice of autonomy in the early church was not absolute as it did not negate the unity of the body or infringe on the right of voluntary cooperation among members of the body of

⁴⁶⁷Barton Stone. Missionary to Pagans. *Christian Messenger* 14. 1944:362-267, as quoted by Leonard Allen, *Things Unseen*, 104-105.

⁴⁶⁸Lewis Hale. *How Churches Can Cooperate*, Austin, Texas: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 22-23.

Christ. A component of a body cannot claim self sufficiency. Hence a local church cannot claim self sufficiency as it is just a small part of the body of Christ.⁴⁶⁹

In addition to the above, there were evidences that congregations in apostolic age did cooperate with each other in areas of benevolence, evangelism and edification. In the area of benevolence, Batsell Barrett Baxter cited Acts 11: 27-30 where the Judean Christians were in need and how Antioch Christians came to their aid through the Jerusalem church. Baxter also identified the events of Acts 13: 1-3 as an example of churches cooperating in carrying out evangelism when Paul and Barnabas were sent out on the first, second and third missionary journeys by the church in Antioch. Congregations in Corinth (2 Cor. 11: 8-9) and Philippi (Phil. 4: 15-16) also supported him. Paul's support was not limited to the Antioch church that sent him on missionary journeys; he also received support from other congregations along the way. The instruction to the church at Colossae (Col. 4: 16) to exchange letters with the church at Laodicea and the intervention of the Jerusalem church on the controversy among the Christians in Antioch on Gentile circumcision, the event that culminated into the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15 were equally cited as examples of cooperation among congregations in edification matters by churches in the early church.⁴⁷⁰

In view of the above, the need for Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria to repudiate the practice of absolute congregational autonomy for a more context-sensitive and biblically faithful model of church cooperation cannot be overemphasized.

On the church of Christ's pharisaical exclusivist attitude towards other Christian denominations, it should be realized that Christians today live in a hostile world and are beset with powerful forces of materialism and Islamic fundamentalism. Hence, the need for the Church of Christ to abandon her sectarian exclusivism and embrace Christian ecumenical movement aimed at advancing and defending the cause of Christianity. In the light of the contemporary challenges confronting Christianity, particularly, the insurgence of Boko Haram in Nigeria, the age of holier-than thou feelings and pharisaical insistence that 'we are right' and 'they are wrong' will not serve the cause of the Lord. Leadership

⁴⁶⁹Oji, *Autonomy and Issues of Unity of the Church of Christ*, 11-29.

⁴⁷⁰Batsell Barrett Baxter. 1963. *Questions and Issues of the Day in the Light of the Scriptures*. Nashville Tennessee: Hillsboro Church of Christ, 7-10.

of the Church of Christ must imbibe the spirit of humility to sit down with other Christians to advance the cause of the kingdom and discover the right approach to modern ecumenical problems. As James DeForest Murch counsels,

There must be admission that the New Testament church has not yet been perfectly restored anywhere within the Restoration Movement. The division into three bodies and the lack of complete unity within each of them are proof that the Disciples have yet much to learn about what it takes to realize the answer to Christ's prayer in John 17.⁴⁷¹

This realization of how the Church of Christ began and where it is today should engender ecumenical spirit to seek and pursue peace with other Christian denominations without necessarily compromising the faith but fostering unity within the body of Christ and extend the frontiers of the kingdom.

While there are some merits in Campbell's hermeneutical presuppositions premised on a dispensational approach to the Bible and a constitutional view of the New Testament, it is equally laden with weaknesses like anything of human origin. Apart from its parochial assumptions, it more or less addressed religious questions and concerns of Campbell's time oblivious of modern hermeneutical methods. One is not comfortable with his bifurcation of the New Testament elevating Acts and the Epistles as the functional equivalent of the New Testament and relegating the life and the ministry of Christ as contained in the gospels to the background. If Christians are to be truly discipled and shaped in the likeness of their Saviour, the Be-attitudes and other teachings in the gospels are indispensable for spiritual formation. Moreover, it is presumptuous of a single church to arrogate the right of accurate interpretation of the Bible to itself and seek to impose this on the entire Christendom, more so when this "accurate interpretation" is premised on the assumptions of one man. This claim of "accurate interpretation" has distanced the church from Christian denominations as they are often seen as the church that claims that only her members will make heaven. Interestingly, 62.8% of the respondents agreed that the peculiar method of interpreting the Bible by the Church of Christ affected her growth and acceptability by other Christians. The need for a review of some hermeneutical assumptions of the Church of Christ particularly in

⁴⁷¹J. D. Murch, *Christians Only*, 366-367.

Southwestern Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized if the church must reflect the love and the grace of God to the world around it.

On relative obscurity of the church on the account of her hermeneutical assumptions, there is the need for broader hermeneutical supposition that is faithful to the scripture but sensitive to the context. If the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria must be transfigured from her present obscurity to reflect the grace of God to the community, the church must incarnate into the various communities it finds itself through holistic ministry. If Christ, the first incarnation saw people in deplorable human condition; condition that dishonours God that created them and had compassion on them, the church as the second incarnation cannot see people in need and look the other side like the priest and the levite in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Reflecting on the normal tension that characterizes the church's attitude towards meeting physical needs of the lost, Charles Van Engen counsels:

The church is not a social agency--but is of social significance in the city. The church is not city government--but God called it to announce and live out his kingdom in all its political significance. The church is not a bank--but is an economic force in the city and must seek the city's economic welfare. The church is not a school--but God called it to educate the people of the city concerning the gospel of love, justice, and social transformation. The church is not a family--but is the family of God, called to be a neighbor to all whom God loves.⁴⁷²

Engen notes further that theology of mission involves three interlocking dynamics--biblical text, faith community, and mission context. According to him, it is unrealistic to isolate any of the three because they form the rationale for ministry. These elements interplay when we apply biblical presuppositions and values to the works of the church and set it within a specific context. He believes that theology of mission has to do with understanding God's intentions and purposes for his people to accomplish his will in the world.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷²C. V. Engen, 1994. Constructing a Theology of Mission for the City, in *God So Loves the City: Seeking a Theology for Urban Mission*, ed. Charles Van Engen and Jude Tiersma, Monrovia: MARC, 247-8.

⁴⁷³ Engen, *Constructing a Theology of Mission for the City*, 251.

To further realize the purpose of dispensing the fruits of the kingdom to the world around it, the following ministry insights could also serve the Church of Christ in good stead.

Firstly, the church should embrace a multi-dimensional focus of upward, inward, and outward. The upward is to God, to glorify, worship, love and be in communion with God. The inward is to nurture its members to grow in love and community, and care for the needs of the saints. The outward is to take the good news to a world without God and to do good in the world (Gal. 6:10).⁴⁷⁴

Secondly, the church should show concern for the often hostile and ungrateful world for the following reasons:

- (a) the church as the elect and the called out (1 Pet. 2:9-10) needs to display the virtues and characteristics of the One who has called them out of darkness;
- (b) in the midst of chaos and injustice in the world, the church is called to make the difference by identifying with the downtrodden (1 Pet. 2:21), imitating Christ in good deeds in the midst of discriminations and ethnic cleavages in the community;
- (c) the church should not repay evil with evil (1 Pet. 3:9) but be a channel of God's blessings to the community.⁴⁷⁵

Thirdly, it seems impossible to separate the spiritual from the physical without truncating the main substance of the gospel. The church must minister in words and in deeds. Felt-need ministry of Jesus was motivated by compassion and not a compulsion for conversion. The need to maintain the redemptive balance in the church's ministry to the community cannot be overemphasized. According to Bruce Winter compassion ministry of the church must be accepted as its own biblical legitimate end and not just as a way to get something else. But caring for the needs of the lost should not be an end in itself or it becomes a deceptive means of manipulating rather than ministering to the lost with integrity. It is hoped that if the Church of Christ in Southwestern is able to replicate the holistic ministry of Christ as articulated above, it would enhance the church's capacity in reaching more people with the gospel. The holistic ministry strategies discussed above are instructive for Churches of Christ in South-Western Nigeria.

⁴⁷⁴Klaus Issler, "Theological Foundations of Christian Education," 40.

⁴⁷⁵Bruce Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City*, 19-20.

On the difficulty of most Churches of Christ in the region in having qualified men to occupy leadership position in the church in line with the church's organization polity, it is recommended that Churches of Christ should learn to plan new congregations with a view to putting necessary structures in place to facilitate leadership development of her members. This will also help nascent congregations to harness and motivate members with leadership potentials to assume responsible spiritual positions in the church within the first decade of the establishment of a congregation. Moreover, the Church of Christ should ensure that trained preachers are saddled with the responsibility of planting and mentoring new congregations. This will allow for holistic growth of the congregation as necessary machineries are put in place to position the congregation on the path of sustainable spiritual development.

Moreover, preachers, particularly the older ones, should be in the forefront in the leadership development process as they have nothing to loose in appointment of elders. They should realize that appointment of elders add credibility to their ministries. There is no glory in saying no one qualifies in a congregation under their spiritual tutelage after three decades of existence. In fact, it should be the crowning glory of the ministry of a dedicated and faithful minister. Likewise, Children from true Christian homes brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord will not constitute a threat to their father's eldership desire. Similarly, a virtuous Christian woman will be a help-meet, not an impediment to her husband in all ways, more so, in matters of faith and eternal life (Proverbs 31). The above conclusions point to the fact that a Christian home built on the foundation of the Word of God will find it easier to produce a mother and children who will meet biblical requirements for the elder's family. Since charity begins at home, it is recommended that potential church leaders should make their homes the centre of family life and spirituality. The Christian habits and spirituality cultivated at home will be extended to the church as an indication that the man rules his home well and that his wife and children are in subjection to him. This will give him the leeway to lead the people of God. Furthermore, Christian men who do not marry at an early age find it difficult to meet biblical qualification of having believing children to qualify them as elders. It is therefore recommended that the Church of Christ encourage her male members to marry r as soon as affordable for them to raise believing children who will qualify them to be

elders in the nearest future. With more men desiring and making themselves available for eldership responsibilities in the local church, there will be a pool of qualified men to provide quality leadership. We turn to the contributions of this study to historical and academic knowledge in the next section.

7.4 Contributions to Knowledge

This study historically appraises selected teachings and practices of the Church of Christ that are claimed to have been inherited from the early church but are considered to be contestable by the generality of other Christian denominations. Some of these teachings and practices include the claim to be the only true church, non-celebration of Christmas and Easter and the belief that genuine miracles have ceased. Others include non-use of instruments of music in worship, absolute autonomy of the local church under plurality of elders and non-association with other Christian denominations. These teachings were appraised in the light of the writings of the early church fathers. The contributions of this work to both academic knowledge and church history are itemized as follows:

Firstly, the Church of Christ claims to be the only true church that Christ promised and was established on the Day of Pentecost. Research findings however unearthed the fact that there was no traces of the church in the writings of the early church fathers and chronicles of ecclesiastical history from the apostolic age through the Middle Ages to the Reformation and beyond. This study was able to establish that the Church of Christ was a product of historical, social, cultural, economic and religious circumstances of early American nationhood. It was discovered that the church emerged out of the Restoration Movement in America in the 1800s. The movement was preoccupied with the desire to replicate the Republican ideology which led to the attainment of American independence in the church. The movement also demanded for the dismantling of existing ecclesiastical hierarchy, advocated a return to primitive Christianity and the right of the ordinary man to read and understand the Bible (theology of the people for the people and by the people). This discovery is a major contribution of this study to academic knowledge and a demystification of the church's sense of historylessness.

Furthermore, the work equally discovered the broad disparity between the teachings of the Church of Christ and that of the early church and that these contestable traditions and her sectarian disposition accounted for the church's unpopularity within the region and a factor for her alienation from other Christian denominations.

Similarly, while the Church of Christ was fond of flaunting her sacred root attributed to biblical documents left behind by the primitive church via the aphorism, "we speak where the Bible speaks and silent where the Bible is silent," this study was also able to uncover the church's profane root. This is in the fact that the church's hermeneutical presuppositions were inherited from Alexander Campbell. Alexander Campbell's dispensational approach to the Bible and a constitutional view of the New Testament greatly shaped the teachings and practices of the Church of Christ. This peculiar hermeneutical assumptions according to findings, informed the church's interpretation of the Bible.

In addition, from the avalanche of evidences from patristic writings the study established the fact that the classic form of music in the public worship of the early church was music without the use of instruments of music. This corroborates the position of the Church of Christ on music in Christian worship.

Futhermore, the spread of Churches of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria testified to the efficacy of Bible Correspondence course and tracts as veritable means of propagating the teachings and practices of the church. The church got to Nigeria when C.A.O Essien enrolled with the Bible Correspondence course of Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee, USA. Jacob S. Odubote, the first convert in Southwestern Nigeria was converted through the correspondence course he had received before the arrival of missionaries in Lagos. The same process was repeated in Abeokuta, Ibadan and several other places in Western Nigeria where the church was subsequently established. The correspondence course precedes the evangelist who only comes to complete the conversion process started through correspondence course. This study therefore unearthed the use of Bible Correspondence Course as effective means of propagating the gospel by the Church of Christ.

Likewise, the study has also afforded the Church of Christ the benefit of an intellectual study of some of her teachings and practices to expose their strengths and

weaknesses. The work provides the mirror of academic and historical study devoid of God-speak emotions and sentiments to evaluate the church's performance against her claim to be the only true church with exclusive historical connection with the early church.

Finally, it is hoped that this study will open the way for vistas of studies on the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria, particularly in New Testament studies to test the church's constitutional view of the New Testament and elevation of Acts and the Epistles as functional equivalent of the New Testament. A similar study is also necessary in the field of Old Testament to investigate the dispensational view of the Bible and the sharp distinction between the Old and the New Testaments prevalent in the church's hermeneutical assumptions. Equally apposite is a study in Christian Ethics to authenticate the church's saints' only approach to benevolence amongst others.

7.5 General Conclusion

This study has been burdened by the need to historically appraise selected teachings and practices of the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria in the light of the writings of the early church fathers. This appraisal becomes necessary in view of the fact that the church claimed that her teachings and practices are traceable to the early church. This claim could not be substantiated in the light of the evidence from early church history thereby making this study an academic necessity to resolve the impasse.

The Church of Christ's claim to be the only true church could neither be substantiated from the writings of the early church fathers nor from chronicles of ecclesiastical history as there were no traces of the church from the apostolic era through the Middle Ages to the 16th Century and beyond. Secondly, the belief that the early church did not celebrate Christmas and Easter was not vindicated by the writings of the church fathers. The Church of Christ's declaration that genuine miracles have ceased with the era of the apostles was flawed by an avalanche of patristic evidences to the contrary.

On church practices, patristic writings confirmed the claim of the Church of Christ that music without the use of instruments of music was the norm in the early church. On church polity, against the position of the church, the study discovered that absolute congregationalism could not have been an exclusive polity of the early church

since Episcopacy was confirmed to have been in vogue since the second century. And finally, Churches of Christ's pharisaical exclusivism towards other Christian denominations have no parallel in the writing of the church fathers.

From the findings of the study, it seems obvious that most of the church's teachings and practices which were claimed to have been traceable to the early church could not be substantiated from the writings of early Christians with the exception of aversion for use of instruments of music in worship. In addition to the above, the study commended the church's insistence on doing Bible things the Bible ways particularly the instructive lessons for the contemporary church on: (a) the need to moderate the unrestricted revelry that often characterized contemporary praise worship; (b) undue emphasis on tithing payment at the expense of the salvation of church members; (c) the benefits of plurality of church leadership as a bulwark against cantankerous succession disputes and (d) the preponderance of phantom miracles and miraculous displays by Christian denominations as a unique selling proposition to solicit for members and outdo one another.

On the disparities between the teachings and practices of the Church of Christ and writings of the early church fathers, the church was advised to own up to her 19th century origin as efforts to deny this fact has often made her message doubtful, unintelligible and unhistorical. In view of the findings of this study, the Church of Christ was also advised to reappraise some of her teachings and practices like seal of miracles, absolute congregational autonomy and sectarian exclusivism towards other Christian denominations.

Research findings also validated Leonard Allen and Richard Hughes' postulation as applied to the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria that a church that imagines it stands beyond history, beyond conformity to culture, beyond sin, and beyond tragic misunderstandings and miscalculations has little to offer the world. But a church that owns up to its blunders, compromises and humanness is a church that can both receive and reflect the love and grace of God to the world around it.

Since most of the teachings and practices were products of the church's hermeneutical assumptions, it was suggested that hermeneutical conjectures inherited

from Alexander Campbell be reviewed to accommodate the challenges of the 21st Century. If the church must meaningfully realize her mission of restoring primitive

Finally, the need for the Church of Christ in Southwestern Nigeria to own up to history, acknowledge her profanity, remain faithful to the scripture but be more sensitive to her context, and find a better way of witnessing in order to reflect the love and grace of Christianity, the need for broader hermeneutical assumptions that is faithful to the scripture and sensitive to the context cannot be overemphasized. The church was also encouraged to incorporate systemic leadership development programmes in her church planting strategies to overcome paucity of ordained elders presently being experienced in most of her congregations. God to the community is inevitable for vitality and continued relevance.

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Questionnaire Results

Section A

Demographic Data of Questionnaire Respondents

1. Age Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents

<i>Variables</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
18 – 30 Years	268	57%
31 – 50	141	30%
51 – 70	57	12.1%
Above 70	04	0.9%
Total	470	100%

2. Gender Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents

<i>Variables</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Males	248	52.8
Females	222	47.2
Total	470	100%

3. Marital Status Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents

<i>Variables</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Married	186	39.6
Single	271	57.7
Divorced	01	0.2
Widowed	12	2.5
Total	470	100%

4. Duration in the Church Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents

	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
5 – 10 Years	192	40.8
11 – 20	153	32.6
21 – 30	73	15.5
30 and Above	52	11.1
Total	470	100%

5. Academic Qualifications Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents

<i>Variables</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Primary School	25	5.3
Secondary School	172	36.6
Higher Education	273	58.1
Total	470	100%

6. Status in the Church Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents

<i>Variables</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Elders	9	1.9
Deacons	5	1.1
Preachers	52	11.1
Members	404	85.9
Total	470	100%

Section B

Please tick your option of the statement. A – Agree, D- Disagree, N - Neutral

Part 1: Selected Teachings of the Church of Christ	A	D	N	Total
7. Church of Christ is the only true church that has her historical origin and teaching traceable to the early church	395	38	37	470
	84%	8.1%	7.9%	100%
8. Celebration of Christmas and Easter are unchristian because they were not taught by the early church	439	21	10	470
	93.4%	4.5%	2.1%	100%
9. There can be no genuine miracle in the contemporary church because miracles have ceased after the era of the Apostles	360	86	24	470
	76.6%	18.3%	5.1%	100%
Part 2: Selected Practices of the Church of Christ				
10. Absolute congregational autonomy under plurality of elders was form of church government operated by the early church.	402	44	24	470
	85.5%	9.4%	5.1%	100%
11. The practice of worshipping with instruments of music is unchristian because the early church did not make use of such	449	15	6	470
	95.5%	3.2%	1.3%	100%
12. Denominationalism is not a true Christian practice as it has no root in the early church	282	139	49	470
	60%	29.6	10.4%	100%
Part 3: Strength and Weaknesses of Teachings and Practices of the Church of Christ				
13. Church of Christ's teaching of doing Bible things the Bible ways is commendable although the church tended towards the extreme	433	24	13	470
	92%	5%	3%	100%
14. Bible Correspondence Course program of the church of Christ has proved to be a good tool for disseminating the doctrinal emphases and practices of the church	389	55	26	470
	82.8%	11.7%	5.5%	100%
15. The peculiar method of interpreting the Bible by the	295	122	53	470

Church of Christ affected her growth and acceptability by other Christians	62.8%	25.9%	11.3%	100%
16. The Church of Christ is relatively unpopular in South Western Nigeria as a result of her teachings and practices which are questionable to the generality of Christian publics	249	159	62	470
	53%	33.8%	13.2%	100%
17. Absolute congregationalism as practiced by the Church of Christ impeded the growth and development of the church	259	164	47	470
	55.1%	34.9%	10%	100%
18. Shortage of Ordained elders affected smooth administration and expansion of the Church of Christ in South Western Nigeria	384	58	28	470
	81.7%	12.3%	6%	100%

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FORMAT

1. On a scale of 1-100, how will you score the Church of Christ in terms of her success in fulfilling her mission after fifty years in South Western Nigeria
2. What will you consider to be the challenges confronting the Church of Christ in reaching out to the public with the gospel of Christ?
3. Will you consider the sectarian doctrinal emphases and practices of the church a stepping stone or a stumbling block to fulfilling her mission?
4. How easy has it been for the church to practice her distinctive beliefs and practices like, no General Overseer, no headquarters, no tithe, no musical instrument, etc?
5. What do you think the church should do to increase her capacity and fulfill her mission?
6. How would you describe the relationship between the Church of Christ and other Christian denominations?
7. Is it possible for all Christians to see or interpret the Bible alike as pleaded by the Church of Christ?
8. How would you describe the Church of Christ from the perception of people in the community?

References

A. Primary Sources

(i) List and Particulars of Oral Interview Respondents

S/N	Names	Particulars	Age	Date Interviewed
1	Abolarin, S. B.	Deacon, COC Egbeda, Lagos State	49	Oct. 2, 2011
2	Abolarin, E. B.	Preacher, COC Ado-Odo, Ogun State	68	May 11, 2012
3	Adaramaja, Peter	Elder, COC Idiaba, Abeokuta, Ogun State	60	May 26, 2012
4	Adeogun, C.	Member, COC Kube, Ibadan, Oyo State	47	June 14, 2012
5	Adeogun, Stephen	Member, COC Kube, Ibadan, Oyo State	52	June 14, 2012
6	Adeola, S. A.	Preacher, COC Osiele, Abeokuta, Ogun State	56	June 2, 2012
7	Adenugba, David	Preacher, COC Abusoro, Ondo State	52	June 2, 2012
8	Adesanya, E.	Preacher/ Elder, COC Idiaba, Abeokuta	58	June 12, 2012
9	Agada, Linus	Preacher, COC Odogunyan, Lagos State	44	July 14, 2011
10	Ajetunmobi, Ade	Elder, COC Egbeda, Lagos State	60	Jan. 4, 2011
11	Ajetunmobi, S.	Preacher, COC Odosida, Ondo State	58	May 11, 2012
12	Akinde, A. O.	Deacon, COC Idiaba, Abeokuta, Ogun State	34	Mar. 30, 2012
13	Akanji, Ayobami	Elder, COC Isheri-Osun, Lagos State	54	Nov. 12, 2010
14	Akinmola, Tayo	Preacher, COC Leo, Ondo State	45	Feb 8, 2012
15	Akinola, L.	Preacher, COC Ido-Ekiti, Ekiti State	35	May 29, 2012
16	Akinyoola, Gabriel	Preacher, COC Oniyere, Ibadan, Oyo State	65	May 13, 2011
17	Alabi, Ken.	Deacon, COC Idiaba, Abeokuta, Ogun State	40	May 27, 2012
18	Amos, Olusegun	Preacher, COC Ijebujesha, Osun State	54	May 13, 2011
19	Aladekomo, O.	Preacher, COC Odo-Ado, Ekiti State	65	May 11, 2012
20	Alaje, D. T.	Member, C.O.C Iragbiji, Osun State	47	May 23, 2010
21	Allen, Bayo	Preacher, COC Irele, Ondo State	30	Aug. 12, 2011
22	Apata, David	Preacher, COC Ado-Badore, Lagos State	35	April 7, 2011
23	Ayoade, Anthony	Member, COC Lantoro, Abeokuta, Ogun State	48	April 7, 2012
24	Ayandare, Sunday	Preacher, COC Koloko, Ibadan, Oyo State	62	July 16, 2012
25	Ayeni, Sunday	Preacher, COC Ipetumodu, Osun State	38	May 10, 2012
26	Awotuyi, Akanni	Elder, COC Isheri-Osun, Lagos State	65	Jan. 12, 2012
27	Bamiduro, A. D.	Preacher, COC Ayedun Quarters, Ondo State	56	Jan. 29, 2011
28	Beckloff, James	Missionary	78	Sep. 10, 2011
29	Daniels, J. B.	Preacher, COC Bodija, Ibadan, Oyo State	58	July 1, 2012
30	Ebong, George	Preacher, COC Ile-Ife, Osun State	68	Aug. 13, 2010
31	Ebong, C.	Member, COC Ile-Ife, Osun State	62	Aug. 13, 2010
32	Edet, Aniekan	Elder, COC Lawanson, Lagos State	58	Sept. 6, 2011
33	Edim, Friday	Deacon, COC Lawanson, Lagos State	48	April 6, 2012
34	Effiong, Tom	Preacher, COC Sangotedo, Lagos State	45	May 9, 2012
35	Ekanem, Sunday	Member, COC Abadina, U. I. Ibadan	36	April 28, 2010
36	Ekereke, T.	Elder, COC Lawanson, Lagos State	56	Sept. 6, 2011
37	Enilolobo, M. O.	Elder, COC Idi-aba, Abeokuta, Ogun State	58	June 15, 2012

38	Fabunmi, Gbenga	Preacher, COC Koloko, Ibadan, Oyo State	51	June 28, 2012
39	Hembaor, Ephraim	Preacher, COC WNCC, Abeokuta, Ogun State	31	June 17, 2012
40	Huffard, Henry	Missionary	62	May 16, 2012
41	Idowu, Zaccheus	Elder, COC Igbein, Abeokuta, Ogun State	64	Mar. 25, 2011
42	Kumayon, S.	Preacher, COC Ondo Town, Ondo State	29	June 26, 2011
43	Lamina, Toyin	Deacon, COC Igbein, Abeokuta, Ogun State	54	May 12, 2012
44	Lawal, Busayo	Member, COC Eleiyele, Ibadan, Oyo State	34	July 28, 2012
45	Lawal, Lasun	Member, COC Eleiyele, Ibadan, Oyo State	38	July 28, 2012
46	Mathis, Larry	Missionary	65	Apr. 12, 2010
47	Monofi, S.	Preacher, COC Ekute Quarters, Ekiti State	66	Feb. 6, 2012
48	Majekodunmi, J.	Preacher, COC, Adiyen/Agbado, Ogun State	68	Dec. 25, 2010
49	Makinde, Olufemi	Preacher, SWSE Onikokoro, Ibadan, Oyo State	48	May 9, 2012
50	Mesanga, O.	Preacher, COC Okitipupa, Ondo State	63	Sep. 6, 2011
51	Monomiye, M.	Member, COC Abadina, U. I. Ibadan, Oyo State	24	Jan. 2, 2012
52	Nwankwo, Julius	Preacher, COC Kajola-Ado Road, Ado-Ekiti	52	July 17, 2011
53	Obakemi, M. O	Preacher, COC Lawanson, Lagos State	38	April 12, 2011
54	Ogunjimi, D.	Member, COC O.A.U Campus, Ife, Osun State	24	Aug 15, 2011
55	Ojeva, Samuel	Preacher, COC Oshogbo II, Osun State	36	Aug 13, 2010
56	Ojo, Comfort	Member, COC Odo-Ado, Ekiti State	57	May 11, 2012
57	Ojo, James	Member, COC Odo-Ado, Ekiti State	64	June 6, 2011
58	Oke, Lawrence	Preacher, COC Idanre, Ondo State	50	Mar. 29, 2012
59	Okome, Philip	Preacher, COC Idepe, Ondo State	43	Jan. 31, 2012
60	Okungbuwa, B.	Preacher, COC Oshinle Quarters, Ondo State	55	May 13, 2011
61	Olabisi O.	Preacher, COC COC O.A.U Campus, Ife	28	Feb. 2, 2012
62	Oladiran, Gabriel	Preacher, COC Gbongan, Osun State	33	May 10, 2012
63	Olatunde, E. O.	Preacher, COC Ore, Ondo State	58	Aug. 10. 2012
64	Olayisade, Debo.	Preacher, COC Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State	64	May. 3, 2012
65	Omodara, Sola	Member, COC Ife, Osun State	32	Aug. 14, 2011
66	Omodara, Tosin	Member, COC Ife, Osun State	23	Aug. 14, 2012
67	Omole, Benson	Member, COC Ekute Quarters, Ado-Ekiti	41	Jan. 29, 2012
68	Solotan, Charles	Member, COC Challenge, Ibadan, Oyo State	42	Sept. 2, 2011
69	Ufot, Abasiono	Preacher, COC Ibeshe, Lagos State	45	April 7, 2012
70	Wheeler, Dough	Missionary	66	Jan. 31, 2012
71	Wheeler, Trent	Missionary	56	May 22, 2012
72	Worley, Steve	Missionary	74	Dec. 4. 2010

(ii) List of Archival Materials

S/N	Date	Particulars	Location
1	Oct. 1959	Report from Nigeria by L. Diestelkamp	COC Orodu, Lagos
2	Dec. 1959	Report from Nigeria (No. 2) by L. Diestelkamp	C.O.C Orodu, Lagos
3	Feb. 1960	Report from Nigeria (No. 3) by L. Diestelkamp	C.O.C Orodu, Lagos
4	April 1960	Report from Nigeria (No. 4) by L. Diestelkamp	COC Orodu, Lagos
5	June 1960	Report from Nigeria (No. 5) by L. Diestelkamp	COC Orodu, Lagos
6	Aug. 1960	Report from Nigeria (No. 6) by L. Diestelkamp	COC Orodu, Lagos
7	Sept. 1960	Truth and Freedom in Nigeria by L. Diestelkamp	COC Orodu, Lagos
8	Oct. 1960	Report from Nigeria, No. 7 by L. Diestelkamp	COC Orodu, Lagos
9	Dec. 1960	Report from Nigeria, No. 8 by L. Diestelkamp	COC Orodu, Lagos
10	Feb. 1961	Report from Nigeria No. 9 by L. Diestelkamp	COC Orodu, Lagos
11	April 1961	Report from Nigeria (10) by L. Diestelkamp	COC Orodu, Lagos
12	June 1961	The Wind of Change by L. Diestelkamp	COC Orodu, Lagos
13	June 1961	Report from Nigeria, No.11 by L. Diestelkamp	COC Orodu, Lagos
14	July 1961	Report from Nigeria, No.12 by L. Diestelkamp	COC Orodu, Lagos
15	July 1966	Diestelkamp Returns to Nigeria by Diestelkamp	COC Orodu, Lagos
16	Oct. 1962	Report from Nigeria 1 by Aude Mckee	COC Challenge, Ibad.
17	Feb. 1966	Report from Nigeria (3) by Aude Mckee	COC Challenge, Ibad.
18	May 1966	Report from Nigeria (4) by Aude Mckee	COC Challenge, Ibad.

(iii) List of Observed VCD/DVD Item Observed

S/N	Title of VCD/DVD	Date Recorded
1	A Documentary on the Church of Christ: Establishment, Historical Background and Restoration Movement in Nigeria	2002
2	History of Church of Christ in Nigeria: Video Documentary on the Church of Christ	2004
3	Searching for the Truth	2006
4	Why are there Many Churches?	2007
5	Is the Payment of Tithes for Christians?	2009

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APPENDIX A
LIST OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST SELECTED FOR THE STUDY

LAGOS STATE

1	CHURCH OF CHRIST 17/19, AWORI STREET, AGEGE	11	CHURCH OF CHRIST 6A, PEPPLE STREET, IKEJA
2	CHURCH OF CHRIST 22/24 AMUSA STREET, AGODO EGBE, LAGOS	12	CHURCH OF CHRIST 20, LIZZY FALANA STREET, IKORODU LAGOS
3	CHURCH OF CHRIST 13, AYO ELEGBEDE STREET, AGUDA LAGOS	13	CHURCH OF CHRIST IGBOGBO, IKORODU LAGOS STATE
4	CHURCH OF CHRIST 46-48, ORODU STREET, AJAGUNLE LAGOS	14	CHURCH OF CHRIST 36, ARAROMI STREET, IMOTA TOWN, IMOTA LAGOS
5	CHURCH OF CHRIST 69/71 ADEBOYE STREET, AKOKA OFF ILAJE ROAD, LAGOS	15	CHURCH OF CHRIST 15, IKOTUN ROAD, ISHERI-OSHUN LAGOS
6	CHURCH OF CHRIST, 2, OHIKERE STREET, OFF YAHAYA CRESCENT, ARAROMI, LAGOS	16	CHURCH OF CHRIST 11, ODUBIYI STREET, OFF COLE ST. IKATE LAWANSON, LAGOS
7	CHURCH OF CHRIST AT THE BACK OF SYCAMORE HOTEL, AJARA BADAGRY, LAGOS	17	CHURCH OF CHRIST MOSHALASHI STREET, OBALENDE LAGOS
8	CHURCH OF CHRIST SAVI QUARTERS, IPARA ROAD, IKOGA ZEBE BADAGRY, LAGOS	18	CHURCH OF CHRIST ROAD B, ILASAN HOUSING ESTATE SECOND GATE, LEKKI, LAGOS
9	CHURCH OF CHRIST RAILWAY LINE, EBUTTE-METTA LAGOS.	19	CHURCH OF CHRIST 18, OYEKAN AYUBA STREET, MUSHIN, LAGOS
10	CHURCH OF CHRIST 11, MUFUTAU ADEYEMI STREET, EGBEDA ORELOPE BUS STOP, LAGOS	20	CHURCH OF CHRIST, 8, OMOSEBI STREET, KOSOFE, MILE 12, LAGOS.
21	CHURCH OF CHRIST 4, SULE BADA, ONIPANU, LAGOS	26	CHURCH OF CHRIST 19, NOFIU ADUNNI STREET, SARI-IGANMU LAGOS.
22	CHURCH OF CHRIST, SANGOTEDO 13, PRINCESS AWUJOLA SHELLA STREET OFF ASAJON WAY, BY NERO BUS STOP, AJAH, LAGOS	27	CHURCH OF CHRIST 1B AKOBI CRESCENT, BY FASHORO LANE, SURULERE, LAGOS
23	CHURCH OF CHRIST 18, RAFIU CRESCENT, MAFOLUKU-OJA, MOSHALASHI BUS STOP, OSHODI – LAGOS	28	CHURCH OF CHRIST 3, VERO ENEBELI STREET, PEACE ESTATE OPPOSITE IBA HOUSING ESTATE
24	CHURCH OF CHRIST 9, OSHO STREET, SHOMOLU, LAGOS	29	CHURCH OF CHRIST 20, SHITTU AJIRO STREET CELE BUS STOP, SABO-ONIBA, LAGOS.
25	CHURCH OF CHRIST 24, LUMAC STREET IJEGUN-EGBA, SATELITE TOWN, LAGOS	30	CHURCH OF CHRIST 9, IGBOHINADUN STREET, OJODU-BERGER LAGOS.

OGUN STATE

1	CHURCH OF CHRIST 31, ABOSEDE STREET, BESIDE ADO-ODO TOWN HALL, IGUFIN QTRS, ADO-ODO,	11	CHURCH OF CHRIST 2 DOTUN OGUNRIDE STREET, OKE-YIDI, LANTORO, ABEOKUTA
2	CHURCH OF CHRIST 41, FEMI OGUNYINKA AVENUE, ADIYAN- AGBADO	12	CHURCH OF CHRIST 31, OLUWOLE ODERINDE STREET, OLUWO/ADIGBE ABEOKUTA
3	CHURCH OF CHRIST 47A, OLALEKAN OJERINDE STREET, IFO OFF OLOMU ROAD, IFO	13	CHURCH OF CHRIST INNER TOWNSHIP ROAD, BESIDE WATER BOOSTER STATION, OSIELE, ABEOKUTA
4	CHURCH OF CHRIST IHUMBO , OKE ODAN,	14	CHURCH OF CHRIST 1, ALELOJU STREET, BEHIND OLD YIDI PRAYING GROUND, OTTA
5	CHURCH OF CHRIST IREWON LAYOUT, IJEBU-ODE	15	CHURCH OF CHRIST WNCC CAMPUS, MILE 7, AJEBO ROAD, ABEOKUTA
6	CHURCH OF CHRIST, ILARO.	16	CHURCH OF CHRIST 6, ROTIMI STREET, OWODE-TITUN, OTTA
7	CHURCH OF CHRIST 27, WAGUNNU ROAD, ITORI	17	CHURCH OF CHRIST NEAR OYINBO HOTEL, SABO OWODE YEWA
8	CHURCH OF CHRIST 16, YAYA BALE STREET, IYANA-IYESI, OTA	18	CHURCH OF CHRIST 1, OTETE STREET, OFF GENERAL HOSPITAL ROAD, OWODE-EGBA
9	CHURCH OF CHRIST KEMTA – IDI-ABA , ABEOKUTA	19	CHURCH OF CHRIST 6, IGBEHIN STREET, IGBEIN - ABEOKUTA,
10	CHURCH OF CHRIST OPPOSITE AJEGUNLE FARM SETTLEMENT MILE SIX, AJEBO ROAD, ABEOKUTA	20	CHURCH OF CHRIST 3/5 BELO STREET, OFF OGORO ROAD, IJOKO

OYO STATE

1	CHURCH OF CHRIST KOLOKO, OLOPO-META AREA OFF LAGOS / IBADAN EXPRESS ROAD, IBADAN	11	CHURCH OF CHRIST 3, KOMOLAFE CLOSE, OFF JANKATA B/STOP OFF BEMBO GAMES VILLA ROAD, IBADAN
2	CHURCH OF CHRIST, OPPOSITE TOTAL GAS PLANT 15, CHALLENGE EXPRESS LINK ROAD IBADAN	12	CHURCH OF CHRIST, ABADINA SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, IBADAN
3	CHURCH OF CHRIST LASISI APAPA STREET, OGUNDARE CLOSE KUBE , TOTAL GARDEN, IBADAN	13	CHURCH OF CHRIST OLAKUNLE B/STOP, BEMBO/ELERE ROAD OLUPOYI, IBADAN
4	CHURCH OF CHRIST OWODE HOUSING ESTATE, ABEOKUTA ROAD APATA, IBADAN	14	CHURCH OF CHRIST, SUNKAYE STREET, BESIDE RAILLINE, ASHI, OFF BODIJA ROAD, IBADAN – OYO STATE
5	BEHIND OLUYOLE CHEMIST ELEYELE ROAD, IBADAN – OYO STATE	15	CHURCH OF CHRIST BEHIND LA SCHOOL, KOSO, OYO TOWN
6	EWETADE'S HAIL, BEHIND OLUGBODE'S HOUSE ODO-ONA, APATA ROAD, IBADAN	16	CHURCH OF CHRIST, OMOLoyE BOOKSHOP, AKEETAN TITUN, OYO TOWN
7	CHURCH OF CHRIST PLOT 29, AJEIGBE STREET, OFF RING ROAD, IBADAN	17	CHURCH OF CHRIST, JALEOYEMI, ONIYERE OPP. C.A.C GRAMMAR SCHOOL, IBADAN
8	CHURCH OF CHRIST , APONMODE HIGH SCHOOL ROAD, OFF MONIYA/OJOO ROAD, MONIYA, IBADAN	18	CHURCH OF CHRIST, OGBOMOSO

9	CHURCH OF CHRIST, 33, OYESINA STREET, FIAT AND LADA, BUS STOP, LIBERTY ROAD OKE ADO, IBADAN	19	CHURCH OF CHRIST KAJOLA, OGBERE, IBADAN
10	CHURCH OF CHRIST 2, EMMANUEL ABEGUNDE STREET BESIDE ALUMINIUM W/SHOP, AMULOKO AREA, IBADAN	20	CHURCH OF CHRIST, ONIKOKORO TOWN GBONGUDU ROAD, VIA AKOBO/OJURIN IBADAN

OSUN STATE

1	CHURCH OF CHRIST OLUFI MEMORIAL PRIMARY SCH. GBOGAN	6	CHURCH OF CHRIST, OSU,
2	CHURCH OF CHRIST 32, ALASELA STREET, IGBOYA, ILE-IFE	7	CHURCH OF CHRIST, O.A.U CAMPUS , ILE IFE
3	CHURCH OF CHRIST, IKIRUN,	8	CHURCH OF CHRIST, OKE-OTARA, IDI-MANGO, IRAGBIJI
4	CHURCH OF CHRIST, IPETUMODU	9	CHURCH OF CHRIST OKE-OORE, OFF AJIGBAGUN SAWMILL, ODOORI – OSUN STATE
5	CHURCH OF CHRIST, , OSOGBO	10	CHURCH OF CHRIST OPPOSITE OGUNSUA GRAMAR SCHOOL ESUYARE-OKE,

ONDO STATE

1	CHURCH OF CHRIST 91, ABUSORO ROAD, OFF IJOKA ROAD, AKURE	6	CHURCH OF CHRIST 1, ST. JOSEPH ROAD, OKE ODUNWO, IDANRE
2	CHURCH OF CHRIST, ODE-AJAGBA,	7	CHURCH OF CHRIST 3, OLUWANISOLA STREET, OFF AIYE ROAD IGBOTAKO
3	CHURCH OF CHRIST APONMU, AKURE	8	CHURCH OF CHRIST 1, CHURCH OF CHRIST AVENUE, ODE-IRELE
4	CHURCH OF CHRIST 1, CHURCH OF CHRIST LANE ARISOYIN QUARTERS, OKE-ARO TUNTUN IGBOKODA	9	CHURCH OF CHRIST 11B, IYEMAJA LANE, ONDO TOWN
5	CHURCH OF CHRIST 54, TUYI STREET, OFF ADEGBOLA STREET AYEDUN QUARTERS, AKURE	10	CHURCH OF CHRIST AJEGUNLE, EMEHINTI ROAD, OWO

EKITI STATE

1	CHURCH OF CHRIST ODO – ADO, EKITI,	6	CHURCH OF CHRIST IJERO EKITI
2	CHURCH OF CHRIST BEHIND OLUJODA HOTELS, ADO-EKITI	7	CHURCH OF CHRIST IDO-EKITI
3	CHURCH OF CHRIST BEHIND RED ROSE HOTELS, ADO-EKITI	8	CHURCH OF CHRIST, EKUTE QUARTERS ADO EKITI
4	CHURCH OF CHRIST, ERINWA STREET, BEHIND HEALTH CARE, ISE EKITI	9	CHURCH OF CHRIST 67, OWODE STREET, EFON-ALAYE
5	CHURCH OF CHRIST 14, APATA AJE STREET , ILUPEJU EKITI	10	CHURCH OF CHRIST, OYE-EKITI

APPENDIX B

Thomas Campbell's 1906 Declaration Address

Thomas Campbell's declaration and address to the Christian Association of Washington on September 7, 1809 is often called the *Magna Carta* of the Restoration Movement and generally accepted by leaders of the Movement as thorough in its treatment of the restoration principles to replicate the ancient order of Christianity as read on the pages of the New Testament in any environment, culture or context. The following is the thirteen propositions of Thomas Campbell as paraphrased for easy understanding by Knofel Stanton:

1. The Church of Christ on earth is indispensably, intentionally, and structurally one. It includes *everyone* in *any* place who professes trust and obedience to Christ in all matters according to the Scriptures; and who demonstrates such in character and conduct. No one else can be called a Christian. **2.** Although the Church of Christ on earth exists in different locations, there should be no divisions among congregations. Each congregation should receive the other as Christ Jesus has. That would manifest God's character before all. To facilitate this, all congregations should observe the same practices and speak the same principles. **3.** In order to carry this out, nothing should be forced upon Christians except what is clearly taught in the Word of God. Nothing should be treated in the constitution and by-laws as divine authority unless it is clearly taught in the Word of God. Thus human traditions, regardless of "how long we've done it that way," cannot be our authority. **4.** Although God's revealed will is expressed in both the Old and New Testament books, the New Testament books contain the immediate constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the corporate Church and for the duties of the individual members. **5.** Nothing ought to be received into the beliefs and worship of the Church nor made the test for fellowship which is not as old as the New Testament books. No one should dictate binding directives outlining exactly *how* procedures have to be carried out if the New Testament is silent about such procedures. It is enough if we fulfill the intent of those practices where procedures are not clearly spelled out. **6.** The "conclusions" we arrive at from systematic Scriptural study, as doctrinally valid and valuable as they may be, should not be used as tests of fellowship. "Conclusions" result from our reasoning endeavors. But a man's faith must stand upon the power and truth of God, not in the wisdom of men. Our "conclusions" should be used for building up those who are already Christians, not for admittance exams to those who are not. **7.** Our "conclusions" will certainly vary as we systematically study the many various topics within Christianity. The more comprehensibly we study and communicate a topic, the better. However, let us realize that the Church is made up of all levels of spiritual maturity--and understanding--spiritual babes, spiritual adolescents, spiritual young adults, spiritual adults (figuratively speaking). That means we will always have differences in our understandings and thus in our conclusions. But these differences should not be used as tests of fellowship. **8.** It is not necessary that people see *all* God's truth exactly alike before they are added to His Church. What is necessary is that they recognize two things: (1) their lost condition and (2) Jesus' way of salvation. And then declare their faith in Him and their willingness to obey Him in all things. **9.** Anyone who has made such a

declaration should consider anyone else who has made such an acknowledgement as saints of God and should love such as brothers. For such people are children of the same family, temples of the same Spirit, members of the same body, subjects of the same grace, objects of the same Divine love, bought with the same price, and joint-heirs of the same inheritance. And whom God hath joined together no man should dare to put aside.

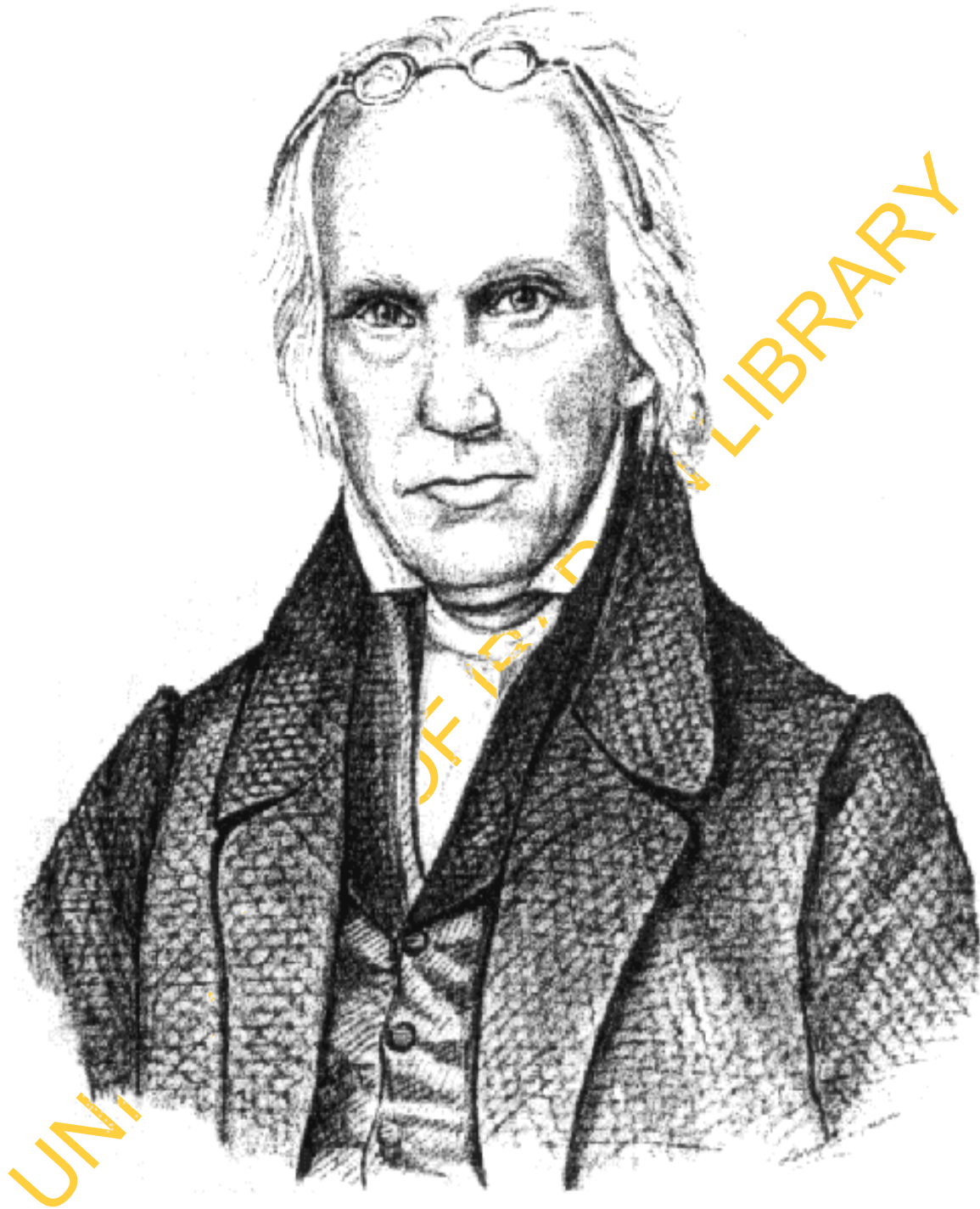
10. Division among Christians is a repulsive evil filled with many tragedies. Here are three of those tragedies: (1) It is *antichristian*, because it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ. Division suggests that Christ is divided against Himself by excluding and excommunicating a part of Himself. (2) It is *antisciptural*, because it is strictly forbidden by God. (3) It is *antinatural*, because it motivates Christians to hate and oppose one another who are commanded by God to love one another as brothers. In summary, divisions are a product of and produce confusion and every evil work.

11. All the past and present corruptions and divisions in the Church have resulted from two causes: (1) The partial neglect of the clearly expressed will of God; (2) The insistence that human opinions and hobby horses be accepted in the belief, life, and worship of the Church.

12. There are four practices necessary if the Church is to manifest the maturity and manners God wants: (1) That no one be admitted who does not acknowledge faith in Christ and obedience to Him. (2) That no one be kept who doesn't back up that acknowledgement with character and conduct. (3) That properly qualified preachers teach nothing other than what is clearly expressed in the Word of God. (4) That those preachers observe all the Divine ordinances which the Church in the New Testament books observed--in the way that the Church observed them.

13. When the observances of the ordinances are altered due to circumstances and the alteration is essential or the observance would not have been possible (due to the circumstances) then that alteration must be seen as a human expedient only. No higher sanction can be given to it. Retrieved March 20, 2012, from <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/tcampbell/etc/DA-KS.HTM>

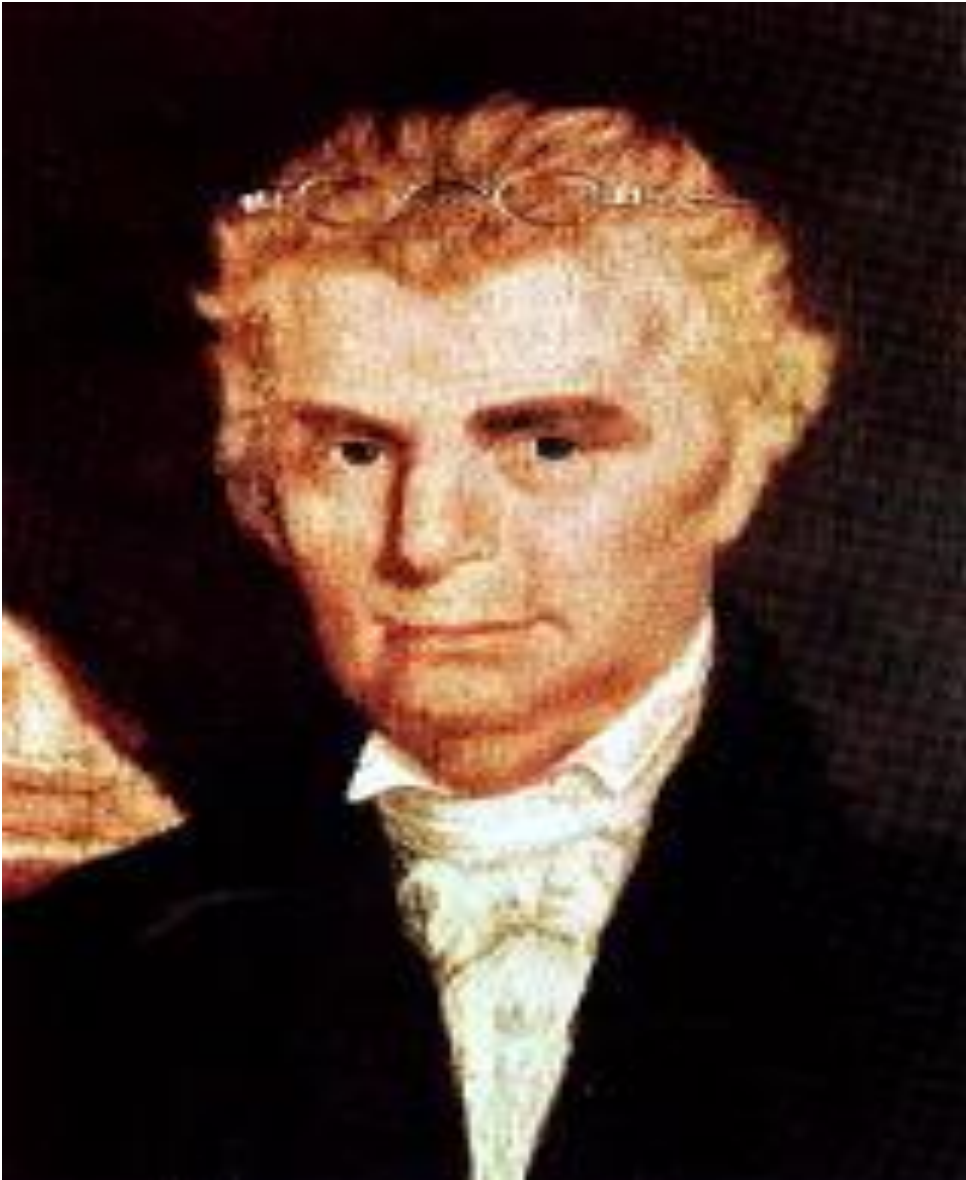
APPENDIX C



Thomas Campbell (1763-1854)

Thomas Campbell was a leading member of the Restoration Movement that metamorphosed into the Church of Christ. Thomas Campbell delivered the Declaration and Address on September 7, 1809, which is often referred to as the *Magna Carta* of the Restoration Movement.

APPENDIX D



Barton W. Stone (1772-1844)

Barton Stone was a leading member of the Restoration Movement with considerable influence on Churches of Christ.

APPENDIX F



Alexander Campbell (1788-1866)

Alexander Campbell was a leading member of the Restoration Movement with the greatest influence on Churches of Christ's hermeneutics and ecclesiology.

APPENDIX G



Walter Scott (1796-1861)

Walter Scott was a leading member of the Restoration Movement most remembered for his formular on the steps leading to salvation.

APPENDIX H



David Lipscomb (1831—1917)

David Lipscomb was a Minister, Editor, Educator and leading influence in the Restoration Movement/Churches of Christ. He was reported to have given the U. S. Census Board the information that led to the listing the Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ as separate entities in 1906.

APPENDIX I



Coolidge Akpan Okon Essien (April 15, 1915-Feb. 8, 1960), Wife and Baby
C.A.O. Essien received the Bible Correspondence Course from Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee, USA, which led to the establishment of the Church of Christ in Nigeria.

APPENDIX J



First missionary Families of the Church of Christ to Arrive in Nigeria in November 1952: The Jimmy Johnson and Howard Horton families.

APPENDIX K



Leslie Diestelkamp (1911-1995)
Pioneer American Missionary to Western Nigeria

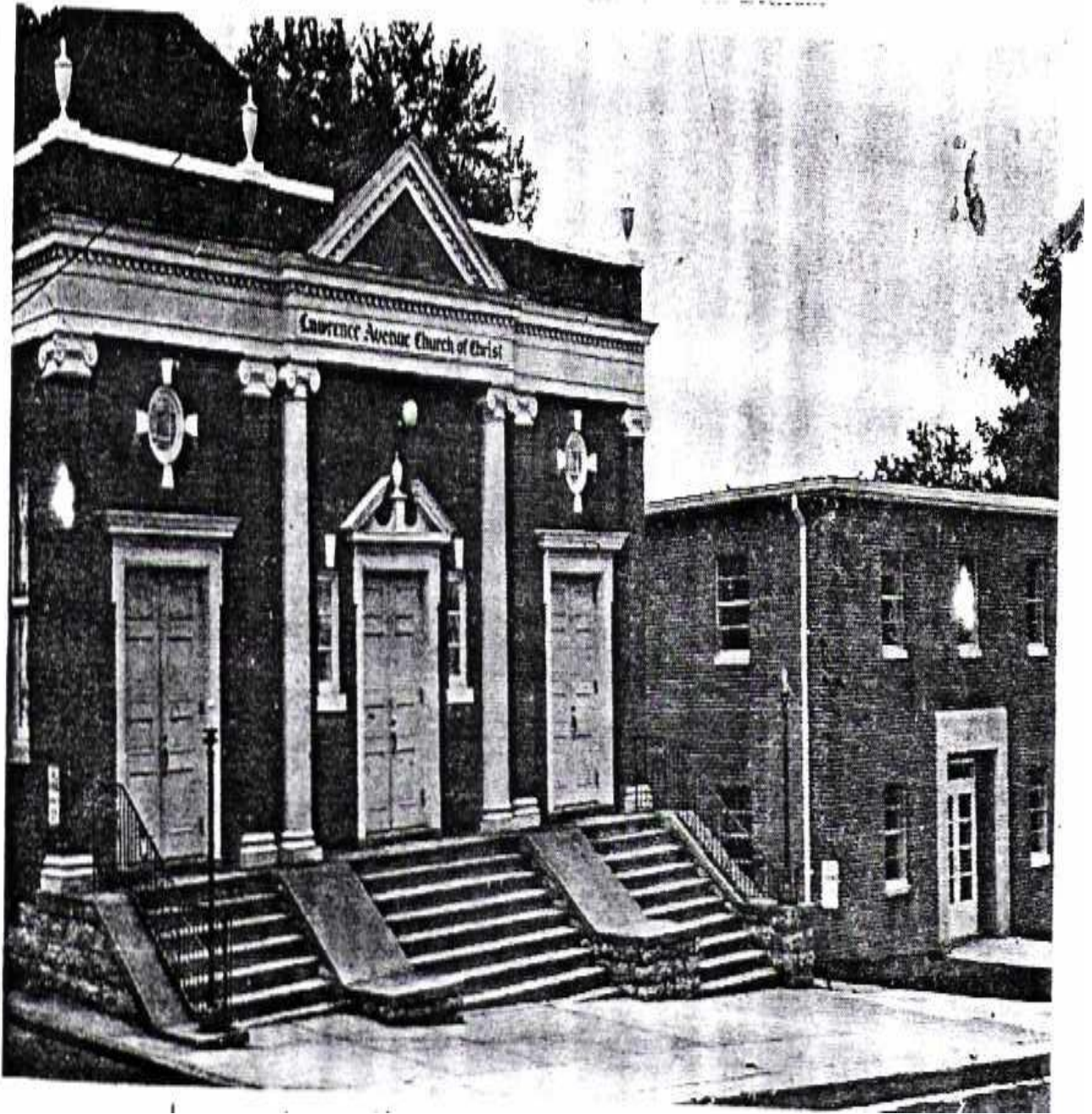
APPENDIX L



George Oginni (1909-2004)

George Oginni was the first Yoruba Minister of the Church of Christ. He died in 2004 and was buried at his Ipole Ijesha family house in Atakumosa East Local Government Area of Osun State on October 9, 2004.

APPENDIX M



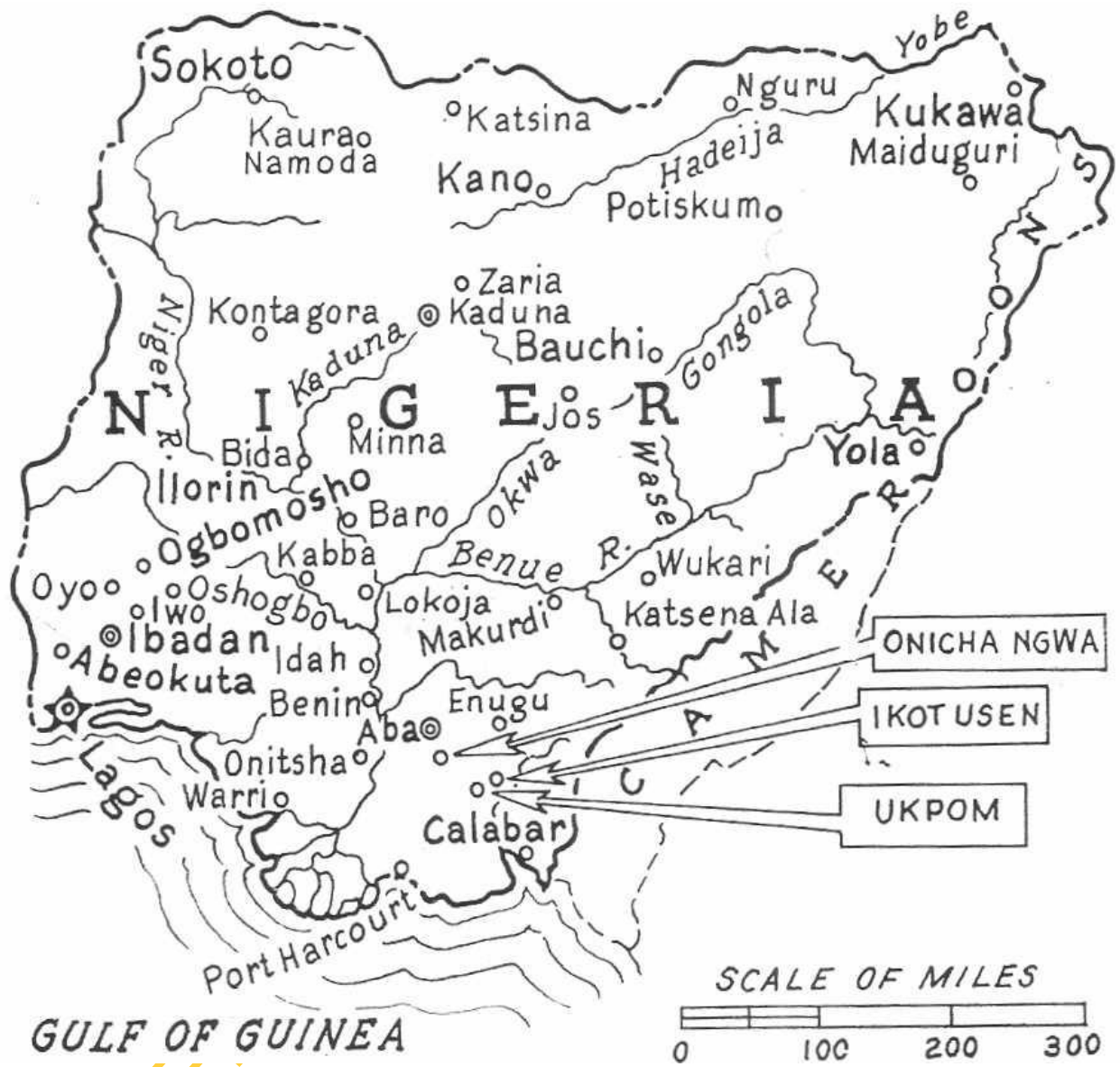
Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ, Nashville, USA, Pioneer of the Nigerian Mission

APPENDIX N



The First Church of Christ Building in Ikot Usen, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

APPENDIX O



The map of Nigeria showing the incursion of the Church of Christ into Nigeria, from Ikot Usen to Ukpom and from Ukpom to Onicha Ngwa

APPENDIX P

A Chronology of the Nigerian Mission (1944 – 1964)

<i>CHRONOLOGY OF THE NIGERIAN MISSION (1944 – 1964)⁴⁷⁶</i>		
1944	May 2	Lawrence Avenue church business meeting discusses Bible correspondence course.
	May 23	Bible correspondence course approved by special business meeting.
	Sept.	First Bible course lessons mailed to servicemen.
1947	Oct.	Anna-Maria Braun enrolls for Bible correspondence course.
1948	June 19	Anna-Maria Braun writes that she is helping advertise course with Labels sent from Lawrence Avenue.
	July	C. A. O. Essien enrolls for Bible Correspondence Course.
	Aug. 2	Essien returns first lesson for grading.
1949	June 27	Essien completes Bible Correspondence Course
	Dec. 31	Lawrence Avenue discontinues Bible Course.
1950	Aug. 7	Boyd Reese and Eldred Echols arrive in Nigeria for two-week survey with Essien.
1951	Jan. 1	Essien's support begun by Lawrence Avenue.
	July 3	Eldred Echols returns to Nigeria for four months additional training of native evangelists.
	Dec.	P. A. Alfred's support begun by Lawrence Avenue.

⁴⁷⁶Adapted from Reda C. Goff, *The Great Nigerian Mission*, (Nashville, TN: Lawrence Avenue Church of Christ, 1964), 61-63.

1952	July	Elders appoint deacons to serve as “Nigerian committee.”
	Nov. 16	The Howard Horton and Jimmy Johnson families leave New York for Nigeria.
	Nov. 24	Jimmy Johnson family arrives at Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
	Nov. 27	Howard Horton family arrives at Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
1953	April	First dwelling completed at Ikot Usen.
	June	Second dwelling completed.
	Aug. 11	Horton returns to Nashville for two-week conference with elders to discuss urgent problems.
	Oct. 12	Eugene Peden family arrives in Nigeria.
	Oct. 21	Pamela Rose born to Johnson family in Nigeria.
	Dec. 4	Elvis Huflard family arrives in Nigeria.
1954	Feb. 1	Two-year Bible Training School started at Ukpom.
	July 15	Jimmy Johnson family embarks for America aboard the “Tulane.”
	August	Construction begun on Bible Training School Building.
	Oct. 20	Lucien Palmer family arrives in Nigeria.
	Dec. 7	Howard Horton family leaves for America on the “Sherbro.”
	Dec. 10	Barney Bawcom family arrives in Nigeria.
1955	Feb. April	Bible College Building at Ukpom formally dedicated. Dwelling at Ukpom completed.
	April 16	Elvis Huffard family leaves for America.
	July 23	Church officially registered in Nigeria.
	Aug. 6	Eugene Peden family leaves for America.
	Aug. 24	Wendell Broom family and June Hobbs arrive in

		Nigeria.
	Oct. 5	J. W. Nicks' family arrives in Nigeria.
1956	Jan.	Palmer reports 12 village schools in operation.
	July 21	Leonard Johnson family arrives in Nigeria.
	July 21	James Finney family arrives in Nigeria.
	July	Bawcom family leaves for America.
	Aug. 10	Palmer family leaves for America.
	Aug. 25	Sewell Hall family arrives in Nigeria.
	Dec.	Finney announces plans for Bible College at Onicha Ngwa.
1957	Jan.	Nicks reports 40 churches of Christ in Iboland.
	Jan. 26	Entrance examinations given for students at Onicha Ngwa Bible College.
	June 28	June Hobbs and Janice Johnson return to States.
	July 6	Land lease application for Onicha Ngwa Bible College approved.
	July 12	Tommy Kelton family arrives in Nigeria.
	Aug. 1	Wendell Broom family embarks for America on the "M. V. Sekondi."
	Aug.	Onicha Ngwa Bible College buildings under construction.
	Nov. 12	Lucien Palmer and Eugene Peden families arrive in Nigeria for second tour of service.
	Dec. 9	J. W. Nicks family leaves for America
1958	Jan. 27	W. H. Bennett, elder at Lawrence Avenue, passes away.
	Feb. 6	Wendell Broom family arrives in Nigeria for second tour of service.
	Mar.13	Rees Bryant family arrives in Nigeria.
	March	Ida Palmer and children leave for America because of Eddie's illness.
	April 14	Leonard Johnson family embarks for America.

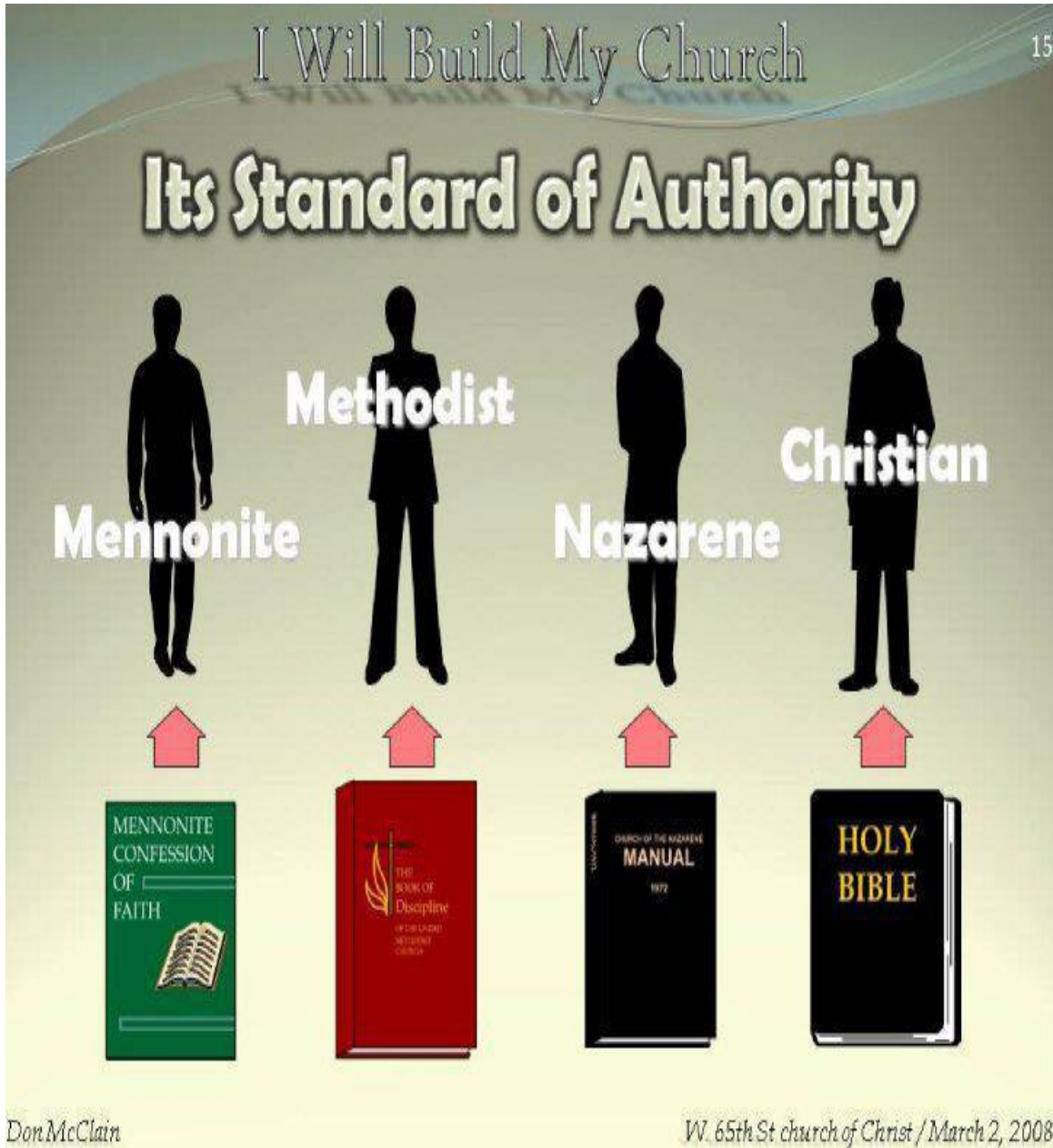
	April 24	James Finney family leaves for America.
	April	Lucien Palmer returns to States.
	June 1	Joe Cross family arrives in Nigeria.
	June 12	J. W. Nicks' family arrives in Nigeria for second period of service.
	June 21	Sewell Hall family embarks for America.
	Oct.	Kathryn born to Brooms in Nigeria.
	Oct.	"The Nigerian Christian Schools Foundation" incorporated in Tennessee to operate native village schools.
1959	Jan. 1	Glenn Martin family arrives in Nigeria.
	Jan. 6	Tommy Kelton family embarks for America.
	June 30	Leslie Diestelkamp family arrives in Nigeria.
	July 26	Eugene Peden family embarks for America
	Aug. 10	John Featherstone family arrives in Nigeria
	Sept. 23	Rees Bryant family leaves for States.
	Oct. 7	P. A. Alfred, native missionary, passes away
	Oct. 29	Reuel Lemmons visits Nigeria.
	Nov. 30	Diestelkarnps begins new work at Lagos.
	Dec. 7	Jim Massey family arrives in Nigeria.
1960	Jan. 1	Third year training begun in Ukpom Bible College.
	Feb. 8.	C. A. O. Essien, native evangelist, passes away.
	April 5.	Rees Bryant family returns to Nigeria for second period of service.
	April 13	J. W. Nicks family leaves for America.
	May 10	Wendell Broom family leaves for America.

	June 30	Lucien Palmer and Marshall Keeble visit Nigeria for 17 days.
	Sept.15	Sewell Hall family arrives in Nigeria for second tour of service to work at Lagos.
	Oct. 1	Nigeria granted independence from Great Britain.
	Dec. 15	Douglas Lawyer family arrives in Nigeria.
	1961 Jan. 21	Cindi Ann born to Lawyers in Nigeria
	Feb.	John Beckloff family arrives in Nigeria.
	March 7	John Featherstone family leaves for America.
	May 18	Dan Gibson family arrives in Nigeria.
	June	Aude McKee family arrives in Nigeria for work at Lagos.
	June 27	Glenn Martin family leaves for America.
	June 30	Leslie Diestelkamp family embarks for America.
	July 19	Rees Bryant family leaves for America.
1962	Jan.17	Glenn Martin family returns to Nigeria for second tour of service.
	Feb. 6	Bill Curry family arrives in Nigeria.
	March 29	Bill Hall departs for America after limited tour.
	May 1	Decision made by board to establish Nigerian Christian College near Ukpom Bible College.
	July 1	Paul Earnhart family arrives in Nigeria for work at Lagos.
	July	Sewell Hall family leaves Lagos for America.
	Sept. 15	M. I. Summerlin, elder at Proctor Street church in Port Arthur, Texas, visits Nigeria.
	Oct.	F. F. Carson and Levi Kennedy, American evangelists, make extended visit to Nigeria
	Oct.	Lucien Palmer, Houston Ezell and Marshall Keeble visit Nigeria to select site for Nigerian Christian College.
	Dec.	Douglas Lawyer family leaves for America.
1963	Feb. 13	Joe Cross family returns to Nigeria for second period of service.

	April 12	Dan Gibson family leaves for America.
	June	Douglas Lawyer family arrives in Nigeria for second tour of service.
	June	Dottie Beckloff and children leave for America.
	June	J. W. Nicks' family visits Nigeria.
	July 20	John Beckloff leaves Nigeria for tour of Holy Lands
	Oct.	Andy T. Richie family of Harding College visits Nigeria.
	Oct.	Dr. Farrar and Jack Sinclair (Elder at West End church) visit Nigeria.
	Oct.	Dr. Floyd Coleman visits Nigeria.
	Dec. 14	Bill Curry family departs for America.
1964	Feb. 3	Nigerian Christian College begins limited operation.
	Mar. 5	Roger Church, Claude Dunn and Howard Dilgard visit Nigeria for 17 days.
	Mar. 18	Elvis Huffard journeys to Nigeria for school dedication ceremonies.
	Mar. 19	Formal opening ceremonies of Nigerian Christian College held.
	Mar.	Dayton Keese family arrives in Nigeria.
	June 27	John Beckloff family returns to Nigeria for second period of service
	June 27	Glenn Martin family leaves for America.
	July 10	Bill Curry family arrives in Nigeria for second tour of service.
	July 25	Dr. Henry Farrar arrives in Nigeria for first period of service.
	Aug. 1	Rees Bryant family returns to Nigeria for third period of service.
	Sept.	Phil Dunn family arrives in Nigeria for service at Ukpom Bible College.
	Oct.	Don and Joyce Harrison arrive in Nigeria for service at Nigerian Christian College.

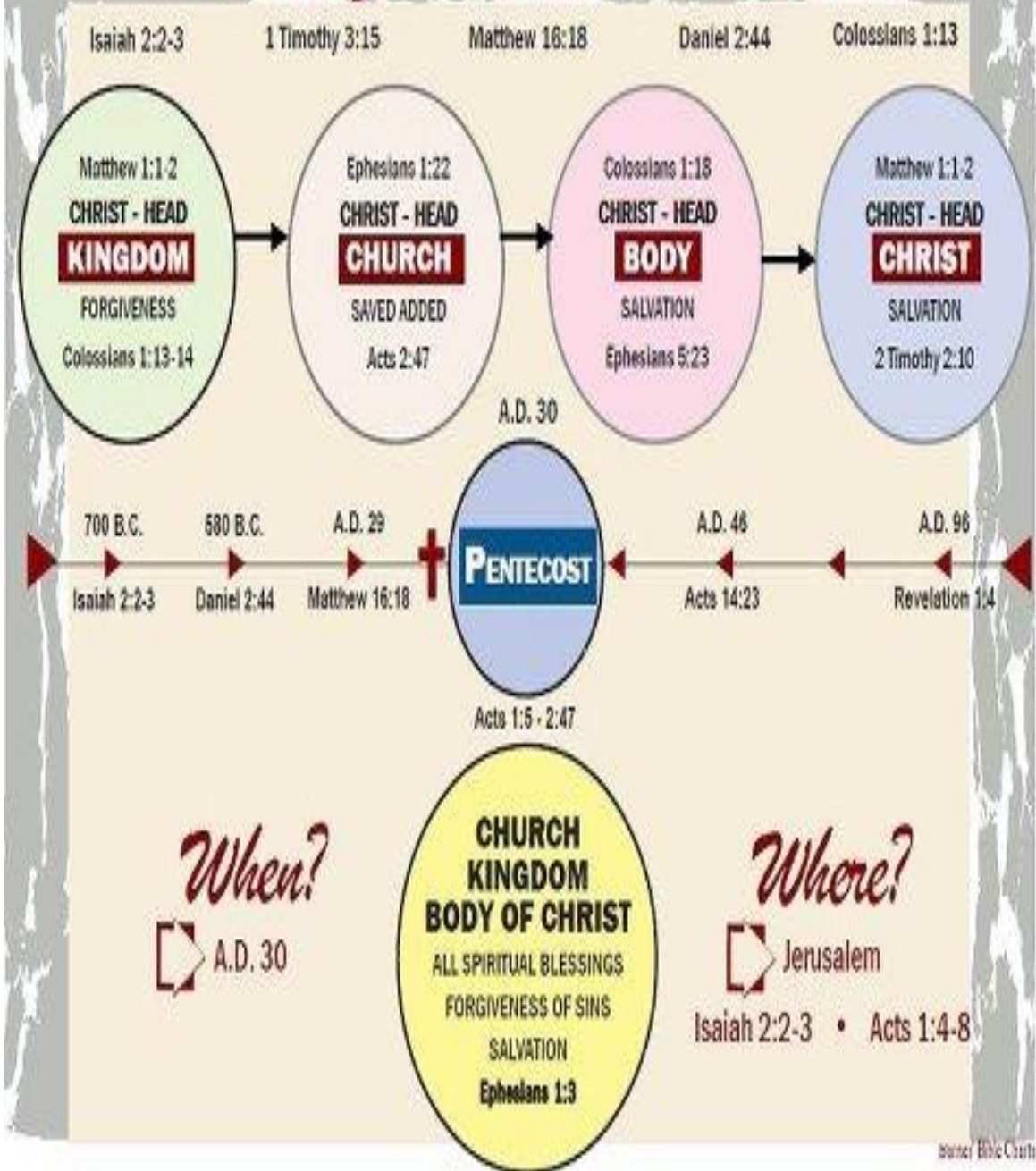
APPENDIX Q

**Graphic Representations of Some Doctrinal Teachings
and Practices of the Church of Christ⁴⁷⁷**



⁴⁷⁷ Source: <http://www.churchart.com>

The Kingdom/Church Established



How Many Churches Are There?

HOW MANY CHURCHES ARE THERE?

➡ **ACCORDING TO MEN** ... There are hundreds splintered into thousands of branches

➡ **ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE** ... There is **ONE CHURCH!**

- The church is His (Christ's body).

Ephesians 1:18-19 - "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body ..."

➡ **The Church is the Body ... And the Body is the Church.**

Colossians 1:18 - "And He is the head of the body, the church ..."

Colossians 1:24 - "... For the sake of His body, which is the church."

➡ **The Church is the Body ... And the Body is the Church.**

- There are as many bodies as there are churches. There are as many churches as there are bodies. Thus, How many are there?
- Answer: **Ephesians 4:4** - "There is one body ..."



➡ Since the church is the body and the body is the church, and since the Bible says there is "one body," the rightful conclusion is that there is **ONE CHURCH!**

Barnes Bible Charts

Four Things Necessary to Constitute A Kingdom

Four things a necessary in order to constitute a kingdom:

1. A King
2. A Law
3. Subjects
4. A Territory

Does the Lord's Kingdom (church) have these FOUR parts?

A KING →	CHRIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of the Church • King of the Kingdom 	<p>Colossians 1:18 Colossians 1:13</p>
A LAW →	GOSPEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law of the Church • Law of the Kingdom 	<p>Acts 2:47 Colossians 1:13-14</p>
SUBJECTS →	ALL MEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the Church • Subjects of the Kingdom 	<p>1 Corinthians 12:27 Ephesians 2:19</p>
A TERRITORY →	WHOLE WORLD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole World • Whole World 	<p>1 Thessalonians 1:8 Revelation 5:8-9</p>

Barnes' Bible Charts

UNIV



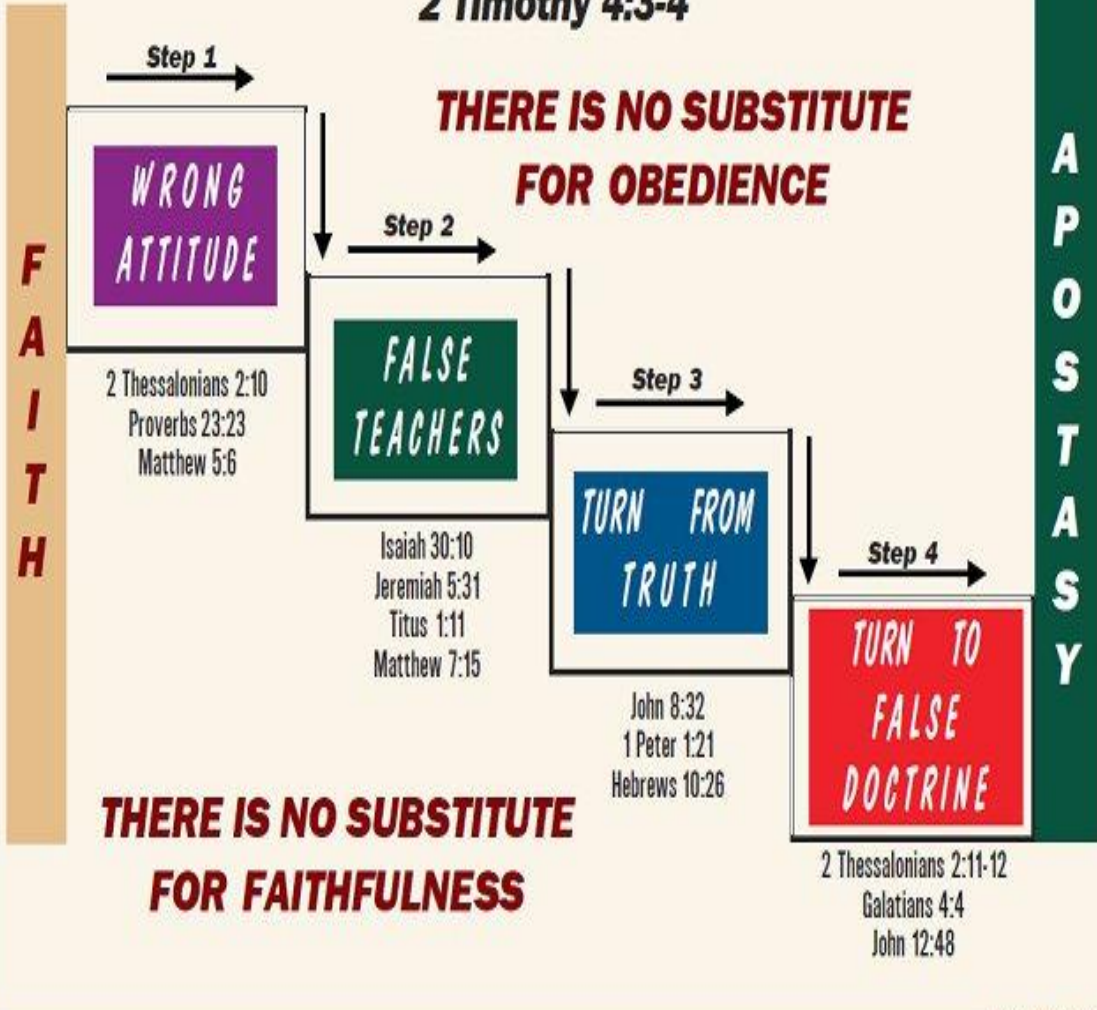
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Romans 1:17
2 Corinthians 5:7
Romans 10:17

Four Steps to Apostasy

1 Timothy 3:1
2 Peter 3:17

2 Timothy 4:3-4



Barnes' Bible Charts

UNIV

Origins of Denominations - Part 1

Chart 1 of 2

DENOMINATIONS	PLACE OF ORIGIN	YEAR	FOUNDER
Adventism	Massachusetts	1831	William Miller
American Baptist	Providence, Rhode island	1639	Roger Williams
Apostolic Faith Mission	United States	1900	Group
Assembly of God	Hot Springs, Arkansas	1914	Group
Baptist Church	London, England	1607	John Smyth
Brethren (Drunkards)	Sewarzenau, Germany	1708	Hochmann & Mack
Brethren in Christ	United States	1820	Group
Catholic Apostolic Church	England	1830	Group
Christadelphians	United States	1844	John Thomas, MD
Christian Church	Midway, Kentucky	1859	Group
Christian Science	Boston, Massachusetts	1879	Mary Baker Eddy
Church of England	England	1535	King Henry VIII
Church of God	Monroe County, Tennessee	1886	Group
Church of God	United States	1880	D. S. Warner
Church of God Holiness	Atlanta, Georgia	1914	K. H. Burrus
Church of Living God	Wrightsville, Arkansas	1889	William Christian
Congregational Church	Massachusetts	1684	Group
Cumberland Presbyterian	Dickson County, Tennessee	1810	Group
Dutch Reformed Church	Holland	1560	Group
Evangelical Church	Pennsylvania	1803	Jacob Albright
Evangelical and Reformed	Cleveland, Ohio	1834	Group
Foursquare Gospel	Los Angeles, California	1917	Almee S. McPherson
Freewill Baptist	New Durham, North Carolina	1780	Benjamin Randall
Full Gospel Church	Goldsboro, North Carolina	1935	R. H. Askew
Greek Orthodox Church	Greece	1053	Group

Warner Bible Charts

Origins of Denominations - Part 2

Chart 2 of 2

DENOMINATIONS	PLACE OF ORIGIN	YEAR	FOUNDER
Holiness Church	Chicago, Illinois	1907	Howard Hoopie
House of David	Michigan	1903	Group
Independent Witness	Van Alstyne, Texas	1900	C. B. Jernigan
Jehovah's Witnesses	Pennsylvania	1874	Charles T. Russell
Lutheran Church	Augsburg, Germany	1530	Martin Luther
Mennonite Church	Zurich, Switzerland	1525	Group
Methodist Church	London, England	1729	John Wesley
Methodist Episcopal	Baltimore, Maryland	1874	Group
Mormon Church	Seneca, New York	1830	Joseph Smith
Mormons Reorganized	Wisconsin	1852	Joseph Smith II
Moravian Church	Kunwald Bohemia	1457	Group
Nazarene Church	Los Angeles, California	1895	P. E. Bresee
New Apostolic Church	Hamburg, Germany	1862	Pruess
Pentecostal Holiness	Anderson, South Carolina	1898	Group
Pilgrim Holiness Church	Cincinnati, Ohio	1897	Group
Plymouth Brethren	Dublin, Ireland	1829	Group
Presbyterian Church	Switzerland	1535	John Calvin
Primitive Baptist	North Carolina	1765	Group
Quakers	England	1650	George Fox
Roman Catholic	Rome, Italy	696	Boniface III (1st Pope)
Salvation Army	London, England	1865	William Booth
Seventh-Day Adventism	Massachusetts	1846	Ellen G. White
Spiritualist Church	United States	1848	Andrew J. Davis
Unitarians	Poland	1500s	Faustus, Socinus, et. al.
Universalist Church	New Jersey	1770	John Murray

Printer Bible Charts

ALL ROADS

DO NOT LEAD TO THE SAME PLACE.



"There is a way that seems right to a man,
but in the end it leads to death."

- Proverbs 14:12

Law & Incidentals

COMMANDS	INCLUDED IN THE LAW	VIOLATIONS OF THE LAW	INCIDENTALS
Build an Ark Genesis 6	Size, Gopher wood, a door, a window, etc. Genesis 6:22	Any change in size, Use of Pine, add to, or take from	What tools, Size of tree, transporting of trees
Go into all the world Mark 16	"Go "Into all the world"	Not going. Saying there is only one way to go, etc.	Walk, Ride, Cart, Car, Ship Plane, etc.
Teach All Nations Matt. 28:19-20	Whole counsel of God - Acts 20:27 Faithful men - 2 Timothy 2:2 All teach - Hebrews 5:12-14 Women teach privately - 1 Cor. 14	Perverted gospel - Gal. 1:7 Women preachers - 1 Tim. 2:12 Wrong spirit - Eph. 4:15 Add to - 2 John 9	Publicly - Acts 20:20 Privately - Luke 10:23 School - Acts 19:9 Radio, TV, class, literature, etc.
Baptizing Them Matt. 28:19-20	Burial - Romans 6:4 Believers - Mark 16:16 For remission of sins - Acts 2:38 Name of F., S., & HS. - Matt. 28 In water - Acts 8:37-39	Sprinkling Infants Wrong purpose Wrong authority, Acts 19:1-7 Oil, milk, etc.	River Ocean Pool Baptistry Water, cold or warm
Come Together 1 Cor. 14:23	Whole Church One place	"Must have a fancy meeting house." "Must meet at 11:00"	Grove, Tent, House, Buiding Decent & orderly. 1 Cor. 14:40
Sing Ephesians 5:19	Songs that teach and admonish Melody made in heart to the Lord	Worldly or unscriptural songs Instrumental music	Notes, Tuning Fork, Song Books Numbers, Parts
Lord's Supper 1 Cor. 11:20-29	Proper Elements. Memory of Christ. First day of the week.	Substitute emblems. Don't discern Lord's body. Thursday night. "One cup."	Sit or stand. Number of cups. Hour of the Lord's Day
Pray Acts 2:42	To God, in the name of Christ In faith, according to God's will	Through Mary, saints, etc. Contrary to word, Proverbs 28:9	Number of prayers Posture in praying. Mark 11:2
Give 1 Cor. 16:1-2	Regularly, As Prospered, Cheerfully, Purpose	No purpose, Less than able To be seen of men	Plates - Baskets Checks - Cash - Envelopes

BARRON BONE CHARTS

God's Plan for Man's Salvation



I MUST HEAR THE TRUTHS OF GOD

Romans 10:17 • John 8:32

I MUST BELIEVE THE TRUTH

Hebrews 11:6 • Mark 16:16 • Acts 8:37

I MUST REPENT OF MY SINS

Luke 13:3, 5 • Acts 2:38 • Acts 17:310-31 • 2 Peter 3:9

**I MUST CONFESS JESUS AS
GOD'S SON**

Matthew 10:32-33 • Romans 10:9-10 • Acts 8:37

**I MUST BE BAPTIZED (immersed in
water) FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS**

Acts 2:38 • 1 Peter 3:21 • Acts 22:16 • Mark 16:16
Galatians 3:27 • Romand 6:3-5



HAVE YOU OBEYED THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST?

Barnes' Bible Charts











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He that
believes
and is
baptized
shall be
saved.

Mark 16:16

UNIVERSITY

Is Mechanical Praise for God Scriptural?

IS MECHANICAL MUSIC JUSTIFIED	THE SCRIPTURES TEACH US TO SING IN WORSHIP!	MECHANICAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP IS SINFUL!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">  A COMMAND? — NO!  AN EXAMPLE? — NO!  BY INFERENCE? — NO!  IS IT SCRIPTURAL? — NO!  A GOOD WORK? — NO!  PERTAIN TO LIFE? — NO!  ANTI-SCRIPTURAL? — YES! 	<p>Matthew 26:30 - "SUNG an hymn"</p> <p>Acts 16:25 - "SANG praises"</p> <p>Romans 15:9 - "SING unto Your name"</p> <p>1 Cor. 14:15 - SING with the Spirit and understanding</p> <p>Ephesians 5:19 - "SINGING psalms, hymns and spiritual songs"</p> <p>Colossians 3:16 - "SINGING with grace in your hearts"</p> <p>Hebrews 2:12 - "In the midst of the church will I SING praise"</p> <p>James 5:13 - "Is any merry? Let him SING psalms"</p> 	<p>VIOLATES THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITH</p> <p>MAKES VOID THE WORD OF GOD</p> <p>VIOLATES GOD'S SPECIFIC COMMAND</p> <p>REJECTS CHRIST'S AUTHORITY</p> <p>CANNOT BE FOUND IN THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST</p> 

Baines-Dorie Cirratt

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God's Plan for Giving



1 CORINTHIANS 16:2 ■ 2 CORINTHIANS 9:7

▶ **Periodic** } "UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK"

▶ **Personal** } "LET EACH ONE OF YOU"

▶ **Proportionate** } "LAY BY IN STORE, AS GOD HATH PROSPERED HIM"

▶ **Preventive** } "THAT THERE BE NO GATHERINGS WHEN I COME"

▶ **Purposeful** } "AS HE HATH PURPOSED IN HIS HEART"



Four Looks at the Lord's Supper

"THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."

LOOK WITHOUT

"Ye do show forth the Lord's death"

(1 Corinthians 11:26)

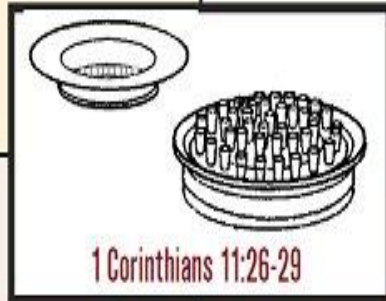
Testifies of His death

LOOK FORWARD

"Till he come"

(1 Corinthians 11:26)

Testifies of His coming



LOOK WITHIN

"Let a man examine himself"

(1 Corinthians 11:28)

Individual communion with Christ

LOOK BACKWARD

"Discerning the Lord's body"

(1 Corinthians 11:29)



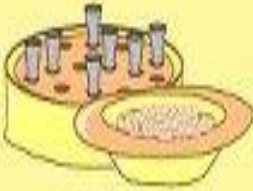
Testifies of His suffering

"THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."

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The Lord's Supper

ANIMAL SACRIFICES	DEATH OF CHRIST	THE LORD'S SUPPER
<p>GOD'S PLAN Gen. 4:3-5; Lev. 1:1-9</p>	<p>GOD'S PLAN Matthew 16:21; 26:39</p>	<p>CHRIST'S COMMAND Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24</p>
<p>WITHOUT SPOT Num. 19:2; 28:3, 9; 29:17, 26</p>	<p>WITHOUT SIN 1 Peter 2:21-24</p>	<p>BREAD & FRUIT OF VINE Matthew 26:26-29</p>
<p>BLOOD SHED Leviticus 1:1-15</p>	<p>BLOOD SHED Matthew 26:28</p>	<p>REPRESENTS CHRIST'S BODY & BLOOD 1 Cor. 11:24-26; Matt. 26:26-28</p>
<p>IN REMEMBRANCE OF SIN Hebrews 8:12; 10:17</p>	<p>FOR REMISSION OF SINS Heb. 9:22; Matt. 26:28</p>	<p>OBSERVE IN MEMORY 1 Corinthians 11:25</p>
<p>BLOOD OFFERED Leviticus 1:5; 16:14-16</p>	<p>BLOOD OFFERED John 19:34</p>	<p>PARTAKE WORTHILY 1 Corinthians 11:27-30</p>
<p>GOD PLEASED Genesis 4:4-5; Hebrews 11:4</p>	<p>GOD PLEASED John 3:16; John 6:38</p>	<p>REGULARLY Acts 2:42; 20:7</p>
<p>OFFERED EACH YEAR 1 Samuel 1:21; 21:19; Hebrews 9:7, 25; 10:1-3</p>	<p>ONLY ONE OFFERING Hebrews 7:27; 10:12-18</p>	<p>ON FIRST DAY OF EACH WEEK Acts 20:7</p>
<p> Altar Offering</p>	<p> Cross of Christ</p>	<p> Lord's Supper "Lord's Table"</p>

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