

CONTEXTING AFRICANISATION AND THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE: HISTORICAL EXAMINATION OF THE VIEWS OF JOSEPH AYO BABALOLA

¹Oludare, Gladys Oluwatosin, ²Fasemire, Oluwatoyin Rebecca

³Department of Philosophy, Ekiti State University, Phone no:07030519530 ⁴Research Assistant, Ekiti State University, Faculty of Arts, Department of History and International Studies, Ado Ekiti

1. INTRODUCTION

Doctrine is defined by a general purpose dictionary as a set of belief held by a religious body, political movements or group of scientists. In other words, the term doctrine, in its usage, refers to a set of beliefs learned and held as unquestionably true by a group of people, be they members of a sect or citizen of a state (Duyile, A Prelude to the Boko Haram Insurgency: A Doctrinal Interrogation, 2023). During this period of study, Nigeria existed as three regions, each dominated by a political party based on the support of the majority ethnic community in the region (Duyile, Buhari Administration and the Nigerian Niger Delta Region, 2015-2021, 2023). Thus, there was a Hausa Fulani dominated Northern People's Congress (NPC) government in the North, a Yoruba dominated Action group (AG) government in the West and an Igbo dominated National Council of Nigeria Citizens (Duyile & Nwachukwu, 'Japa' Phenomenon And Nigeria Students in the Mix of A Proxy War in Ukraine, 2023). Nigeria appeared in unity but in truth the nation had an iota of disunity (Duyile, The Birth and Formation of the Nigerian Army: A background to the Conundrum of Ethnic Rivalry and Military Doctrine, 2023).

Nigeria during the life time of the Apostle was at the peak of its struggle for independence. However, while the nation Nigeria was at a physical battle; men like Joseph Ayo Babalola had began a spiritual since the early 20th century. He was the first Apostle and General Evangelist of CAC and he's believed by the generality of Nigerians to be the founder of CAC. Born in 1904 at Odo-Owa in Kwara State he was the instrument of the Great Revival of 1930 which gave birth to CAC and The Apostolic Church (Oluwamaki, 2019). This study will unearth the biography of this unusual prophet - his birth, unusual childhood, backgrounds, cheque educational career, call to ministry, his marriage, the process of his spiritual empowerment, his miracles and wonderful ministry and his death in July 1959. Apostle Joseph Ayodele Babalola gave various teachings and revelation as he received from God. He gave teachings and warning for pregnant women, teachings on choosing a life partner, revelations about those who fail to pay tithe, revelation about the future of Christ Apostolic Church and the Church of God in the world, to mention but a few (Sadela, 2012). The Apostle gave an important warning for pregnant women, and the warning is applicable even to this day (Sadela A. , 2000). It was an assurance when people were attributing the bad habits of some children to the lifestyles of their parents. Parents who want their children to have bright future and to be meaningful should not ignore or take this warning with levity hands (Alokan, 2010). Although these views are not backed by scientific evidences- Science do however discuss the role of genes in the parent and children bloodline. In the indigenous context, Yorubas believed that there is a relationship in character and behavior between parents and their children. He warned pregnant women that it is possible for the unborn child in the womb to inherit their habitual characters when they are pregnant. The fetus will most likely inherit his/her mothers' habits. One might inhabit a particular habit from the womb. He said, the Lord wants pregnant women to repent on sin of 'anger' in particular, because the Lord said most wicked acts exhibited by children and adults are inherited from their mothers' womb.

According to Badalona, whenever people are testifying to a good character of a man and he eventually begets a wicked child, people would either be attributing it to the works of the devil or probably the inheritance from his/her mother's womb. He brought this teaching to an end with powerful warning for pregnant women to be careful during pregnancy. If the woman has good virtue with integrity, she would be able to transfer the good virtue to the children. In order to do this, let every man be ready to be comforters for their wives and their children, and more importantly, when their wives are pregnant. The Apostle also said when a pregnant woman put to bed the baby will inherit part of the habits of whoever first of all carries him/her from the blood.

Although, this view has no scientific insinuations; the Apostle logically was incorporating African culture and believes into Christianity. Immediately after a child delivery, the parents should go and bury the first haircut in their birth place. The child will return home to the place of his parents' birth from wherever he/she goes in the world. His doctrine in this context completely negates the CAC doctrine in this modern era. A lot of his followers now engage in 'Japa', most of them are of the Yoruba culture and in the 21st century they get buried outside their cultural areas in Europe and other continental enclaves. The 'Japa' phenomenon is about Nigerian youths migrating to Europe, Americas and Asia (Duyile & Nwachukwu, 2023).

He also selected Psalms for pregnant women.

First month	– Psalm 136
Second month	– Psalm 143
Third month	– Psalm 23
Fourth month	– Psalm 51
Fifth month	– Psalm 54
Sixth month	– Psalm 121
Seventh month	– Psalm 85
Eight month	– Psalm 3
Ninth month	– Psalm 29

They were to read these Psalms inside water for bathing and drinking. Apostle Babalola said that the nine months or forty weeks a woman would nurse pregnancy symbolizes the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit. Any child born with these Psalms would be very intelligent, favored and fortunate, and cannot be killed by any witch. The Doctrine also taught about God's leading in choosing husband or wife; for the church leader there is no place for love. He said the Lord said, as farmers break one calabash into two, which becomes a new calabash that would be very useful, if somebody tries to break the calabash into three, it would not be useful for anything again; thus He, God has arranged it that each woman would be the wife of every man, this is one husband, one wife. What is amazing in this is that, as a bone from the ribs of Adam was brought out create Eve, thus, He, Go has brought out a bone from the rib of each man to mould his own woman he would marry as his wife. Therefore, both of them must locate each other wherever they are. From the time immemorial, it is a taboo for any German to eat in the same plate or drink water from the same cup with the British, despite that, there has been inter-marriage among the citizens of the two nations (Germany and England) since the beginning of the world till today; he context it in similar circumstances with Nigerian tribes such as natives of Ilorin and Ijebu can't marry themselves; Tapa and Oyo tribes, Hausa and Ijesa, Igbo and Yoruba, Benin and Calabar, Abeokuta (Egba) and Ghanaian, indigenes of Kwara and Oyo, Urhobo and Aganyin, e.t.c. Finally, if strangers; men and women who are not from the same place marry themselves, let us take it as the plan of God, because the bones of their ribs must locate each other according to God's written plan. If the bone of the ribs of an Ijesa man is in Maiduguri, they will meet. If anybody sojourning in a strange land marries a woman of that land, we should no longer regard such a man as a stranger or regard the marriage as a taboo or illegitimacy (o.o, 2010). He never succumbed to intra sex marriages calling it an aberration and not backed by the bible. He also was anti polygamy, a culture predominant during his time (Akede, 2000). This view of Babalola shifts the choice of marriage from parents to God. This doctrine is not different from what Yorubas are used to- consultation with gods were a part of the Yoruba cultures in those days.

During a vigil, God gave Apostle J.A. Babalola a great revelation concerning peoples' responsibility about offering and giving. In the revelation, God took him inside a big hall which was very wide to the extent that no one could imagine it end. He said he saw on the wall of the house; he saw big sacks which were as big as cocoa bags. He said of the big sacks were full of overflowing blessings, some of the sacks were even full to the brim, and some of them contained little blessings or were half full, while most of the sacks were virtually empty. When Apostle Babalola asked from the Lord what could be the meaning of the sacks on the wall? He said the Lord said "these sacks you are seeing are the sacks into which people work in the world and that the content of the sacks stands for blessings on individual offerings of members of the church". He further explained that individual contributions of members in the church, done in the name of the Lord go to those sacks. The CAC leader explained further that people who don't desist from contributing to work for the Lord were those whose sacks were full to the brim and were ever overflowing. Those who did little and stopped were those whose sacks were half full; those who just started where those whose sacks contained little blessings. Those whose sack was virtually empty were those who had never done their duties at all either in tithe and offering. This encouragement of members to pay tithe and give offerings was new to members especially the doctrine of dropping tithe. The Kings in Yoruba land were paid tributes by the commoners.

Apostle Babalola said, in a vision, he saw a beautiful woman dressed in gorgeous attire without backing any child. He said the woman was going, and suddenly he saw that the woman was backing a baby and he was gazing at her as she was going. Babalola said, the spirit of the Lord told him to move ahead of the woman in order to see her clearly with the child she was backing; he said it was when he moved closer to the woman that he saw a wonder. He said he saw that the baby she was backing was turned upside down at the back of the woman. According to him, as the woman was going, the baby she was backing was using the two legs to hit the mothers' neck and head, the mother was then thrown into an unspeakable trouble. He said, when he asked the Lord about the meaning of the vision, God said the woman he saw symbolized Christ Apostolic Church; while the baby the woman was backing who was turned upside down at the back of the woman symbolized civilization. The Lord at times will come when civilization will enter into Christ Apostolic Church, immediately civilization set in that means trouble has started.

According to the Apostle, civilization was already knocking and what can overcome the menace of civilization is for the church to go back to the old landmark because we don't know when Christ will come. He spoke about the need to go back to the old landmark, and to return to the first love before the coming back of the Lord. According to him, if the whole world goes back to the first love, everybody would be saved.

His lifestyle and Marriage

Apostle Joseph Babalola preached the gospel conscientiously. His parent began to think he should get married so his wife could help him in his work. They suggested marriage to him three times before he agreed. Soon after, a beautiful, well behaved young lady was found for him. Her name was Miss Dorcas Adetoun Fowewe, an Ijesa lady. Satan waged war that the marriage should not be, but God gave the victory and the matter was settled. God knew the right woman fit for his servant, she was wise, homely, and humble. She was in control of the home, good with handcrafts, sewing, and she loved children. Before they were married she went to train with godly elderly women on how to take care of the home and her husband. She learns everything quickly and easily.

Their wedding took place at CAC Oke-Inisa (now CAC Oke-Igbala) in Efon-Alaaye. David Odubango led other Fathers of the Church such as J.S.B Orogun, Odusona Babatope, Joshua Adeniran, Medaiyese, e.t.c to perform the marriage. The attendance at the wedding was staggering; he received a gift of three pounds, ten shillings and six pence (£3:10s 6d). This was on 25th April 1935, on his 31st birthday. The couple thereafter lived together and accorded respect to each other, they related cordially to each other through out their life time. As he found Dorcas virtuous, Joseph gave her two pounds and ten shillings (£2:10s) in addition to the usual customary gift of one pound and one shilling (£1:1s) meant as appreciation for her chastity as practiced among the Yoruba. In their home, it was either 'Baba Abiye' or 'Mama Abiye'; Abiye being their first child.

Joseph Babalolas' marriage with Madam Dorcas produced three daughters and a son. Regrettably, the son died young when both parents were still alive. The eldest daughter was Victoria Oladunni who was married to S.O Olumuyiwa (Pastor). Though the marriage was fruitful, nonetheless, she died after the death of her father. The other daughters are Wura and Apeke. Wura, a Home Economics specialist later became Mrs Oginni. After the death of her mother, she became Iya Ijo (Patroness) of CAC Okesa, Ilesa. One her part, Apeke is married to a leading Methodist member named Adeniyi. She is an Accountant and a business guru in the fishing trade. She has great zeal in promoting church development. In this way, she soon distinguished herself as a strong lover of the Gospel. For example, she erected a sanctuary for Methodist children's use at Ile-Ife. In recognition of her selfless services to God and humanity, the Methodist Church of Nigeria made her a knight of John Wesley. Both Wura and Apeke have built enviable Christian homes along with children who have risen to positions of responsibilities in life. This marriage was stormy, based on the accounts of several witnesses who knew and /or lived with the couple and who were interviewed by this author, including Babalola's younger sister Mrs. Olanrewaju. This was however due to the enormous pressure brought on the home as a result of the challenge of the work on Babalola's time which forced him to be away from home most of the time and not due to the character of the woman as has been falsely chronicled through side talks, tales and comment over the years. Obviously, even the best and the most saintly of women would not endure certain things. He himself admitted in a written document that he had a good wife.

As a church leader that was performing signs and wonders, people from far and near came to him daily for counseling, prayer and consultation. On occasions, some of them would wait for days in order to see him. His wife had to cater for their welfare including feeding, accommodation or even transport fares. Furthermore, he had great love for orphans and indigent people. At times, his concern for such and other dependents received priority consideration over the needs of his biological children as regards the payment of school fees, provision of school materials, cloths and health care. This practice was in compliance with his life philosophy of giving

service in the order of God, others and then self (G.O.S). However, a few observers hold the view that Mama Dorcas was occasionally high-handed with high-tempered in her relationship with 'Baba Abiye', her husband. While we are not out to defend Mama on this issue, we feel that one should be wary in passing judgment on others, especially on matters concerning husband and wife. What is more, Joseph Babalola was a benevolent man of God that was making other rich when he and the members of his family were in need. Further still, he as a great evangelist was always busy at either meetings or crusades or travelling from one town to another for days or weeks running in the interest of the Gospel. Therefore, he was not always available to solve some problems at home, even when at home, he was such a workaholic that he hardly had times to spare for other matters outside the spread of the Gospel. His wife had to stand in for him under rain and sun. If under those and similar conditions, Mama Abiye sometimes get tensed up, she could be excused, being human.

After their wedding, both of them resided at Efon-Alaaye, the seat of Babalola's missionary activities. Geographically, Efon Alaye is a big town in Ekiti State. Thereafter in 1962, Mama Dorcas had to relocate to Ilesa as a trader in a raw food stuffs especially rice in order to sustain the family left behind by her husband. With passage of years, she became the Iya Ijo (Patroness) of CAC Okesa, Ilesa until she died on 28th December, 1993. She was accorded befitting burial at that church by the authority of the church led by President Elijah Olushey and David Babajide on 15th January 1994.

Apostle Babalola was a man known for great wisdom, inspired by the Spirit of God, he was a man of prayer and great humility. His wisdom was exhibited through some parables he told about certain issues of life. One of such parable or word of wisdom was when the prophet said the Lord made three heaps in the world and instructed the entire world to come together as one to choose one of them and water it. The world refused, separated themselves into three groups, and each choose its own heap. The three groups are Christians, Muslim and the Animists. Of the three heaps, the first has seed in it, the second is empty and the third has a stone in it.

The Apostles' humility was beyond all, he respected all, both young and old. A Lagos Yoruba Newspaper, Akede Eko (Lagos Trumpeter) reported that Joseph Babalola was a prophet who attended to the common and great men alike; the black and white visitors rushed to him for either personal or general requests; that he had no time day and night for rest; that he was a unique and true prophet. He was selfless in all his dealings, this can be seen in his putting others first even before his own family and himself. He had no favourites, he loved everyone equally. God had exalted and honored him greatly, so was his humility. He taught his followers to prostrate for elders, he was also very merciful. There was nothing anyone could do to annoy him. If he was not welcome in a town, he left, and if they called him back, he went back to them. He was merciful to all, he hated no one. He did not discriminate between persons he ate whatever was offered him, never refused food.

The Apostles Achievement

A meeting was held at Ilesa on July 9th and 10th, 1930 by the Faith Tabernacle Society in Nigeria. The main reason for holding the meeting was to settle the doctrinal differences among members of the society. Some members held that polygamists should not be admitted into the Church. While another group among them accepted the view that they should be accepted into the Church, but they should be denied baptism. Yet some other group also argued that polygamists may be given the chance to attend Church services, but they must be excluded from participating in the Holy Communion. Another issue that also needed to be settled was the case of the use of drugs to heal the sick. While some believed that only the name of the Lord Jesus Christ should be used to heal the sick, some others believed that both methods should be used. Among those groups who wanted the two methods to be combined for healing was Joseph Babalola who was station in Ilesa at this time.

Besides, members of the society also planned to introduce Babalola to others as the leader of their Society. Members of the Society assembled at Oke-Oye Street in Ilesa town for the meeting on the above mentioned date. Before the deliberation on the above issues, Babalola preached to the assembled members. After his preaching, he stepped aside with Mr. Medaiyese in one of the rooms that was attached in the church building. Delegates of the various Churches deliberated and finally arrived at the conclusion that a Christian husband should marry one wife. Likewise, a Christian woman should marry to one man. While the delegates were deliberating on the issue of divine healing, there was an incident that disrupted their discussion. It was the death of a child that was brought from the farm by its parents for burial. As Babalola heard the cry of the community over the dead child, he was moved with pity then he had compassion on the child and the parents. He pray on the dead child and the child was brought back to live. This is a major feat of spiritual growth he made compared to Jesus miracles. This became the first miracle which all the delegates from various towns and villages that attended the conference witnessed. The raising of the dead child convinced everybody that Jesus Christ is the Lord over sickness and the dead. Everybody who saw the child brought back to live believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour and Messiah. Many people who witnessed the miracle became convinced that

Babalola was a prophet anointed by God. As a result, many repented of their sins and became converted. Babalola stayed in the town spreading the Good News for many days. Many people visited him and he prayed for them.

Some people brought water to him to pray on it for their use. According to the late Chief Ezekiel Komolafe who also witnessed the great crusade that took place at Ilesa, there was a prominent king from Akoko land who was warned not to drink the water which Babalola prayed on. But the king insisted and drank the blessed water. Immediately, he fell down and blood began to rush out of his mouth and he died. Reverend Lennon, an Anglican priest at Ikare Mission Station, who went to Ilesa to hear Babalola preach, used his car to carry the deceased king to his town for burial. Also, a woman from Ogori named Mrs. Rebecca Jemitola, who was childless for many years, went to the crusade and Babalola blessed the water for her to drink. She drank the water and she conceived and gave birth to a son named Samuel Jemitola. The son later became a Medical doctor. The crusade of Babalola spurred the growth of the Church in the Yoruba land. It also became as the first time for Christians to gather in one place to witness the preaching and performing of miracle at the same time.

Not long after, the Faith Tabernacle Society got transformed into Christ Apostolic Church of Nigeria. Babalola later moved from Ilesa to Efon-Alaaye where he later settled as his missionary home in the Yoruba land. From there, he proceeded to the following towns for evangelism: Offa, Aramoko, Ijero, Ikole and Iddo. Many sons and daughters of these towns are now Ministers of the Gospel in Nigeria and overseas.

Among the major challenges the Apostle Encounters one of it was that he was rejected in his home town, Ilofa his ministerial work can be said to have started at Ilofa when the Lord instructed him to go and warn the people to forsake their sinful ways or face destruction. At Ilofa, they rejected the message; they were hostile to him; they treated him with dishonor, threat of terminating his life through evil plans. In his church, Anglican Church, Oke-Ilofa himself and his group followers were disbanded by the leaders of that church; Joseph Babalola remained in town using Isaiah Oluyemi's residence for house fellowship. Others in his group were Dorcas Bolaji Atalese, John Dada Obafemi (Later 4th CAC president), John Komolafe and Joseph Owolabi among others.

As a result of the miracles, healing from the miracles, the traditionalist was feeling humiliated by the open condemnation of their practices in sermons, prayer choruses. For these reasons among others, the traditionalists vehemently challenged in different ways the power and authority of Joseph Babalola and his disciple. For instance, at Ipole-Iloro in Ekiti West, an herbalist tempted Joseph Babalola but failed as earlier explained. However, there were Muslims who accepted the revival message and used their 'teshubaha' to praise the Lord. Without compromising the tenets of their faiths, the Aladura members and the Muslims did many things in common in Efon and some other Muslim towns.

Please note, at Odo-Owa, he was also rejected, they were hostile to him, God commanded him to instruct the people at Odo-Owa to burn and do away with their idols and charms. One day, while he was ministering, the people of Odo-Owa wanted to use cane soaked with charm to whip him, he ran away to Ilofa to the house of Mr Isaiah Oluyemi, who rescued him from their hands. This happened before his work and experience at opposition rose from evil forces such as witches and familiar spirits against the Apostle. A classic example of spiritual attack on Joseph Babalola took place on 25th February 1932 when during Lenten season, he was engaged in prayer session at Odo-Owa Mount. First to have encounter with him were witches and wizards, those that came next were ecological forces (herbs, leaves, roots) and the last to face him were the evil spirit of the firmament and the earth. These evil forces accused him of breaking the covenant between them and the new converts; that whereas at the creation, the Lord created the good and the bad like the child and the placenta inside a pregnant woman; that Joseph Babalola should therefore defend himself for acting contrary to divine order. It was a night of real spiritual contest for Babalola.

As he was praying hard for victory over the evil forces, his disciples Joshua Medayese, David Adio, Benjamin Adefabijo and others that were around engaged themselves in fervent prayers. Happily, as his advocate was Jesus Christ, the prophet was eventually victorious. There was the incident of Joseph Babalola trekking for two days from Ikun to Owo in response to summons served on him by three Police men. At the end, he was let off the hook. His disciples, 12 in number, were ill-treated but later released with warning to stop following him. The 13th disciple, Isaac Ukpe, was imprisoned for six months, allegedly for not paying tax.

A few days later, he left the place of prayer and returned to Oke-Ilofa. During the first week of his return, a warrant for his arrest came from Ilorin. There was an allegation that at Otuo, some people drank a concoction made from the bark of a tree (Obon) and they died. They said upon investigation, two of them pointed at the

Apostle as having administered the drink and that he had called them witches. Consider that Ilofa is very far from Otuo, moreover, he was in private prayers throughout the Lenten period. From Ilorin he was taken to Benin City, because the Judge who presided over cases in Otuo area was resident there. He was sentenced to six months in prison, this was in March 1932. Many were concerned about the case and wanted to engage a lawyer for him, but he refused. He refused being defended by a lawyer, insisting that he was God's messenger. He warned us not to engage a lawyer for him and went to serve his prison sentence. The Apostle did not accuse anyone of witchcraft, but when the witches saw him, and because of the power of the Holy Spirit upon him, they confessed their sins voluntarily.

2. CONCLUSION

From 1955 upwards the tone and ministry of Babalola began to change. Even his concerns and approach to things began to take a different turn. He began to relieve himself of certain responsibilities which he had graciously taken and began to prepare his close associates for the coming eventuality. In the early part of that year he took his close associates- a coterie of pastors and prophets very close to him- to Ijumu in the present Yagba Local Government of Kogi State. There, after their prayer and fasting retreat he told them that they should learn to take full responsibilities for the church because very soon he would be going on a journey and would not be there to give them directives again. Or he might go and settle in a place for rest and when he returns he might not relate with the church (CAC) again. Because these were his beloved he shared deep secrets with them. He told them that the church has already sown a garment of shame and getting ready to don the garment but that it would not happen in his lifetime. Present at this meeting were Andrew Olu Young, J.A. Medaiyese, D.O. Babajide etc at the General Convention of the Church that year he also enjoined both elders and pastors to be prepared to assert their calling which Christ had given them.

Starting from 1957 however, revelations and warnings began to come from everywhere to CAC to pray so that a big tree that has branches reaching towards the east, west, south and north and whose influence is worldwide would not fall. But the leadership and even the common run of the church membership did not discern. Thus by 1958 the messages became more direct, specific and frontal as to the identity of the big tree that was about to fall. In the early morning of July, 1958 a young prophet came from Ilesha to Efon- Alaaye with a direct and specific word from God to the leadership of the CAC Alabukun. The message, according to Olujobi Olowolagba went like this: *"Thus saith the Lord, from henceforth don't entangle my servant Joseph Babalola with the affairs of your church. Learn to go on with the administration without him because the time has come for me to take my servant from your midst."*

The prophet was a young man and obviously he did not weigh the consequences of his message before delivering it. At any rate the leaders- pastors and elders that he gave the message to were stunned and visibly troubled. They were so discomfited that none of them remembered to give the young man transport money as was the convention in those days back to his station and he was nearly stranded but for the intervention of Pastor Olujobi Olowolagba. Immediately, prayers and fasting were declared to stop the evil. But would prayer or fasting change God's design, counsel and ordination?

In the Cross over service of 1958/59 there was another sign, this time at Odo-Owa, Babalola's hometown. As the prayer for the New Year progressed a young girl, so small that everyone has to keep quiet to even hear her told of a vision that she saw and warning CAC to pray fervently and vigorously so that a tree whose branches extend to the south, north, east and west and whose shade provides comforts to the people of the whole world would not fall. Again people began to pray with tears. But as the singer sang- *what will be, will definitely be*. Why? Because it was time to go.

In this same year Babalola held a powerful crusade in Ilesha, the town where his ministry began and took his worldwide acceleration 28 years earlier. He called it *Isoji Alasepe* (The Revival of Completion or Perfection). It was his own way of bidding farewell to the people and especially to the earth, a witness to the earth and the cosmos that he has *completed* what he came to the earth to accomplish.

It was under this shadow of ominous warnings and prophecies that CAC entered 1959. Warnings and dreams were now coming frequently and sporadically as to the effect that a big fish would soon leave the waters. Another little girl from the country side in a prayer meeting told the leaders of a vision she saw in prayer where he saw "our father Apostle Babalola bidding the world goodbye." Yet in spite of all these the leadership did not take note of all these omens and signs.

Babalola himself gave a clue to the effect that it was time for all those who were perceptive and discerning enough to know. Usually during the Lent period, he would produce a pamphlet for the prayer and fasting program. He had been doing this since 1945. In the pamphlet of 1959 was this cautionary note: keep this document for use of several years to come. This was Babalola's warning to the generality of the church of the imminence of his transition.

At his Easter Sermon that year he taught on death and the power of death and the triumph of Christ over death. There he told the people that if he should die they should not begin to think that it was one witch or wizard who did it because all witches and wizards put together with Satan their father could not do it. He encouraged his people to be firm because he had been to the mountain and has seen the other side. From April he began to undertake some crucial journeys and travel to different places to strengthen the church. It was that April, 1959 David Ogunleye Odubanjo the General Superintendent of the church died in Lagos. He was there to preach his funeral and encourage the church to be firm and steadfast. Unknown to the majority of his listeners that he too was preparing and 3 months later would also leave the scene.

From June through July he was virtually on the road from one town to another on account of church affairs. Three of the places he visited last are however worthy of consideration here. In the month of June on the 16th day, he made an unusual trip to Erio-Ekiti where his mother Madam Martha Talabi lived. Knowing that his time was up and he would leave this world before her, he asked his mother very boldly and pointedly, "If I Joseph Babalola your son should die today will you desert Jesus?" The answer Babalola got must have pleasantly surprised him from the old woman: "Since my lord" - that was how Mama referred to Apostle Babalola, she never called him directly by name - "has shown me the way of life there is no cause for alarm. I know Jesus will take care of me if He takes you away." Then Babalola added this word disguised in parable so that the old woman would not get what he was saying, "When Jesus called me in 1928 He did not tell me that He would stay this long before coming back for me. It's now thirty years ago and He has not come. If I did not see him in the next 40 years I will have to go to Heaven to go and call Him." The old woman did not discern. But forty years became forty days, for exactly 40 days to the letter after those conversations were exchanged, Babalola made good his threat to go and meet Jesus. It was after the news of his death reached the mother at Erio that she cast back her mind and remembered that her son had already forewarned her.

He went to Warri in the Delta area around the first week of July. He had to go because the people needed him to confess their sins and ask for his forgiveness. They had been rude to Babalola during the crisis over the separation between The Apostolic Church and Christ Apostolic Church in the late 30's and had chosen to go with the former even though it was Babalola who founded the church. But problem had started thereafter and finally God told them that until they reconcile with His servant and got him to pray they would move from one tragedy to another. This was what brought him to Warri to pray.

From there he went to Iloffa and Odo-Owa his home place where the church convention was to hold in September that year, to assess their preparations. He was however not impressed. In fact he was greatly saddened by the total unpreparedness of the people, his own people and his next -of-kin. He had written to them three years earlier to tell them to begin to plant cassava and in 1958 he had written them to tell them to plant yams because they would be hosting the whole church. But few weeks to the Convention there was very little or nothing on ground. To change the venue was no longer possible because of the imminence. Other towns had hosted the church successfully in the past, how should it be heard that the leader's own town was the place where the thing flopped. This was what pained Babalola and he spoke to his people that day in the bitterness of his soul. He even told them that they didn't know him because he was from their town but on the day of Reckoning, on that Glorious Day they will know who Babalola is and how great he is. At this statement the whole church began to weep. It finally dawned on them that they had sinned against God and His servant and they all began to confess their sins and to plead with him not to leave the town in anger. He forgave them and prayed for God to forgive his people.

It was on 24th of July 1959. That day they left Iloffa for Efon- Alaaye arriving by 7.00p.m. Two hours later at 9.00 p.m they left for Ibadan for the Leadership Meeting of CAC at Olugbode which was held on Saturday 25th July. As soon as they finished he made some personal visit to some persons to pray for them and to deliver God's message to them at home. One of these was S.A. Adeshina who contested for the Alaaye stool and had lost.

Towards the evening of the 25th July he left Ibadan with his entourage towards Ede for the inauguration of the Good Women Maternity Home which was to take place the next day, Sunday 26th July. On the way they stopped at a village called Sekona where they held Evening Prayer with the people. Usually Babalola was never in a

hurry when travelling. At every stop prayer must be offered before proceeding. Thus it was in the evening of Saturday by 7.00 p.m when they reached CAC Talafia, Ede where the host, Prophet Samson Akande was eagerly awaiting them. Elaborate preparations have been made to receive him and his entourage which included Medaiyese, Babajide, Odutola etc. Supper was served immediately for these fathers but Babalola did not taste of it. He was ushered into a room specifically prepared for him and was allowed to sleep, the only sleep he'd had in 12 days (Oluwamaki, 2019).

Early in the morning of Sunday 26th July the apostle got up as early as 5a.m and requested for hot water. A coffee was prepared for him but he insisted it must not have sugar or milk. That was how he drank it raw, the last thing he ever took before leaving the earth. It was a life of self-denial from beginning to end. After preparing for the service he called for his deputy, the Assistant General Evangelist, Prophet David Babajide and his host, Prophet S.O Akande. He asked two of them to kneel and began to talk to them rehearsing his experiences in ministry from the beginning when he received the call to the present day and all the hassles he'd met in ministry. He reminded the duo that within the limit of human possibility he had done his best. He now asked each of them to pray for him that if there had been any sin he Babalola had committed in the course of his ministry from the beginning to that day that God should forgive him. Thereafter he himself prayed the last prayer and made the benediction. He told the duo, "Now I thank God the way is clear (Sadela S. , 2012)." But they didn't understand. He encouraged them to be faithful and thereafter he dismissed them.

They went for the morning service and he made the opening prayer. J.A. Medaiyese the Superintendent gave the sermon at the service. Throughout the service Babalola never stood up for once not even when the congregation rose to sing hymns. He remained on his seat, until at the end when he gave the benediction. After the service the congregation moved straight to the dedication of the Faith Home but Babalola went straight to his chambers to rest. After the dedication delegates began to depart to their various destinations. Some of these also came to Babalola to bid him goodbye and to ask for his blessings and prayers and he willingly obliged them. One of these was Pastor Odusona, the General Superintendent of the Church. As he was going Babalola called him back and reminded him of the young man he had met at Ibadan few days before who he promised to help with his wedding. This man had reached the age of marriage but had no father or any helper to see him through. Babalola then took it upon himself to give him the support he needed and reminded the General Superintendent of the church to expedite action on the matter. This was his last act of mercy before he left for eternity.

He was left to rest. At 3p.m his associates came for prayers with him. Medaiyese was the first to pray follow by Odutola. Then just before Babajide could pick up the prayer, Babalola himself took it and began to pray the very last prayer he made on the earth. And what was he praying about? According to Babajide he was praying for all people of the earth that their salvation may be sure and not once did he make mention of his immediate family. He was allowed to rest while Medaiyese went for the evening service. One Michael Isajimi, one of the assistants with Babalola stood at the entrance of his door (Sadela A. , 2000).

Around 4p.m the walls of the room where Babalola was began to shake as if experiencing a tremor or vibrations. But the cause of the movement could not be located. At 4.30 p.m on the dot Babalola breathed heavily three times: Hi, Hi, Hi- as if to say God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit- and like lightning the man was no more. It was exactly forty days to the time he told his mother he would be going to call Jesus. The entire room shook and yet the window panes did not break. Michael cried with a loud voice to summon the elderly men to come. As they opened Babalola's room a wave of power hit them and they all fell to the ground. By the time they rose up and moved near they found he was lifeless.

They began to pray while Babajide sent for Medaiyese who was preaching at the evening service to stop his sermon and close the service immediately and come. They all surrounded Babalola each one holding a part of his body and they began to pray from 5p.m till 7p.m. Medaiyese began to plead in prayer, "Lord what is our sin? What have we done wrong? Where have we missed it? "It was then a vision was shown to someone where he saw Babalola before the mighty gates of heaven and entering through the gate he laid his sword at the feet of the Lord Jesus. The Lord then revealed to this servant that Babalola could not return to them again as they desired because the heavens have already received him. At 7p.m Medaiyese declared plaintively, "The Great Apostle is Gone." He was 55, still fit and agile and without a single grey hair on his head (Akede, 2000).

Thus marks the end of an era in Nigeria's religious and evangelical history. Apostle Joseph Babalola gave instruction before his death that he must be buried close to his parents when he died and anyone that decided to go contrary to this instruction will not see the kingdom of God. Arrangements therefore were made and the body was taken to Efon that night where his father was buried. Even in death his eyes were not closed and there was a smile on his face. Eight days later he was committed to mother earth amidst a flood of tears, wailings and

lamentations. All the schools in Ijesha and Ekiti were shut for the week as a mark of respect to the great apostle. Thus marks the end of an era (Oluwamaki, 2019).

REFERENCE

1. Akede, o. (2000). Akede Eko: A Lagos Yoruba Newspaper. Christ Apostolic Church.
2. Alokun, J. (2010). Christ Apostolic Church. Ibadan: Ibadan.
3. Duyile, W. A. (2023). A Prelude to the Boko Haram Insurgency: A Doctrinal Interrogation. Matondang Journal , 2 (2), 119.
4. Duyile, W. A. (2023). Buhari Administration and the Nigerian Niger Delta Region, 2015-2021. International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science , VII (V), 1842.
5. Duyile, W. A. (2023). The Birth and Formation of the Nigerian Army: A background to the Conundrum of Ethnic Rivalry and Military Doctrine. Lakhomi Journal , 4 (1), 23.
6. Duyile, W. A., & Nwachukwu, J. U. (2023). 'Japa' Phenomenon And Nigeria Students in the Mix of A Proxy War in Ukraine. Matondang Journal , 2 (1), 1.
7. o.o, A. (2010). Akede Eko: A Lagos Yoruba Newspaper. Lagos: Yoruba Newspaper Publisher.
8. Oluwamaki, D. (2019). The Excellent Man of God. Ibadan: Christ Apostolic Church.
9. Political Parties, V. a. (2021). William Abiodun Duyile; Oluwaseun Peter Oyewale. European Journal of Development Studies , 1 (2), 22.
10. Sadela, A. (2000). 80th Memorial Anniversary of Babalola call. Ibadan: CAC Publishers.
11. Sadela, S. (2012). The testimony at the 80th Memorial Anniversary of Babalola Call. Ibadan: CAC Printers.