

## THE PROPHET JOSEPH AYODELE BABALOLA AS A NIGERIAN RELIGIOUS REFORMER

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### Abstract

*Prophets are regarded as God's mouth-piece. They either fore-tell, (predicts future events) or forth-tell (address current lapses in a particular human society). Prophets serve as preachers, teachers, interpreters, oracles, social critics, instructors, and reformers. The Prophet Joseph Ayo Babalola through the revival of 1930 was used by God to reform the Church in Nigeria through healing and miracle ministry. Despite all the persecution by the government and Anglican Church, he was able to reform the church and the people. The Church in Nigeria that appeared to be in a coma came back to life again. The paper concludes that the Christian Church in Nigeria needs a prophet like Joseph Ayodele Babalola who will focus on their role as reformers than pursuing material things.*

**Keywords:** Prophets, Joseph Ayodele Babalola, Religious Reformation, Evangelism, Nigeria.

### Introduction

The primary duty of a prophet is to hear from God and communicate God's message to his audience. The intentions of God on issues were disclosed to the people through the prophets. (Akintola 2008). Most Prophets did not come to the office by inheritance, having been born into a prophetic tribe or family; nor was a son of a former prophet automatically made a prophet because he was the son of such a person. Each prophet was called by God and commissioned to do a specific task for God. Prophets stand as watchmen for their nation because they could enter into the realm of the spirit to stand in the gap between the nation and God. This gave the prophets the privilege to sharpen the religious, economic, and social life of the people and as such, they called for reform and transformation in the land (Griffin, 1997). Joseph Ayodele Babalola served as an important religious reformer with the view of establishing in a Nigeria a prophetic ministry and churches. However, very little attention has been paid to the enormous work of Joseph Ayodele Babalola who performed miracles, reformed the life of ordinary men and women, co-founded the Christ Apostolic Church (C.A.C), and expanded these churches rapidly through evangelistic ministry. No one is sure whether the reason for this inadequate attention was as a result of prejudice against the church (C.A.C) by some historians or not. Could this also be because of his low education (Standard 5)? What we can deduct from his many persecutions and his imprisonment is that it may largely be because of the type of his preaching, the way he preached, and generally his behaviour and ambition to win souls.

It is expedient to define the word religious reformer that constitutes the fulcrum of this paper. Religion is an expression of faith and belief; the conscious response to the ultimate source of existence (Imaekhai, 2010: 28). This source of existence refers to God who demands the

worship of humans irrespective of race, language or colour. As far as worshippers in every religion are concerned, religion performs two basic functions for humanity. These are, one, the heavenly or spiritual function, which determines the relationship between man and God. Two, the earthly or social function which regulates relationships among human beings.

A reformer is a person who works to achieve political or social change (Hornby, 2015: 1295). This suggests that a reformer is an individual who is all out to effect positive changes in what he considered a bad situation. A Religious reformer therefore, is a person burdened with some ideas geared towards religious reforms.

The purpose of this article is to examine the history and activities of the Prophet Ayodele Babalola as a religious reformer among Nigerian society. Joseph Ayodele Babalola is examined to establish how he was used and is still being (his name) used as a religious reformer in Nigeria. Ahistorical and phenomenological approach will be used for this article. Historical approach is to discuss the life history of Ayo Babalola and the phenomenological approach is to discuss that history as it is known and told by his people.

### **The Birth and Call of the Prophet Joseph Ayodele Babalola**

Joseph Ayodele Babalola was born on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1904 in Odo-Owa, near Iloffa, Kwara State, Nigeria (Adamo 2005:25; Aiyegboyin & Ishola 1997:71). His Mother's name was Madam Martha Talabi Rotimi and his Father was Mr. David Lawani Rotimi. Both were members of St Peter's Anglican Church, Iloffa. Mr. David Lawani Rotimi was the Patron of the Church. An unusual and unexplainable incident that characterized his entire life happened. Few months to his birth, Madam Martha Rotimi, (Babalola's mother) suffered from smallpox, which was an epidemic ravaging the countryside then. She was then taken to the forest for treatment (as the disease of smallpox was usually treated at that time). The name of this forest is *Igbo Niyun* (Pleasant Forest). While in this farm something happened which would have been difficult to believe but for the fact that it was narrated by the woman herself. It was in the dry season and someone set fire on the bush leading to a big conflagration that began to consume the bush surrounding the hut where the woman was staying. Luckily her husband David Rotimi was also present when this was happening. There was no way of escape and the end seemed imminent. This made the husband lament: 'We are in trouble. We did not die of a smallpox epidemic in town but we will now perish through this strange fire.' (Medaiyese, 1950:2). Meanwhile, animals of different shapes and kind began moving towards them ostensibly to escape the fire but they stopped just before reaching them. All the animals stopped within fifty feet radius of where they were; and they were looking at them from a distance. As they waited for their end something miraculous happened. Without any external effort or push, the fire started going down and ultimately quenched. As soon as the fire quenched the beasts began to go back one after the other without harming any of them (Madaiyese, 1950: 3).

On January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1918, the very year of the terrible influenza epidemic, like that of Coronavirus, Babalola left Odo-Owa for Lagos with his uncle Mr. Moses Rotimi a catechist of the Anglican Church who was working at Oto near Badagry. Although he was already fourteen years old he had no education which was unusual at that time.

He first began his education at Aworiland where his uncle was stationed for a period. On the transfer of his uncle, he moved to Lagos. He was again enrolled at Methodist School, Ago-

Ijaye at Ebutte-Metta in 1921 where he would complete two sessions before withdrawing again in 1924. They moved to Oshogbo that same year and after a period, he was again enrolled at M.C.S. School in Osogbo. It was here he stayed to study up to Standard Five before he finally dropped out again to learn a trade. The first thing he did was to learn how to repair a car. He mastered it after a short time. But on the completion of his apprenticeship, he had no money to buy the equipment to practice the trade. Hence he began to work in a hospital as a dispensary aid trying to raise the money to buy equipment (Ayeboyin and Ishola 1997:72). Babalola later secured a job with the Public Works Department as a roller driver. As a hardworking man, he liked this job with pay of £4 per month (Ayeboyin & Ishola 1997:72). The Public Works was the colonial creation assigned with the construction and maintenance of public facilities, especially roads. At the time Babalola joined them they were working on Akure-Ilesha Road. Having known something about fabrication it was not difficult for him to master the roller and within a short time he had his team and began to handle the job to the satisfaction of his European supervisor, Mr. Ferguson in 1928.

In September 1928 as they were moving from Owena, Igbara-Oke moving towards Arakeji, he received an order from his supervisor to be prepared to proceed to Ilesha for the repairs of township roads. As he was working in Arakeji the roller he was working with stopped suddenly and refused to function. On October 11, 1928, he heard a voice and immediately his steamroller stopped and refused to function any longer (Ayeboyin & Ishola 1997: 73; Walls 1977:627).

He examined the roller but found no fault with it. According to Medaiyese, this roller was examined by both the blacks and whites who knew about the operation and repairs of the roller and no one could find any fault or problem with the roller (Medaiyese, 1950:2-4). And truly there was nothing wrong with the roller but it refused to work (Medaiyese 1950:2-4).

As of September 1928, Babalola started having some strange experiences (like Angels appearing to him in dreams and visions) which disturbed his sleep for several months. For about two weeks he could not sleep except to read the Bible especially the book of Psalms (Medaiyese 1950:4). On the 25 of September (1928) he narrated his mystical experience:

It happened that I could not sleep for a whole two weeks both night and day. My spirit was rejoicing and I studied the Bible from night till morning. The portion that engaged my attention was Psalms 1- 150 which I read every night. I did not feel sleepy and did not fall sick (Medaiyese, 1950:5).

Babalola interpreted this strange event to mean God's calling into the ministry but he refused to respond positively or answer the call.

This was the very reason why his roller refused to work without any mechanical fault. He was being transported to the heavenly realm. Babalola read the whole book of Psalms every night (Medaiyese 1950:5). According to Babalola as reported by Medaiyese:

On the 9th of October, I was still at the site of the roller that had refused to work. At about 12 noon I heard a voice, a mighty voice whose sound was like

that of 10,000 thunders and calling my name saying, 'Joseph! Joseph!! Joseph!!! Leave this work you are doing, if you do not leave this work this year, this year, I mean this very year you shall be cut off from the land of the living. This happened three times consecutively but I did not bother. I was only concerned with getting the roller to function (Medaiyese, 1950:5).

Without recognizing what was happening, he went on as before. But he was uncomfortable. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 1928, he had no choice but to quit the job and went home to Ipetu- Ijesha where he was staying. After he had prayed and fasted many days. He had a revelation that prayer and sanctified water (*omi iye*) are all he needed to heal all diseases and cure all infirmities. Armed with the Bible and a large bell he began his evangelistic campaign. According to Olayiwola, he was given a handbell and a bottle of 'live-giving water' for driving away evil spirits and healing all kinds of sicknesses (Olayiwola 1995:149). Consequently, there was healing and driving away of evil spirits for anyone who drinks the water (Olayiwola 1995:137-149).

He went back home to Ilofa and organized a prayer band which was meeting at the local Anglican Church. Unfortunately, the meeting did not last long because Babalola was excommunicated from the Anglican Church for his behaviour of displaying the gift of the spirit of prophecy, healing, and profuse use of sanctified water (*omi iye*). Later the prayer band was moved to the house of a lay-reader and Elder in the Anglican Church, Elder Olayemi (Ayegboyin & Ishola 1997:73). Mr. Olayemi was also excommunicated from Anglican Church. However, membership of the prayer band grew while that of the Anglican Church dwindled (Ayegboyin & Ishola 1997:73). When the opposition from the Anglican Church became unbearable he moved to Ibadan and from Ibadan he went to Lagos where he met Pastor Odubanjo, a member of the Faith Tabernacle who welcomes him and re-baptized him, thus making him become a member of Faith Tabernacle Church (Ayegboyin & Ishola 1997:73).<sup>1</sup>Odubanjo saw Babalola's coming as a divine provision because they had been praying that God would send a spiritual revival.

It should be noted that at this time, the Faith Tabernacle Movement was on the verge of collapse. Some of their members had backslided. There was discord among the leaders of the movement on some doctrinal matters, such as a baptism of polygamists, or whether to uphold divine healing or not. Since there was no agreement among the leaders on the practice of the above doctrines and other issues, the unity of the group was at stake. This led to the calling of a peace meeting at Ilesha in 1930 (Olushey, 2000:15). The meeting was to address several doctrinal issues causing ripples within the leadership. Some of the leaders in attendance were Pastors Odubanjo, Akinyele, Akinsinade, Babatope, Onasinwo, and Madayese (Olushey, 2000:16). These leaders invited Joseph Ayodele Babalola to attend the meeting to be considered as a full member of the Faith Tabernacle.

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<sup>1</sup> The real beginning of Aladura Churches (Pentecostal) is a response to the crisis as a prayer group within the missionary churches (mainly Anglican) for ending the epidemic, famine, and depression, and opposition to the use of medicine and infant Baptism. The Precious Stone Society was founded in 1920 in the Anglican Church at Ijebu-Ode by a group of people led by Joseph Sadare and Sophia Odulami as a prayer group. Odubanjo founded another branch in Lagos. They affiliated with an American organization called Faith Tabernacle in Philadelphia but the affiliation did not last long (Isichei 1995:280).

### **Prophets as Religious Reformer in ancient Israel**

Prophets in Israel regard themselves as both 'forth tellers' and 'fore tellers' because they spoke forth the words of God and predicted the future. There is a clear difference between a forth teller and a fore teller. A forth teller speaks out the mind of God to the people, while afore teller speaks or predicts what may eventually come to be (Lasebikan, 2013). Some of the Prophets in ancient Israel were peasants who derived their prophetic mandate from Yahweh. They condemned oppressive regimes and leaders, and also demanded fair treatment for the poor. The aim of the Prophet was to reform the social and religious lives of the people especially the poor (Dada, 2018: 179). They advised the people to serve God.

In ancient Israel, Prophets were religious activists who believed in the supremacy of Yahweh. This is the reason why their audience sometimes refers to them as Yahweh alone party. The Prophets described the interaction of Israel with the religions of their neighbor as syncretism. This was because at a particular time in the life of Israel it became difficult to draw a line of demarcation between the worship of Yahweh and the Canaanites gods. Yahweh was worshipped on the same alter with Baal and Asherah. Eventually, the worship of Baal became very popular as it was preferred to that of Yahweh. The Prophets as religious reformers in ancient Israel stressed that the nation has backslide and that there was the need for her to return to Yahweh the God of their fathers. The Prophets maintained that right relationship with Yahweh will foster peace and tranquility in the society. According to the Prophets the only way for Israel to achieve God's purpose was to be intimate with Yahweh (Awojobi, 2015: 49).

### **Babalola as a Religious Reformer in Nigeria**

In July 1930 leaders of the Faith Tabernacle Church were holding an executive meeting at Ilesa. This meeting was to discuss some crucial matters over which there had been disagreements among members of the Faith Tabernacle Church. Babalola was invited to attend the meeting as a delegate from Lagos and to confirm him as full member. He was introduced by Pastor Odubanjo as a man filled with the Spirit of God. It was at the meeting that Babalola was confirmed as a full member. It should be noted that Babalola was not a yet a leader of the Faith Tabernacle at this point. He was only a gifted member. In other words, he was not recognized as ordained as a Prophet by the group but his gift and activities after being admitted into the full membership of the Faith Tabernacle attested to the fact that he was a Prophet.

Top on the agenda that was dealt with was whether or not polygamists should be immersed in water for baptism. Having cleared the first item on the agenda, as the second which was divine healing was being considered some people were passing by, carrying a dead person wrapped in clothes, crying, and weeping. Babalola, wearing white shorts, a shirt, and a pair of white canvas with a Bible and a bell in his hand came out and prayed in the name of Jesus and the dead man rose (Olusheyeye, 2000:17; Fatokun 2013:74-90). This brought joy to the people and ushered in a new era for the Faith Tabernacle Movement. This brought the meeting to an abrupt end as the news of this miracle spread and people started bringing their sick ones and instant healings and miracles happened. The news of this revival spread to other towns and cities to the extent that people trooped to Ilesha to experience God. Babalola preached to the people asking them to renounce evil practices and witchcraft to embrace Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour (Walls 1977:627; Fatokun 2013: 80). As the population on the revival ground

increased the river Oye which is a few metres to the revival ground was consecrated and used for the healing of the sick people. The sick people at the hospital were carried to the revival ground and the District Officer had to intervene by inviting the Prophet Babalola and then charging him for disrupting hospital services but he was later released (Ayegboyin & Ishola 1997 Many: 74). However, the revival continued and many of the people received salvation, healing and many also dedicated their lives to Christ (Olusheye, 2000:18).

This great revival of 1930 at Ilesha became the beginning of the reformation of Christians and particularly, the Faith Terbanacle Church.<sup>2</sup> It is remarkable that Babalola was at the forefront of the revival (Ayegboyin & Ishola 1997:73) and made the reformation possible. Many Nigerians who were initially consulting herbalists or native doctors now shifted their attention to the true God as represented in Babalola for a solution to issues confronting them. Miracles were allegedly performed in the name of Jesus Christ. Consecrated water was given out freely. The result of this was that thousands of unbelievers, Muslims, traditional worshippers were converted to Christianity (Fatokun 2013:80-81). The church building became too small to contain people. Because of the crowd, an open field was used for service as people from all walks of life came (Abayomi, 2018:24).

The 1930 revival by Joseph Ayodele Babalola was so impactful because it turned the Christian faith and other faiths around. It was reported that barren women of long standings were made fruitful, the blind saw, the dumb spoke, the deaf were made to hear, lepers were cleansed, and insane became sane. Many with diver's sicknesses were cured. Most mainline churches in the city of Ilesha were almost empty because worshippers trooped out to the scene of the revival for divine encounter through prayers in the name of Jesus. Magicians, juju priests, and idol worshippers came surrendering their instruments and charms for destruction (Adegboyega, 1978:24). In three weeks there was the healing of about 100 lepers, 60 blind people, and 50 lame persons (Adegboyega 1978:24). Other churches in Ilesha were almost desolate because their members transferred their allegiance to the revivalist and that all the patients in Wesley Hospital, Ilesha, abandoned their beds to seek healing from Babalola. This divine miracle kicked off The Great Revival of 1930, which saw people coming from most parts of Africa and Diaspora without posters and TV adverts (Adeola1930)<sup>3</sup>

It should be noted that at the 1930 Revival meeting at Oke-Oye, Ilesa by Joseph Ayodele Babalola, prophetic ministry was given prominence. The leadership of the Movement recognized Babalola as the prophet of God. Many idolaters, non-Christians, magicians and Juju priests surrendered their satanic powers and books for destruction (Adegboye, 1978:24). The prophetic ministry of Babalola became more pronounced and other notable prophets that were raised through him included D.O. Orekoya, D.O. Babajide, and Durojaye. Another generation of prophets regarded as grandchildren of Babalola are Prophet Akande (Baaba Abiye, Ede), T.O. Ayanda, T.O. Obadare to mention but a few. Like his counterparts in the

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<sup>2</sup> The Faith Tabernacle of Philadelphia and the British Apostolic Church were the first Pentecostal churches to have a strong presence in Nigeria. They were established in the 1920s through contact with the indigenous leaders of Aladura movements (Marshall 1992:30; Peel 1919:45).

<sup>3</sup> (Adeola 1930, <http://www.ekimogundescendant.org/story-of-late-cac-founder-apostle-ayo-babalola-from-the-book-that-reveals-his-life-why-they-call-him-olorun-1930/>, Accessed 27/5/2020).

Old Testament Babalola was called by God into the prophetic office to stand before men.( I King 17:1, 18-15).

Joseph Ayodele Babalola's fame as a mighty prophetic figure and reformer spread far and wide. An outstanding scholar of Church History at the Premier University, University of Ibadan attested to Joseph Ayodele Babalola was a great reformer and a mighty prophet in his writing:

J.A Babalola's fame as a mighty prophetic figure, spread in July 1930 during his visit to Ilesha, This was occasioned by his outstanding miracle of raising 'a dead' child to life. This feat consequently gave rise to the historic 1930 revival which changed the course of Faith Tabernacle and catapulted it into the limelight. Many people were attracted to Oke-Oye where several mighty works of healing and deliverances were allegedly wrought through prophet Babalola. It is reported that the dumb spoke, the lame walked, the deaf heard, lunatics were delivered, lepers were cleansed, long-standing years of pregnancies were wonderfully delivered and thousands of unbelievers, the Muslims, and idol worshippers were converted and so on... This revival witnessed a vivid and mighty demonstration of the power of God that it was exclaimed: 'God has visited Ilesha' (Fatokun 2013:80).

In 1935 he married Dorcas and in the following year Babalola, accompanied by Evangelist Timothy Baba Busuyi, went to Ghana. On arrival at Accra, he was recognised by some people who had seen him at the Great Revival in Ilesa and he was warmly received. He returned to Nigeria after a successful evangelization of the nation. Babalola was genuinely dissatisfied with the increasingly materialistic and sinful existence of his time because of western civilization's influence on society (Fatokun, 2013: 81).

### **Persecution of the Prophets and the Leaders of the Faith Tabernacle**

Soon after this revival the Prophet Babalola toured the entire nation of Nigeria. When he was in Ondo area where he established his base at Efon Alaye preaching and performing miracles, the government became alarmed because it was alleged that he and his co-workers were accusing people of sorcery and witchcraft which was against the law. There were further allegations against the leaders of the Faith Tabernacle leaders. They accused the Prophet Babalola of inciting Nigerians against the government by 'forcing people not to take medicine and regarding hospitals as satanic institutions' (Ayegboyin & Ishola 1997:75). He was also accused of forcing his adherents to drink unhygienic water which he called 'sanctified water' (*omi iye*) from Oke Oye River. The government believed that the practice can cause an epidemic to the community. In Ilesha, some of the Faith Tabernacle leaders were imprisoned for the so-called criminal offenses of the Prophet Babalola (Adegboyega 1978:30). In Ekiti where the Prophet Babalola worked for some time, the government banned him from using consecrated water (*omi iye*), witch hunting, challenging other cults, condemning other religious faiths, keeping the neighbourhood awake by observing vigil, and conducting open-air public revival meetings (Ayegboyin & Ishola 1997: 75). Eventually, the Prophet Ayodele Babalola was picked up and jailed for six months at Afema Division while he was conducting a revival meeting at Benin.

When the leaders of Faith Tabernacle Church felt that the persecution was too much and could increase, they decided to seek for foreign assistance (Ayegboyin & Ishola 1997: 75). They later affiliated with the Apostolic Church in Bradford, Great Britain. Three missionary delegates were sent to Faith Tabernacle Church in Nigeria to sign the affiliation-D.P William, Andrew Turnball, and W.J Williams.

After the affiliation with the British Apostolic Church, the Nigerian Faith Tabernacle adopted the name 'Apostolic Church'. This affiliation and the adoption of the name of the British Apostolic Church necessitated a re-ordination of the leaders of the Nigerian Faith Tabernacle leaders. To solidify the affiliation and relationship, the British Apostolic Church sent two missionaries, George Perfect and Idris Vaughan as resident pastors on July 22, 1932 (Ayegboyin & Ishola 1997:76; Isichei 1995:280). These missionaries made contact with the British Government authorities and they later relaxed the persecution. Babalola was then released and was allowed to continue his evangelistic campaign. It should be noted that the colonial masters and the missionaries sent to manage the affairs of the church in Nigeria were Briton. The affiliation of the Faith Tabernacle movement to the British Apostolic Church was considered a step in the right direction because the colonial masters who were also British view this development as proper integration with the government of the day and as such the persecution was relax.

In about ten years after the affiliation, there were disagreements when the missionaries were found taking a medicine called quinine for malaria. When they were questioned, they did not deny but affirmed it and maintained that there was nothing wrong in taking medicine for cure or prevention. Some of the Faith Tabernacle leaders such as Babalola, Odubanjo, Akinyele, Esinsinade expressed their great disappointment on the issue and insisted on their belief and practice of divine healing (Clarke 1986:169).

On this issue of using a medicine, a division occurred among the Apostolic Church in Nigeria (Isichei 1995:280). In 1939 the majority of the leaders, led by The Prophet Ayodele Babalola, who opposed the missionaries using the medicine, broke and adopted the name Nigerian Apostolic Church (NAC) (Isichei 1995:280), while others who sympathized with the missionaries continued to worship with the missionaries and adopted the name The Apostolic Church (TAC).

In February 1940, when the Nigerian Apostolic Church spread beyond Nigeria soil, the name was changed to United Apostolic Church (UAC). When they found out that United Apostolic Church (UAC) was a name for a very famous company (United African Company), in Nigeria, they changed the name to the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) in 1941 and were duly registered in May 1943 having been convinced that it was divinely chosen (Mala 1983:67; Oshun 1983: 107).

The Prophet Joseph Ayodele Babalola's prophetic and evangelistic ministry was responsible for the growth and development of C.A.C in Yoruba land and places like Benin Republic, Edo, and Delta States in Nigeria. Kings and Chiefs of many towns and cities were requesting Babalola and his team to stage revival programme in their domain after which C.A.C assemblies were established there. In most of his revival programmes there will be healings, salvation, and deliverance of all kinds such that charms, magical powers, and books were



submitted to his team by those who were being converted. There was an influx of people from the mainline churches like Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Baptist, and others in the new Movement led by prophet Babalola (Adegboyega, 1978:25-26).

Besides, the adherent of the Christian faith who preferred the worship style of Babalola's church migrated from the mainline churches to join the new movement. They claimed that worship services in their former churches were boring and stereotyped. These people accused the white missionaries of modeling worship services in African churches after the West (i.e. American or Europeans). The prayer books liturgies, clerical dress, musical instruments, hymn books, and others were imported. However, when the indigenous churches came on board, they made worship to have African relevance. They introduced African musical instruments like 'Gangan', 'Dundun', 'Bata', 'Apala', 'Sekere', 'Aro', 'Kanago,' and so on. Whenever these instruments are being played people were happy and felt fulfilled in worship. They also danced to the tune of the melodious music. This brought excitement and joy to the worshippers. They came to express themselves to God in their own culture. This to a large extent encouraged growth as multitudes trooped into the church to worship God in the African way. Today Africans compose and sing songs and choruses in their churches (Awojobi, 2010:8-9). The African indigenous churches design their worship services to meet the needs of the worshippers. Most of the African Christians felt at home with their mode of service and programmes. In support of the above claim Adamo asserts that:

Most prominent and widest characteristic of African indigenous churches is the strong interest in the use of the African worldview in their mode of reading and interpreting the Bible. This distinguishes African Christianity from Western Christianity. The missionary/Western ways of reading and interpreting the Bible are too foreign to meet the urgent needs of Africans. They are down-to-earth in their belief, doctrine, and response to the problems of their African congregation. These indigenous churches preach the message that is rooted in African culture and light of the existence of evil spirits, witches and wizards, dreams, trances, and visions. They respond to these problems through exorcism, rituals, sacrifices, prayers, fasting, bathing, and the power of words (Adamo, 2005:39-40).

However, it should be noted that the revival of Joseph Ayo Babalola in 1930 had both positive and negative effects. The positive aspect was that hundreds of thousands of people claimed to have accepted the Christian faith. Many claimed to have been healed from sicknesses or diseases while a lot claimed to have been delivered from demonic powers. The negative effects were that the ministry of Babalola attracted persecutions from the Government of the day and the mainline churches. For instance, Captain W.A. Ross, the resident at Oyo province in his letter to the higher colonial authority described Babalola and his group as enemies of the Church and as such should not be recognized (Abayomi, 2018:26). The movement, however, became established and stronger as committed and influential members in the society became members of the group

Many prayer mountains were established by Babalola and his team of prophets. Christians and non-Christian are seen patronizing the prophets on these mountains for solutions to their problems. This led to the growth of the C.A.C. The number of the C.A.C. assemblies founded

by Prophet Babalola is innumerable. However, some leaders in the Church claimed that Babalola pioneered more than six hundred local assemblies in Nigeria and abroad (Abayomi, 2016:10-11). It should however be noted that Babalola was not the only founder of Christ Apostolic Church (C.A.C).

Joseph Ayodele Babalola slept in the Lord in 1959 but his works speak on till today. His work has given birth to so many revivalists in our days now. Joseph Ayo Babalola still lives today though he died years ago. That is why many of his members pray to Jesus with his name as they pray with God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Whenever they pray they add *Olorun Ayo Babalola* (The God of Ayo Babalola). That is how much he is revered by CAC adherents. Members of his church, C.A.C see him equal to the biblical apostles like Peter, Paul, and others as far as spiritual power is concerned. The church later opened up several primary and grammar schools, a teachers' training college, a seminary, maternity homes, and a training school for prophets. As of today, the church has its Missionary and General Headquarters in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

We have discussed the humble background of a humble and mighty prophet of God, Joseph Ayodele Babalola, who came from a small village of Ilofa in Kwara State, Nigeria. We have also discussed the great 1930 revival in Ilesha and the mighty miracle that God had performed through him. Despite all the persecutions by the government and the Anglican Church of the day, his work expanded and his reform continued to be great throughout Nigeria and other countries and continents in the establishment of the C.A.C churches.

While the missionary churches in Africa sought mostly to capture the cream of the society, that is, the top civil servants, engineers, lawyers, wealthy businessman, skilled workers, university teachers, doctors, the Indigenous churches, including C.A.C, sought those who were the least socially and materially privileged people (Omoyajowo 1978: 96-110). The African Indigenous Churches' ability to translate African spirituality and culture to African Christianity, especially for the underprivileged societies who struggled to find identity and dignity in the face of exploitation is important and it is a genuine reformation (Deji 2010:12).

From the foregoing, the growth and expansion of the Christ Apostolic Church today was the work of God through the revival of 1930 by Joseph Ayo Babalola. As of today, the church is found in all the 36 states in Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory. It has branches in West, South, East, and Central Africa. The church is one of the fastest-growing indigenous churches in the continent. The church also has branches in America, Europe, Australia, and other places. Apart from this, the ministry of the prophet was accorded a significant place in the life of the church.

The message of Joseph Ayodele Babalola brought hope to the dying churches and nations. If our readers acknowledged and accepted the mighty work that God has done through Prophet Ayodele Babalola as a reputable Professor and church historian, Fatokun, has acknowledged that,

The great 1930 revival which started at Oke-Oye, Ilesha allegedly shook Nigeria as a nation. Efforts were made to carry this revival to other places.

Hospitals were reportedly deserted by patients for healing at crusade grounds. Members of the historic churches abandoned services for revival meetings (Fatokun 2013:81),

You would certainly agree with us that if there is a time that the Church in Nigeria and the world need of a prophet like Babalola who will champion revival in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is now.

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