

Initial Problems of the Christ Apostolic Church, Agbala Itura and Proffered Solutions

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Introduction

There is scarcely any individual organization without its problems. Such is the situation with C.A.C. Agbala Itura. The Christ Apostolic Church, Agbala Itura, like any other corporate body or indeed any other Church had numerous problems from the beginning, and is still grappling with some now. It is however the belief of the worshippers in the Church that God is able to solve all problems.

Some of these problems could be regarded as teething problems, which have been surmounted, while some of the problems are yet to be solved. The Church and its leadership are still looking forward to solving these problems. Some of these problems will be identified and examined below. They include what the members refer to as "opposition from the kingdom of Satan and hell", backsliding of members, financial/ economic problems, interdenominational rancor, differences within the leadership of the C.A.C., disunity and separation within the Church itself, disenchanted youths, allegations about long and boring services, accommodation and space, organization of outreaches, crusades, evangelism, hostilities from the Muslims and others in the neighborhood, transportation and communication, death of some pastors, illiteracy and staff development, unwarranted visitors (thieves), unemployment, the press and a host of other problems.

It is significant that the above problems were identified by informants interviewed by the researcher. These informants cut across all categories of people, Pastors and laymen. The researcher observed that, our informants did not mention some latent problems like leadership tussle, misappropriation of funds, low level of morality in the Church, and dwindling level of spirituality. We, however, probed deep with informants who nevertheless mentioned none of these common problems. The researcher came to the conclusion that it is either that the informants have high regard and respect for the founder and the Church and hence would not want their names to be associated with such problems or that such problems do not exist at all in the Church. The researcher is much more comfortable with the latter option since informants willingly volunteered to enumerate the problems they stated about the Church without any undue pressure.

Spiritual Oppositions from The Kingdom of The Devil

It is the opinion of Mrs. Yesufu, the former Director of Communication at Agbala Itura, that the main problem of the Church is "Opposition from the Kingdom of Satan and hell" (Mrs. Yesufu, 2001). When the researcher probed further, Mrs Yesufu explained that the devil who is the enemy of God and his children has instigated problems and has waged wars against the Church. In spite of this, the devil has not prevailed on the Church. She explained further that, although God has conquered the devil, it is a point of fact that the devil in its subtle and crafty nature rears its ugly head as would be seen in the other problems facing the Church. The point being made is that other problems encountered by the Church emanate from the fact that the devil does not want the manifestations of the work of God. Whereas the informant did not expatiate on this problem initially, when the researcher probed further through leading questions, she was able to explain that by opposition from the kingdom of Satan and hell; she was referring to, spiritual as well as metaphysical battles or warfare from the devil and his cohorts against the C.A.C. Agbala Itura. The old saying is therefore true of Agbala-Itura that "The Church is marching on and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. (Holy Bible)"

The foundation of the C.A.C. Agbala Itura was to give succour to the problems of the people. This was the idea behind the dream of the Church as revealed to the founder, Pastor, S.K. Abiara and hence the name, Agbala-Itura. This does not, however, preclude problems. Problems would indeed come, but the Church would surmount them. Hence, other problems faced by the Church are in lieu of the afore-stated. We shall proceed to examine these other problems.

Backsliding of Members

Another problem of the Church has to do with members of the Church who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour turning away from the church. The Church finds it painful to discover that people who come in with one problem or the other often bolt away or become lukewarm soon after receiving their miracles or divine healing from Agbala Itura. Unexpectedly, some depart to other Churches, while others might even stop attending Churches altogether. Without doubt, this trick of the devil is discouraging.

Here, it should be noted that Agbala-Itura is a church that emphasizes miracle, divine healing, deliverance, prosperity, salvation, and the hope of heaven or paradise for all those who Endeavour to come to the

Church. This is in line with the dream of the founder, Pastor Prophet Abiara, to offer succour to those who are in problems. This is in line with the scriptures (Holy Bible). It is therefore common for people with problems like sicknesses and diseases, poverty, unemployment, and a host of other problems to besiege Agbala-Itura Churches. It is also noteworthy that Agbala-Itura was founded at a time when the country (Nigeria) was going down the drain economically and hence poverty was common with the citizenry. The low class of the citizens of Nigeria was badly affected by this problem and hence the mass movement into and mass patronage of "spiritual Churches" of which Agbala-Itura is one.

The Church welcomes all categories of people without discrimination. In fact, initially, the Church was more or less interdenominational. The church also welcomes people from other religions like Islam and African Traditional Religion. Suffice it to say that many of those who have benefited from healing miracles in the Church have been "outsiders" like people from other churches, and other religions like Islam and indigenous religion. The primary emphasis was on miracles of healing, and comfort for all.

Little wonder, therefore that, some who came from outside as well as those from inside who benefit from these miracles of deliverance, often bolt away, only to go back to their former religions or churches. Needless to say, some were never converted in the first instance, but only came to enjoy the "booties of miracles!" These explanations could be given for the exodus of people from the Church after they might have received their miracles.

Economic and Financial Problems

The C.A.C. Agbala-Itura is also confronted with economic as well as financial problems. The Church is faced with the problem of lack of funds to execute most of the programmes and projects, even though the Church cannot be said to be poor. However, it is saddled with much more responsibilities than its finances can actually support effectively and efficiently. For instance, the Church organizes from time to time several programmes and requires so many equipments to facilitate its evangelism, radio and television programmes as well as pay staff salaries and effect a host of other things that require huge sum of money. According to Rev. Banji Olukotun, the Church is faced with the problem of finance at the moment. He explained further that there is financial problem at the grass root, that is, with the other branches of smaller Agbala Itura Church, where poverty is dominant among the people (Revd. Banji Olukotun, 2001). A good number of the congregation cannot even give offering not to talk of tithe. Hence, it is the main Church at the headquarters in Old Ife Road and the other buoyant branches Churches in Ibadan and Lagos that finance the smaller Churches at the local level. Furthermore, it is the opinion of Olukotun that "the average member of the Congregation is relatively poor and lives below the average per capital income" (Revd. Banji Olukotun, 2001).

In the meantime, Pastor Olaiya in his contribution lamented that "some think that Agbala Itura is wealthy whereas only God sustains the Church." (Pastor D. A. Olaiya, 2001). He thus feels that the Church needs more money than she has at the moment. Still on the issue of finance, another informant, Pastor Oladejo, stressed that majority of the branches and satellite Churches of Agbala Itura rely on the headquarters for survival as regards financial assistance. Hence, the financial burden of the young and growing Churches or satellites rest heavily on the headquarters. Pastor Oladejo, however, quickly added that this situation is never for too long as the branches often stand on their own and maintain themselves once they are settled (Pastor S. B. Oladejo, 2001).

However, in a bid to find solution to these financial problems, he submitted that the founder and his assistants have donated their personal money to the Church. This has helped the Church to overcome some of its challenges. (Pastor S. B. Oladejo, 2001).

From the afore-stated, it could be adduced that the Church is faced with financial problems because majority of its members or congregation are, in the words of Pastor Akinyele Akanbi, "petty traders", although there are professors, doctors among others." (Pastor A. Akanbi, 2001) Little wonder, Pastor Sanni Gbenga said that though "the congregation is large, but most members give lower denominations of the currency." (Pastor S. Gbenga, 2001) Hence, Pastor Clement Olusola also stated that, "Not much is realised even though people think that Agbala-Itura is wealthy." He stated further that, "there are very many projects for which there is limited fund. Therefore, the Church sometimes purchases things or materials instalmentally." (Pastor C. Olusola, 2001).

The Church as it continues to grow and develops would require funds to be able to meet up with the challenges of the Church as they emerge. The congregation would need to respond to this problem urgently.

Financial and economic problems are not limited to C.A.C. Agbala-Itura, the problem cuts across many sections of the Nigerian Society including the Churches. P. Gifford backs this opinion up when he writes thus:

Nigeria is a country with rich and extensive natural endowment. However, her citizens groan under extreme poverty and a stagnant economy, which aggravate tensions leading to disillusionment. This is typified in joblessness and deteriorating infrastructures. Most Nigerian Communities are no better than slums while most families can hardly feed themselves. "Potable water, good roads, proper medical facilities, social infrastructures

and good public schools remain a perpetual mirage to the majority of Nigerians. (P. Gifford)

D. Gaya is also of the opinion that:

Only 11 million people in Nigeria can safely be described as people living in good conditions. The remaining 118 million people can be described as poor and hopeless. (D. Gaye)

Isiramen also supports this opinion when she writes:

The poor condition of Nigerians is easily exposed as one walks the streets of the nation. The gap between the rich and the poor is so wide that the income of a single person could equal or even surpass the millions of Nigerians put together. Adequate medical care remains alien to the people. Although science and technology would readily consider it superstitious, the belief in sicknesses that are above orthodox or traditional medicine is largely upheld. There is also the belief in the existence of "wicked spirits" or "demons" that are said to be responsible for these ailments that are beyond medical care. (Isiramen)

Gifford, Gaya and Isiramen have described the situation in Nigerian Churches, which also affected Agbala-Itura, thus constituting one of the problems of the Church. With God however, no problem is insurmountable.

Interdenominational Rancour

The churches in Nigeria preach the same message from the same Bible, rivalry, jealousy, envy and sometimes hatred are often noticed among Churches of varying denominations, especially among the new generation Churches that are founded and directed by individuals. These rancor's often arise as a result of the craze and rush for members and population of each of the churches. Pastors with only a few members in their Churches may therefore be envious of those with large congregations. Sometimes, also Pastors often scramble for wealthy members to join their churches and hence do clash in that bid. Wealthy and prestigious members are also desired by Pastors in order to improve the financial status of the Churches.

The Charismatic personality of Pastor Abiara and his assistant and the prayerful nature of the church have been able to keep this problem under proper check. Pastor Abiara is also amiable, simple, spiritual and polite. He and his assistants have therefore been able to avoid this problem to a large extent with its serious implications.

Differences within the Leadership of the C.A.C

Over the years, the C.A.C. Worldwide has been faced with the problem of leadership and the C.A.C. Agbala-Itura cannot claim to be free from the squabbles within the Church. As a matter of fact, the Church falls within one of the factions regarding who leads the C.A.C. Denomination. There are differences in the leadership of the C.A.C. generally. These differences arose as a result of individual differences and the modus operandi of the Church administration and spiritual development. The leadership of the C.A.C. has not been able to manage the crises arising out of these differences effectively and it is greatly affecting the growth and development of the C.A.C. Some Church founders and leaders have been accused of insubordination to the national executive and dismissed. Hence, parallel leadership had emerged and there had been litigations and counter injunctions. As a result of this development, the Church has subjected herself to the control of the judiciary. This does not augur well for the promotion of the work of God. The C.A.C. Agbala-Itura has remained directly or indirectly a part of this development which can be attributed to the perpetration of the Kingdom of Satan and hell to see the Church of God, divided.

It is hoped that the leadership will understand this and find spiritual solution to the things of the Spirit rather than finding solutions in the physical world through the judiciary. Still on this issue of differences within the leadership of the C.A.C., Oshun admits that:

Clearly, the national leadership of C.A.C. whether in its forum or interim expression, has derailed from its main goal of soul winning to one of empire seeking and unless there is a timely curtailment of this derailment, the Church may take a turn for the worst. This has happened because the national Church has ignored its source, its faith, its vision and its fervour. It has also ignored the means of grace in ensuring the nurture, extension and survival of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth. (C. O. Oshun, 1983). Oshun also recommends "Moral integrity" as a panacea to solving the existing problem of differences within the leadership of the C.A.C.

Disunity and Separation within the C.A.C. Agbala Itura

Similar to the above is the issue of disunity and schism within the Church. Here, it is noteworthy that even within the rank and file of the C.A.C. Agbala Itura, there is sometimes disunity and separation. Within the assembly, there are rivalries, contentions and strives leading to disunity and separation. In the view of Mrs.

Yesufu, some of these cases are caused by selfishness from people seeking positions of leadership or money. (Mrs. Yesufu) There is rivalry among such people in the Church and this is common to the leadership, whereas for the laity they easily backslide or take their exit from the congregation.

Disunity among the leaders or Pastors have resulted in some of the member of the congregation leaving the Church while some pastors leave to plant new churches. For instance, according to Pastor Olaiya, some Pastors broke away from the Church to establish their own Churches after they had been trained by the founder and the Church. (Pastor Olaiya) However, he added that some of these Pastors often come back to apologize and seek permission to be reinstated into their former positions when after their newly founded churches prove unviable. (Pastor Olaiya)

On this same issue, Pastor Oladejo also opined that many ministers employed and trained by the Church often jettison the ministry after they had been trained" (Pastor Oladejo) as noted by Pastor Olaiya. According to Pastor Oladejo too, such ministers often abandon the Church in order to establish their own." (Pastor Oladejo) However, he was also of the opinion that despite their action, the absence of such Pastors are seldom noticed in Agbala-Itura and therefore of no significance.

Pastor Sanni Gbenga also added his voice to this issue of disunity and jealousy in the Church arguing that "being a large congregation, once you are noticed to be gifted, there is envy, jealousy and grudging." (Pastor Sanni Gbenga) He commented further that people tend to forget that it is God who promotes people, they count on duration. They think it is the length of service that determines promotion. (Pastor Sanni Gbenga)

The researcher observes, however, that this problem of disunity and separation is not only common to Agbala-Itura, but to almost all churches. Quite often, both the clergy and the laity in many churches often bring in selfishness, greed, pride, and a host of other problems to the church in a bid to cater for themselves. This is sometimes due to the human nature. This is however, not implying that people are totally godless but that they are just human despite their commitment to God.

Disenchanted Youths and Long Service

It was the opinion of Mrs. Yesufu that the youths of the Church are getting disenchanted as they sometimes find it cumbersome and boring to sit for hours listening to the elders in the Church. (Mrs Yesufu) It is significant that in these days of Pentecostalism the youths are known to be energetic and very active, restless and full of youthful exuberance. However, the interests of the youths can hardly be sustained once the programmes become dull or uneducative to them. Given the fact that the C.A.C. Agbala Itura happened to be a place that people bring one kind of problem or the other to, and seeking for solution to them, the seemingly unending prayers disenchant the youths.

Indeed, they become disenchanted and are often mobilized to leave once the programmes do not carry them along any more. Lending credence to the boring nature of the Church Service, Pastor Clement Olusola has this to say,

Sometimes, people do complain about the long service especially during the festivals. Without doubt, the Church must find solution to this problem, knowing fully well that the basis of the society is the youth. At the moment, the youths are the bedrocks of the numerous emerging Pentecostal Churches flourishing.

In most churches, the youths participate actively in the Churches as members of the choir, guild of ushers and a number of church activities. Most times, the youths like to sing actively, beat the drum set, play the organ or the piano, dance vigorously and shout as a sign of joy and contentment. All these are characteristics of the youths and they must be accommodated by the adults if the youths would be retained. The youths must also be kept busy with vibrant activities that will interest them. The youths are also interested in importing western ideas like the modern way of dressing and dancing to the Church. In all these, they must be accommodated by the adults if they are to retain their membership.

Space and Accommodation

It is the view of virtually all my informants that a major problem facing the Church is that of accommodation and land, especially now that the Church is expanding. According to Mrs. Yesufu, "quite often, the Church suffers the problems of space with respect to land and housing" (Mrs Yesufu). Many times, the Church is faced with the problem of accommodation, in her effort to expand. Mrs. Yesufu stated further that in an attempt for the Church to expand, the Church scouts around for plots of land or even buildings to be purchased. (Mrs Yesufu)

The land and buildings, however, turned to be very scarce. Sometimes in an attempt by the Church to solve the problems of land, buildings and accommodation, the church has been dragged into some embarrassing situations. One of such examples happened when the church purchased a landed property in Lagos and built an edifice in Ikeja. However, it turned out to be a sad story as the vendor of the land was not only fake, but also dishonest and fraudulent. The Church was given fake documents. Hence, the Church was taken to the court and judgment was given against the church by the presiding judge. The end result was that the Church property in

Lagos was looted, the building demolished while the land was returned to the owner (Mrs Yesufu). According to Pastor Oladejo, "this single event served as a great setback, discouragement and frustration to the Church at the time" (Pastor Oladejo).

It is also the opinion of Deaconess Dorcas Abiara that "the problems of space regarding accommodation for the overbearing population of the Church is obvious" (Deaconess Dorcas Abiara). The Church is so faced with the problem of space and accommodation to the extent that crusade and revival grounds have been converted to Churches in order to accommodate the rising population (Pastor Akinyele Akanbi). Even more importantly, in a newly founded branch of the C.A.C. Agbala-Itura planted in the Agugu area, where so many people responded to the Gospel, and were willing to join, it became difficult for the Church to get accommodation and space to keep the congregation (Pastor Akinyele Akanbi).

In the same vein, Evangelist Michael O. Joseph, reiterated that there was a time when one of the branches of Agbala-Itura in Osogbo was using the building and compound of Fakunle Comprehensive High School, but the Principal of the school was a Muslim. With time, the Muslims applied to use the same venue. Consequently, the Church was given one week's notice to quit the place. The Church therefore had to move to Fakunle Hall, Osogbo as an alternative. Unfortunately, however, another quit notice was issued to the Church to vacate the premises of Fakunle Hall. The Church had to vacate there and relocate to Igbona area of Osogbo. Here again, the last quit notice was given to the Church. From there, the Church moved to her present location in Osogbo (Evang. M. D. Joseph).

All the above confirm the problems of space and accommodation that the Church has been grappling with for a long time as revealed in the course of this research. The problem of accommodation, land and space is, however, not limited to Agbala-Itura, but cuts across other churches, schools and business concerns. This problem is more acute in major cities in Nigeria noted for fast development. People tend to migrate from the rural areas en-mass to cities and developed areas thereby constituting overcrowding there while the villages are massively deserted.

Organization of Outreaches, Crusades and Evangelism

The Church has constraints in engaging in evangelism, organizing outreaches, and crusades, as well as how to administer and manage these programmes of the Church. Evidently, the constraints are the consequences of lack of adequate funding. Funds are needed to facilitate these primary programmes of the Church. If enough funds are not made available, it would be difficult for the Church to make headway in this direction. Lack of funds therefore is responsible for the inability of the Church to be able to manage effectively and efficiently programmes of evangelism through which souls could be won into the Church and consequently the kingdom of God.

Muslim and Neighbourhood Hostilities

Another major problem, which my informants generally identified, had to do with the fact that the site of the C.A.C. Agbala-Itura, at Old Ife Road is within the premises where majority of the people residing in the vicinity are Muslims. It was the opinion of many of my informants that the Muslims and landlords in the area are hostile to the Church. Instances of hostility will hereby be cited below. Deaconess Abiara classified this problem as chronic (Deaconess Abiara).

She recalled that their neighbours look up for the minutest excuse to confront the founder of the Church and other leaders on the fact of disturbance and inconvenience to the environment by the Church. These inconveniences they claim range from disturbance during Church Services to the misuse of parking space of the member's vehicles to the fact that the Church members are passing through the front of their houses on the way to and from the Church. All these they consider as inconveniences.

However, they make these complaints aggressively by shouting and making a lot of noise in order to provoke the worshippers. However, these misunderstandings have not degenerated into quarrels between the Muslim residents and the Church because the leadership of the Church had always handled the matter with care by apologizing each time they complained.

Pastor S.B. Oladejo, and Lady Evangelist Rachael Allen also highlighted the problem posed by the Muslim Community. It is the belief of Oladejo that the Muslims are antagonistic, (Pastor S. B. Oladejo) while Evangelist Rachael Allen referred to them as "aggressive neighbours" (Lady Evang. Rachael Allen) Alokun, while writing about the history of the C.A.C. generally listed the aggression of the Muslims as one of the problems that confronted the C.A.C. generally in the early years of the church. It is the view of Alokun that:

Moslem leaders were also opposed to the revival movements, which came to rob them of the majority of their followers. The opposition from this group of believers was strongest in big centres such as Ibadan, Ogbomoso, Oyo, Ilorin, Offa, Ikare. These were towns where the people were predominantly Muslim (A. Alokun, 1991).

But apart from the Muslim group, the people in the neighbourhood of the church are generally hostile. These neighbours often rise against the church complaining that the church is too noisy (Pastor D. Olaiya). Indeed, according to Deaconess Abiara, some landlords around the church were very angry at the time the church acquired the plot of the church, which was, then a thick forest (Deaconess Abiara). But as the church began to grow and develop, the people started complaining that there was too much noise around the Agbala Itura, area. On each occasion of complaint, the founder had to appeal to them.

It is also worthy of mention that very many people are jealous of the founder of the C.A.C Agbala Itura as well as the progress he is making. Hence, the church has many enemies outside arising out of complaints from all and sundry. It is not surprising therefore that apart from the Muslims, some churches around the location and vicinity of the church are also jealous of the church (Pastor Olaiya).

The opinion of Olaiya is corroborated by Alokun who also listed the older churches as one of the problems of the C.A.C. in the early years. According to Alokun:

The greatest opposition to the revival movement came from the older churches that were for a number of reasons intolerant of the movement (C.A.C.). Prominent among them were the Anglican and the Methodist Churches, especially the former (A. Alokun, 1991).

Transport and Communication

There was also the problem posed by transportation and communication facilities. In view of the problem of funds, the church thus has the problem of communication system as some churches do not have gadgetry with which to preach the gospel. Assistance only come to such churches or branches from the headquarters. In the same manner, transportation has been a problem. The church has the problem of lack of vehicles to transport the over-whelming population of people to and from the revival or crusade ground. This is so, according to Pastor Akinyele Akanbi, because there are usually not enough vehicles to transport the congregation (Pastor A. Akanbi).

Death of Pastors

Death has no doubt dealt a serious blow to the church. Two of my informants noted this and lamented on it, especially in view of the fact that some pastors or members of the church were involved. According to Mrs. Yesufu, "death of pastors and members of the church occur now and then usually through motor accidents" (Mrs. Yesufu). It is also in the same vein that Pastor Clement Olusola cited the incident of 1991 when an accident claimed the lives of some ministers of the church, while many of them were severely injured (Pastor C. Olusola). According to him, that singular occurrence weighed down the church for a long time thereafter (Pastor C. Olusola). These cases of death are no doubt a source of concern. For, even in the course of this research, Pastor Folahan who is looked up to as the man to take over the leadership of the church suddenly died after a brief illness in what so far seems a mystery.

A development of this kind no doubt lowers the morale of both members and Pastors of the church, even though we know that things may not always be smooth at all times as Pastor Olusola noted (Pastor C. Olusola). We only hope that the death of Pastors and members will come to an end but the church must pray seriously against this and commit the lives of all to God Almighty who alone can preserve lives.

Illiteracy and Staff Development

A great challenge of the church is that majority of its members are either illiterate or with low educational background, who come with one problem of the other to the church and are seeking divine healing and salvation. Whereas it is highly commendable of the founder. Pastor Abiara who through self efforts and adult education has transformed himself from the low level of education to a fairly literate and educated person, it is advisable that his pastors and other members of the congregation should follow suit. This is so because quite a lot of the ministers and workers of the church are also not educated. In the words of Revd. Banji Olukotun, "the average level of education in the church is still very low and this is in respect of both members and the pastors" (Revd. B. Olukotun). Hence, the church needs to plan ahead in the area of getting the Pastors particularly educated and encouraging the congregation in this age of Western Education. The church therefore has a lot to do in the area of education and staff development. The church should be able to grant her staff the opportunity to be trained and develop the church in spite of financial constraints. In the modern age to be able to catch up with the rest, the leadership of the church must be educated as it is the case with the emergent Pentecostal Churches

Unwanted Visitors

Yet again, the church is faced with the problem of visitors with negative missions. Such visitors include thieves, armed robbers, and kidnappers. These visitors, according to Pastor Oladejo, often put the church in difficult situations by their acts (Pastor Oladejo). Some of them in the bid to perpetrate their acts often come to the church as worshippers, while having their eyes on other things. However, they are often arrested by the security outfit of the church and are taken to the police station. There are times also, when they are arrested by

the spirit of God. When this happens, they come forward to confess their sins and they are prayed for rather than being castigated for their actions. Indeed, such people often become genuine members of the church after conversion.

Unemployment

There is also no doubt that joblessness and unemployment is a major problem and challenge that the church is faced with. Apart from the fact that jobless people are many in the church and even in the society generally, so do people who can be regarded as destitute flock the church for one kind of assistance or the other (Pastor Oladejo). The church, however, does that entire she could to assist and provide for them until they can get jobs.

The Press

It is also the opinion of people in Agbala Itura that the press constitutes a sort of problem to the church. According to Pastor Oladejo, "these people (pressmen) often come here to ask satanic questions that can cause a lot of problems". By satanic questions Pastor Oladejo meant questions that can implicate the church or get the church into trouble with the state or political authorities. Such questions include, "Do you support or agree with the present government's policy on one matter or the other?" These are often asked from the Pastor/Founder and other Pastors by the pressmen. Because of the sensitive nature of some questions asked Pastor Abiara and most of his associates always respond in a way that would not incur the wrath of the powers.

From the above, it would be seen that the Christ Apostolic Church, Agbala Itura is faced with quite a number of problems and challenges as highlighted. Little wonder therefore that the church in spite of its quite fairly long years of existence since 1977 has not been able to grow beyond what it is, especially when placed against the astronomical growth of the new emergent Pentecostal Churches, in the city of Ibadan. The question therefore arises, what effort is being made by the church and its leadership to solve all these problems.

In an attempt to answer this question, the church and its leadership should begin to look inward. First, efforts should be made to encourage the large congregation to give bountifully to the work of God. However, the more concerned are the wealthy and educated who should give much to support the work of the Lord. It should be noted that no one gives to the Lord and lacks. However, for the poor to be able to contribute and lift up the church financially, efforts must be made to get them employed. In this way, the problem of the poor and destitute in the church will be solved.

Concerning the church and the problem of the youths, the church should re-organize the liturgy and at the same time carry the youths, the leaders of tomorrow, along. The youths should be given the opportunity of preaching as a way of training for their tomorrow. The church should therefore endeavour to keep abreast with time by trying to also focus attention on what goes on in the other churches. It is also significant to note that given the spate of death in the Church, especially with respect to Pastors, the most recent of which was that of Pastor Folahan, the effort at praying against satanic devices should become more rigorous and untiring. It is only with prayers and fasting that such problems can come to an end. This is not unconnected with the fact that the devil does not want the work of God to succeed. It is also with prayers that the church will be able to solve the problem of disunity, separation and backsliders who do return after sometime. It is hereby stated that there should be a re-awakening to what the situation was between 1963 and 1977 when the C.A.C Agbala Itura, was put in place. If the effort at fasting and prayers as well as evangelism and outreaches can be carried out with diligence, the church would no doubt move from strength to strength. In the same manner, prayer will be the solution to the problem of external persecutors.

Bibliography

The 13th Point of the article of faith of the C.A./C. in the Second Chapter of this work., it says "Faith in God, the Jehovah Jireh to supply all financial needs"

Mrs Yesufu, 52 years old, was interviewed on the 20th of July, 2001. At the time of interview, she was the Director of Communication in the C.A.C. Agbala Itura. She has since retired shortly after she was hospitalized briefly for an undisclosed ailment.

Revd Banji Olukotun was interviewed on 12/09/2001. He was 53 years old and was one of the foundation members of the Church who joined in 1978. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics and a Masters degree in Business Administration.

Pastor David Abiodun Olaiya, interviewed on 31/10/2001, 53 years old. He is the current District Superintendent, C.A.C. Agbala-Itura and a very important dignitary in the Church. In fact, the third in rank in the order of hierarchy. Indeed, he has about 32 Churches under him.

Pastor S.B. Oladejo interviewed on 10/03/2001, 45 years old. He is an associate Pastor in the C.A.C. Agbala Itura and joined the Church in 1984.

Pastor Akinyele Akanbi, interviewed on 20/05/2001, 36 years old. He is the current Public Relations Officer of the C.A.C. Agbala Itura.

Pastor Sanni Gbenga, interviewed on 15/06/2001, 36 years old. He is currently the assembly Pastor of C.A.C. Agbala Itura, Agugu branch and he joined the Church in 1999.

Pastor Clement Olusola, interviewed on 21/07/2001, 39 years old. He joined the C.A.C. Agbala Itura in 1983 and is currently an associate Pastor at the headquarters of the Church.

P. Gifford, African Christianity: its Public Role, (London, Hurst and Co. 1998); p. 4 reproduced in Isiramen C.O. Biblical Healing: The Craze in Contemporary Nigerian Society. A Paper presented at the 16th Annual Conference of the Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies (NABIS) 15th-18th July, 2003 at Babcock University Ilisan-Remo, Ogun State, p.2.

D. Gaye, "Ethnic clashes in Nigeria: A Nightmare vision of what capitalism has to offer". [Http/www.Marxist.Com /Africa/Nigeria ethnic Conflicts html](http://www.Marxist.Com/Africa/Nigeria%20ethnic%20Conflicts.html). Lagos, December, 1999 p. 1 reproduced in Isiramen pp. cit

C.O. Oshun, "The Experience of Christ Apostolic Church" in Ademola Ishola & Deji Ayegboyin; (eds) Rediscovering and Fostering Unity in the body of Christ the Nigerian Experience, Ibadan, Wellspring Prints Limited, p. 165.

Deaconess Dorcas Abiara interviewed on 25/08/2001, 48 years old. She is married to the younger brother of the founder, Pastor S.K. Abiara.

Evangelist Michael D. Joseph, interviewed on 10/09/2001, 35 years old. He joined the Church in 1994.

Lady Evangelist Rachael Allen interviewed on 17/10/2001, 48 years old. She joined the Church in 1983.