

Socio-Historical Analysis of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church Unification, Obafemi Awolowo University Campus Fellowship, Nigeria

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Abstract: *Since the division of the Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) Church in 1929, there has not been a single leader of all the factional bodies. Over the years, many attempts have been made in order to bring about a unified C&S church that would involve all the many factional bodies, which have also failed. Not until the 1980s when some group of students in higher institution came together to form a unified C&S church that will comprised of all the factional bodies. The quest for the oneness of all members of the church regardless of factions was what led to the establishment of the Cherubim and Seraphim Unification Campus Fellowship. Thus, using data collected through participant observation and secondary sources, the study focused on the beginning, growth, spread and the various practices that had led to the unification of members of the C&S Church in the higher institutions, with particular focus on the Cherubim and Seraphim Unification Church, Obafemi Awolowo University Campus Fellowship. It also assessed the impact of the unity on the fellowship and the society at large. The study found out that despite the many divisions in the C&S church at large, there is unity with regards to campus fellowships, especially the Obafemi Awolowo University Campus Fellowship from whom other branches emanated. The data collected were analysed using socio-historical and descriptive phenomenological approaches.*

Keywords: *Campus Fellowship; Cherubim and Seraphim Church; church unification; Moses Orimolade*

Introduction

Schism, a term that is no longer new when it comes to different religious spheres, especially among the *Aladura* Churches, is described as a major split within an established religious denomination, usually on the grounds of differences in belief or practice, leading to the setting up of a separate breakaway organisation, or the offense of causing such a split.¹ Ammerman sees schism as the process by which a religious body divides to become two or more distinct, independent bodies.² She opined that

the division takes place because one or each of the bodies has come to see the other as deviant, as too different to be recognised as part of the same religious brotherhood. Often disputes over doctrine or organisation brew for years before some triggering incident incites the final break. During that preparatory period, groups of adherents slowly come to understand their procedures and convictions as being fundamentally different from those of the opposing group. The psychological and sociological process of separation is often complete before an organisational break occurs.³

The Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) Church, being one of the *Aladura* churches, is one that portends major division right from her early stages of beginning. The church has disintegrated into so many factions, which are also having branches of their own. These various factions all have their own heads – *Baba Aladura*. Also, these factions have their own ways of practices and mode of worship that are peculiar to them. Reasons for these various divisions are things that have to do with leadership, money, titles, effects and so on.

In the C&S Church, Omoyajowo noted that the very first schism that took place was from the letter that the founder, Moses Orimolade Tunolase wrote to the co-founder, Christianah Abiodun Akinsowon, asking her to form her own society.⁴ This was the foundation of division in the church as so many other personalities, arms and groups also followed suit. Below are the words of Omoyajowo concerning the various breakaways:

In Lagos alone there were until 1968 fourteen different sections of the C&S registered under the Companies Ordinances, while a hundred (now more than two hundred in 2014) other small groups exist in the city under one Cherubim and Seraphim title or another... Before the end of the same year, 1929, the Praying Band had broken away, and two years later the Western Conference was separately constituted. By 1932 the Holy Flock of Christ had been carved out of the Praying Band section, and the section led by Moses Orimolade split into two a few months after his death.⁵

Going by the words of Omoyajowo as regards these various divisions, it is pertinent to note that these various C&S groups have become so numerous that to unify them would have to take ages. Nevertheless, the aim of this paper is to look at the unification drive of the Cherubim and

¹ Microsoft Encarta, "Schism," 2009.

² Nancy T Ammerman, *Schism: An Overview.* In *Encyclopedia of Religion, Second Edition*, Edited by Lindsay Jones (Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2005).

³ Ammerman.

⁴ J. Akinyele Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim: The History of an African Independent Church* (New York: NOK, 1982).

⁵ Omoyajowo.

Seraphim Church, Obafemi Awolowo University Campus Fellowship. It focused on the establishment, activities and liturgical practices of the fellowship. Also, it assessed some of the impact the unity in the church has had on the fellowship, church and the society at large. The methodology employed in this paper is both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included magazine and participant observation. The secondary sources included books, journal articles, encyclopaedias and the Internet. The data collected were analysed using the socio-historical and descriptive phenomenological approaches.

Literature Review

In the two works of Peel (1968, 1969) on the C&S Church, he brought to fore the establishment of this church in 1925 by the two founders, Moses Orimolade and Abiodun Akinsowon, who later got divided in 1929. This division led to further divisions among the followers.⁶ Peel noted that even though there were many attempts made at uniting the various divided sections of the church, these attempts failed and had brought about many other factions instead. On the part of Sanneh, one very important factor that fanned the ember of factional spirit in the Society was the various attempts at introducing some organisations into the movement. However, despite the division in the movement, there was a massive increase in the evangelistic practices that led to the establishment of more branches of the church.⁷ As this may look so good in its entirety, it should be noted that the establishment of these various branches were carried out by the factional bodies and never as a unified entity.

One particular scholar who noted the disintegration rate of the C&S church was Onovughakpo. He claimed that today (even though he had made this assertion way back 1971), there are hundreds of splinter groups scattered all over the country, each claiming to be the headquarters of the C&S Society in Nigeria.⁸ More reason he opined that there is probably no sect in Christendom that has suffered so much splintering as this movement. Till date, there are still tendencies of split among the various factional bodies of the church. This is why Clarke stated that the church had been prone to splintering from the outset. He averred that, the church had splintered into six independent sections within ten years of its foundation and by the 1960s, there were fourteen larger and over 100 smaller, autonomous C&S groups in the city of Lagos alone.⁹ Nonetheless, Omoyajowo noted that these various divisions were for the good of the church as they have helped the church in spreading into the nooks and crannies of the country.¹⁰ Even though he later opined in another work that there were various attempts made at unifying the various factional bodies, all these later proved abortive.¹¹ Also, Omoyajowo asserted that Orimolade in his last days made an effort to re-unite the “dissident groups” into one strong, dynamic Society, but his unwilling associates thwarted all his moves for peace.¹² This shows that

⁶ J. D. Y Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

⁷ Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact* (New York: George Allen & Unwin, 1983).

⁸ S Onovughakpo, *History and Doctrine of the C&S Church in Nigeria* (Warri: Midland, 1971).

⁹ Peter B Clarke, *West Africa and Christianity* (London: Edward Arnold, 1986).

¹⁰ Akin Omoyajowo, *Diversity in Unity: The Development and Expansion of the Cherubim & Seraphim Church in Nigeria* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

¹¹ Omoyajowo.

¹² Akin Omoyajowo, *Moses Orimolade Tunolase (1879 – 1933).” In Makers of the Church in Nigeria, Edited by J. A. Omoyajowo* (Lagos: CSS Bookshops, 1995).

unity has eluded the church ever since its earliest division. Indeed, if Orimolade had wanted the church to be in unity, he would not have initiated the very first division between himself and Akinsowon. Even after his (Orimolade) death, Omoyajowo established that Akinsowon (whom Orimolade called Captain Abiodun) persistently maintained that unless she was recognised as a co-founder of the church (or, Society as it was fondly called in its earliest formation period), there would be no unity within it.¹³ Whether it was a spiritual or physical utterance, the statement may have come to stay as there has been no visible unity among the factional groups, especially at the level of the mother churches.

Ositelu, on his own part, posited that the schisms that broke the church into parts in its formative years have continued hitherto. Each succeeding year gives birth to multiple groups within the movement.¹⁴ Also, on the tendency to factionalism and the need to buttress charismatic authority with a more stable set of institutional and intellectual structures among the Aladura churches, Lindenfeld (2003-2004) noted that, “the most dramatic case was the C&S, where a much-publicised split occurred between the middle-aged Orimolade and the 22-year-old Abiodun; this was but the first of six splits in seven years! Clearly, age and gender issues were involved – most of the women in the movement sided with Abiodun – but the splintering continued long after Orimolade’s death in 1933.”¹⁵ This has shown that age and gender issues are important factors when it comes to looking at the causes of division in the church. However, according to Oshitelu, it was more of a personality clash that has made the church to be divided into many factions.¹⁶ All these together with the issue of titles, seniority claims and so on also add to the factional tendencies.¹⁷

According to Olaniyi, a successful attempt was made by some group of persons to bring about a united C&S church through the establishment of the Cherubim and Seraphim Unification Church of Nigeria.¹⁸ This was also supported by a more recent article by Aluko which concentrated on the C&SUCN. In this article, the author traced the historical emergence of this unification drive of the mother churches. The study examined the different beliefs, organisations, membership and societies of the church. Before delving into the main body of the work, the author looked at the various failed attempts that have been made in bringing about a unification of the C&S church in general.¹⁹ This shows that unity in particular has eluded the church (majorly at the level of the mother churches) prior to its fulfilment in the year 1986 that the C&SUCN was founded. Notwithstanding, this attempt is still an effort in progress as noted by Aluko in his doctoral thesis in 2019 as there are still so many factional bodies that are yet to join this particular

¹³ Omoyajowo.

¹⁴ Rufus Okikiolaolu Olubiyi Ositelu, *African Instituted Churches: Diversities, Growth, Gifts, Spirituality and Ecumenical Understanding of African Initiated Churches* (Berlin-Hamburg-Münster: LIT Verlag, 2002).

¹⁵ David Lindenfeld, “The Taiping and the Aladura: A Comparative Study of Charismatically Based Christian Movements,” 11th–12th ed. (Afrika Zamani, n.d.), 119–35.

¹⁶ G. A. Oshitelu, *History of the Aladura (Independent) Churches 1918-1940: An Interpretation* (Ibadan: Hope, 2007).

¹⁷ Oluwasegun Peter Aluko, “Historical Appraisal of Unification Efforts in the Cherubim and Seraphim in Southwestern Nigeria (1980-2017)” (Obafemi Awolowo University, 2019).

¹⁸ Abiola A. Olaniyi, “A Comparative Study of Sacrificial Rites in Ancient Israel and the Cherubim and Seraphim Unification Church of Nigeria (C&SUCN),” *ISALA Journal*, no. 9 (2014): 107–23.

¹⁹ Oluwasegun Peter Aluko, “The Cherubim and Seraphim Unification Church of Nigeria: Its History, Beliefs and Organisation,” *Asian Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Studies* 4, no. 1 (2021): 1–10.

unification group.²⁰ However, this is not the case with the Cherubim & Seraphim Church Unification in the higher institutions.

The Concept of Unity

Unity as a concept entails integration. It is a social psychological condition that implies a sense of one-ness and a sense of we-ness; it stands for the bonds, which hold the members of a society together.²¹ Kalin described unity as a framework in which reality develops as an interconnected whole.²² This is also supported by el-Battahani who noted that the concept of unity refers to relations binding various elements and parts together within a single whole.²³ This means that there are different parts that are coming together in order to have a complete entity. In other words, for anything called unity to be put in place, it must first have been divided.

In “Christian Unity - A Lived Reality: A Reformed/Protestant Perspective,” Abdul-Mohan noted that Christian unity is the result of a shared faith in Christ and the gospel. The basis for Christian unity is simply the confession of faith in Jesus Christ, not in unity of creed, doctrine or polity.²⁴ This view of unity by Abdul-Mohan seems to be limited to just the gospel and faith in Christ, thereby neglecting some factors that also bring the Christians together. Nonetheless, she was quick to also note that, the precondition of Christian unity is the recognition and acceptance of diversity, plurality and difference. The ecumenical goal is unity in diversity, not uniformity. Unity does not reduce diversity but rather demands and allows it.²⁵ This shows that there will always be diversities but the major thing that should be the guiding principle of Christians is the belief in the oneness of faith in Jesus Christ. Also, John Mackay (cited in Kotzé) is of the view that, “Christian unity is, above all else, a unity in the Spirit. Instead of being unity of order it is a unity of faith and love and work.”²⁶ Yes, there is no how it will be possible for the whole Christendom to be united in order, but what will be possible is if there is unity in the Spirit that is able to bring about unity in Christendom at large.

Veith thinks the kinds of unity that exist in the world are dogmatic and experiential unity.²⁷ Dogmatic unity is the binding of people together through principles and doctrine. Dogmas can include words of the church fathers, sacraments, and liturgies. Besides, experiential unity is found when emotions or supernatural happenings become the unifying factor. This type of unity can

²⁰ Oluwasegun Peter Aluko, “Historical Appraisal of Unification Efforts in the Cherubim and Seraphim in Southwestern Nigeria (1980-2017).”

²¹ “No Title,” n.d., <https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/18835/1/Unit-1.pdf>.

²² Ibrahim Kalin, “Religion, Unity and Diversity. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*” 37, no. 4 (2011): 471–78, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453711399726>.

²³ Atta el-Battahani, “Peace without Unity: The Dilemma of Reconciling Divergent Perspectives in Post-Conflict Sudan,” *SWP* 4 (2008): 1–18, <https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/2954-peace-without-unity.pdf>.

²⁴ Abdul. Joy Evelyn Mohan, “Christian Unity - A Lived Reality: A Reformed/Protestant Perspective,” *Transformation* 27, no. 1 (2010): 8–15.

²⁵ Mohan.

²⁶ Kotzé J. C. G, “The Meaning of Our Unity in Christ,” *The Ecumenical Review* 7, no. 4 (1955): 321–37, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623.1955.tb01763.x>.

²⁷ Walter J Veith, “Two Kinds of Unity,” 2014, https://amazingdiscoveries.org/S-deception-unity_false_experience_dogma.

cross Biblical, doctrinal, and cultural barriers, bringing people together in a communal emotional high.²⁸

These two kinds of unity as stated by Veith are in line with having an effective unification of the many factional groups in the C&S church. With little or no differences in their principles and doctrines, many of the C&S adherents have deemed it fit to come together and become one, especially at the level of the higher institutions.

Historical Development of the C&S Unification Church

The Cherubim and Seraphim Unification Church, Obafemi Awolowo University Campus Fellowship, Ile-Ife is a fellowship of students in the Obafemi Awolowo University. It is the first C&S Church campus fellowship, as it was founded in the year 1980 when a group of students with penchant for worship in the C&S brand decided to worship together under one single umbrella. This meeting was done at then Central Cafeteria (now Architecture Building) of the institution; and it was this meeting that birthed the C&S campus fellowships in different higher institutions in Nigeria and the overseas. Present at the meeting was Reverend Wale Adekoya, Apostle Olusegun Rufai, one Pastor Olusola and Alagba Oduyoye. The inauguration of the fellowship was done in May, 1980.²⁹ These students in their youthful ages came together with a vision to uniting the church which at large had been derided with many divisions. These students came from different groups/brands of C&S churches from home but their coming into school brought about a transformation into the establishment of a unified C&S church. They were of the opinion that their mother churches had been encapsulated with issues like titles, waywardness, the use of charms etc.³⁰ This is corroborated in the words of Peter Osunde who asserted:

...Most of the parent churches were title bereaved. Most Senior Apostle, Apostle, Apostle this, Apostle that...they were all adulterated with a lot of funny things like fetish things, backbiting and all the nonsense that (some) C&S Churches are known for, churches springing up everywhere.... All these were very confusing. So, we students on campus said no, we are not going to do such kind of things. We were all coming from different backgrounds. So, we decided to just come together and worship and that is just the purpose of coming together....³¹

These students were not looking forward to be affiliated with any of their mother churches. They were not interested in titles as had been given earlier. Instead of titles and leadership struggles, they employed the use of President for their leader. They were also willing to adopt the use of 'brothers' and 'sisters' in addressing themselves. Notwithstanding, there are now many campus fellowships in different higher institutions in Nigeria from their humble beginning in the OAU campus fellowship.

²⁸ Veith.

²⁹ Adesola Leke-Oyedemi and Folasade Kuteyi Odeyemi, Isaac, "Tales of a Tri-Decade Grace," *LaPACTO Magazine*, 2010.

³⁰ Pius Mabayoje Osuntuyi and Ibukun Oluwakemi Olawuni Aluko, Oluwasegun Peter, "Religion and Democratic Sustainability: The Impact of 21st Century Adherents of Orisa Youth Movement and the Cherubim and Seraphim Church Unification (Campus Fellowship)," *Religions: Journal of the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions* 25, no. 1 (2015): 29–39.

³¹ Odeyemi, Isaac, "Tales of a Tri-Decade Grace."

The Name of C&S Unification Church

In bringing about the name for the new movement that is to spread like a wildfire across many higher institutions in Nigeria, people did not get to meet in order to bring about a name; rather, they met together for prayers. As these people were praying, it was claimed that the Holy Spirit descended upon a particular person, and this brought about a unique name for all students in the higher institutions to be known with. In the words of Peter Osunde, he said:

...we were worshipping and the spirit of God came down in a fierce nature...God said the name of the church should be changed to C&S Church Unification. God said He was going to use this church to bring a sense of unison into the entire C&S fold. All the various forms of C&S churches would become one.³²

This assertion by Osunde gives a reminiscence of the beginning, that is, the founding of the C&S Church. The going into trance as given by young Christianah Abiodun Akinsowon during the celebration of the *Corpus Christi* by the Roman Catholic in Lagos in 1925, and the issue of fasting and prayers as instructed by Moses Orimolade for God to grant them a name.³³ One would not be surprised as it has been claimed that the name for this new movement among students should be given by the Holy Spirit. The name was given as the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, with the alias as UNIFICATION in 1981.

The name is normally written as Cherubim and Seraphim Church a.k.a. Unification, Obafemi Awolowo University Campus Fellowship, which has been the name from the time the unification drive started moving from Ile-Ife to other campus fellowships in other higher institutions. However, recent development taking place in the church has it that the alias (a.k.a.) has been taken away. The researcher was able to gather that the name of the fellowship now goes as “Cherubim and Seraphim Church Unification” followed by the name of the campus fellowship. For example, Cherubim and Seraphim Church Unification, Obafemi Awolowo University Campus Fellowship.

The Journey to Other Higher Institutions

Filled with the zeal of propagating the gospel of unifying the many sects under the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, these young gents/ladies set out to go to other higher institutions in Nigeria from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. They had the vision of catching the attention of the youths, which they believed are the future of tomorrow. Having started the first chapter in Obafemi Awolowo University (then University of Ife), they set out under the leading of God as claimed by Peter Osunde.³⁴

Strategies used

Firstly, careful planting: Just like the Apostle Paul who was going from one town to the other preaching the gospel and planting churches, the Cherubim and Seraphim Church

³² Odeyemi, Isaac.

³³ Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim: The History of an African Independent Church*.

³⁴ LaPACTO Magazine, “Ile-Ife: Cherubim and Seraphim Church (a.k.a. Unification),” *Obafemi Awolowo University Campus Fellowship*, 2010.

students also went out to plant a unified church that is based on the practices and doctrines of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church. They did this by going from one higher institution to the other in Nigeria. They pasted posters, worshipped with these higher institutions they go to for the first two services; after that, they encouraged them to worship together and sent them materials with which to take off.³⁵ Some of the higher institutions they visited were: University of Ilorin in 1985/86; University of Ado-Ekiti in 1987/1988; Federal University of Technology Minna in 1988/1989; Federal College of Education, Abeokuta in 1989 among others.

Secondly, students relocating to other states after their studies in OAU and starting a fellowship in other campuses. Some of the graduates of the OAU Campus Fellowship who became lecturers continued with the unification drive in their campuses. Among these are: M.O. Rufai, Arch. Ajibade Adeyemo etc. A hint about how the train to other higher institutions in Nigeria started was given by Peter Osunde, who said: “God told us that He would use the first chapter, that is, Ife, to spread the message to other campuses across the nation. I was in my year one then in 1981 and in my year two the President of the fellowship then, Segun Rufai graduated and became a lecturer at the Ogun State University (now Olabisi Onabanjo University), so he was able to organise a fellowship and they started worshipping....”³⁶

Thirdly, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was also used as a means of founding the Unification church in some other higher institutions in Nigeria. Graduate members of OAU Campus Fellowship who went for the compulsory service scheme in other parts of the country were privileged to continue with the propagation of the unification gospel. Foremost among these persons is Seyi Macaulay who was posted to Oyo. He was the one that formed a chapter at the Federal College of Education, Oyo in 1985/86.³⁷

These various strategies in one way or the other had helped in spreading the unification of the C&S church to the youths/students in other higher institutions in Nigeria. Many youths/students in the higher institutions who were really interested in the *Aladura* church (C&S Church) joined not minding the various branches or forms they attend back at home. With these, it would be good to look at the various aims and objectives of the church.³⁸

Aims and objectives

The aims and the objectives of the church are as follows:

1. The youths of Cherubim and Seraphim Church, especially students in Institution of Higher Learning in Nigeria shall worship together in oneness of mind and purpose, with a view to making them Christ-like.
2. The Church shall spread the gospel of Jesus Christ, teaching the fear of God, the love of God and mankind (Matt. 22:37-40), through organised Worships, Bible lectures, Symposia, Annual Conventions, Sub-Conventions, Revival Services, Publishing of

³⁵ Magazine.

³⁶ Odeyemi, Isaac, “Tales of a Tri-Decade Grace.”

³⁷ Hannah Ojo, “Unification: Against All Odds,” *LaPacto Magazine*, 2010.

³⁸ The use of the word ‘church’ is to show the oneness of the various fellowships under the name Unification.

Journals and related papers and other activities. It shall also spread the Unification gospel of Cherubim and Seraphim Church to everybody in the world.

3. The Church shall seek wider friendship with other Christian organisations.
4. The Church shall initiate as well as support genuine moves aimed at unifying the Cherubim and Seraphim Church the world over.
5. The Church shall seek registration with all recognised Nigeria Christian organisations and World Council of Churches and other related religious bodies.
6. The Church shall establish chapters known as fellowships in all institutions of higher learning in the country as well as any other place of worship. Whereas such Chapters/Fellowships and/or place of worship shall be directed, administered and controlled by the constitution. However, Chapters/Fellowships and any other place of worship shall adapt to peculiarities, which their environment may impose on them.³⁹

With these aims and objectives, the various fellowships have been brought together under one umbrella. This is to ensure the unifying drive of the founding fathers. Also, they are to forestall any act that may want to bring about failure to the unification goal. Obafemi Awolowo University Campus Fellowship being the founding fellowship has continued with these aims and objectives.

The Interregnum

There was a period of interregnum in the unification drive of the Obafemi Awolowo University Campus Fellowship. This period is one that most of the church members, especially the founding members are not always willing to remember. This was the time in which a group of people claimed to have received a ‘vision’ that talks about the dissolution of the unification movement. Banjo Adedeji described this period as the time when the Pentecostal churches were at their peak with tongue speaking and various criticisms.⁴⁰

It was the leader of the church then, in the person of Olusegun Rufai who said he had a vision that the Cherubim and Seraphim Church Unification should cease to exist. So many contended and requested to pray about it since the church is believed to be a spiritual church. Their supposed findings/enquiries from God actually negated that of the leader. This singular act coupled with the interest of another leader in the person of Tunde Ayeni led to the parting of ways. Thus, what was supposed to be unification of all C&S church members met a halt which lasted for some years. This period was in the early 1990s.

The Recommencement

In 1995, it took the intervention of one Bode Oyediran, who later became the president of the fellowship for the unification to kick start again. It was recorded that he almost single-handedly

³⁹ The Constitution of Cherubim & Seraphim Church a.k.a. Unification, *Institutions of Higher Learning in Nigeria*, 2009.

⁴⁰ Leke-Oyedemi Adesola and Olawunmi Adeola Odeyemi, Isaac, Folasade Kuteyi, Oluwasegun Aluko, Samuel Dada, “Prophet Olusesi: Ife Is a Pacesetter,” *LaPACTO Magazine*, 2010.

went about meeting with people and telling them about Unification. He was able to get people by putting up forms in envelopes on the notice boards in the halls of residence with the inscription: "If you are a C&S member, kindly fill this form." This really interested and got the attention of so many people who were C&S members from home. One out of many who filled the said form was Yomi Akande who said: "...I filled the form and behold, I saw Brother Bode in my room. He was very persistent".⁴¹ With this, the unification drive swung into a full force action till date.

The Obafemi Awolowo University Campus Fellowship Today

The present Obafemi Awolowo University Campus Fellowship comprises of three arms which are: Graduate Forum, Undergraduate Members and the Pre-Degree Outreach.

The Graduate Forum: The Graduate Forum of the fellowship comprises of people who have graduated from the school fellowship. This forum takes care of all the graduate members of the fellowship in and around Nigeria. It enables graduate members to continue to identify with the goals and aspirations of the church and the campus fellowship. It also facilitates meaningful interactions between graduate members and student members, thereby enhancing the continual existence and growth of the campus fellowship. Also, it is actively involved in funding the campus fellowship at large.

This forum normally meets to deliberate on issues that affect members. These issues range from spiritual, financial, to health. It is also involved in the giving of bursary to distinguished students in the campus fellowship. At the end of every year, there is a time in which both the students' body (undergraduates and pre-degree) and the graduate members do meet to celebrate the annual end of the year programme together.

The Undergraduate Members: The undergraduate members comprise of members who are students of the Obafemi Awolowo University and OAU School of Nursing. They are led by a 13-man Steering Committee member being headed by the president. These are the ones that are saddled with the affairs of the campus fellowship. Apart from the Steering Committee, there are the executives who are heads of units and halls of residence. There are units into which the fellowship is divided. These units are: Academic, Bible Study, Choir, Decorating, Drama, Evangelical/Follow-Up, Growing Believers School (formerly known as Foundation Bible School), Levite/Ushering, Library, Publicity, Technical and Transport. Services are held on Wednesdays and Sundays. The venue for the services was then on Cricket Pavilion, a space in the sports complex of the University, until the Fellowship purchased its land for worship outside the campus along Ede Road, Ile-Ife in 2020.

Moro Members: These are members from the preliminary sections of OAU {the Pre-Degree and the Joint Universities Preliminary Examinations Board (JUPEB)} and the Foreign Links Campus that are located in Moro, Ife North Local Government Area, Osun State. From inception, it was known as the Pre-Degree arm of the fellowship because it comprises of mainly students from the Pre-Degree programme of the OAU. However, with the recent inclusion of students from JUPEB and Foreign Links Campus, the name has now changed to Moro Outreach, in consonant with the name of the town. This outreach started during the 2006/2007 academic

⁴¹ Odeyemi, Isaac, Folasade Kuteyi, Oluwasegun Aluko, Samuel Dada.

session which is meant for the students in the OAU Pre-Degree programme. It was established purposely to bring together members who are about to gain full-time admission into OAU. Even before they become students for the degree programmes in the institution, the fellowship makes this platform as a budding for students; more reason for the inclusion of students from other higher institutions in Moro. They have people who act as their leaders; these are undergraduate students from the OAU Campus Fellowship, and headed by a coordinator known as the Moro Outreach Coordinator. This coordinator is part of the executive members in the Campus Fellowship, and also has people who are working with him.

Liturgical Practices

In order for the youths/students to have a true feel of unification, some liturgical practices have been put together to accommodate all and sundry. Having in mind that there are so many types or branches of the C&S Church, these branches all have their own practices that distinguished them from another. With this knowledge, a new liturgical practice is imminent. Below are the various liturgical practices, which are brought together for the oneness, and the purpose of conveying the unification process.

1. The use of White Garment: C&S Church is a church known to put on garment for their various functions. This particular garment usage has given them the unique quality that renders them as an *Aladura* Church. The many factions of C&S church all put on garments, be it red, yellow, blue, and white. However, in order to have a unifying garment, the use of just WHITE garment was agreed upon. No other colour is allowed in the unification church. This use of only white garment for functions has really put a unifying trait in the services and functions of the unification church.
2. The Use of English Language: The lingua franca in this fellowship is English language. This is due largely to the fact that this fellowship is based in a higher institution. Though there are some times in which the Yoruba language is sometimes spoken due to the large presence of its speakers, but English language is often the spoken language. The use of this English language is also as a result of the diverse nature of people (students) from different tribes.
3. The use of White Girdle and Cap for the female: In line with the use of just white garments, the use of just white girdle which is being worn around the waist is also encouraged by all. For the ladies, theirs is together with a white cap.
4. The removal of shoes in the service centre: This is another unique feature of the C&S Church. The unification party is upholding the removal of shoes since it is one of the qualities that differentiate the church from every other church. It is not permitted for any member or outsider to put on shoes anytime they are on the worship centre.
5. The reading of some psalms like Psalms 19, 24, 51, 91 etc. The C&S Church is a church known to make use of the book of Psalms in their various services and practices. The unification drive never forgoes these practices as they imbibe the reading of psalms in their various services and functions. The reading of Psalms 51, 19 and 24 during their opening services on Sundays. Also, the reading of Psalm 30 alone for the midweek services on Wednesdays.

6. The forming of various bands. Bands are a group of people who have the same ideas or beliefs or who are pursuing the same activity together.⁴² There are various bands in the various factions of the C&S Church; each having some bands that are peculiar to them. For instance, in the Movement Church (Ayo Ni o), there are bands like Jeremiah band, Ephraim band, Rhoda band, etc. In the Praying Band Church, there are bands like Ladies' League Deborah Band, Ruth Band, etc. In order to continue with these bands and for the various youths/students not to feel marginalised when it comes to the issue of bands, the unification drive employed the use of a common set of bands for the church. Bands that are common in all factions of the C&S church were allowed. These bands are: Choir band, Egbe F'ogo Olorun Han (Let the Glory of God Shine Band) which is especially for the men, and so on. Bands like Hannah and Rhoda (female bands), Ore-Ofe and Aaron (male bands) existed in the OAU Campus Fellowship from the inception. But there are only two major bands/groups functioning in the OAU Campus Fellowship as at today. These are: The Choir band and the *Aaronites*, which is the praying house of the church. The Choir band members are also distinguished with their blue cape which is being worn alongside their white garment. These two bands include both male and female. Although these bands exist in OAU campus fellowship, they do not function like the bands in the home churches where they organise anniversaries. More importantly, the Choir band is seen as a unit like every other unit in the fellowship.
7. The avoidance of titles. Titles in the various factions of C&S have been a torn in the flesh to these young people. The titles also vary from one faction to the other. In order to see themselves as a unified body, they decided to employ the use of 'brothers' and 'sisters'. In other words, members are encouraged to make use of the word 'brother' or 'sister' as an appellation before calling a member's name to see one another as equal. It is also to serve as a means of respect for one another.
8. Some other practices that serve as unification are as follows: Fasting, clapping, dancing, testimonies, singing of hymns, and so on.
9. Generally, the church holds its weekly services on Sundays and Wednesdays, and sometimes on Fridays, for vigil (most especially, every second Friday of the month).

Unifying Logo

In order for the unification group not to be affiliated with any faction of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church, a logo was decided upon. A logo that would make sure that they are really interested in unifying the various factions together as one. Also, the unification group were looking forward to having their own identity. A logo that would be simple in its mode was decided upon as on the Figure 1.

⁴² Microsoft Encarta, "Band," 2008.

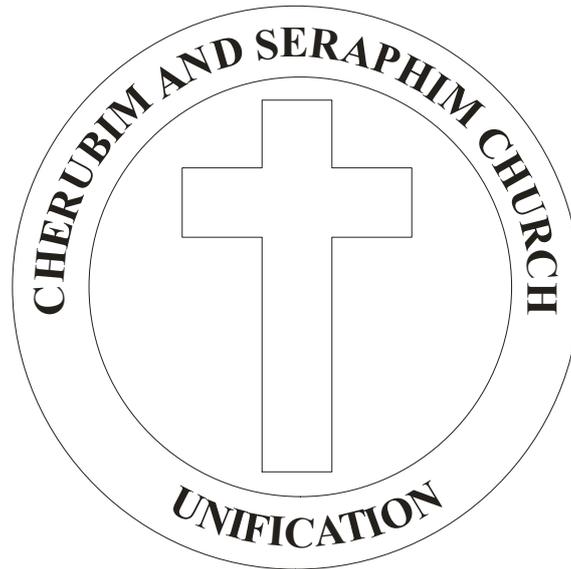


Figure 1. Logo of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church Unification Campus Fellowship

The logo consists of a double circle with the name ‘Cherubim and Seraphim Church Unification’ written in-between the double circle, and a cross placed in the middle of the circle. The colour chosen for the logo itself is white with black lettering.

Impact of the Unity

Equality

As noted under the liturgical practices, the avoidance of titles (which usually bring about division in the mother churches) is one area that this fellowship has used in achieving equality among its members. Since the members are majorly students, there is no need for the use of titles that are likely to show what they must have achieved, experienced or position in life.⁴³ Majorly, the titled person is expected to deserve the conferment of the title and becomes a source of inspiration to others,⁴⁴ but in this instance, there is virtually nobody with experience of age beyond the others. This makes it very difficult for anyone to lord it over the other and thus, bring about equality.

Equality in this sense is seen by the Equality and Human Rights Commission as ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents.⁴⁵ This definition is quite apt for this fellowship as virtually every member of the church has equal rights, means and ability as a member. Though we cannot take away the place of hierarchy as there are leaders to bring about stability and organisation, the place of equality among the members is clear and cannot be overemphasised. Apart from the absence of titles, the absence of flamboyant dress and the use of just white garment and white girdle have helped in ensuring equality which is missing in some of the mother churches that have been engulfed in disunity. Also, there is the

⁴³ Deji Ayegboyin, DejiAyegboyin, “Li Oruko Jesu: Aladura Grassroots Christology,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 8, no. 1 (2005): 11–21.

⁴⁴ Emmanuel O Babalola, “A Selected Yoruba Christological Titles among the Aladura Churches: An Insight into African Perception of Christ,” *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Invention* 1, no. 1 (2019): 13–20.

⁴⁵ Equality and Human Rights Commission, “Understanding Equality,” 2018, <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/secondary-education-resources/useful-information/understanding-equality> .

absence of special seats that are meant for titled members and aged people. With everyone sitting down together, there is a sense of knowledge that everyone is the same.

Single Church

In a doctoral thesis carried out on this church by this author, it was established that there is a unified C&S at the level of campus fellowship only.⁴⁶ This shows that every C&S member coming into higher institution in the country would attend a unified C&S church, not minding their affiliations from home, except such a person is not interested in attending his/her home church in school. This is made possible as a result of the absence of factional bodies of the church in these higher institutions, especially OAU Campus Fellowship. Also, over the years, the fellowship has accommodated many students from other Aladura churches, especially the Church of the Lord (Aladura). With many of the church members not finding any campus fellowship of their church on gaining admission, they have hitherto worshipped with this campus fellowship to the extent that so many of the members have become members of the executives. At home, they are members of Church of the Lord (Aladura) but in school, they are members of C&S Unification Church, OAU Campus Fellowship.

Avenue for Social Interactions

The unity seen in this campus fellowship has open up means for people of different origin, background and heritage to interact based on their church affiliation. Though they all have different factional bodies they represent from home, their presence on campus has given them a new platform in order to relate very well to the extent that so many have had friends that are now bosom friends. Also, their different interactions have led to many of them getting married to themselves after leaving school. This particular act abounds among the members of the fellowship, especially the Graduate Forum. Many of them get married to one another and this is so due to the different ways they have interacted while being students. However, since social interaction has both positive (affiliative) and negative (agonistic) effects (Wey, Jordán & Blumstein, 2019), there are also some negative things that have come out of these interactions.⁴⁷ Prominent is the fact that many of the members do not usually associate with the fellowship after graduating from school. This may be as a result of their inability to continue to fellowship together, since many of them usually go back to their respective homes in different parts of the country upon graduation. Also, it may be as a result of many of them searching for their means of livelihood, which may not permit the continuous interactions with the fellowship. Moreso, in the course of their inability to get married to someone in the fellowship, there is likely going to be a break in interaction since the spouse is not a member of the fellowship.

Notwithstanding, many of the members have had the opportunity of becoming great by interacting with people who are believed to be like-minds in the fellowship. In addition, their interactions often include a song which usually act as their “national anthem”. It is a song the

⁴⁶ Oluwasegun Peter Aluko, “Historical Appraisal of Unification Efforts in the Cherubim and Seraphim in Southwestern Nigeria (1980-2017).”

⁴⁷ Ferenc Jordán and Daniel T. Blumstein Wey, Tina W., “Transitivity and Structural Balance in Marmot Social Networks,” *Behavioural Ecology and Sociobiology* 73 (2019): 88, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00265-019-2699-3>.

members have believed to be a covenant between themselves and God. Thus, it is known as a covenant song. The fellowship sees it as one unique song that has existed for generations and has become a major anthem for the members. The song was first aired at the 2001 Joyful Noise – the Fellowship’s annual anniversary programme, was sung by Toyin Familusi as the opening glee. It was later repeated at the 2003 edition of the programme. The song goes thus:

*Àwa-má-rídiì nişẹ Olúwa
 Oba t’ó j’oba lo, Eleruniyìn
 Jehovah, Nisi, Bàbá o o ò
 Gbogbo işẹ Rẹ nişẹ lokè l’onyin O lógo
 Orun at’òşùpá, iràwọ
 Fi ogo Rẹ hàn-àn
 Ìwọ dá orisun sí afonifoji
 O sì kó àwọn òkè
 O f’ogbọn dá ayé àti orun,
 Wọn sì dúró jẹ,
 Halleluya sí O, Jehovah El-Shaddai
 Àwa-má-rídiì nişẹ Olúwa...*

Unsearchable is the work of God
 Jehovah Nissi, Father o o o
 The King of kings, the burden bearer
 All thy works in heaven and on earth are praising You
 Sun, moon and stars
 Are declaring Your glory
 You created the source in the firmament
 And, You gathered the high places
 You used wisdom to establish the earth and the heaven,
 And, they were well established,
 Halleluyah to You, Jehovah El-Shaddai
 Unsearchable is the work of God...

This song normally gears up members anytime it is being sung. It is one song that unites all the arms of the fellowship together.⁴⁸ It is believed that if any member of the fellowship is to be stirred up in an atmosphere of ecstatic praise before God, any part of the song is to be sung. But of recent, the fellowship now has another unifying song. The song goes thus:

*Ifẹ lo so wa pọ
 Nile Olorun o
 Ifẹ lo so wa pọ
 Nile Olorun o
 Idile Olodumare, oun ma l’ẹbi wa o
 Idile Majemu, oun ma l’ẹbi wa o
 Ifẹ, ifẹ, ifẹ lo so wa pọ
 It is love that binds us together*

⁴⁸ Ayegboyin, DejiAyegboyin, “Li Oruko Jesu: Aladura Grassroots Christology.”

In the house of God
It is love that binds us
In the house of God
God's family is our own family
Covenant family is our family
It is love, love, love that binds us together

Apart from these two songs that act as the covenant songs, there is another song which is being upheld for the unification of the mother churches. This song is usually sung from the general hymnals of all the various factions of the C&S Church. The song reads thus:

*Jọ májẹ kì fitilà Egbẹ̀ yìi kú,
Jọ máàşẹ jẹ k'òta lèrì gbé şe
Jọ tún gbogbo ibàjẹ inú rẹ şè,
Jẹ k'ò gbilẹ n'nu fẹ ò'n 'wà mímọ
'Wọ Ọba Síóion, ó dọwọ Rẹ
Jọ má jẹ k'iyọ Egbẹ̀ wa yí d'òbu*
Please, do not let the lamp of this Association go dim
Please, do not let the enemy overcome it
Please, patch-up all the bad things in it
Let it be deep in love and holiness
You King of Zion, it is in Your hand
Please, do not let the salt of this Association become saltiness

The above song is a prayer to God calling for help on all the C&S Church in the whole world. It is normally taken at the end of every Sunday service. The prayer sees love and holiness as the major attributes that are lacking among all the various factions of the mother church. Thus, it calls on God to grant unto all the members the spirit of love and holiness.

According to Suttie while citing a 2013 review of the research on music, it was discovered that music impacts peoples' ability to connect with one another by impacting brain circuits involved in empathy, trust, and cooperation.⁴⁹ This is true of the songs being rendered above by both the undergraduate and graduate members. There is flow of cooperation and oneness whenever these songs are being rendered, and this has helped in their social interaction and social cohesion.⁵⁰

Reflection

The founding of the C&S Church Unification was for oneness of mind and practices. However, the practices of the OAU Campus Fellowship have been streamlined to suit their own environment and taste. Most of their activities are not being directed to follow the guidelines of the Central body.⁵¹ They do their Bible Study with individual topics and not in accordance with

⁴⁹ Jill Suttie, "Four Ways Music Strengthens Social Bonds," 2015, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four_ways_music_strengthens_social_bonds.

⁵⁰ Nathan Oesch, "Music and Language in Social Interaction: Synchrony, Antiphony, and Functional Origins," *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (2019): 1514, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01514>.

⁵¹ Unification, *Institutions of Higher Learning in Nigeria*.

the Unification outline. This can be seen from the way they do not really flow well with the other Unification chapters whenever they are having conventions and sub-conventions. Also, their modes of worship have been found to be in line with the one of Cherubim & Seraphim Movement Church, popularly known as *Ayo Ni* which has made the Central body to always frown at them anytime they visit them. Also, they do not really move along well with other Unification chapters. This is seen from the words of Demola Olusesi, a former Chairman/Apostolate of the Central Executive Council, who says: “The only thing is that sometimes OAU tends to be more about themselves; ...”⁵² Thus, the unification they are planning of having has in no way been effected so elaborately.

Further still, being in an institution in which Pentecostalism permeates, the campus fellowship tends to have been influenced with the Pentecostal doctrines. At a point in time, the leadership of the house in 2014 thought it wise to put a stop to some liturgical practices that are very germane to the C&S Church. It was claimed that the Holy Spirit ministered to them to stop the recitation of Psalm 51. This actually raised serious contention with the Graduate Forum as they were sensing a repeat of the interregnum of the 1990s. And, since this did not go down well with the Graduate Forum, the church had to continue with the recitation of the said psalm. Also, there were some occasions in which the use of garment was not allowed for the midweek service under the guise of ‘special services’. This was also contended against as it was believed that the garment is the identity of the fellowship, which should never be tampered with.

Nevertheless, these would not have been enough to say that the unity the founding fathers were willing to have has not really been upheld. The unification has really been of help to even the mother churches as most of them are now imbibing most of the practices of the movement that started from the OAU Campus Fellowship. This is captioned in the words of Ojo (2014) who opined that, “This unity has given way to new developments and a hope of the mother churches coming together as one too. The C&S Church Unification, Obafemi Awolowo University is an iconic brand that enjoys loyalty among the OAU community and other places”.

Most of the mother churches (the many fractioned C&S churches) are now moving in the unification of all C&S churches to the extent that they now have a unified place of worship along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway. The mother churches have also imbibed the use of all white garments in their activities. The use of various coloured garments and girdles have been banned. In fact, they now have a body that is called Unification of all the numerous C&S factions with a single leader that leads the church. The very first leader happens to be the co-founder of the C&S Church in the person of Christianah Abiodun Akinsowon. However, this has not made all the factions to drop their registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). They are still retaining their various factional names. Nevertheless, the sky is still very bright for the unification of all factions of the Cherubim and Seraphim Church.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the socio-historical study of unity in the Cherubim & Seraphim Unification Church, Obafemi Awolowo University Campus Fellowship. It discovered that the concept of unity was highly needed among students in the higher institutions, since their mother

⁵² Odeyemi, Isaac, Folasade Kuteyi, Oluwasegun Aluko, Samuel Dada, “Prophet Olusesi: Ife Is a Pacesetter.”

churches have been engulfed in division right from the time of the two founders. The OAU Campus Fellowship has over the years become the founding campus fellowship of all C&S Unification church in higher institutions and the unity it enjoys has been shown in different aspects of the lives of the members and the society at large. Among the impacts are: Equality, oneness and the opportunity to present an avenue for social interactions. The paper recommends that the mother churches should take a clue from the campus fellowship and become one. Though it is not going to be an easy task, but it is going to be a good step in the right direction if the various factional bodies could come together and chart a new course together.

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