

S. B. J. OSCHOFFA (1909–85)

THE MIRACLE OF A SHARED LIFE

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Abstract

In the twentieth century, God raised many faith giants among Africans for Africans and the whole world. These faith heroes contributed immensely to the decolonization, indigenization, and expansion of Christianity in Africa and the Global South. Among these highly spiritually invested Africans was a Beninese-Nigerian carpenter, Samuel Biléou Joseph Oschoffa (1909–1985). He was educated in the Methodist tradition before the Lord called him to lead one of the most significant African prophetic-charismatic indigenous movements, the Celestial Church of Christ. This article explores his life, ministerial legacies, and theology.

Introduction

For many decades, the role and the contributions of African faith heroes in decolonizing, indigenizing, and expanding Christianity in Africa and the Global South have been highly phenomenal. Many of these Christian figures were so incredibly spiritually gifted and endowed that they lived a shared life both within and outside of their African territories. Some of their legacies live on today. In the twentieth century, God raised many spiritual giants among the Africans for Africans and the rest of the world who contributed immensely to the Africanization and indigenization of Christianity in Africa. Among these spiritually invested Africans was the Beninese-Nigerian carpenter, Samuel Biléou Joseph Oschoffa, a prophet and an apostle who founded and led one of the most significant African prophetic-charismatic indigenous movements, the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC),¹ for thirty-eight years. Born on October 11, 1909, and died September 10, 1985, he was educated in the Methodist tradition before the Lord called him into the ministry. His ministry's impact and influence blazed the length and breadth of Africa, and the miracles of his shared life transcended geo-ethnic boundaries and nationalities. Although his ministry received

heavy criticism, particularly concerning doctrinal principles, his place cannot be contested in the global Spirit-empowered charismatic, academic, and ecclesial community as a highly charismatic and spiritually gifted leader.

For that reason, this article explores the life, ministry, and the legacies of S. B. J. Oschoffa, who was widely known and respected as a spiritual force due to his spontaneous and iconic miraculous life and ministry.² In this essay, I critically examine his theological and cosmological views, situating his theology within the synthesis of a biblical belief, Christian liturgical traditions, and elements from the Yoruba cultural milieu and worldview.³

Life and Memoirs

Samuel Biléou Joseph Oschoffa was born in Dahomey (now the Republic of Benin) into a polygamous family after the rest of his siblings died either as infants or before their teen years. He was named Samuel Biléou at birth and later adopted his father's name, Joseph. Christened after the biblical Samuel at birth because like Hannah in the Bible, his father (who had suffered the loss of all his children, but one female) specially requested him of the Lord because according to the African tradition, he needed a son as an heir to propagate the family's name and lineage. His name Biléou (or Bilewu), a derivative of a Yoruba epistemological view and in Yoruba language, *Bi 'le aiye wu ko gbe, sugbon mo mo wipe mo ti toro re lodo Olorun*, means: "If the world pleases the child let him stay, but I know I've asked God for you."⁴ According to Samuel Biléou, his father's name Oshoffa, which later became a household name, was obtained from a Yoruba aphorism '*Oju ki ise Ofà ti Ota le ta bani ka subu*, or, in short, '*Oju ko sofa*', which was shortened further to OSOFA', or Oshoffa in the Yoruba language (Anglicized Oschoffa). It means in English, "The human eye is not a missile that an enemy can fire at one to make one fall."⁵ Thus, his full name, Samuel Biléou Joseph Oschoffa.

In fulfilment of the covenant his father had with God that if God gave him a son, he would make him serve the Lord, and the fact that he had no access to Western education, the young Samuel Oschoffa was enrolled in the Methodist catechetical school. However, after some years, the new bishop, who was posted from London at the time, ordered the students to participate in making bricks for a new and modern school building, but because they all refused, Oschoffa and his co-catechists were expelled. This made him end up as an apprentice in his father's professional carpentry business. The young Oschoffa soon became proficient and prominent in the business and became a household name due to his dexterity and professionalism in wood planing, house roofing, and working with ebony, which he purchased from his friends.⁶

Shortly after his father's death on June 15, 1939, Oschoffa found passion for another brand of business, buying and supplying lumber and ebony logs to carpenters and other traders. As this type of business seemed more lucrative than his carpentry job, he pressed deeper into the forest in search of ebony trees. As an avid lover of God's Word, he usually had his Bible with him and equally loved to pray much. Thus, he continued this lucrative trade until one such trip in May 1947 during the floods.⁷

Founding of the Celestial Church of Christ

Unlike the other Aladura churches that assimilated some features from the mainline churches from which they severed, the CCC does not represent an institutional break-away from any already existing mission church, but was founded on September 29, 1947, through a vision from heaven as claimed by its founder.⁸ The vision came earlier, on May 23 of the same year, while Oschoffa was on one of his trade trips collecting ebony to sell to his friends and traders and was marooned in the forest near Toffin, a village in Porto Novo in the Republic of Benin. In his personal testimony as recorded in the CCC's constitution, Oschoffa claimed, "On the 23rd of May 1947, the day of the eclipse of the sun,⁹ as I was praying in the forest on this trip, I heard a voice and could not open my eyes. The voice I heard was 'LULLI,' and the same voice told me, 'This means The Grace of Jesus Christ.'"¹⁰ It was this visional event and other subsequent revelational experiences where Oschoffa saw different animals and creatures that spawned the movement, among which were a white monkey with wings, a multicolored bird with yellow legs that resembled a peacock, and a snake about thirty centimeters long.¹¹ Although the vision of these creatures is significant to the worldview of the CCC as they bear key theological import on how the CCC views the world as described by the founder, these visional experiences have generated various theological controversies and have received mixed reactions from other Christian blocks, particularly Pentecostals.

While some groups see this as a demonic event that lacks textual basis, others construed it as Oschoffa's phase of liminality or rites of passage into the occultic world, associating his miracles and exploits in ministry with witchcraft and some strange and esoteric forces based on the event. Underscoring some of the views and reactions to this visional and supernatural experience, Akinwumi muses as follows:

The monkey could not be described as an angel of God because the biblical description of angels of God portrays them as having human features and with two wings with which they fly. Neither could it be described as a bat since bats are not so large and have no tails. The multi-colored bird could not be associated with any divinity because the dove is

the only bird said to be the bearer of good tidings. Viewed from an African perspective, strange birds which are so lovely and sing beautifully are associated with witchcraft. While Oschoffa was still contemplating the meaning of all this and the power behind such an event his attention was drawn to a noise from the ground. He looked down and saw a short snake, about thirty centimeters long. The people of Dahomey (Republic of Benin) at that time considered snakes sacred creatures and it was an abomination or taboo for a Beninese (Dahomean) to kill a snake either intentionally or without any justifiable cause. Snake worship among the Dahomeans was widely accepted and the *Dangbe* god of Porto Novo was a python god.¹²

While this statement represents some of the dissenting views characteristic of the claims that Oschoffa was diabolical and phony, Oschoffa, in his later years, clarified the significance of the creatures he encountered in his visions as he claimed to have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit.¹³ According to him, each of the animals portrays a different category of human characteristics and behaviors among which the church will dwell, explaining why the vision cannot and should not be taken literally, but metaphorically and symbolically. Therefore, it is credible to argue that there is a congruence between Oschoffa's supernatural experiences and other visions in the Bible relating to animals and/or living creatures. The visions of the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek 17), Zechariah (Zech 1:6), and the apostle John in the book of Revelation (Rev 13) all come to mind. It is safe to say that none of these visions bears any literal, but rather metaphorical and symbolic, interpretation. Referencing Oschoffa's and William Wade Harris' experiences, Cornelius Olowola, in his study of African Independent Churches (AIC), contends that the belief in visions and revelations has always been at the center of the doctrinal practices of independent African churches. Many of their leaders claim to have visions or revelations.¹⁴ It was these experiences that heralded Oschoffa's commission into the ministry.

The "Divine Order"

On September 29, 1947, while fellowshiping with some individuals in his house, Oschoffa claimed to have seen a mysterious and divine appearance where a winged angel bathed in an intense light stood before him.¹⁵ The angel, according to Oschoffa, brought a word from God to Oschoffa regarding his commission and the assignment of the mission he was called to lead. The angel conveyed the message to Oschoffa in the Egun language and interpreted it in English as follows:

It is the wish of God to send you on an errand of preaching to the world.¹⁶ Many nominal Christians there are who, when confronted by difficulties and problems of this world, they run after fetish priests and other powers of darkness for all kinds of assistance. Consequently, on their death, they cannot see Christ because, by their action, Satan has left his spiritual mark on them. To assist you in your work so that men may listen to and follow you, miraculous work of Holy divine healing will be carried out by you in the name of Jesus Christ. These works of divine healing and God's spiritual mark on you will testify to the fact God sent you.¹⁷

This message encapsulated what would later be interpreted as both the vision and mission statements of the CCC, in which it defined all its missional activities. It is perhaps one of the things that distinguishes the CCC from any connection with occultism as claimed by its critics. Although people tend to associate the movement with occultism and fetishism, it maintains its self-image as a Christian church *sui generis* and vehemently refuses any connecting nexus with traditional religions and praxis.¹⁸ Reacting and underscoring the significance of the message of the “divine order” as delivered by the angel, Adogame maintains that the vision revolves around the mission against “Satan,” “fetish priests,” and other “powers of darkness” in the world.¹⁹ Not only that, he also believes that the vision shows that God's benevolent power as portrayed in the message was to be used to counter the power of Satan and other mischievous forces.²⁰ More significantly, the events of May 23 and September 29 both helped establish the prophetic office of Oschoffa, as people began to regard him as a prophet after relating the encounter to them.

Eric N. Newberg, who has done an extensive study on Christianity in Africa, is probably one of the few scholars in the global Charismatic academic and ecclesial guild who avidly testified to the prophetic office of the anointed man of God. Noting his role as one of the leading figures in Aladura movements, Newberg surmises, “An example of a leader of an Aladura movement would be Samuel Biléou Joseph Oschoffa (1909–1985), the prophet-founder of the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) in Nigeria in 1947.”²¹ Newberg maintains that Oschoffa had visions in which God showed him how to organize a purified church based on a distinct liturgy, organizational structure, and code of rigorous ethical and doctrinal principles.²² It is Newberg's insightful assertion that possibly helps to simplify both the agenda of the movement as well as Oschoffa's commission to lead a purified church and/or an organized structure. It equally helps to assert his place as a prophet who was commissioned to speak light into the darkness of his own generation. His generation was one of the darkest in the history of Christianity, particularly when Christianity was just mushrooming on the continent of Africa. He is probably one of the people Philip Jenkins would regard as “prophets of Africa.”²³

Regarding the name of the denomination, the naming of the movement was believed to have “come down from Heaven by divine revelation” through one Alexander Yanga, who was at the time undergoing spiritual healing under Oschoffa.²⁴ It was reported that Yanga experienced a seven-day-long trance. At the end of the seven days, he wrote the name originally in French as *Le Christianism Celeste*. It was later rendered as *Eglise du Christianisme Céleste*, translated in English as “Celestial Church of Christ.”²⁵ Just as the name of the church was given through a different prophet, many other important components of the church, such as mode of worship, dress code, and hymnodies, were received through different prophets within the fold. This attests to the highly charismatic and democratic leadership acumen of Oschoffa. According to Newberg, *socialized* charismatic leadership is leadership that (a) is based on egalitarian behavior, (b) serves collective interests and is not driven by self-interest of the leader, and (c) develops and empowers others.²⁶ Oschoffa can be classified as one of the few Charismatic leaders who lived the most shared life, building, raising, and empowering other leaders. Rosalind I. J. Hackett, however, has argued that while he was alive the organization of the CCC was ostensibly structured around him, making him the centralized authority, ratifying all major decisions.²⁷ However, eyewitness accounts and the fact that the organization outlived him has attested to the fact that Oschoffa rarely made any major decisions with regard to the organization without consulting with his leaders, particularly the board of trustees. In fact, every CCC parish had and still has a parochial committee that is vested with the responsibilities of making critical decisions in each local assembly.

A Man of Many Miracles

One of the major characteristics of Oschoffa’s ministry was his healing miracles. He was regarded as one of the healing apostles of the twentieth century. In his thirty-eight years of earthly ministry, it was reported that God through him brought fourteen people, including many who have been clinically certified dead, back to life. His healing ministry took effect right in the forest where he had the encounter that turned his life around. During his sojourn in the forest, he was reported to have been transformed through the supernatural encounters with angels and a series of visional experiences. He became transformed and highly spiritually empowered. On the day of the eclipse of the sun, Oschoffa equipped himself with his personal effects, including food and drinking water, in search of ebony trees. Having purchased a personal canoe for his business trips, he hired a paddler since he did not know how to paddle. Arriving at the destination, he asked the paddler to stand on shore while he went into the forest in search of the trees he wanted. While there he noticed a change in the weather as the sky suddenly turned dark and he became terrified. He quickly opened his Bible and read some Psalms in

meditation and prayer. He then realized that the phenomenon was an eclipse of the sun.²⁸

While he knelt to pray, he claimed to have seen many strange visions and heard many strange voices. He then retreated to the location of the canoe. As what will mark his first miracle, he found his paddler writhing in severe pain and he speedily laid hands on him, and he was healed. The paddler later confessed to stealing part of Oschoffa's stew. Right after that he got lost in the forest because his paddler, who now saw him as strange and mysterious, ran away and left him. He was stranded in the woods for three months. During the whole time he experienced different stages of encounters and manifestations until he finally was able to find his way out. After his reappearance in the city, he heard a sound of mourning and wailing in a close by village and decided to visit and find out what was going on with his former neighbor and now his host, Yusufu. On reaching the scene, Oschoffa detailed what happened in one of his sermons as follows: "Here I found a Methodist young man called KUDIHO at the point of death who was reported to have been very ill for a long time. I touched him and Jesus raised him up. He is alive today and so are his children, all in Agange."²⁹

Following this event there was another report of Oschoffa bringing his nephew, Emmanuel Mawunyon, back to life after being confirmed dead. These earliest miracles spawned many public meetings and several evangelistic outreaches where many miraculous activities of healing, renunciation of occultic membership, and testimonies of deliverance were recorded. Another mysterious miracle that was ascribed to Oschoffa was the story of a sea that overflowed its banks to engulf the town at Grandpop in Porto Novo. It was reported that God through Oschoffa performed a miracle by making the sea to ebb back to its original spot. There were countless numbers of other miracles until Oschoffa's name became synonymous with miracles. Akinwumi aptly echoed this: "Oschoffa's name became synonymous with miraculous healings and people in Porto Novo and beyond anxiously awaited the day he would visit them."³⁰ His healing ministry probably explains why he had multitudes of followers within a few years of ministry. While some castigated and discredited the authenticity of his miracles, some who witnessed his miracles firsthand testified to the veracity of those miracles as they were performed in the name of Jesus. Akinwumi explained that the CCC grew by leaps and bounds after the formal proclamation of the Holy Spirit's orders through Alexander Yanga. Adogame shares the same view about Oschoffa's speedy popularity and growth of the church. Speaking on the popularity of Oschoffa's ministry garnered within a short period of time, Adogame explains that it was the nature of its growth and proliferation in Nigeria afterwards that brought the church the popularity it has enjoyed today.³¹

Following Max Weber's theory, Newberg surmises that charismatic leadership is understood as flowing from charisma or giftedness, which is attributed to the leader by

his or her followers.³² In light of this assertion, he goes further to highlight five paradigms of Spirit-empowered leadership adapted from Ephesians 4:11: apostle, prophet, healing evangelist, pastor-preneur, and teacher/scholar.³³ He uses this theory as a test case to assess all the five offices. Concerning the apostle paradigm, he begins by stating that there is no universal agreement in Spirit-empowered movements concerning the apostle as a position in contemporary leadership. However, quoting Michael Brown, he believes “if one takes the term apostle in its general sense as an emissary of the gospel, one can affirm the existence of modern-day apostles.”³⁴ In his assessment of the healing evangelist paradigm, he references Allan Anderson, “The main attraction of Pentecostalism in the majority world is still the emphasis on healing and deliverance from evil.”³⁵ However, he argues, God can use suffering to grow faith in his people, therefore emphasizing a balanced theology.

In his assessment of the prophet paradigm, Newberg begins by asking whether there are modern-day prophets. In answering this question, he asserts that the contemporary paradigm of prophets and prophecy is based upon the biblical assumption that “no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s interpretation; but men spoke from God as they are carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:20–21).”³⁶ While acknowledging this view, he cautions against the temptation of leaders asserting infallibility and unquestionability to themselves and thus advises that no leader should be allowed to operate outside the authority and accountability of the church as whole.³⁷ Thus, in light of Weber’s theory that charismatic leadership thrives on the basis of charisma and the giftedness their followers attribute to them, and Newberg’s approach of biblically contextualized leadership paradigms, particularly within the global Spirit-empowered community, it is safe to say that Oschoffa fits seamlessly into the categories of apostle, healing evangelist, and prophetic paradigms. He also functioned as a pastorpreneur who led a movement to a global reckoning. He enjoyed the grace and anointing of God, as well as the giftedness and the charisma acknowledged by his followers. However, the fact that many of his earliest followers ascribed infallibility and unquestionability to him should be critically assessed as this has led to many heresies and malpractices in the fold. Without doubt he was used by God, but his words, visions, and actions were not allowed to be subject to biblical scrutiny, particularly because he was never accused of or caught in any scandals but polygamy.

The CCC Belief System and Ritual Cosmos³⁸

As has been stated, CCC’s cosmological and theological views, as well as its ritual praxis, give us a window into the theological views of its founder. Adogame contends that a large part of the CCC’s hymnodies aptly echoed some traditional Yoruba aphorism and cosmology.³⁹ In another study, Adogame identified continuities and discontinuities

between the CCC and the Yoruba traditional religion and cultural matrix. However, he argues that the CCC maintains its self-image as a Christian church *sui generis* and vehemently refutes any connection with traditional religious thought and praxis.⁴⁰ According to him, CCC cosmology is a synthesis of biblical belief, Christian liturgical tradition, and elements from the Yoruba cultural milieu and worldview.⁴¹ Therefore one may gain appreciation for the CCC or Oschoffa's cosmological and theological views from Adogame's point of view. And of course, the CCC has been established from its inception as a holiness church with strict regulation against immorality and idolatry. Adogame explains what one could infer from its affinity with its African origin:

It has been shown that Yoruba cosmology influenced the CCC in the construction and shaping of their sacred space. Both worldviews share the belief in the reality of benevolent and malevolent paranormal forces. The attitudes towards these forces remain essentially the same. What has changed in the case of the CCC is the transformation of what constitutes the benevolent powers on the one hand, and the medium of control of the evil forces on the other. CCC gains access to heaven through prayers, prophecy, visions and dreams, and elaborate rituals within the various sacred space as opposed to divination and sacrifice in Yoruba cultural matrix.⁴²

Meanwhile a lot of people who cannot take the painstaking route that Adogame took to understand the ritual and spatial conceptions of the CCC have not been sympathetic towards the theological and liturgical configuration of the church. Underscoring the major components (visions and revelations, prophecies, worship, and prayer) of the Aladura and/or AICs in general, Olowola maintains, "There is no doubt that the independent churches have the idea of Christ as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world and the coming one."⁴³ Furthermore, he declares that the African independent churches have a high view of the Bible. The centrality of the Bible is striking, as earnest Bible study is one of the characteristics of the group.⁴⁴ With regard to the growth and expansion of Aladura churches, particularly the CCC with more than 20 million worshippers worldwide, Olowola believes that the reasons given for the growth are that these churches' goal was to bring Africans to Christ via media that is understandable to Africans and more relevant messages that meet the needs of Africans. Hence, they have extensive outreach through healing ministries.⁴⁵

Conclusion

The ministry of Samuel Biléou Joseph Oschoffa has been considered as one of faithful service to God, liberation of the ordinary people that were overly oppressed by sin and

evil forces, and indigenizing and ensuring that the African peoples understand and worship God in their own way. His theology synthesizes biblical belief, Christian liturgical tradition, and elements from African worldviews, helping Africans to understand and worship God based on their cultural worldview and perspectives. The CCC was probably one of the first few churches that introduced and synthesized elements from African culture like drums and ecstatic dancing into church services and Christian activities. Oschoffa's leadership paradigm was highly charismatic and one of a shared life among humanity. He was highly spiritual and ably gifted by God, a threat to the kingdom of darkness and a beacon of hope to the hopeless. Thirty-seven years after his death, the CCC is still growing in leaps and bounds, liberating and setting the bound free across all the continents of the world with about 20 million worshippers worldwide.



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Notes:

¹ The Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) represents one of the indigenous religious initiatives in West Africa popularly described as the Aladura movement. Other churches that fall within this category are the Cherubim and Seraphim (C & S), Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Church of the Lord—Aladura (CLA), Evangelical Church of Yahweh (ECY), Church of the Seven Seals of God (CSSG), and their various appendages and splinter formations. These churches are so-called due to the special emphasis they placed on prayer, healing, and other charismatic features like dreams, visions, prophecy, and their pattern of belief in ritual structure. See Afe Adogame, “Doing Things with Water: Water as a Symbol of ‘Life’ and ‘Power’ in the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC),” *Studies in World Christianity* 6:1 (2000), 59–77.

² The most important and reliable source for learning about Oshoffa is the CCC's constitution. According to the CCC's constitution, Oshoffa performed many iconic miracles, including bringing fourteen different people who had been clinically certified dead back to life. His life and ministry were synonymous with miracles. See *Celestial Church of Christ's Constitution* (Lagos: The Board of Trustees for the Pastor-in-Council, 1980), 5–8.

³ In this study, it should be stated that both the theology and the doctrine of the CCC is predicated upon the vision, revelation, and the theological views of its founder based on his visionary experiences and his personal hermeneutics. They give us a window into the religious thoughts and praxis of the CCC. In his studies of the continuity and the discontinuity between

CCC and the Yoruba cosmological views, Adogame observes, “The Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) has been identified as a distinct brand of Christianity which has much affinity with the Yoruba cultural matrix.” However, he explains that the CCC, on the other hand, maintains its self-image as a Christian Church *sui generis* and vehemently refuses any connecting nexus with Yoruba traditional religious thought and praxis. See Afeosemimo Adogame, “Building Bridges and Barricades,” *Marburg Journal of Religion* 6 (1998), 4.

⁴ Elijah Olu Akinwumi, *Oshoffa, Samuel Bilewu (1909–1985), Celestial Church of Christ (Aladura) Nigeria* (Lagos: Project Luke, 2002), 1–2.

⁵ *Celestial Church of Christ’s Constitution*, 8.

⁶ Akinwumi, *Oshoffa, Samuel Bilewu (1909–1985)*, 2.

⁷ *Celestial Church of Christ’s Constitution*, 8.

⁸ Adogame, “Doing Things with Water,” 2.

⁹ According to Wikipedia, there was a series of solar eclipses that occurred between 1946 and 1949, one on May 20, 1947. “Totality was visible from Chile, including the capital city Santiago, Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, Liberia, French West Africa (the parts now belonging to Ivory Coast and Benin), British Gold Coast (today’s Ghana), including capital Accra, French Togoland (today’s Togo), including capital Lomé, British Nigeria (today’s Nigeria).” See “Solar Eclipse of May 20, 1947,” *Wikipedia*, 1 October 2021, n.p., https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solar_eclipse_of_May_20,_1947. Although these events may be considered as natural phenomena with basic scientific explanations, the CCC attached more significance to that of the month of May, as it is believed to be a miraculous event that spawned the movement known as the CCC.

¹⁰ *Celestial Church of Christ’s Constitution*, 8.

¹¹ *Celestial Church of Christ’s Constitution*, 8.

¹² Akinwumi, *Oshoffa, Samuel Bilewu (1909–1985)*, 4.

¹³ See the text of Oschoffa’s press interview in *The Sunday Times*, May 16, 1982, 11.

¹⁴ Cornelius Olowola, “An Introduction to African Independent Churches,” in *Issues in African Christian Theology*, ed. Samuel Ngewa (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 1998), 286–305.

¹⁵ *Celestial Church of Christ’s Constitution*, 18.

¹⁶ *Celestial Church of Christ’s Constitution*, 18.

¹⁷ *Celestial Church of Christ’s Constitution*, 18.

¹⁸ Adogame, “Building Bridges and Barricades,” 1. It should be noted that, according to early sources, Oshoffa, who was a one-time catechist in the Methodist Church at Porto Novo, played a significant role both as a chorister and a church trumpeter. Thus, it was alleged that Rev. Geoffrey Parinder visited when the news of Oschoffa’s mysterious power got to him and asked why he did not use his gift in the Methodist church, but decided to form a movement. It was reported that Oshoffa replied that if the Methodist pastor of his church had inquired sincerely about his new powers, rather than reject him, he would have probably remained a Methodist and not founded a

movement. Furthermore, according to the same source, in a bid to affirm the message Oshoffa received about the Christians who had backslid into idolatry, he (Oschoffa) had asked Rev. Parrinder to position himself at the exit door on Sunday to shake hands with every member to pick out members who had neither engagement nor wedding rings. It was such people who publicly professed Christianity but practiced idolatry and occultism by wearing amulets and talismans (*Celestial Church of Christ's Constitution*, 6). See also J. Akinyele Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim: The History of an African Independent Church* (New York: NOK Publishers, 1982), 39.

¹⁹ Adogame, "Building Bridges and Barricades," 3.

²⁰ Adogame, "Building Bridges and Barricades," 3.

²¹ Eric N. Newberg, "Paradigms of Global Spirit-empowered Leadership," *Spiritus: ORU Journal of Theology* 7:2 (Fall 2022), 177.

²² Newberg, "Paradigms of Global Spirit-empowered Leadership," 177.

²³ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 70. Jenkins, one of the proponents of the Global South being the "Next Christendom," recognizes and applauds the efforts and sacrifices of the "Black Africans" in decolonizing Africa and African Christianity.

²⁴ Adogame, "Building Bridges and Barricades," 3.

²⁵ Adogame, "Building Bridges and Barricades," 3.

²⁶ Newberg, "Paradigms of Global Spirit-empowered Leadership," 170.

²⁷ Rosalind I. J. Hackett, "Thirty Years of Growth and Change in a West African Independent Church," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 11:3 (1980), 212–24.

²⁸ *Celestial Church of Christ's Constitution*, 8. See also Omoyajowo, *Cherubim and Seraphim*, 32.

²⁹ *Celestial Church of Christ's Constitution*, 9

³⁰ Akinwumi, *Oschoffa, Samuel Bilewu (1909–1985)*, 6.

³¹ Adogame, "Doing Things with Water," 2. While further elucidating on the growth and the expansion of the church, Adogame explains that the CCC has transcended geo-ethnic boundaries, thus earning its re-christening as the Celestial Church of Christ "Worldwide."

³² Adogame, "Doing Things with Water," 2.

³³ Newberg, "Paradigms of Global Spirit-empowered Leadership," 173–92.

³⁴ Newberg, "Paradigms of Global Spirit-empowered Leadership," 174.

³⁵ Newberg, "Paradigms of Global Spirit-empowered Leadership," 181.

³⁶ Newberg, "Paradigms of Global Spirit-empowered Leadership," 175.

³⁷ Newberg, "Paradigms of Global Spirit-empowered Leadership," 178.

³⁸ Afe Adogame, "Aiye Loja, Orun Nile—The Appropriation of Ritual Space-Time in the Cosmology of the Celestial Church of Christ," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 30:1 (2000), 3.

Although a Professor of Religion and Global Christianity of the Anglican faith, Adogame has written more on the CCC than any African theologian dead or alive.

³⁹ Adogame, “Aiye Loja, Orun Nile,” 3.

⁴⁰ Adogame, “Building Bridges and Barricades,” 1.

⁴¹ Adogame, “Building Bridges and Barricades,” 1.

⁴² Adogame, “Building Bridges and Barricades,” 1.

⁴³ Olowola, “An Introduction to African Independent Churches,” 301.

⁴⁴ Olowola, “An Introduction to African Independent Churches,” 301.

⁴⁵ Olowola, “An Introduction to African Independent Churches,” 301.

The Holy Spirit Research Center

In 1962, Oral Roberts established the Holy Spirit Research Center with the purpose of preserving the history of the global Spirit-empowered movement. Today, the HSRC is one of the largest and most well-known collections in the world, serving researchers from across the global Spirit-empowered movement with the following resources:

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- Over 1,300 Ministry and denominational magazines.
- Over 9,000 audio/videos of pastors and teachers.
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"God said to me, 'Build me a university on the Holy Spirit'" – Oral Roberts

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