



John Obi Oluwabamiji Ogundipe and the Promotion of Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria: A Historical-Theological Study

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Abstract

John Obi Oluwabamiji Ogundipe's life marks a significant turning point in African Pentecostalism, particularly through his involvement in the 1930 revival at Oke-Ooye, Ilesa, Southwestern Nigeria. At age ten, Ogundipe was reportedly raised from the dead during the revival led by Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola. This event helped cement the global recognition of Nigerian Pentecostal Christianity. Despite his impact, Ogundipe's legacy has received limited academic attention. This historical-theological study explores his life, focusing on the intersection of his miraculous healing and his contribution to the spread of Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria and across Africa. Utilising interviews with selected respondents, church documents, and bibliographical sources, the study reveals Ogundipe's pivotal role in validating and promoting Pentecostalism, shaping its trajectory within Nigeria and the broader African context.

Keywords: John Obi Oluwabamiji Ogundipe, Life Story, Faith Healing, Pentecostalism, Pentecostal Christianity, Nigeria.

Introduction

The renowned Pentecostal revival of 1930 at Oke-Ooye, Ilesa, in Southwestern Nigeria, stands as a watershed moment in the history of Nigerian Pentecostal Christianity, garnering significant scholarly attention both locally and internationally. This movement, pivotal to the growth and global recognition of African Pentecostalism, is most commonly associated with Apostle Joseph Ayodele Babalola, whose leadership and faith healings have been extensively documented in Nigerian church historiography (Peel, 1968; Oshun, 1981; Olayiwola, 1995; Ayegboyin & Ishola, 2013; Fatokun, 2009). Central to the revival was the miraculous resurrection of John Obi Oluwabamiji Ogundipe (1920-2002), a ten-year-old boy allegedly raised from the dead, a miracle that catalysed Pentecostalism's spread across Nigeria and Africa. However, despite his critical role in this transformative event, Ogundipe's life and legacy remain largely underexplored in academic literature.

Prior to the Oke-Ooye revival, Apostle Babalola had already conducted several revivals marked by miraculous healings in places such as Ilofa, Odo-Owa, Orokere, and Ofa. These revivals, though met with opposition—including false accusations and conspiracies aimed at derailing his ministry—resulted in miraculous healings, including the resolution of long-term pregnancies and mental illness. These early evangelistic successes garnered attention and set the stage for the 1930 revival, which reached its peak in July 1930 when Babalola allegedly raised John Obi Oluwabamiji Ogundipe from death. This miraculous event drew crowds from across Nigeria and even beyond its borders (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 2013:65-67), marking the externalisation of African Pentecostalism and placing a strong emphasis on practical Christianity, evidenced through physical and spiritual healings.

While Pentecostalism in Nigeria has evolved since these foundational moments in the 1930s, it has grown exponentially, influencing contemporary Christian life. Modern Pentecostal churches such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Living Faith Church Worldwide (Winners Chapel), and the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM) continue to emphasise themes of divine healing, miraculous interventions, and charismatic leadership – all catalysed by figures like Babalola and Ogundipe. According to Pew Research (2006), Pentecostalism accounts for a significant proportion of Nigeria's Christian population today, underscoring the lasting impact of these early revivals.

Problem Statement and Rationale

Despite the extensive attention given to the 1930 Pentecostal revival at Oke-Ooye, Ilesa, one key figure remains notably underexplored – John Obi Oluwabamiji Ogundipe, the boy allegedly raised from the dead during the revival. While the event itself, particularly Apostle Babalola's role, has been well-documented and widely analysed, Ogundipe's life and legacy have not received the same scholarly consideration. Most studies have focused on the miraculous nature of the revival and Babalola's ministry, neglecting Ogundipe, whose resurrection symbolised the transformative power of Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria and Africa.

The lack of focused academic inquiry into Ogundipe's life and his contributions represents a significant gap in the historical and theological understanding of African Pentecostalism. This neglect limits a fuller appreciation of how the miraculous elements of Pentecostalism – particularly faith healing – contributed to the movement's growth and shaped its contemporary practice. By overlooking Ogundipe's legacy, existing scholarship risks underrepresenting the complex nature of Pentecostal Christianity and its foundational figures.

This study seeks to address these gaps by centring Ogundipe's role within the narrative of Nigerian Pentecostalism. Through a historical-theological examination of his life, this paper reveals the significant part Ogundipe played in promoting practical Christianity, particularly the Pentecostal emphasis on miraculous healings and divine intervention. Furthermore, the

study explores how Ogundipe's story influenced the externalisation of African Pentecostalism and the contemporary evangelical movement in Nigeria.

Addressing this gap enhances our understanding of Pentecostalism's history while also shedding light on crucial theological dimensions, such as the role of faith healing, miraculous events in Christian evangelism, and the influence of historical narratives on modern religious practices. Therefore, the study offers new perspectives on Ogundipe's role in shaping Pentecostalism in Nigeria and beyond.

In this study, we examine John Obi Oluwabamiji Ogundipe's life and his role in promoting Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria. Using a historical-theological framework, the investigation fills the gap in academic research concerning Ogundipe's legacy by exploring the miraculous healing he experienced and its broader significance for Pentecostalism in Africa. Through personal interviews, church documents, and relevant bibliographical sources, this study illuminates the intersection of faith healing, theological education, and church-state relationships in the expansion of Pentecostal Christianity in contemporary Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for analysing Ogundipe's contributions to Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria combines perspectives from religious studies, historical sociology, and Pentecostal theology. This approach facilitates an understanding of how Ogundipe's life and ministry intersect with broader socio-religious trends in Nigeria, particularly the rise of Pentecostalism in the 20th century. The framework also considers how his work reflects and contributes to the dynamics of religious change, identity formation, and the interaction between religion and public life in Nigeria.

Ogundipe's contributions can be understood through the lens of religious innovation, a concept rooted in the sociology of religion. Religious innovation refers to how religious leaders and movements introduce new ideas, practices, and organisational forms that transform existing religious landscapes (Stark & Bainbridge, 1985:22-24). Scholars like Weber (1952) and Stark (1996) have explored how charismatic leaders play a pivotal role in such transformations, particularly in contexts where traditional religious institutions are perceived as inadequate or irrelevant to the people's needs.

In Nigeria, the emergence of Pentecostalism represents a significant religious innovation, characterised by a departure from the liturgical and hierarchical structures of mainline churches towards more dynamic and experiential forms of worship (Kalu, 2008). Ogundipe's life as we shall see in this work, particularly his involvement in education and Pentecostal ministry, can be seen as part of this broader trend. His role as an educator and religious leader contributed to the dissemination of Pentecostal ideas and practices, thereby shaping the religious identities of many Nigerians.

On the other hand, there is Pentecostal theology that provides another crucial component of the theoretical framework. Pentecostalism, with its emphasis on the direct experience of the Holy Spirit, divine healing, prophecy, and speaking in tongues, offers a theological basis

for understanding Ogundipe's ministry (Anderson, 2013). His association with prominent Pentecostal figures like Pastor T. O. Obadare situates him within a tradition that prioritises spiritual gifts and the active participation of believers in the life of the church.

The framework draws on the works of theologians and historians who have examined the theological underpinnings of Pentecostalism and its emphasis on spiritual experience over doctrinal orthodoxy. Scholars like Allan Anderson have highlighted how Pentecostalism's emphasis on the Holy Spirit as an active, empowering presence aligns with the experiences of African Christians, making it particularly resonant in contexts like Nigeria where spiritual power and healing are central to religious practice (Anderson, 2013).

Ogundipe's ministry can also be analysed through the lens of religious identity and social change. Pentecostalism in Nigeria has not only been a religious movement but also a social force, influencing education, politics, and community life (Marshall, 2009). Ogundipe's involvement in education and his role as a church leader reflects the dual focus of Pentecostalism on both spiritual and social transformation. As a leader who bridged the worlds of education and Pentecostal ministry, Ogundipe exemplifies how religious identity can be both a personal and communal project, shaped by broader socioeconomic and cultural forces. The framework draws on the work of scholars like Ruth Marshall, who have explored the intersection of religion, politics, and social change in Nigeria, showing how Pentecostalism has become a key site for negotiating identities and addressing societal challenges (Marshall, 2009).

Methodology

The study employs a historical-theological methodology, combining primary and secondary data sources to explore the life and legacy of John Obi Oluwabamiji Ogundipe within the context of Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria. Data was gathered through in-depth interviews with purposively selected respondents, church documents, and relevant bibliographical sources. These materials were analysed using a historical-theological lens to trace key events, such as Ogundipe's miraculous healing, and to examine their theological implications for Pentecostalism. The study also employed purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of knowledgeable respondents, while recognising the limitations posed by the scarcity of detailed historical records about Ogundipe. To address this, the study triangulated various sources to enhance the credibility and depth of the findings. This methodological approach allowed for a nuanced examination of Ogundipe's role in expanding Pentecostalism and the ongoing theological discussions surrounding faith healing and charismatic leadership in Nigeria.

Origin of Pentecostalism in Nigeria

The rise of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria was part of a broader, global Pentecostal movement that spanned multiple continents (Oshun, 1981:42). Pentecostal manifestations in Nigeria occurred contemporaneously with similar developments in the United States and

Britain. For example, the Welsh revival of 1904-1906 marked the beginning of Pentecostalism in Britain, while the "Outpouring of the Holy Spirit" in 1906 spread Pentecostal fervour throughout America. At around the same time, similar events connected to the Holy Spirit movement were already taking place in Nigeria and across West Africa. This resurgence in the power of the Holy Spirit and the subsequent Pentecostal phenomena did not emerge in isolation; it was closely tied to specific human actors and broader societal shifts. In the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the rise of African Indigenous Churches (AICs) reflected a general distrust among Africans toward the Eurocentric forms of Christianity that had dominated the religious landscape (Massondo, 2005:89).

The spontaneous manifestations of the Holy Spirit in Nigeria gave rise to several charismatic figures (Komolafe, 2004) who would become pivotal in the evolution of Pentecostalism in West Africa, particularly in Nigeria. One such figure was James Johnson, a lifelong advocate for African interests in both Church and State. Johnson's work in Pentecostalism in Nigeria cannot be understated. In 1874, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) transferred him from Sierra Leone to Lagos, where he seized the opportunity to expand the local Native Pastorate. Johnson believed firmly that Africans should lead the conversion of other Africans, free from European domination. Inspired by Henry Venn's vision of a "self-propagating, self-governing, and self-reliant Church in Africa," Johnson initiated a self-support scheme that enabled Africans to finance their own Church organisations under the CMS's auspices.

Bishop James Johnson's Pentecostal practices and teachings laid the groundwork for the origin and development of Indigenous Churches in Nigeria. He emphasised the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the efficacy of prayer in Jesus' name, leading to many conversions to Christianity (Adegboyega, 1978:2). This was particularly evident in the formation of the Precious Stone Society, also known as the Diamond Society, a key precursor to Pentecostalism in the region.

The rise of prophetic healers also played a significant role in the origin of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. For instance, Garrick Sokari Braide, who emerged as a prophetic healer in 1895 in the Niger Delta around Bonny, became a central figure in this movement. Braide's ministry was marked by prophetic healing, accurate revelations, and the display of special spiritual gifts. He was a vocal opponent of traditional religion and magic, encouraged fasting, and promoted the practice of loud praise to God in local songs. His ministry significantly contributed to the growth of the Church in the Niger Delta, where the number of Christians increased from 900 in 1895 to 11,700 due to his influence (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 2013:59; Adelaye & Adelaye, 2001:3).

These examples illustrate that Nigerian Pentecostalism took root through the religious experiences of a few charismatic individuals who claimed prophetic callings, practised faith healing through prayer, and spoke in tongues. This movement of the Holy Spirit in Nigeria was largely independent of external European Pentecostal influences, suggesting that African Pentecostalism emerged as a universal movement within the broader Christian

context. The movement was deeply rooted in the indigenous religious and cultural experiences of the Nigerian people, which allowed it to flourish and resonate across the region (Ojo, 1995:114).

The Formation of Precious Stone Society (PSS)

The formation of the Precious Stone Society (PSS), also known as the Diamond Society, between 1917 and 1918 was influenced by a combination of socio-political and spiritual circumstances in Nigeria, particularly in the Ijebu region of Southwestern Nigeria. Firstly, in 1892, the British Government conquered the Ijebu kingdom, which had previously been hostile to Christianity. This conquest led to a significant shift, with many Ijebu people converting to Christianity and Islam. The new Christian converts embraced the benefits of Western civilisation, such as education, white-collar jobs, and legitimate trade. This mass movement towards Christianity provided a fertile ground for the emergence of new Christian movements, including the PSS.

Secondly, the development of communication networks, especially the construction of railways by the British, played a crucial role in the formation of the PSS. These railways connected the southern and northern parts of Nigeria, facilitating the movement of people for work and trade. As part of these migrations, Christians who moved to new regions, such as the North and East, brought their faith with them and made new converts. This mobility helped spread the ideas and practices that would later coalesce into the PSS (Peel, 1978:62; Boahen, 1969:138).

Thirdly, the terrible outbreak of influenza in October 1918, at Ijebu-Ode, like all other Southwestern Nigeria also contributed to the formation of PSS. Since that great pandemic defied human solutions, the government ordered the closure of all public buildings including the Church in Ijebu-Ode. To this end, Omowole (1991:300) asserts that the disasters had struck most painfully. It defied the Yoruba medical system, all the herbs, charms, sacrifices, incantations, and so on, could not help and numberless people continued to be struck dead immediately after they were infected. Even the Western, medicine, for those who had access to it, was of no help. At such a time when the situation became desperate, the average Yoruba mind would attribute spiritual cause to the problem. Thus, human inability to combat the raging socio-spiritual crisis, apart from the lapses on the part of the mission Churches, occasioned the birth of the Precious Stone Society. Some charismatic figures like J.B. Sadare and Sophia Odunlami (Miss) were at the vanguard of the society (Adeleye, 2010:68; 2011).

Fourthly, as some Christians began to revert to traditional forms of worship due to the perceived ineffectiveness of the mission churches during the influenza crisis, a group of committed Christians sought to prevent this backsliding. They focused on family worship, private prayers at home, and small church prayer gatherings. These efforts to maintain and strengthen the faith of believers during a time of crisis were instrumental in the formation of the PSS (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 2013:40-45).

Also, the contribution of a prophetic healing evangelist in the person of a nineteen-year-old school mistress, Sophia Odunlami (later Mrs Ajayi) at Isonyin about 5 miles away from Ijebu-Ode should not be understated. Compelled by her religious experience, she engaged in a peripatetic gospel campaign the mission of which was to inform her people to store up rainwater and have it consecrated for use as a remedy for the influenza epidemic. People adhered to her prophetic warning and were healed without the use of medicine (Peel, 1978:67). In July 1920, barely two years after its commencement at Ijebu-Ode, the PSS was formally inaugurated with the native name, *Egbe Okuta Iyebiye*, which was variously translated, as the PSS or Diamond Society (Fatokun, 2009:52; 1 Peter 2:6 NIV). Thus, the success of the pioneering Pentecostals was attributed to their attendance at social functions in critical times.

Suffice to assert here that the rise of PSS in Southwestern Nigeria characteristically marked the beginning of a Pentecostal Revival. Nigerian Christianity was transformed from an intellectual to a power-demonstrating one. The reason is that, in Africa, religion is not so much something that is believed intellectually as something that is acted out physically and emotionally, involving body, soul and Spirit. This feature distinguishes the African Pentecostal Christianity in contemporary Nigeria from older mainline churches (Mbon, 2004).

John Obi Oluwabamiji Ogundipe's Life Story and Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria **His Birth and Early Life**



John Obi Oluwabamiji Ogundipe was born on July 20, 1920, in Igando, Ilesa, Southwestern Nigeria, to Mr. Emmanuel Ogundipe and Mrs. Adetola Ogundipe. His birth was marked by a profound personal tragedy, as it occurred just two months and one day after the death of his father on May 18, 1920. Growing up without his father, John became the favourite child of his mother, who devoted herself to his upbringing. His early years in the family home at Igando, Ilesa, were shaped by his close relationship with his mother and the absence of his father (personal communication, Elder D. O. Agboluaje, 2007).

His Groundbreaking Healing at Oke-Ooye, Ilesa

In 1930, at the age of ten, John Obi Oluwabamiji Ogundipe experienced a life-altering event that would become a cornerstone of Nigerian Pentecostal history. According to accounts, John allegedly died, an event that triggered immediate preparations for his burial, in line with Yoruba customs. While the death of an adult typically entails elaborate burial rites, the death of a child or young person, depending on the circumstances, often leads to a swift

burial (Abiose, n.d). Consequently, John's body was quickly prepared for burial and taken from the Igando compound to Oke-Ooye, Ilesa. At the time, the Faith Tabernacle Congregation (FTC) was holding a peace meeting at Oke-Ooye, Ilesa, from July 9th to 10th, 1930. As mourners, including John's mother, arrived at the premises, their heart-wrenching cries filled the air. These cries caught the attention of Apostle Joseph Ayodele Babalola, who was nearby in a separate apartment from the church's peace committee. The peace meeting had already addressed two of the twenty-four agenda items, specifically those concerning baptism and the admittance of polygamists into full membership of the FTC. At the time, the committee was deeply engaged in a discussion on the feasibility of faith healing without the use of medication.

Alerted by the mourners' cries, Apostle Babalola approached the scene to understand the cause of the commotion. Upon seeing the lifeless body of young Ogundipe, Babalola took decisive action. He rang a bell three times, touched the boy with his rod, and invoked the name of Jesus three times. To the astonishment of all present, the boy suddenly came back to life. The sombre atmosphere instantly transformed into one of overwhelming joy and celebration. As the people rejoiced, Babalola repeatedly exclaimed in Yoruba, "*Oluwa ti bami ji*", meaning "The Lord has raised him for me." This phrase, *Oluwa ti bami ji*, was later contracted to *Oluwabamiji*, which became John's third (middle) name, signifying his miraculous return to life.²

This incredible miracle occurred at a pivotal moment, effectively settling the ongoing debate within the FTC regarding the validity and encouragement of faith healing. The joy and awe that followed the miraculous event were unprecedented in the history of the Faith Tabernacle Congregation, leading to an abrupt end to the peace meeting. This event marked the beginning of Apostle Babalola's great revivals and has since been celebrated as a foundational story in the history of Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria and Africa at large. Ogundipe's resurrection not only solidified the practice of faith healing within the Pentecostal movement but also became a significant reference point in the narrative of African Pentecostalism. His life story continues to be a powerful testament to the faith and fervour that characterise Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria (Oshitelu, 2007:36-39).

His Education and Career

At twelve, Ogundipe began his formal education at The Apostolic Central School, Oke-Ooye, Ilesa. Despite starting school later than his peers, Ogundipe quickly demonstrated remarkable academic ability. His brilliance became evident as he advanced through his studies. While in Standard V, he was appointed pupil teacher at The Apostolic School, Igbogi, Ilesa, a notable responsibility for a student his age. After completing this assignment, Ogundipe returned to his studies and excelled, leading his class in the Primary School Leaving Certificate exam, even though he had missed an entire academic session. His academic prowess continued to shine when he studied independently for the Junior

Cambridge Examination and passed with distinction, a remarkable achievement, particularly as he had not attended a formal secondary school.

In 1946, Ogundipe was admitted to The Apostolic Teachers' Training College, Oke-Ooye, Ilesa, as one of the pioneering students (Admission Number 1946/12). He was among the fourteen students in the first cohort, including Abere Emmanuel A., Adeniran Michael A., Ajiwe Moses, Akanbi Peter, Akpan Matthew U., and so on (The Apostolic Teachers' College, n.d.). According to Daramola, the initial cohort faced stringent academic standards, resulting in the withdrawal of four students for poor performance (Daramola, 1986:9). The Apostolic Teachers' Training College was supported by The Apostolic Church in Nigeria and its home mission in Great Britain, which bore the majority of the financial costs. As a result, tuition and boarding were provided free of charge, which was crucial for the success of the programme, as the students could not afford to pay fees at that time (The Apostolic Teachers' College, n.d.).

Ogundipe's leadership qualities were recognised early on, and he was appointed as the first prefect of the institution. The Apostolic Teachers' Training College, Oke-Ooye, Ilesa, was the second post-primary institution in Ijesaland, following Ilesa Grammar School. Ogundipe's education and training equipped him with the skills and knowledge to become a versatile teacher. Over the years, he taught in various schools and colleges, distinguishing himself as an active Scout Master. He also attended Moor Plantation College, Ibadan, further enhancing his qualifications as an educator. One of Ogundipe's notable contributions to education was his role as a founding staff member and the first senior tutor of the African Teachers' Training College, Ikirun, in Osun State, Nigeria. His reputation as a seasoned educationist grew, leading to positions at the Divisional Teacher Training College in Ilesa and as an inspector of schools in the Ilesa Division.

Beyond his contributions to education, Ogundipe also ventured into partisan politics. He was an active member of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), which later became the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens. He served as the General Secretary for the Ijesa Division, demonstrating his leadership and organisational skills in the political arena. Ogundipe's career culminated in his retirement in 1987 as an Education Officer with the Schools Management Board in Lagos State. His legacy as an educator and a leader in both the academic and political spheres remains significant, reflecting his lifelong dedication to the betterment of his community and the nation.

His Marriage and Death

Ogundipe was married to Mrs. Emily Olatidayo Ogundipe and Mrs. Abike Ogundipe. Although he was married to two women during his lifetime, he ultimately passed away as a monogamist. His marriage was blessed with children and numerous grandchildren, creating a lasting family legacy. Ogundipe's character was widely admired; he was known for his kindheartedness, patience, and a perpetually joyful disposition. His contentment with life, regardless of its challenges, was a defining trait, and he never allowed the difficulties he

faced to burden him. His faith played a central role in his life, and he was recognised as a devout Christian, deeply committed to his spiritual beliefs.

Throughout his life, Ogundipe maintained a close association with prominent figures in the Pentecostal community. He was particularly known for accompanying Pastor T. O. Obadare, the renowned General Evangelist of the Christ Apostolic Church in Nigeria, to various evangelical revival campaigns. During these events, Ogundipe often testified to God's miraculous power, reinforcing his role as a living testament to the faith that had shaped his life since childhood.

Ogundipe passed away on January 30, 2002, at 82. He was laid to rest on May 18, 2002, surrounded by family and loved ones. He was survived by his wife, Mrs. Emily Olatidayo Ogundipe, his children, and many grandchildren. Ogundipe's life and legacy continue to inspire those who remember his contributions to education, his deep faith, and his unwavering commitment to the principles of Christianity. His story remains a significant chapter in the history of Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria.

Theological-Historical Reflections on John Obi Oluwabamiji Ogundipe and the Promotion of Pentecostal Christianity in Contemporary Nigeria

The life and experiences of John Obi Oluwabamiji Ogundipe offer profound theological and historical insights into the development of Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria. His story serves as a compelling narrative that highlights the intersection of divine intervention, faith healing, and the broader dynamics of Pentecostalism in Nigeria.

Divine Intervention and Faith Healing

One of the most significant theological reflections from Ogundipe's life is the concept of divine intervention, especially in situations where orthodox medicine appears inadequate. Despite medical advancements, Ogundipe's near-death experience at the age of ten underscores the Pentecostal belief in divine healing. The miraculous nature of his revival, reportedly through the intervention of Apostle Joseph Ayodele Babalola, who called upon the name of Jesus three times to bring Ogundipe back to life, illustrates the Pentecostal emphasis on the power of faith and the name of Jesus. This event is a testament to the potency of faith healing and also reinforces the Pentecostal doctrine that divine intervention can override natural circumstances. The miraculous revival of Ogundipe thus serves as a cornerstone in Pentecostal narratives, particularly in The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN) and Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), where faith healing remains a central tenet.

The Role of Charisma in Ministry

Ogundipe's life also reflects the importance of charisma in Pentecostal ministry. The event of his revival by Apostle Babalola, who utilised no physical objects but merely invoked the name of Jesus, emphasises the belief in spiritual endowment as a key element in the

effectiveness of ministry (Budiselić, 2011). This incident challenges the reliance on physical symbols like the staff or water in faith healing, arguing instead for a direct dependence on spiritual power through faith in Christ.

From a missiological perspective, Ogundipe's case suggests that latent charisma, nurtured through discipleship, could have made him a powerful evangelist. However, due to the lack of consistent follow-up, he became more prominent as an educator and politician rather than a religious figure (Adeleye, 2011). This highlights the need for improved strategies in Christian ministry that go beyond the immediate results of crusades and focus on long-term spiritual growth and training.

Theological Education and Leadership

The experience of Ogundipe and the broader context of Pentecostalism in Nigeria during the 1930s also underscore the importance of theological education for church leaders. Historically, that Ogundipe was an adjudged first fruit of the Christian ministry of Apostle Babalola, the protagonist of the 1930s Pentecostal revival in Nigeria is a factor to be reckoned with in Pentecostal studies. Indeed, he was and remains the point of reference for historic faith healing among the Pentecostals. The Pentecostal Christian messages that reflect on the God of the 1930s, the almighty power to do all things and the like revolve around the life story of John Obi Oluwabamiji Ogundipe who was raised to life on 9th July 1930 at Oke-Ooye, Ilesa, Nigeria. Remarkably, several miraculous healings and deliverance occurred in the evangelistic ministry of Apostle Babalola but the one that gave Pentecostalism its name in Nigeria and Africa at large was the raising of Ogundipe who was claimed to have been dead and raised to life. It should be noted here that, whereas Apostle Babalola was instrumental to the effectual work of miracles in the 1930s revival, the life story of Ogundipe promoted Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria. The fact is that the living testimonies of Ogundipe enhanced the faith of many people. Thus, the singular miraculous healing performed upon Ogundipe promoted Pentecostal Christianity in Nigeria and Africa at large. Therefore, rather than self-gratification and self-glorification, Christian ministers are expected to turn Ogundipe into an instructional being to point people to the Lord God, the non-compromising universal healer. This theological understanding probably informed the momentous exclamation of Apostle Babalola: 'The Lord has helped me to raise him', *Oluwa ti bami ji i*. Rather than humans, the Lord God through the Lord Jesus Christ is the absolute healer.

Theological education and apostolic supervision of evangelistic ministry involving miracles and healings are germane to effective Christian ministry. In retrospect, on the 15th of March 1937, Pastor Sydney Elton arrived in Ilesa to take over the superintendence of the TACN Ilesa Area. As an Area Superintendent, he was directly responsible to the International Missionary Committee in Bradford, England. He soon settled into his new role where his work was majorly to assist the revivalists and he travelled extensively with Evangelist Babalola and Pastor J. A. Babatope on evangelistic campaigns. He was even involved in large crusades at Oke-Ooye, Ilesa. It should be noted that Elton soon identified the need to

train many of those prophetic/charismatic figures in the knowledge of the Scriptures. The reason being that many of them manifested the power, but had had little biblical education characteristics of some evangelists in their contemporary society. Therefore, a Bible School was established to teach them the doctrinal aspect of what they were manifesting (Abodunde, 2007:25-27). In short, travelling with the revivalists allowed Pastor Elton to observe some lapses of the revival. According to him, the emphasis was only on miracles, healings and the destruction of charms, amulets and other paraphernalia of African religious practices, without an equal emphasis on sound teachings from the scriptures.

Manifestations of deficient theological orientations pervaded the religious space of the first two decades of the 1930s evangelistic ministry in Nigeria. For instance, from the outset of Apostle Babalola's ministry, he had a religious experience, a revelation, where he was given a rod, a bell and a bottle of water. He interpreted this revelation literally and throughout his ministry, he carried a rod and prayed over water for therapeutic and prophylactic means. According to Abodunde (2007:25-26), Pastor Elton countered this and told him that things he saw were symbolic- the iron rod represented his authority while the bottles of water signified the level of his anointing. From a classical Pentecostal viewpoint, it was argued that the practice of blessing water encouraged many to place their faith in the "holy water" rather than in the word of God. It should be noted here that Pastor Elton's viewpoint only advocates absolute complete reliance on the word of God for any question of faith. However, Babalola claimed that the practice of blessing water for healing was by revelation. Hence, he was bent on obeying divine revelation to the letter.

Church-State Relations

Historically, Ogundipe's story also reflects the complex relationship between the church and the state in Nigeria. Knowledge of church-state relationships is capable of either enhancing or disturbing an evangelistic ministry in contemporary society. In retrospect, in the 1930s, the leadership of the Pentecostal movement including Pastor J. A. Babatope, Apostle Babalola and some notable ones were accused of contravening a series of state laws for which the mission works were hampered. It is on record that the protagonists of the 1930s Pentecostal revivals were incarcerated due to various offences and charges of infractions of the state laws including environmental pollution (regular operation of vigil with loud noise in the night that provoked public disturbance), inciting public disorder (condemning other people's religious affiliations), witch hunting (alleging people of indulging in witchcraft and or sorcery), campaigns of calumny (that government establishments such as hospital is diabolic), and unhygienic practices (sanctification of water or river as a means of healing that was abused) that were capable of causing public health hazard. So, in Ilesa, some of the erstwhile church leaders like Pastor Babatope and David Obadare were detained in police cells and later arraigned in court for alleged criminal and civil offences (Church Document, 1971). However, they were discharged cautioning not to disrupt civil order any longer (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 2013:68-69). Following the above, in

the Ekiti axis, the government used the instrument of state to ban evangelistic activities for sheer breach of government enacts a preventable error. These incidents underscore the importance of theological education including awareness of state laws and social responsibilities.

Celebrating the Healed over the Healing

The emphasis on celebrating the miraculous healing of Ogundipe rather than focusing on the spiritual growth of the individual reflects a broader issue in Pentecostal practices. Theologically, the Bible teaches that miraculous deeds are a means to glorify God, not the individuals involved (Acts 3:1-10). Thus, the focus should be on how these miracles point people to God rather than on the miracles themselves. Ogundipe's life serves as a reminder that the ultimate goal of any miraculous event is to lead people to a deeper relationship with God.

Ogundipe's Legacy in Theological Context

Faith Healing and Charismatic Leadership in African Pentecostalism

Ogundipe's resurrection at the Oke-Ooye revival stands as a foundational moment in African Pentecostalism's theological landscape, particularly concerning faith healing and charismatic leadership. In African Pentecostalism, faith healing is not merely a theological concept; it represents a tangible manifestation of divine power and validates the spiritual authority of leaders like Apostle Babalola and, by extension, Ogundipe. The centrality of faith healing in Pentecostal theology, especially in Africa, continues to fuel debates on its theological implications.

Scholars such as Anderson (2013) have noted the importance of faith healing in African Pentecostalism, not only as a practice but also as a mechanism for legitimising spiritual leadership. Charismatic figures like Babalola gained authority through such miraculous events, and Ogundipe's resurrection contributed to forming Pentecostal Christianity's narrative of divine intervention in human affairs. Faith healing remains a core aspect of African Pentecostalism, serving as an instrument of evangelism and a mark of God's active presence within the congregation.

However, contemporary theological discussions often challenge the extent to which faith healing should be emphasised. Critics within Pentecostal circles, such as Samuel Kunhiyop (2008), argue that overemphasis on healing can overshadow other essential elements of Christian theology, such as spiritual maturity, discipleship, and scriptural teachings. Ogundipe's legacy, then, can be seen as both a catalyst for growth and a point of theological tension in the movement's development, raising the question: Should Pentecostalism rely heavily on miraculous events to sustain its appeal?

Charisma and Leadership

The role of charismatic leadership in African Pentecostalism is closely linked to the movement's emphasis on the miraculous, particularly the ability of leaders to perform or be

associated with divine acts, such as healings and deliverances. Ogundipe's resurrection positioned him as an emblem of Pentecostal charisma, even though he did not assume leadership roles like Apostle Babalola. His resurrection became a tool for promoting the movement, demonstrating the divine favour bestowed upon key figures within the Pentecostal hierarchy.

In contemporary discussions, charismatic leadership in Pentecostalism continues to be celebrated and scrutinised. Leaders like Pastor Enoch Adeboye of the RCCG and Bishop David Oyedepo of Winners' Chapel have established vast followings, often attributed to their association with miracles, prophetic declarations, and divine interventions. As Chesnut (1997) highlights, charismatic leaders are pivotal in the Pentecostal worldview because they act as conduits between the divine and their congregations. This mirrors the role that Ogundipe's resurrection played in validating Babalola's leadership and Pentecostalism's miraculous ethos.

Yet, some theologians question the sustainability of charisma-based leadership. Issues of accountability, the potential for manipulation, and the centralisation of power around single individuals pose significant challenges within the African Pentecostal framework. Ogundipe's life, while marked by a singular miraculous event, highlights the tension between the theological emphasis on divine intervention and the potential for over-reliance on charismatic displays to validate Christian ministry.

The Role of Miracles in Pentecostal Faith

Miracles, especially faith healing, remain central to the Pentecostal faith. Ogundipe's resurrection epitomises the Pentecostal belief in the immediate and active involvement of God in human affairs. In African Pentecostalism, miracles serve as both a spiritual and social phenomenon, reinforcing the belief that God is not distant but intimately involved in believers' daily lives. This has theological implications for understanding the nature of God's interaction with the world, especially within Pentecostal eschatology, where miraculous healings are seen as a foretaste of the kingdom of God (Burgess, 2008).

Contemporary Pentecostal scholars debate whether this focus on miracles can lead to an imbalance in the faith experience, potentially creating a transactional relationship between believers and God, where faith is measured by the ability to receive miracles. Chan (2000) argues that Pentecostalism must critically evaluate its emphasis on the miraculous to ensure it does not foster a consumerist approach to Christianity, where believers view God primarily as a provider of material and physical benefits. Ogundipe's resurrection, while historically significant, invites reflection on how Pentecostal theology navigates the balance between faith in the supernatural and the call for spiritual growth and ethical living.

Conclusion

The life of John Obi Oluwabamiji Ogundipe represents a pivotal moment in the development of Pentecostal Christianity, particularly in Nigeria and across Africa. His

miraculous resurrection during the renowned 1930 revival at Oke-Ooye, Ilesa, stands as a defining event, that catalysed the spread of Pentecostalism and underscored the movement's emphasis on divine intervention and miraculous healing. As a figure who experienced firsthand the transformative power of faith healing, Ogundipe's life story validated Pentecostal Christianity and contributed to its growing influence locally and globally. However, despite Ogundipe's critical role in the foundational years of African Pentecostalism, his legacy has been largely overlooked in academic discourse. This study addresses this gap by repositioning Ogundipe at the centre of Pentecostal history, emphasising his theological significance in promoting practical Christianity. Through a historical-theological lens, the research highlights how Ogundipe's resurrection solidified faith healing as a central tenet of Pentecostal practice but demonstrated the potential of divine miracles to inspire mass evangelism and societal transformation. Moreover, Ogundipe's life provides valuable insights into the ongoing theological debates surrounding faith healing, charismatic leadership, and the role of miracles in Pentecostalism. His story remains relevant to contemporary African Pentecostal churches, where the themes of healing, spiritual warfare, and divine empowerment continue to shape Christian identity and practice. His experiences challenge modern Pentecostalism to revisit its core values, particularly integrating spiritual power with ethical leadership and societal responsibility. Based on the study's findings, Ogundipe's story can be incorporated into Pentecostal theological curricula as a case study for faith healing and divine intervention. His life offers a powerful testimony of how miracles can authenticate the Christian message, but this must be coupled with sound theological education to avoid over-reliance on miraculous signs without understanding the broader biblical message of salvation and discipleship. Also, Pentecostal leaders should be trained to balance charismatic authority with ethical governance. Ogundipe's resurrection highlights the importance of charisma in Pentecostal leadership, but contemporary leaders must also cultivate integrity, accountability, and humility to prevent the misuse of spiritual gifts. Pentecostal churches today should emphasise the miraculous and the everyday application of Christian principles in addressing societal needs such as poverty, injustice, and health. Ogundipe's resurrection sparked a widespread revival, yet the movement can further address contemporary social issues in Nigeria, promoting holistic physical and spiritual healing.

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