

**GIDEON M. URHOB0 AND THE GOD'S KINGDOM SOCIETY IN NIGERIA BY
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**CHAPTER THREE
THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES**

We have noted from our last chapter that one of the foreign Christian bodies in Nigeria in the 1920s was the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, better known throughout the world as Jehovah's Witnesses, and this society comes into sharp focus in the early history of God's Kingdom Society. The founder of the GKS was once, from Watchtower sources, a special representative of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in Nigeria. There is therefore a certain interest in more closely investigating the origin of the Watchtower, its teachings and appearance and distribution in Nigeria. The venture will offer us much opportunity to see later and at what point and for what reason Gideon Urhobo got associated with the Watchtower Society. It will also treat the issue of their separation. However, the scope of this book does not permit for any elaborate treatment of the history and doctrines of the Watchtower society. Notwithstanding this excuse, enough must be said to establish a basis for understanding the attraction the Watchtower Society held for the founder of the God's Kingdom Society.

The history of the Watchtower Society falls into three periods, each of which coincides with the tenure of a president. The first of these was the founder of the society, Charles Taze Russell, who was president from 1881 till his death in 1916. The second was Joseph Franklin Rutherford, President from 1916 to 1942. The third was Nathan Homer Knorr, president from 1942 to 1977. The fourth president whose period began in 1977 is Frederick Franz. Though much is happening in his tenure, we shall not be too concerned with his time, as this is not wholly a history of the Watchtower Society.

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society is clearly one of the most dynamic religious movements in the world today. Founded in 1872, this movement has been mainly concerned with the preaching of the dawn of a millennial kingdom. Its members strongly believe that God created the world as paradise but it was lost to Satan (one of God's creatures who turned evil), through the disobedience of Adam and Eve to the law of God in the Garden of Eden. But beginning from Abel, the son of Adam and Eve, (Genesis 4) Jehovah has set up a movement or true worshippers to witness to his holy name, Jehovah, so that the lost paradise may be regained to prevail on earth again. The regained paradise will belong only to them.

It seems the movement, some of whose past members were Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, at some time thereafter got stranded until 1872 AD when Jehovah raised up Russell to continue the succession. Thus the Witnesses not only claim to be "the most ancient religious group of worshippers of the true God" but also that Jehovah:

"Raised up his Witnesses in these modern times not as a new religion but as a climax to the long succession of Witnesses that he has had down the past millenniums all the way back to Abel."

A Jehovah's Witness once preached that "Jehovah's Witnesses also preached today... like Jehovah's Witnesses nineteen centuries back." But while Salvation is claimed to belong only to the membership of this movement, all other peoples and movements will, in their opinion, be destroyed by Jehovah at Armageddon - an impending battle between the forces of good and evil. However, the Witnesses want as many people as possible to join them in

witnessing because they "are the only ones that have been favoured and equipped with this good news of the Kingdom" and "to everyone they point out the only way to that Kingdom..." Thus, as Edwin Gaustad observes of millennialists like the Watchtower Witnesses they see "themselves as possessors of a private truth not granted to society at large." They are therefore in Herbert Blumer's phrase disposed to aggressive proselytizing of outsiders since they feel they have a divine mission to save others and to show them the light. Hence, for example, when the Witnesses came to Nigeria, they were known in Lagos and other parts of Western Nigeria as "*alakatakiti*," which in Yoruba means "you either listen or I force you to listen", Those who did not listen were told "Armageddon go kill you", which in other words, implies that you - the unbeliever will die at Armageddon for refusing to join in proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom.

To begin the history of the movement, it is necessary first of all to trace some of the contemporary influences, which most writers on Russell think were responsible for the formation of his millennial beliefs and ideas. Alan Rogerson shows the influence on Russell's ideas and doctrine, that these were derived from the major trends of religious and social thought, which characterized life in the United States during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Another writer says that in the America of the 1850s, there was a mingling of the currents of Christian radicalism with those of social idealism and these emerged clearly in Russell's ideas.

Before Russell was born, speculations about the imminent Second Advent of Christ were rife and there were prophetic dating of Christ's return. The dominant figure in the nineteenth century adventism of the United States, was William Miller. Miller was a humble product of the New England Frontier of the late eighteenth century who became an ardent student of prophecies. After an intensive study from 1816 onwards, he came to the conclusion that the affairs of the world would end about 1843 or 1844. He began to preach in 1829, and many thousands of people in the Eastern and Middle States of America, were convinced and followed him. Several magazines concerning the Second Advent of Jesus, which would also mean the end of the world, were circulated. Miller and his followers were however, disappointed; the world did not end. But disappointed "*Millerites*" continued to search the scriptures and debate the "imminent" Second Advent of Jesus. As a result of these debates, various Adventist groups emerged and it is believed that it was one of such groups Russell joined at Allegheny, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Russell, who is said to have discovered errors in the calculations of William Miller, did not acknowledge borrowing from any group of the Adventists. But many writers believe he did. Alan Rogerson, for example, believes that "nearly all of Russell's beliefs and certainly all the important ones, were thought up by other people—most of them Adventists." Marcus Bach, to cite another, thinks that Adventists books and pamphlets helped Russell formulate his ideas. It may become obvious later that the religious ferment of the time formed part of the basis for Russell's ideological development.

Socially, the second half of the nineteenth century America in which Russell lived was that of change. There was, for example, the rapid growth which resulted in the destruction of a rural way of life and in the creation of new communities. This situation left many people economically dispossessed while at the same time creating a new class of capitalists and aristocrats. There was therefore a call not only for economic reform but also social equality. Russell himself saw the social situation as "an essential fore-runner of the end of 'Gentile Times in 1914'", that is period of troubles. However, as far as originating factors are concerned, it is not certain if there was any close connection between Russell and the social conditions of his time. Russell had based his idea, as the Adventists did, on Biblical

chronology, and his dating fell on a period of social unrest. While Russell may have recognised external conditions as a signal of his millennial expectation, it is clear that much of his ideas has to do with some of the major religious preoccupations of his times, mainly represented by the group of Adventists. This will be made clearer as we now turn to the Russellite story.

Charles Tazz Russell (1852-1916)

Russell was born of Scottish-Irish parents in Allegheny, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He was reared a Presbyterian but later joined the congregational church and became interested in theology. This interest led him to examine the teachings of the church and he soon discovered that the statements of the Christian faith and creeds contained certain element which he could no longer accept. He found, for example, the doctrine of eternal torment of all mankind, except a few, utterly abhorrent and at the age of seventeen, he was driven to skepticism. He then began to investigate other religions which he found equally unsatisfactory. At this time Russell was in the clothing business in his father's drapery store.

And as the story goes, one day in Allegheny, as he was passing through the street, he heard singing from a nearby hall and joined in what turned out to be a meeting of a small group of Second Adventists gathered to hear one Jonas Wendell. Here, he was converted to the doctrine of the Adventists. He then began to study the scriptures to know more about the Second Advent. In 1870, he organised a Bible class of six members to study together in order to get more proofs of the Second Advent. His group was made up of men of the same social and economic circles.

Russell made a long study of the prophetic books of scriptures, Daniel and Revelation in particular, and drew up a chronology of events called "the divine plan of the Ages." His chronology led him to the conclusion that the world was coming to an end in 1914 and that Jesus Christ would set up the millennial Kingdom in 1914. But prior to the establishment of the Kingdom, there would be a forty-year period of preparation (1874–1914) in which there would be troubles. Such troubles would lead to the destruction of earthly kingdoms at the battle of Armageddon. In this battle, Jehovah's hosts under the command of Jesus Christ would defeat and bound Satan and his cohorts for a thousand years and put them in the bottomless pit, that is, bury them. This victory would be followed by the glorification of the saints. The saints, many of whom were believed to have resurrected in 1918 and taken to heaven are altogether 144,000 (Revelation 14: 1-3). The rest of mankind who would be saved would inherit the earth.

In 1876, Russell read a copy of The Herald of the Morning edited by one Adventist, N.H. Barbour of Rochester, New York. He contacted and joined him, Barbour, as co-editor. Barbour had published that Christ came invisibly in 1874, Russell agreed with him and worked out his forty years period of troubles from 1874. Russell and Barbour worked together and in 1877, Russell assisted Barbour to publish a book titled Three Worlds and the Harvest of this World. It is not clear what type of assistance he gave but Russell certainly supplied most of the funds for the publication of the magazine, Herald of the Morning. However, in 1878 when Barbour published articles in the Herald, denying the Ransom sacrifice, Russell disagreed with him and both men parted.

In 1879, Russell founded his own magazine Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence with a first printing of 6,000 copies monthly. In 1879, the magazine which came to be known simply as The Watchtower after 1931, increased to 17,650,000 copies in 1975. By the autumn of 1880, there were some thirty congregations in the United States of America

organized as part of Russell's work of conversion to his millennial belief. By 1881, Russell was managing an unincorporated body, Zion's Watchtower Tract Society and on 13th December 1884, a legal charter was granted to this body and was organised as a corporation. The present name, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania was adopted in 1896.⁴³ In 1898, Russell got a building in Allegheny, Pennsylvania where he had his headquarters. 1891 saw Russell on his first missionary journey abroad, and in 1900 the society's first branch office was established in London. A second journey in 1903 led to a branch in Germany, and in 1904, Australia had its branches.

Russell was a prolific writer, and an untiring speaker and traveller. It is believed that Russell travelled a million miles, preached 30,000 sermons and wrote over 150,000 pages of advanced Biblical exposition, etc. His seven Volumes Studies in the Scriptures were written between 1886 and 1904; the seventh was published post-humously in 1917.

Russell died on October 31st, 1916 aboard a transcontinental train near Pampas, Texas. As a result of his works his followers think that "when the history of the Church of Christ is fully written, it will be found that the place next to St. Paul.... will be occupied by Charles Tazz Russell." As for where Russell is now, the Witnesses say that. "Our brother (Russell) sleeps not in death, but was instantly changed from the human to the divine nature and is now forever with the Lord." Yet about one percent of the present Witnesses know his works. However, Russell it may seem did not possess the qualifications, as it may be obvious when we examine some of his teachings to discredit all other Bible teachers. He had little academic training, nor was he educated theologically though he might have pointed to New Testament figures like Peter, Andrew and John where God used the uneducated to do great things in the field of evangelism.

Joseph Franklin Rutherford

When Russell died, Joseph F. Rutherford took over leadership of the Watchtower Organisation. He became President at 47 in January 1917. Rutherford, known popularly as "Judge" Rutherford because he was one time a substitute judge for the fourteenth Judicial District of Missouri,⁵⁰ was born of Baptist parents on the 8th November, 1869 on a farm in Booneville, Missouri. He studied law and became a legal practitioner and acted for sometime as public prosecutor. Rutherford came into contact with the representatives of the Watchtower society in 1894, but he did not join the society until 1906. The following year he was made the legal counsellor for the society." His first few years as president were a hectic period in which he struggled among other things to avoid a total disintegration of the organisation. Already, many members of the society were disappointed, and some left Russell at this stage when instead of millennial peace, the year 1914 brought the most vast and devastating war. This disappointment itself, though other factors like leadership rivalry and some changes in the society's teachings may be added resulted in defections from the society. Many who left founded independent religious bodies like - The Standfast Movement, Paul Johnson Movement - later called The Laymen's Home Missionary Movement, Elijah Voice Movement, The Eagle Society, Pastoral Bible Institute of Brooklyn and Dawn Bible Students Association. Some of these movements held fast to what Russell taught, though some slight doctrinal differences kept them apart from each other.

But a lot more who remained agreed with Rutherford's adjustment of the society's teachings on the millennial Kingdom, and the new organisational structure introduced by him, not to speak about doctrines. Concerning the Millennial Kingdom, Russell had said that since 1914 had failed, it might require a year or two or three for the fulfillment of the millennial prophecy. His explanation seemed reasonable to the members for not very many left in his time but

they remained in hope. However the failure continued until Rutherford declared that the earthly Kingdom needed some more time to come, He said that the world came to an end in 1914, that Christ was enthroned that same year as the kingdom began immediately but only in heaven. The earth needed "a short transitional period between the enthronement of the king. (Christ) and the full establishment of the millennial reign" This short period would witness a great struggle between the forces of good and evil until Armageddon would come and wipe out the evil forces and usher in the kingdom.

It would appear that those who believed Rutherford were still anxious for the end of the world. Rutherford pinned their hope on other date. 1925 He assured them that in 1925 they would see the ancient worthies including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David resurrected in America. It was believed that the ancient worthies would be resurrected first after the destructive works of Armageddon. With this expectation in view a house "Beth-Sarim (the house of the Princes) was built. But when Abraham and others failed to appear, the house "was finally disposed off through a real estate agency."

The Society was still insecure until Rutherford re-organised it. Under Russell, the movement was run along the lines of the Congregational Church to which he had belonged before. There were elders elected democratically by the members to run their congregations or "ecclesias". Each congregation was completely autonomous, and independent of headquarters control. Russell was simply related to the ecclesias as spokesman or spiritual mouthpiece. It was later that he emerged as a Charismatic Leader. When Rutherford took over he replaced democracy with theocracy. That is, it was God who would now decide for the congregation what they should do. And so the congregations were subjected to direct supervision by the headquarters. As the Society developed, it became more authoritarian, more intolerant and more aggressive." One writer described the governing of the Society then as "one man show" and another says that the Society really started afresh under Judge Rutherford and that what Rutherford began to present in his writings were quite different from what Russell taught. It was at this stage that many members left, some founding new movements as we have said above.

Rutherford was also faced with another problem but this was from the Government of the United States. In 1918, the issue of recruitment for the army, as the government got involved in the First World War, became important. The members of the Watchtower Society, at the instance of Rutherford refused to be recruited into the armed forces. Rutherford and seven of the principal leaders of the Society were therefore arrested in 1918 and jailed principally for obstructing the recruitment and enlistment in the armed forces. After the war, and as a result of an appeal, they were released. Though it is said that some members fell away during this period the leaders were away, the imprisonment "led to a rebirth of zeal and enthusiasm" and there was an increase in contributions and membership.

Rutherford wrote many books and tracts and improved the propaganda machine of the society. Rutherford was a prolific writer and we want to mention some of the major ones besides pamphlets and booklets. The Harp of God; Reconciliation; Creation; Government; Enemies; Salvation; Life; Light (2volumes); Vindication (3vols); Jehovah, Deliverance; Children; Prophecy; Riches; Religion; Preservation etc.etc. (We may state for posterity that almost all the books and their spiritual contents have been set aside by the Watchtower Organization as old truths and worthless). He claimed that the best way of propagating the word of God was a house to house canvass and the sales of literature with which the people must be taught. He described all these as advertising the king, Jesus Christ. His own messages were put on gramophone records which were played in homes during visits. "Rutherford gave the name Jehovah's Witnesses to his followers at a convention held at

Columbus, Ohio in 1931. Hitherto, the members were known principally as Bible Students. On January 8, 1942, Rutherford died after making the Watchtower a well-established "theocratic" organisation. He was succeeded by Nathan Homer Knorr.

Nathan Homer Knorr

Knorr was elected President on January 13th, 1942, five days after the death of Rutherford. He was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in 1905. He was sixteen years old when he associated himself with the Watchtower Society and two years later he went into the Watchtower Headquarters, Brooklyn to work. He grew very quickly in the Society's work becoming one time, factory production manager at the Watchtower press, and director of the New York Corporation.

Knorr's time as President saw many changes in the Witnesses works. He began the training of Witnesses in Bible knowledge. In Rutherford's time, there was emphasis in placing of books in people's homes and little was done on spiritual development of the members. Knorr established the theocratic ministry school for those intending to be ministers of the organisation. Another school with similar aims in view was established at South Lansing in New York which they called Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. His interest in training the Witnesses resulted in the publications like Theocratic Aid to Kingdom Publishers and Qualified to be Ministers. Though Knorr was not as conspicuous as Russell and Rutherford in terms of prolific writing, he was in his own way, a writer and speaker. He however, declared that Society books should no longer bear author's names. He did not write the Society books exclusively but still presided over those who were responsible for writing and supervision.

Knorr realized the importance of retaining absolute control over the organs of communication of the society. He personally supervised the work in foreign lands, building Watchtower halls and houses. His time therefore saw tremendous expansion. In the book published by the Society, Qualified to be Ministers, it is said that in 1942, at the time Knorr took over from Rutherford, there was witnessing work going on in 54 countries. By 1971 work was being done in 207 countries.

Again Knorr's Presidency is particularly important to the Witnesses on account of his efforts at producing the New World Translation of the Bible. The work, which began to appear in parts in 1950, came out in full in 1961. This translation, said to be in Modern English, has been criticised by some scholars. Their main criticism is that the Witnesses have incorporated much of their words and ideas and have therefore favoured the peculiar teachings of the organisation." It is however, seen as Knorr's achievement.

This is the brief history of Jehovah's Witnesses, the product of Charles Taze Russell the founder and preacher of his time. His works, which received more recognition by two other leaders, have spread to all parts of the world and are still spreading. By 1923, it was already in Nigeria, and in the early 1930s Gideon Ukoli (later called Gideon Urhobo) - the GKS founder and leader had come in contact with Watchtower books. Considering the fact that the most areas of disagreement between the Watchtower Society and the GKS are doctrinal any effort, time or space devoted to the discussion of their teachings and practices cannot be dubbed wasted. We can now turn to another section for a glance at the Watchtower beliefs.

A Summary of the Doctrines of the Watchtower

In the following summary of the essential doctrines of the Jehovah's Witnesses, attempt has been made to present their doctrines as they, the Witnesses, have stated them. We should

select from a range of their teachings over the years. As Anthony Hoekema points out, "to find the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses on various doctrinal points, we must consult their publications." This is exactly what the present writer considers the best approach, but it must be stated that a great deal of scholarly works exist on the Witnesses and some would be used in conjunction with Watchtower publications.

The Holy Bible

The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the Bible is the word of God and is truth. In it, Jehovah made his will known to man and what he has for the world and man himself. Those God used to write it were inspired and this can be determined by its harmony and prophetic accuracy. Any teaching it supports are thus unquestionable. But its message must be interpreted by someone who has the spirit of God. Russell was said to be favoured by God with this gift.

For this reason the Witnesses believe that it is only in their organisation that the correct interpretation of the Bible can be got, that this is the channel or instrument being used by Jehovah to teach his people on earth. Thus Russell's interpretations of scriptures as contained in his *Studies in the Scriptures*, became the doctrinal books in his days, without which no correct understanding of the Bible could be got. In the period of Rutherford, it was his book "The Harp of God" which served that purpose and "Let God be true" in the era of Knorr. And because the Bible must be interpreted, each president developed his own doctrines according to "new" light or changed the existing ones. Between 1917 and 1928 Rutherford, it is said "changed doctrine no less than 148 times. Concerning changes in doctrines one writer labels the three periods as "new, newer, newest" On the whole the Holy Bible to the Witnesses, is therefore not a human product but a book of which God is the primary author and inspirer.

Jehovah

The name Jehovah is very important to the Witnesses. One must know God by this Holy name in order "to become a true worshipper of him." It is a name that distinguishes God from all other gods, just as it distinguished every Witness from other Christian. Like any other Christian Organisation, the Watchtower believes that Jehovah created the heavens and the earth. It is also believed that Jehovah was alone at one time until he decided to create, and it was Jesus he created first. Jehovah also has four infinite attributes, wisdom power, justice and love and all these were displayed in God's dealings with his creation. Jehovah is holy, full of goodness and mercy but the Witnesses tend to think of God as God of power and justice, that is, to judge and punish. To understand the Witnesses God's love is remote for as it is believed God will kill everyone at Armageddon unless one joins the Watchtower Organisation.

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is viewed by the Jehovah's Witnesses as the second greatest personage of the universe, but certainly not co-equal with God. God created him before all other creatures and made him a "working partner in the creating of all the rest of creation". Jesus is God but not the almighty one as Jehovah is. The Witnesses recognise Christ's prehuman, human and post-human existence. They say that Christ was in heaven as God's next person in rank before he was divested "of all that he was as a heavenly spirit" and miraculously transferred by Jehovah from heaven into the womb of Virgin Mary. Christ was therefore born on earth as

flesh and not an incarnation in flesh as is generally understood among most Christians. He worked as a man on earth until his death.

After his death Christ was resurrected by Jehovah from the grave as a spirit creature to begin his post human existence in heaven. This opinion, namely that Christ was resurrected spiritually, denies the commonly accepted opinion in most Christian circles that Christ was resurrected bodily.

The Witnesses say that Christ came primarily "to bear witness to God's Kingdom" and secondarily "to die as a holy sacrifice to Jehovah... to cancel the sins of believing men and to free them from death...". But it would appear that Christ's saving grace means nothing more than his coming to take the Witnesses into the kingdom. Their interpretation of believing man does not go beyond their Watchtower Organisation. Though the Bible speaks of Christ "who gave himself a ransom for all" (1st Tim 2 verses 5-6) only the believing men of goodwill today "will avail themselves of this price." The Witnesses are not alone in this thinking. There are many religious groups of the Adventists and millennial cast who totally regard salvation as found only in their organisation or religious society. The genuine concern of such groups for the soul of the "lost" has tended to force them into belligerent and aggressive proselytization.

The Trinity

The teaching that there are three persons in One, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit all equal in power, substance, and eternity, appears to the Witnesses unscriptural. They believe that "Satan is the originator of the trinity doctrine." Furthermore, God is considered separate from Jesus Christ because God created him. God and Christ are only one in terms of acting together and not in substance. As for the Holy Spirit, he is not a person at all; much less God's equal. The Holy Spirit is considered as "invisible active force of Almighty God that moves His servants to do his will". The trinity is therefore not acceptable to God who says nobody should be compared to him or made his equal.

The Millennial Kingdom

According to the Witnesses, God's Millennial Kingdom or simply Kingdom, is the new world God is making ready for people of goodwill who survive Armageddon and those to be resurrected afterwards. Willful sinners, like Adam, will not be resurrected. The kingdom is described as: "...a sovereign empowered theocratic government under an administration of divinely appointed kings. Jehovah Himself is the great Everlasting king.... He has taken into association as co-regent his son Jesus Christ."

The Jehovah's Witnesses as we noted earlier, have claimed that the kingdom was established in 1914? in heaven and also on earth. And that the earthly kingdom has not appeared physically because Jehovah has allowed man a brief time to decide to associate with the forces of good and be saved or with evil and be destroyed at Armageddon. God, it is said, has purposed the heavenly kingdom "as the capital or ruling part of his universal organisation." It is comprised of the king, Christ Jesus and 144,000 associate kings taken from among men.

The earth's first inhabitants will be the Jehovah's Witnesses who survived Armageddon. However, before Armageddon descends upon the non-Jehovah's Witnesses, the ancient worthies including Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be resurrected. They will prepare the Armageddon survivors on how to rule "the billions of unlearned and unjust dead who are scheduled to come forth from the tombs at the general resurrection". When Armageddon has come and destroyed those who were not Jehovah's Witnesses, the general resurrection will

begin for billions who would be resurrected and judged. The just will be awarded everlasting life in the kingdom and the unjust will be punished and made to do the work of obedience so as to be awarded everlasting life in perfect peace and happiness. Some will disobey and be destroyed once and for all. Some, of the dead, like Adam and Judas Iscariot, will not be resurrected for knowingly and deliberately committing sin.

Only Armageddon survivors will bear children. The resurrected and approved ones will only add to the survivors and their children so that when the earth has reached a point where it is filled, people will stop having children. At this stage the earth must be rebuilt by the labour of the unjust and in preparedness for Jehovah to take over from Jesus who supervised the reconstruction of the earth. But Christ will not hand over to Jehovah until Satan and all his wicked forces have been resurrected to see the beautiful earth, and be destroyed, on contemplating to lure man into sin again. Thus the inhabitants of the new world will receive what Adam lost long ago - everlasting life on a paradise earth. This paradise is the dream of the Witnesses and they have always identified God's kingdom with their Watchtower Society. As we shall discover the GKS makes similar claims but, unlike the Watchtower, the GKS recognises that God has chosen the anointed remnant from different parts of the world and so does not see itself as the only channel in the world for people to be saved. It sees itself as part and parcel of God's kingdom. This appears tenable as allowances are made for others. The Watchtower has however, dated several times the arrival of the Armageddon to destroy the world and save them. So far in our time such dates as 1914, 1925, 1937, 1975 for the dawn of the millennial kingdom have failed. It seems God has continued to cancel the flights of the ancient worthies to earth, and each time this failure is noticed, the Witnesses would return to their drawing table to work out another date. Since the failure of 1975, no new date has been issued. They seem to recognise the fact that the date cannot be known by man. Since Jesus Christ claimed not to know the hour the world would end, (Matt. 24:36) presumptuous man should quietly bide his time with faith and hope; for it will certainly happen one day. Nevertheless, as Neil Weiser puts it "Prophecies cannot, and do not fail for the committed". And so, in spite of the failures, expectation for this kingdom continues, and with more zeal, hope and determination to be less concerned with the affairs of this world.

Baptism

Witnesses believe in the baptism of all converts. It is viewed as a symbol of dedication to the will of Jehovah but not seen as essential to Salvation: That is to say that being a baptized Witness does not mean to be saved. Good works must be added to it. The best and only way God approves for baptism must be by immersion, and not by sprinkling which most Christian churches use. Infant baptism is condemned while using Jesus as an example of an adult baptized. Above all, baptism is not seen as a ceremony to wash away sin. This role is attributed to the blood of Jesus.

The Lord's Supper

This supper is celebrated by the Witnesses once a year at the supposed time Christ died. This date which may fall on any day of the week used to occur in what Christians call passion week. In the supper they serve memorial unleavened bread and fermented wine. It is not believed that the bread and wine contain the actual body and blood of Christ as some mission Christianity taught to their followers. The meal is believed to be set up only for the anointed Christians, (144,000) to take. Other Witnesses who do not see themselves as qualified to take the supper are expected to attend to observe it. Usually, only very few take

it. Its purpose is to remember Christ's sacrifice, which has given man the forgiveness of sin. It helps the Witnesses to know who among them belong to the heavenly class.

This World

The Witnesses are convinced that this world is just a place for them to work out their future life, which is God's kingdom. It is stated that:

"In as much as Jehovah has chosen his Witnesses out of this world to be ambassadors to the people of the earth, in behalf of his kingdom, they are not a part of the world."

For this reason, they "remain unspotted from the world." "But they have a duty to perform for the people of this world, and this is to point out to everyone "the only way to that kingdom which shall permanently take the place of all earth's present governments that shall be destroyed soon in Jehovah's battle at Armageddon."

The Politics of this World

The attitude of the Witnesses to politics has been very negative. They say that their allegiance is to Jehovah God and his kingdom, and as such they do not participate in local, national or international elections or politics. They claim the right to use their freedom of choice to do what their conscience tells them. But by insisting on being apolitical, many of them have suffered severely. For example, in Africa where mobilization for national progress and security is an assumed policy by some governments, like Malawi and Zambia, the Witnesses have been killed, dislodged or dispossessed for refusing to buy party cards or to vote.

Military Service

The Witnesses not only claim non-involvement in the politics of this world but also the right to exemption from military service. They regard themselves as ambassadors of Christ to this world to proclaim the name of Jehovah. And so they claim that "the preaching activity of Jehovah's Witnesses as ministers entitles them to claim exemption from performing military training and service in the armed forces of the nations wherein they dwell." Again they think that it would be wrong for a Witness to be a soldier of two governments, "he is in the army of Christ."

Flag Salute and National Anthem

These are seen as emblems of the devil in the state. The flag saluting ceremony is regarded as a political ceremony where the symbols in the flag are bowed down to or saluted. To salute a flag is therefore to ascribe "salvation to the flag (national emblem) and to the nation for which it stands". Witnesses think that glory and honour are given to the state and to the individuals who are mentioned in anthems of some states.

Regarding Blood Transfusions

The Witnesses do not allow the use of blood for medical treatment. It is believed that blood should not be transferred to save life because blood is sacred. In their booklet, Blood, Medicine and the Law of God; it is argued that blood transfusion may result in the immediate and very temporal prolongation of life but that at the cost of eternal life to whosoever it is administered. Old Testament citations are profusely used in this book. Many Witnesses are reported to have died because of the feeling that to allow blood transfusion was violating the

law of God. Observably, the denial of blood transfusion is one costly joke causing disaffection from the society.

Marriage

This is important to the Witnesses but it must be a monogamous marriage. The stand of the Witnesses against polygamy is made clear in their book, *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*. Here it is stated that "a person who wants to serve God and to live in the promised paradise can have only one wife". Some Witnesses have refused to contemplate marriage in this world because that would deprive them a great deal of time from witnessing daily. Marriage would make them care for families when in fact such opportunity would have been used to preach about the good news of the kingdom. Marriage is not only a problem to mission churches in Africa but also to the Witnesses who separated many happy families to establish one wife.

Method of Preaching

The method of teaching and preaching used by the Witnesses of Jehovah is said to have been copied from the Bible. It is apostolic and it was the very method instituted by Christ. Jesus and his apostles are said to have preached from house to house, city to city, province to province and publicly too. The Witnesses think that by going to people in their homes with the "good news" more people would be won to Christ. Men, women and children take part as ministers of the Watchtower doctrines. Several steps are taken by the Witnesses to win a disciple. From the first step, which is to get a Watchtower book or magazine into the hands of a householder, to the seventh which will lead to his Witnessing and baptism into their faith. Apart from the use of magazines and other publications, the Witnesses also use international conventions as a forum for their preachings. In these conventions, the teachings of the historic Christianity are attacked. It may be added of these conventions that not many outsiders, if the Nigeria situation can be used as an example, attend them. Nevertheless, there are reports of thousands of converts in their yearly books.

Preaching Organisation

The Organisation is authoritarian and hierarchical. A board of directors, (12) headed by the President directs the movement. The whole movement is divided into "regions or branches" with "servants" who are usually at the head of the work in each country where they are working. These servants are to supervise the country which in itself is divided into region, zone, district, circuit etc. All members meet in kingdom halls for study before going out to canvass for disciples. While it is true that each member is a minister, full time propagandists are called pioneers. Part time propagandists are called publishers. The pioneer is expected to put in 100 hours a month preaching and selling Society Literature. The publishers, though not full time, appear to be the backbone of the Society because they are by far the most numerous. They put in fewer hours but this must be consistent. All work done by pioneers and publishers is reported and forwarded to America. In his devotion to the preaching, a Witness is encouraged to turn over the excess of his income to the Watchtower Society after providing a decent living for himself and his families.

The history of the Watchtower from an insignificant organisation in the 1870s to the huge propaganda organisation of today has been summarily traced, and selectively too, for who can contain such history in a single volume. Some of its teachings have also been discussed. Begun by Russell it went through other capable leaders, Rutherford and Knorr, each leader adding to or subtracting from the teachings if not re- interpreting. The expansion

of the Watchtower Society has reached many lands. Under Rutherford, it came to Nigeria, and how it fared here we can now turn.

THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESS IN NIGERIA

I want to be allowed to take up a paragraph to lament a certain historical inexpediency before going properly into the history of the Watchtower in Nigeria, a part that has more bearing with their activities with the GKS. The Jehovah's Witnesses have written about their history in Nigeria. This is published in their 1986 Year book of the Jehovah's Witnesses. pages 186-252. It is an interesting one written perhaps by Albert Olugbebi, one of the best Witnesses I have come to know and befriended but too briefly. The Watchtower needs many more Olugbebi's to fire up their kingdom news here. This history deals with only their internal matters such as the expansion of the Watchtower works and the role played by certain individuals in the extension of the Society. It is however, sad that the rivalry between the Watchtower Organisation and the God's Kingdom Society which spanned uninterruptedly between 1934 to 1955 was not mentioned at all. Even when the Watchtower claims that Gideon M. Urhobo was once the Watchtower representative in West Africa. A history without a mention of the exploit of a whole regional representative is an incomplete one. My researches in the National Archives in Nigeria and the Public Records Office (PRO) in London reveal that Watchtower file from 1933 to 1946 was made up of over 80% relationship with the God's Kingdom Society. It was in 1946 that a separate file (Rivprof. 13/1/150) was opened for the GKS. There are not less than 30 newspapers report about the struggle between the Witnesses and the God's Kingdom Society. These are besides several court cases in which some of the best known Nigerian judges and lawyers were involved. Yet no mention is made even when they scantily mentioned the rivalry in their Year books. I also obtained a few pages of that written history in 1979 in the Lagos headquarters of the Witnesses. These pages were devoted to some of the struggles between the Watchtower and the GKS. Surprisingly enough, these pages did not appear in the 1986-Year book where the Nigeria story was given to the International Community. I like to submit that the authentic history of the Watchtower in Nigeria is yet to be written. The present is too personal and eulogic. A more academic analysis of the history is required.

Before the Millennial literature of Russell was carried to Central and South Africa by Joseph Booth, around 1908, Liberia in West Africa had received the literature in 1887. But unlike Central and South Africa where it proliferated immediately, in Liberia it did not receive such attention. For one reason in West Africa there was no conspicuous land grabbing or creation of reservations for the native nor forced labour, situations which made urgent need for a Utopian Society where no man is oppressed or discriminated against as was the case in South and Central Africa. Russell's message was therefore urgent to the people of those regions. Liberia had been an independent state in 1847, though this is not to say that all was well in Liberia of the time which was divided between those who claim to be civilized and those they regarded as uncivilized. Again the churches opposed the millennial literature. The Watchtower literature came to Liberia through a migrant (probably an American) one Brother Samuel W. Seaton in 1887. He came from Pennsylvania in America to Monrovia with two dozen copies of the Millennial Dawn paperbound, and some specimens of Zion's Watchtower. Seaton preached for a while but was unsuccessful. One main reason for his failure was because Mission Churches in Liberia were critical of the literature and sent a warning to their converts not to read it. A circular was also passed round to Liberian Christians. It reads in part:

"The church of Christ in Liberia has been hitherto

blessed in not having to contend against dangerous heresies, such as God's people had to encounter in the early period of Christianity. But recent events warn us that... our faith is henceforth to be sorely tested... Certain publications, Millennial Dawn and Zion's Watchtower written by one Mr. Russell, a citizen of the United States of America, are being scattered throughout our land, which openly declare all Christian churches to be in error and proclaim a false and most pernicious system of religion..."

The circular, dated July 28, 1888, then described Russell as an agent of Satan "to abolish and destroy all that has been accomplished here in the name of Jesus". Though this literature made an impact, as the circular seems to show, Seaton had a short-lived success as a preacher. However, a recent work on the prophet William Wade Harris of Liberia seems to suggest that Harris was probably influenced by the Watchtower literature "scattered throughout the land" by Seaton. Harris was reported to have told one Father Joseph Hartz, Superior at Bingerville of 'the times of the future'; and referring to the Great Dragon, Satan, who would be bound for a thousand years, ideas reminiscent of Watchtower teachings. The launching of the mission of the Russellites really began in Sierra-Leone in West Africa in 1923 and from there it came to Nigeria. Concerning Sierra-Leone, the Watchtower of December 15, 1923 noted, "There is a brother {his name was not mentioned} on the West Coast of Africa in Sierra-Leone deeply interested in the truth". The interest presumably shown by this anonymous brother made the headquarters in America to decide to send a missionary to the coast. A pioneer, Mr. William Roland Brown, and his devoted wife, both natives of Trinidad, came to Sierra-Leone in 1923, and that marked the beginning of the Watchtower religion in West Africa. It seems Brown and his wife were well received there because they soon began the distribution of Watchtower literature.

In 1923, W.R. Brown and one other Missionary from Brooklyn came to Lagos to preach. They entered a Nigeria that had seen much of independent thinking on religion and where any religious teacher could attract a large audience. The provision of education in some parts mostly by various missionary bodies, to many West Africans paved the way for a readership of Watchtower literature.

Brown settled in Lagos and began to distribute Watchtower literature. The encouraging demands for the literature, probably not for what is contained but for the fact that they were cheap to buy, encouraged Brown and he asked for the use of the Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos to preach his first sermon. Though the particular topic could not be remembered by my informant, it is said that those who attended were disappointed because it was full of abuse of Mission Churches, which he identified as Satan's instruments.

While resident in Lagos, Brown began to tour the big centres of the British West African Countries, though he may have visited the French-speaking countries to preach. He also distributed and advertised the publications of the Watchtower which were mainly, written by Rutherford. Brown reported in 1929 that the total number of items of literature placed in the hands of the people by the Colporteurs and class workers throughout Sierra-Leone, Liberia, Gold Coast, now Ghana, and Nigeria totalled 36,602 books - 17084, booklets, 17,818 and 1,700 given away. He sold his literature mostly among the Yoruba of Lagos. In 1932 some of the publications began to be published in the Yoruba language.

It seems Brown did not do much about organising the interested people into a group of Bible students until 1933 after his contact with Gideon Urhobo. By 1932, after 9 years there were

about 80 Jehovah's Witnesses in West Africa. The bulks were in Liberia and Sierra-Leone though Lagos showed more enthusiasm for Watchtower reading materials. Brown had toured a few towns in Nigeria between 1930 and 1932 and it was during one of these tours that he came across Gideon Urhobo at Benin distributing Watchtower literature. And from this moment up to the parting of the two men in October, 1934, it was Urhobo's activities which featured more in Watchtower affairs. From October 1934 onwards Brown was involved in a conflict with Urhobo. The preaching activities of Brown and Urhobo were so related that even colonial reports from 1936-1946 did not differentiate between the GKS and the Watchtower. The file for the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society contains more reports about Urhobo and his relationship to Brown than anything else. Even in 1948, two years after, when a file was opened separately for the GKS, official letters were still addressed as "Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. However, after Brown and Urhobo had disagreed in 1934, Brown began in earnest to evangelize and tour more Nigerian towns to sell his literature and to establish branches to which his literature was sent for distribution on a commission basis. In 1935, Brown visited Port Harcourt and preached to the people asking them to flee from the path of untruth and error if they wanted God's protection from the impending catastrophe. Brown had lectured in Lagos that Armageddon would be fought in 1936 or 1937. In December 1937 he visited Aba where he preached briefly and converted some people. In 1939, he was in Kano in the North of Nigeria to preach against Christian Churches. He also worked in some towns in the Yoruba West, for example, Ibadan and Ilesha. Ilesha, in particular, accepted the Watchtower early and the growth there was rapid. It is said that as far back as 1936, Brown visited Warri. Some Witnesses claimed that Brown visited Warri in 1934 as soon as he parted with Urhobo and in fact inherited the Witnesses which Urhobo, as we shall see, organised himself as he did in Lagos while Brown was after the placing of literature in people's homes. But apart from the fact that the Witnesses were not sure there was no such evidence even among Warri people. I was particularly very determined looking for this evidence. Much happened between Urhobo and Brown after 1934. To that we have graciously devoted some chapters in this book.

By 1953, Parrinder reports that the Watchtower was in Ibadan and had built a small house for their meetings. The method used in Ibadan for preaching was the open-air lectures, visitation of houses and dissemination of literature. At these times, the Yoruba language was being used in the translation of some of their literature. Parrinder notes, however, that the books were not helpful as guides through the maze of differing religious beliefs. 147 Field evidence showed massively that Watchtower literature was bought mainly for prestige. While this claim can generate debate, we shall submit later that serious attempt to understand the contents of their publications within the Organisation began in the era of President Knorr.

Distribution in Nigeria

The Jehovah's Witnesses are not evenly distributed in Nigeria. In the south the distribution is almost even and they are especially active in the rural areas where people are less critical of what they accept about Christianity. According to Tony Hodges in 1976, the Witnesses in Nigeria numbered 105,686 with 1,988 congregations, the largest concentration of them in Africa. However, a recent 1981 internal report of the Witnesses made Nigeria 95,903 with 2,130 congregations.

There are well to do members among them but the majority, if not all, are not interested in the material wealth of this world. They are chiefly concerned with the "coming kingdom". However, they have appeared as peace-loving citizens, and as Bryan Wilson describes them

in Africa as a whole, they instill the values of hard work, punctuality, sobriety and self-respect.

Relation with Government is of now seemingly cordial but everyone knows that at an emergency period like the conscription, the Witnesses in Nigeria would not be unlike Witnesses everywhere. Though no official action has been taken against them on such issues as blood transfusion, flag salute, singing of the national anthem or participating in politics, as has happened in Central Africa, the government is merely closing its eyes or at best ignoring them. As for the people generally, the relationship is not strained but a good number have been alienated by the Witnesses' non-cooperation with the government and the society at large. Some people are also not happy with the Witnesses as they neither establish schools nor contribute in finance or labour towards the maintenance of missionary schools. They believe that the tax they have paid to the government is for government to provide every thing including schools, hospitals and social services. They do not contribute to the building of town halls because it is the affairs of this world that are discussed in them. They are also known to have created problem within families, as community levies on families for certain social needs are borne by some family members only. The coming millennium which they look forward to has led some of them and those they have convinced of its imminence, to part with much of their means of livelihood only to get woefully disappointed at last.

Drawing to a conclusion on the Nigerian scene, one would say that the Jehovah's Witnesses have enjoyed years of peace with government and the people and have used this to propagate their beliefs and put into practice those things which appear to some people as fanatical or inhuman, such as their refusal to accept blood transfusion.

CHAPTER FOUR

G.M. URHOB: THE FOUNDER OF THE GOD'S KINGDOM SOCIETY.

The founder of the God's Kingdom Society was Gregory Mogboruko Ukoli who was to take the name Gideon Meriodere Urhobo. He was active in religion and politics in Nigeria between 1930 and his death in 1952. His life in this period was marked by conflicts with people and institutions, both in religion and politics. He clashed on different occasions with the Roman Catholic Church, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and Muslims. He also crossed swords with political leaders like Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Mazi Mbonu Ojike after over thirteen years of giving sacral sanction to the political efforts of these men, alleging that they denounced Jehovah the God of the Universe, and with the backing of the leadership of the National Church of Nigeria. His activities were much reported by the nationalist papers of the time. This is beside the definite instructions given by the Secretary of States for the colonies to always send to the Home office in London, the activities of Gideon Urhobo especially his clashes with the Jehovah's Witnesses. This would explain why this writer benefited greatly from materials stored in Public Records Office (P.R.O.) in London.

His Early Life

This section is based on interviews with his brothers, leading figures in the God's Kingdom Society and some of those who knew him personally. I make it clear where the opinions expressed are those of the present writer.² Gideon M. Urhobo was born about the middle of 1903,³ in Oghareki, a small fishing and trading village lying east of the Ethiope River in the Delta State of Nigeria. His father Ukoli, and his mother Enemohanre, had gone to Oghareki to buy trading items. During one of the trips, Gideon was born there.

His father Ukoli, was the son of Okoro who was the son of Urhobo, an Urhobo by ethnic extraction from Agbassa, (Agbarha) in the present Warri South local Government area of Delta State. According to tradition, Gideon's great grandfather, Urhobo, was one of the three men who founded Agbassa village in Warri. He farmed on that land which was first called Ogo Urhobo, (Urhobo farmland) "As regards the name Urhobo no one seems to know how it came to be identified with the people called Urhobo who number more than half a million today. Perhaps, as Gideon Urhobo himself claimed the word Urhobo " is a corruption of the word Urhogho." Urhogho is a Benin word for a great multitude of people. Perhaps when the Urhobo migration to their present country from Benin took place around 1370AD, the event was described as the departure of "a great multitude of people.

Gideon's father was said to have been a successful trader. He traded in starch and plantain, the staple food of the Urhobos, the Isokos and the Itshekiri. He operated between Warri and Igun in his own canoe. Igun was, and still remained an important trade centre for all the Delta Peoples. Obaro Ikime says that Olomu, the father of the famous Nana of the Itshekiri, desired to trade in that area and so "had to dredge and widen the creeks in that part so that his canoes could get as far as Igun." When Gideon grew up sufficiently to be able to paddle a canoe, he helped his father on his business, thus following the tradition of children helping their parents to cater for the well-being of their families. Ukoli was a chief among his people and was in charge of the ancestral shrine. He was never at anytime converted to Christianity before his death in 1935.

Gideon's mother, Enemohanre, was the daughter of an Itshekiri man from Old Warri, a different people though well mixed in marriage, bordering on Agbassa in Warri. It is said that her family was one of the families who preserved nominal Catholicism in Old Warri. And according to Gideon's brother Augustine, his mother, Enemohanre, remained attached to the faith and its rituals. As a Roman Catholic, she had on several occasions quarreled with her husband for serving idols. She is said to have been taunted on many occasions by Ukoli and his relations for not taking part in the preparation and consumption of sacrificial meals. She brought up her children by teaching them the fear of God and decent living. She appreciated the importance of education and sent her first son, Augustine to an Anglican School (C.M.S. School, Warri) when other Ukoli children including Paul, and Benjamin, were involved in trade with their father. Augustine later became a Catechist in the Roman Catholic Church after its re-introduction to modern Warri about 1913. He was the first Catechist and worked in that capacity to retiring age. The second son, Gideon, a product of Government School, Warri, became a teacher and held catechism classes in the Roman Catholic School. The third son Paul, though not involved in any post either at the school or the church, was equally involved in church activities, as giving financial support and manual labour. He was an asset to the family and the Roman Catholic Church. Gideon's mother had two daughters, Helena and Emetie, both married with children and grand children. Ukoli married three wives and had a total of ten children all of whom except Gideon, were alive in 1979.

Some wonderful stories are told of Gideon's early life. These have come mainly from Benjamin, Gideon's brother. The stories, some of which are related here, refer to river experiences; Benjamin was among Ukoli's sons who assisted him in trade along the river between Warri and Igun. The children, Gideon, Benjamin and Paul were 13, 11 and 9 years old respectively in 1916 when the river experience started.

In one of the trading journeys to Igun, Ukoli's children became tired in the night and were asked by their father to sleep in the canoe while he alone paddled. As they were going, Gideon fell into the river and was there for a little while before his father discovered what had happened. The father woke up Paul and Benjamin and he jumped into the river in search of

Gideon until he discovered him by a mangrove swamp. Benjamin says that when Gideon fell into the river, he was "carried" away by a water spirit to a mangrove swamp in the middle of the river, some hundred yards away behind where he was supposed to have dropped. Paul and Benjamin heard their father shouting for Gideon. Gideon answered the call very far away as the frightened father swam against the tide to reach him. It was certain that Gideon was a good swimmer but what bothered Ukoli most was Gideon's inability to call for help as he dropped from the canoe. Moreover, it was impossible for anyone to drop from the big trading canoe such as they were using. These thoughts must have introduced the element of water spirit into the story. However, when Ukoli's sons managed against the tide to reach them at the mangrove swamp, Gideon was asked to relate what took place. According to Benjamin, the equally frightened Gideon told the father that he found himself holding to a mangrove swamp in the river. How he came to find himself there he could not tell. Anxious for the safety of his children, Ukoli secured them with strips of cloth and continued his journey. We may note that Gideon was experiencing the canoe wonders for the first time, and there was no case of epilepsy. Ukoli and his children regarded this incident as a miracle believing that a water sprite had wanted to kill him but God intervened.

Two days later on their way back, they stopped, anchored their canoe against a big mangrove swamp and passed the night in the canoe. At dawn Ukoli, according to Benjamin, thought that the big swamp had moved to the middle of the river while his canoe remained tied to a very small swamp on the same spot. The apparent exchange of mangrove swamp, though mangrove swamps are mobile at any time according to the current, was viewed as another miracle. Ukoli had to make a ritual sacrifice immediately with plantain and palm oil to "Oghene" as it was customary to do in the situation he found himself. Back from this journey, Ukoli worshipped his ancestors and set off with his children again, hoping that the "sprite" had been appeased or driven away by the ancestors through his appeal to "Oghene". After three months, Gideon fell again into the river but was quickly rescued by his father. And that was the end of not only Gideon's trip up river but also that of Ukoli's trading with Igun and in fact along the river. While these stories may be exaggerated and embellished, it may be necessary to add that apart from the river experiences, no other unusual experiences are narrated of Gideon in his youthful days. However, Ukoli, on consulting oracles in various places, came to believe that Gideon's future life would be great. And when later Gideon became a preacher of the gospel, Ukoli is said to have warned all his children not to persecute him but rather to help him serve God who saved him from death. This repeated warning, as we shall copiously show, was not heeded.

Stories and legends of early youth are not unusual among independent church founders and their disciples. Such are found in the life of leaders like Simon Kimbangu, the founder of the Kimbanguist Church, Zaire. Isaiah Shembe of the Nazareth Baptist Church of South Africa, John Masowe, the founder of the Masowe Apostles among the Shona, Charles Wovenu, the founder of the Apostolic Revelation Society, Ghana, and Jehu - Appiah, the founder of the Musama Disco Christo Church, also of Ghana. However, his Church does not relate these stories and a great many of the members, even in Warri, know nothing about them. Though the stories are important, Urhobo is entirely judged by his preaching of the gospel, according to the Holy Bible.

Gideon's Education

At the time of Gideon's birth in 1903, the C.M.S. had just established the first school in Warri. In or about 1905, the Colonial Government opened an Elementary School there and called it Government School, Warri. The Roman Catholic Mission did not open a school there until

about 1917. Gideon, who began his elementary school in 1916, attended the Government School, Warri. He started late, aged 13, because he was serving his father. In any case, children often went to school late in those days.

As soon as Ukoli stopped his trading along the river, Augustine, who at that time was a very strong young Catechist in the Roman Catholic Church offered to pay Gideon's school fees which then amounted to three pence a month. It appears Ukoli was not convinced of the necessity of education for his children. As a chief, Ukoli could have sent all his children to school at the period Gideon started school, but according to Augustine, his father was not willing to train him.

Gideon obtained his standard six certificate in 1923 and taught in the Government School, Warri. His family and schoolmates claim that Gideon was very clever at school, and that he was appointed a teacher in the school before he sat his standard six examination. Augustine says that Gideon taught for a little over a year in the Government School. He also claimed that owing to persuasion from the Catholic Church, and backed with promises to help him further his education, Gideon left the Government School for the Roman Catholic School to teach. After sometime, the church sent Gideon to the Roman Catholic Teacher Training College at Asaba, where he completed the course after two years and then returned to his sponsors as a teacher. This exposure to the Roman Catholic Church gave him the opportunity of conducting Catechism classes for the church, as well as teaching when he returned to Warri.

Urhobo in the Catholic Church

Here we shall examine more closely his role in the Roman Catholic Church and why he left the church. Gideon's Catholic faith is traced to his mother. She had been fully exposed to the religious atmosphere of the nominal Catholicism of Old Warri, and it seems her character had been moulded by that surrounding. Speaking for the family, Augustine claimed that their mother Enemohanre, was a Catholic Christian without a Catholic Church in Agbassa where she married. The reason for this claim was that apart from instructing her children against the worship of idols, Enemohanre was also fond of making the sign of the cross and praying to God on her knees.

Subject to the influence of the mother, Gideon became a serious member of the Roman Catholic Church. He himself said in his autobiography that "I was a staunch member of the Roman Catholic Church, baptized but not confirmed, and I was totally ignorant of the Holy Scriptures." As to why Gideon was not confirmed in the Catholic Church after so many years, inspite of his claim to be a serious member, it seems that Gideon started early to doubt certain teachings of the Catholic Church, which he did not question openly until later. Only later did the Church know of his inward rebellion against its accepted teachings.

Augustine believes that neither he nor the church would have sponsored Gideon's education if it had been foreseen that he would later oppose the Catholic Church. According to Benjamin, his brother Gideon did not make any attempt to seek confirmation.

Gideon, it is said, knew his catechism very well and taught others but he did not consider baptismal knowledge nor dogmas taught by the priests sufficient for one to become confirmed. Gideon, as Benjamin disclosed, wanted to learn the scriptures by himself and therefore insisted on acquiring this by his personal reading of the Holy Bible. But the Roman Catholic Church at that time did not encourage lay members to possess the Bible. However, there were then a few copies of the holy Bible available in the church and these were reserved for the use of the priest, and to some extent, the catechist. Augustine the catechist,

says that in the early days that he, in particular, though he had a copy of the Bible, was more inclined to follow the prescribed liturgy of the church.

The situation was such that Gideon was worried about the restriction of the use of the Bible. Probably, he could not understand why the Bible, which was being possessed and read by other Christian Churches in Warri, could not be available to Catholic members. He may have assumed that, as a catechism master, he ought to make use of the Bible, or perhaps his education had exercised his mind towards independent and religious thinking. As we shall see shortly, he began to question certain Catholic teachings that were certainly not clear to him in his effort to learn about God.

However, the attitude of the Catholic Church did not diminish his zeal in church and school work but certainly, Gideon was contemplating having a Bible from whatever source it might be available. In his time, the English Roman Catholic Bible, otherwise known as the Douai version, was regarded in the Roman Catholic Church as the approved Bible not only because of the authorized translation but because of the inclusion of those books generally regarded as the Apocrypha. King James Version commonly referred to as the C.M.S. Bible, was received with misgivings by Catholics. But in spite of the general distrust of the "Protestant Bible" in the Roman Catholic Church, Gideon obtained one from a member of the C.M.S. church in Warri. Augustine, Benjamin and the elders of the G.K.S. believe that Gideon obtained it from a C.M.S. member.

Urhobo Begins Bible Studies

In or about September 1929, when Gideon is believed to have obtained a copy of the Bible, he began studying it for the first time. According to Benjamin, who was his closest companion in the family, Gideon was extremely interested in the Bible. After a short period of reading, he began to question openly the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Towards the end of 1929 and the beginning of 1930, Gideon began discussions with the Catholic priests concerning the teachings of the church about which he had doubts. He began to be seen often in the company of catholic priests, one of whom was said to be Father Patrick Kelly. Gideon raised with Father Kelly the question of making the Bible available to church members. Benjamin remembers very clearly how Gideon was asking numerous questions, some of which he would discuss at home with him and other disinterested Ukoli children. As a sideline, we can state that the Ukoli family is almost entirely, even now, a Roman Catholic family. Gideon also raised the question of the use of sacred images in church and wanted scriptural evidences to justify the practice. It was natural for any Urhobo person, especially at that time, to question the erection of images in the church yard when other Christians in their midst were demolishing the peoples' carved and moulded idols regarded as emblems of paganism.

Gideon was also exercised by the question of eternal punishment of the wicked in hell fire. The average Urhobo person at that time might well doubt on hearing for the first time that Oghene, who is the protector of his children might burn some with fire to torment them everlastingly. It is not unlikely that Gideon reasoned thus. What the Urhobo people, as well as many people, believe about God is that God could burn off evil doers directly or through other agents like divinities, but by all means not to put them in fire for ever because of a few years of sin occasioned by the devil. With regard to the Roman Catholic teaching on Mary, Gideon felt uncertain about the virgin birth. Gideon could not understand why Mary should be addressed as Virgin after bearing Jesus Christ. His bitterness reached a climax when after the priests had agreed with him that Mary had other children, boys and girls, they were still addressing Mary as Virgin and sometimes with the adjective "holy". He was also vexed

with the teaching that Mary was not only the mother of God but also that she was in heaven with her son, God.

Although it appears that the priests paid him attention by explaining these teachings to him during this period of "inner crisis or faith Crisis" Gideon persisted with his questions. In a discussion with H.W. Turner, the son of Gideon Urhobo, Dr. Emmanuel Jesse Urhobo noted that:

At first the Roman Catholic priests answered his questions, then he developed an interest, he came and asked more questions till they got fed up with him and said he should not read the Bible.

Benjamin doubted if at any time Gideon was satisfied with explanations that were based not on the Bible but on the tradition of the church. In any case, it was the admonition not to read the Bible that stiffened his resolve more than the unsatisfactory answers to his searching questions.

Eventually, Gideon resigned from the Catholic Church and left the school where he was a teacher. He had been well paid but found his religious preoccupations too distracting. The family was not happy about his resignation. Augustine in particular was unhappy about it, and tried to get the family to appeal to Gideon to think over his actions, but Gideon was determined not to go back. Gideon said that the church was preaching what God did not say. He did not however, remain unemployed for long because he joined the Civil Service.

In June 1930, he joined the Post and Telegraph Department, Warri as a third class postal clerk and telegraphist. This job afforded him time for Bible Study and Religious reflection. While doing this job in the day his evenings were taken up with Bible Study. Shortly after, he came across a Watchtower advertisement from South Africa and he ordered for the literature. He joined the Watchtower materials with his Bible and other religious books in his studies. Hitherto, Gideon had developed the coming of God's Kingdom to this earth so that the Lord's prayer which asks people to pray for the Kingdom to come may find fulfilment. On the literature, we shall say more later. But suffice it to note here that when he got them, he got a few friends with whom he studied the literature.

Change of Name

I shall discuss Gideon's biography subsequently. Here, I simply want to say why Gideon changed his name. This is very necessary because Gideon's change of names at least show some of his reactions to the Catholic Church and his own family. It also gives some impressions of what his contemporaries thought about him. From birth to 1915, he was "known as Mogboruko Ukoli, from 1916 to 1930 as Gregory Mogboruko Ukoli, from 1930 to 1942 as Gideon Mogboruko Ukoli, and from 1943 to 1952, as Gideon Meriodere Urhobo. These changes had raised a query in the minds of Gideon's own contemporaries. Some reasons have been suggested for the changes of his names.

Among the Jehovah's Witnesses, Gideon was regarded as a dubious character and therefore he decided to change Ukoli to Urhobo. The witnesses had associated the name Ukoli with some derogatory words like "Prisoner", "robber", "thief", "withered branch", "devil", "Judas of our time.". Our next chapter will make clear why these words came to be associated with Ukoli. His contemporaries outside the Watchtower and the G.K.S. believed that Gideon changed his name from Ukoli to Urhobo because he wanted to build a tribal church which the generality of Urhobo people would call their own. His taking on that name further suggested according to Mr. Ifie of Sapele that Urhobo wished to be regarded as the leader of the Urhobo people in all aspects of life. To M. Umukoro, a contemporary of Gideon and a retired civil servant, now late, there was the strong suggestion that Gideon perhaps

wanted simply to perpetuate his great great grandfather's name especially because of its similarity with the tribal name. Sources from Agbassa say that Gideon renounced the name Gregory because of its link with a pope of the Roman Catholic Church. Gideon is believed to have described the Roman Catholic Church as one of the churches being used by the devil to dish out wrong doctrines about God. Again Gideon, perhaps dropped the name Gregory as a consequence of his persecution by the Catholic Church. The middle name "Mogboruko" in the Itshekiri language means "I have taken a name." This name merely translates in Urhobo language as "Meriodere". Why he preferred the Urhobo rendering to that of the Itshekiri is not clear among my informants.

As regards Gideon M. Urhobo's change of name, I heard from sources in the G.K.S. Ministry during my interviews that in those days when the GKS was an infant Organization, the Urhobos were derided and treated with contempt. GKS was called "Usobo Church" and "Usobo Wayo Church" But G.M. Urhobo announced repeatedly in his lectures that he was proud to be an Urhobo man and taking occasion of the name of his great great grandfather being Urhobo, he changed his name. It seems logical and acceptable to me that Urhobo changed his name to dissociate him from his kinsmen who had rejected him because of his religious conviction based on his calling. It is interesting that some of his followers later changed their names as follows:

Nelson Obelikpeya became Ebenezer Temisanren Otomewo

Ekpe became Beniah Edet and much later as Bassey Okon Edet.

Eferuku became Joseph Eferoghene

Uyalaju became Emmanuel Oghoghome

These names were changed during baptisms performed by G.M.Urhobo in those days.

URHOBOS AND HIS FAMILY

The married life of Gideon Urhobo and the place of his children in the family and the church he founded deserve a place in this book. Urhobo was a polygamist in later life and this was severely attacked by some Christians as unacceptable in a church leader. Many of his children seem not to be interested in the church founded by their father. One of his sons, Dr. Emmanuel Urhobo, was later opposed to the GKS, objecting to some of the doctrines and practices of the church. Though we shall learn more about Emmanuel in the coming pages of this chapter, we may wish to state early that his opposition to the GKS was severe enough prompting the GKS to warn all its members to shun and ostracize Emmanuel except for engaging in polemics.

Gideon married his first wife whose name is not clearly remembered by Benjamin, in the second half of the 1920's. The date of marriage which was performed according to Urhobo custom is nowhere stated but this was before his separation from the Roman Catholic Church in 1929. This marriage was conducted by the Ukoli family according to the custom of the Urhobo people. She had four children for Urhobo, two sons and two daughters, one of whom is Dr. Emmanuel Urhobo. Gideon reported that his wife left him when he resigned from the government service. He said:

My former wife, who had four children for me, left me and carried away my little savings and all my belongings, and was married to another man in one of the religious organizations at Asaba.

After this, Urhobo - remained unmarried between February 1933 and November 1936. By 1936, as subsequent chapters reveal, Gideon was leading his own Church. Between 1933 and 1936 he preached from place to place, and according to Benjamin, carrying his children along with him.

In November 1936, Urhobo left his followers in Lagos and came to Benin to preach. While there, it is said, he dreamt of a girl whom he would marry. His dream was reported to have included a prophecy that the girl would not only be devoted to him and his church, but would also endure all suffering and would be a blessing to him and his work. The girl who came to fulfill this dream was Elizabeth Osifo, who also gave me this information as she heard it from Urhobo.

Elizabeth was born in 1922 by an Itshekiri woman, Eyemogbara and a Benin father, Osifo. She lived with her mother at Sapele where she went to school. When she was fourteen and in form three, the father came from Benin to take her to Benin. Osifo, according to the story, did not say why he was taking away his daughter from school nor did he tell Urhobo about it. According to Elizabeth, she had never met Urhobo before. They met first when her father gave her to Urhobo in marriage. The marriage was conducted according to the custom of the Benin people, but Elizabeth maintains that Urhobo did not allow her father and family to perform all the rites connected with marriage. It is a surprise to Elizabeth how her people consented to the rejection of those rites without which a marriage is not consummated.

Urhobo, for example, did not allow libation to be poured out to the ancestors, and no portion of the marriage feast was kept, according to custom, for the various lineage divinities etc. Another surprise was that the family waited for Osifo to name the dowry price, but in vain. Much of the feasting was provided by Osifo, and Elizabeth said the father's spirit was high and exceptionally happy that he was offering a wife to a man of God. In all these, he carried the family along with him. Earlier in 1936, Urhobo was Osifo's guest in Benin when Urhobo went on several open-air lectures. Osifo was not a convert but was a well wisher of Urhobo and he provided much to make Urhobo feel at home in Benin. After the marriage, Elizabeth followed Urhobo to Lagos where they settled. Elizabeth had seven children by Urhobo - five boys and two girls. The last of her children born in 1948 were twins—a boy, Benjamin, and a girl, Sarah. In all the places Urhobo visited and preached, Elizabeth accompanied him. She led the women wing of the God's Kingdom Society and remains a faithful follower of the GKS. When Urhobo died in 1952, she married the present (as of the time of writing this book) President Ebenezer Temisaren Otomewo. She had no child for Otomewo. She later moved from Nigeria to the United Kingdom where she is still an active member and elder of GKS London Branch.

Apart from Elizabeth (now late), Urhobo also married another woman Jemima a native of Ebon in Edo State in 1948 but Jemima did not have any child for him. This was the marriage which started a controversy between Urhobo and the Jehovah's Witnesses who believe that it is unchristian for a follower of Christ to have two wives or more at a time. Jemima was, after the death of Urhobo, inherited by a Senior Minister of the church, J. A. Kuye - Obafemi, who died in 1976. She had three children by Obafemi, one of whom Rotimi is still a G.K.S member.

Urhobo's Children

As already described, Urhobo had four children by his first marriage. The first son Smart Morgan, was not interested in religion and he left home. He later became a leading contender for the featherweight boxing title of Nigeria. He was known then as Kid Morgan and he died as a result of injuries he sustained in a boxing bout in 1948. As for the second son, too much cannot be said about his place in the history and development of the GKS. His stand vis-à-vis the GKS had influenced some people in assessing the GKS. For example, Mercy Alagoa who described Gideon Urhobo as the greatest religious crowd puller in the forties and early fifties suspected, and she is not alone, that something must be wrong

in the GKS for the fact that Emmanuel had to defect from the Society founded by his father. Like most people I interviewed, Mercy recalled Emmanuel's zeal and popularity in the GKS in the days of his father as a Bible reader.

Dr. Emmanuel Jesse Urhobo, was born in 1932. He is a very brilliant man and he followed his father faithfully as an obedient son. He worked hard with him till his father's death in 1952 after a brief illness. Shortly after the death of his father and the appointment of Vice - President, E T. Otomewo, as President, the Society decided to send Emmanuel abroad for further studies. Emmanuel said that his father wanted him to be trained as one of the Ministers of the GKS, but he was not interested in becoming a Minister. He was instead interested in Journalism. He trained as a proofreader and reporter for the Daily Times of Lagos. He also worked briefly with the Daily Service Lagos, and the Nigerian Star, Sapele, as a sub-editor and reporter, respectively.

Otomewo, the President (as of the time of writing) of the Society, recognized in Emmanuel a flair for journalism, and he arranged for him to proceed to the United Kingdom to train as a journalist and to study law. Emmanuel was meant to open the GKS press and to edit the projected Newspaper of the church, The Kingdom Advocate. In the United Kingdom, he obtained his Diploma in Journalism, BSc in Economics and LLB in Law. He is said to have offered to specialize in libel cases so as to defend the GKS in case of any libel suit against the society. Emmanuel helped to organize the GKS branch in London, which is still functioning till date. This branch received real impetus when a former GKS television service Minister, Gamaliel Eghagha, visited London in 1996. He staged two public lectures in Hyde Park Corner. Three of Gideon Urhobo's children, Goodwill, Benjamin and Sarah till my research period hold fellowship with GKS members in London.

Emmanuel married an English pianist, Pamela in July 1957, in the Lambeth Methodist Mission Hall, in London. They had a daughter, Rebecca. While in the United Kingdom, Emmanuel met some friends who were Methodists and Baptists and with whom he had Bible discussions. From this point his insight into the Scriptures changed. He engaged the GKS in writing in a debate from which he emerged apparently convinced by the GKS.

Emmanuel returned to Nigeria with his wife and daughter in November 1960. He was warmly welcomed by the society. Delegates arrived from all branches of the GKS in Nigeria in Lagos and gave Emmanuel a real happy welcome. After a brief period, he left for Warri, the GKS Headquarters, and received another hearty welcome. All delegates wore uniform clothes made for the occasion. Because Otomewo saw the achievement of Emmanuel as very important "for the furtherance of the Lord's work," he spared no effort to get Emmanuel and his family comfortably settled. The GKS bought a new car for him and made arrangements for a very good accommodation for him. A GKS member who had been a cook and steward at sea with more than fifteen years experience was withdrawn by the GKS to serve Emmanuel and his family. Nevertheless, in spite of such genuine evidence of welcome, Emmanuel later broke with the society.

Emmanuel demanded that the GKS should be re-organized. He wanted, in particular, the GKS to outlaw polygamy and adopt and preach monogamy as a way of life for the members. He also asked that there should be no separate Ministry for the church. In fact the idea of full devotion to a Ministry was opposed by him. He wanted just a central office or headquarters where those serving as Ministers could be assigned duties from wherever they lived. He was also opposed to separate male and female sittings during church services. In short, he preferred mixed sitting. He did not favour special prayers or frequent services in one day. The GKS Ministry holds morning and evening devotions daily. Emmanuel wanted families to have prayers in their private homes. Some of the above issues and much more were

discussed for a while but the GKS did not accept such strange ideas, which would have meant throwing away what the founder Saint Urhobo had taught the church. Emmanuel had prepared the ground for himself to dump the GKS but before the parting, the GKS excommunicated him from the society, and got back the car bought for him. Emmanuel, it would appear, was sincere in his effort to set "right" what he thought was wrong in the GKS. He must have been influenced by his friends abroad to seek changes at home, but he asked for too much at once. His demands, which were not reasonable in the eyes of the elders of the church, seem to give the impression that he was simply looking for an outlet to leave the GKS. He returned to meet a healthy GKS and by the time he was leaving the GKS, the church had grown healthier, which might explain why some GKS people thought he only returned to cause distraction to the GKS leadership.

Emmanuel was a front-line member of the ruling party in Nigeria—the National Party of Nigeria—during the politics of the Second Republic (1979–1983). When he came into politics, his father's name, Urhobo, and the GKS connection were used by his supporters to canvass for votes. At a stage, it seems the campaign team declared that Emmanuel was a worthy candidate possessing all the leadership qualities of his father and was therefore qualified to speak for the Urhobo people. This declaration prompted the GKS to issue a statement dissociating itself from Dr. Emmanuel Urhobo's politics. Thousands of leaflets were distributed all over Edo, Delta, Lagos, and Rivers States and to all branches of the GKS nationwide. Despite this action of the GKS, Emmanuel won the election to become a member of the House of Assembly in the then-Bendel State, comprising now Edo and Delta States. It is important to mention that Emmanuel has trained some of his father's children on his own. As soon as Urhobo's younger children finished their secondary school education, they went to Emmanuel, who would send them to higher institutions to further their education. It is agreed, even in the GKS circles, that Emmanuel, in spite of his opposition to the GKS, has not interfered with the religious conviction of his father's children.

Among Urhobo's other children is Esther, one of the two girls of the first marriage. She left her father and the God's Kingdom Society in 1947 at Port Harcourt; she simply took transport to Sapele, where she lives now. Other children are Victor, Goodwill, David, Joy, Sarah, and Benjamin. Victor, who was a soldier and fought in the Nigerian Civil War of 1967–1970, was the first child of Elizabeth. He was later invited by the GKS Ministry to return to his father's church as a devotee. He accepted and came into the Ministry in 1977, but in January 1979, he died in a private hospital in Warri after a brief illness. Goodwill Benjamin and Sarah live in London. David, a product of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria was, in 1979, a postgraduate student of Fine arts at an American University. David formerly held the Nigerian Sports Council pole vault record, and before he went for his postgraduate studies, he was a coach in the Sports Council Benin. According to the GKS, David has no problem with the GKS, even though the church could not confirm if he should be regarded as a GKS member. Joy was in Benin, where she registered as a general contractor.

The position of Urhobo's children vis-à-vis the Church he founded seems a peculiar picture in Africa. Some children of Independent Church founders are known to have taken up leadership in the church in the event of the death of their fathers. Emmanuel claimed to have tried to succeed his father, but he got to Warri late; at a time Otomewo had been appointed. He was in Lagos when his father died at Warri. Other children of Church founders are if not appointed leaders, active in the church of their fathers. However, in the case of Emmanuel Urhobo, he wanted first to reorganize the GKS or that the leadership should reorganize the GKS before he could function in any capacity. The demand could not be met because it would have meant a massive change in what the God's Kingdom Society has known and

practiced for many years. Presently (1998), Emmanuel lives in Warri, where he practices law. He is not a GKS member.

CHAPTER FIVE

GIDEON M. URHOB0: THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESS 1930-1934

Introduction

This chapter covers the activities of Gideon Urhobo as a preacher of the gospel in what is now broken up to Edo and Delta States of Nigeria, up to his accidental meeting with Mr. William Roland Brown, the West African representative of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. Both men met at Benin when Brown visited there in 1932 from his headquarters in Lagos. It goes further to relate Urhobo's vision of Jesus Christ and his command to him. When writing about some aspects of the Church of the Lord, Aladura, Harold W. Turner observes that:

The memory of those outside the Church who knew him (i.e., Josiah Oshitelu, the founder) has been demonstrably faulty, while the memory of members of the Church for factual matters such as dates and places has been proved very accurate.

I have found the same point true of G. M. Urhobo especially of the beginnings of his society. As for written sources, Urhobo's is easier to find than of his opponents. While Urhobo's public lectures, according to Assimeng, "were regularly advertised in the leading newspapers of Nigeria and covered a wide variety of topical subjects", the Watchtower did not advertise their lectures, thereby leaving behind little of written sources outside their society. The Watchtower was content with inviting people to their lectures during house-to-house witnessing. As I have noted, the Watchtower did not allow the use of their archives, nor did their members who spoke allow their names on paper. But many of the letters referred to here in connection with the Watchtower were published in the newspapers in response only to certain points raised by Urhobo or to address public opinion in 1938.

Gideon Urhobo's Contact and Preaching with the Watchtower Literature

We have noted in the last chapter Gideon's resignation from the Catholic Church and School about April 1929 and his subsequent appointment with the Posts and Telegraphs, Warri, in June 1930. Some time during that month, or the next, Urhobo came across an entry in one of the Nigerian Dailies, advertising the Watchtower books and booklets from South Africa. Urhobo got interested and placed an order for these books and booklets. When they arrived, he began to read them with interest in conjunction with the Holy Bible and other religious books. According to Edet,

When he (Urhobo) found them to be interesting, he placed an order for more copies with his own money, which he used to introduce and give out to people free of charge."

Gideon Urhobo studied his materials along with these books for some months, and by 1931, he began to discuss openly with friends and associates the results of his studies, especially about the establishment of God's kingdom.

We may wish to mention that Urhobo was already asking the Roman Catholic priests about the Kingdom they were asked to pray for. He also doubted the doctrine of all Christians going to heaven when the prayer was meant to bring God's Kingdom to earth. At this stage, Urhobo did not add that the Kingdom had come. He also preached about Sabbath, stressing that any Christian who worked on Sunday had not violated God's commandment. These teachings, particularly that of the Sabbath, which predated his contact with the Watchtower were strange to the converts of Christianity because Sunday was known as a day of rest in

which no manner of work must be done as far as they were taught by the missionaries. It is evident that Urhobo had his notions about the truth before contact with WBTS literature. The literature only confirmed his views.

In 1931, Urhobo visited Benin and preached to a gathering of people, among whom was Macaulay J. Orode. Orode was a teacher under the C.M.S. at Ogba Beach, some five miles away from Benin. Urhobo's preaching that day converted Orode to his views, with the result that he claims that he was soon dismissed from his teaching appointment for introducing his views about the Sabbath to converts and pupils in the School and Church. Orode could not find a job, and he went nearer his home in Urhoboland. He went to Warri to meet Gideon Urhobo, stayed with him for three months, and learned all he could about the Bible.

In the same year, Urhobo succeeded in getting two other people interested in the Bible and teachings of the Watchtower Society. One of them, Clifford Oritsegbeyiwa Omoneukarin, an Itshekiri man, was then a senior clerk in the Resident's office, Warri. He was a C.M.S. member before he joined Urhobo to study the Watchtower literature. The other person was Gabriel O. Agbenoma, an Isoko man, who was a clerk with the United African Company, (U.A.C.) Warri. His religious affiliation is not accurately remembered but he was probably one of the Protestant Church members.

Two points worth noting concerning Urhobo and his group of three are that, first, they belonged to what at that time, was the educated elites in Warri, and second, that Urhobo had attracted a cross-section of the Warri and ethnic groups of the Delta Province. The Society Urhobo founded has never, so it is claimed, at any time been regarded as Urhobo tribal church, though the three people who together with Urhobo knew themselves simply as "friends" were to leave Urhobo later. The new foundation he laid in Lagos was even more national in membership - Yoruba, Igbo, Urhobo, Efik, Edo, Kalabari (Eastern Ijo), Ijo of the Western Delta, and Sierra Leoneans—can be identified in 1934.

From 1930 to some time in 1932, Urhobo's source of literature supply was South Africa. Within this period, Gideon Urhobo had established himself as a serious agent of the Watchtower Organization, but he was offending his family by paying for the literature coming to him while offering it to people free of charge. His family was also offended when Urhobo was found to be spending too much of his money in the company of his friends who were interested in studying the Watchtower literature. Another source of offence was his often-sudden departures from home especially on weekends to preach in distant places like Ughelli and Benin.

In 1931, Urhobo caused a stir in Warri Township. His studies of the Holy Bible, along with Rutherford's books, had convinced him that "Christ has come "invisibly to set up his Kingdom. Urhobo accused the Churches of hiding the news about the Kingdom from the people, if they knew, directing his accusation especially against the Roman Catholic Church. From place to place, he tried to show Catholic teachings such as the trinity, the perpetual virginity of Mary, going to heaven, hellfire, and images in worshipping places or temples as wrong, and he seems not to have lacked audience. Some Roman Catholic members are said to have become lukewarm. Gideon Urhobo's brother, Benjamin, claims that the Roman Catholic Church introduced into Warri the Legion of Mary due to the Church's fear for their members. It seems Gideon's preaching was responsible for the lukewarmness. A writer, Professor S. U. Eriwo, has said that the Legion of Mary was introduced into Warri in 1931 and that "the legionaries moved from house to house convincing fallen Roman Catholics to repent and come back to the Church." The Legionaries, according to this writer, were also concerned with "safeguarding the authentic teaching of the Church." Though this writer would not sweepingly connect the introduction of this body with Urhobo, there seems to be

no evidence of any special factor other than Urhobo's preaching to warrant the backsliding of Catholics, nor any open attacks other than Urhobo's on the doctrines of the Church. I specifically laboured on this point in my research if I could find any other preacher than Gideon Urhobo in Warri at the time.

In 1932, Gideon Urhobo was transferred to Benin by the Posts and Telegraphs Department. Some of Urhobo's family members thought that the Catholic Church was responsible for his transfer, but in the opinion of his wife, he was sent to Benin to assume greater responsibility. His few interested friends in Warri, the number of which had been increased, were not yet organized into a church; they were simply Bible students, studying together, distributing literature, and preaching whenever possible.

The Meeting of Gideon and Brown at Benin, 1932

At Benin, Gideon began his activities where earlier in 1931, he had preached with the same watchtower literature. Gideon was out one evening distributing the literature when he came across William Roland Brown, the accredited representative in West Africa of the Watchtower organization of America. Brown was pleased to meet someone distributing the literature and took an interest in Urhobo. Edet notes in his papers:

It was in 1932 when St. Urhobo was giving out some of the watchtower books he usually ordered from South Africa to people that W. R. Brown, a representative of the watchtower met him with these books. Then Mr. Brown said, 'look here young man, come along, I don't know you. How do you come about these books?', then St. Urhobo made him understand that he used to place orders from South Africa for them. Said Brown to him, 'don't do it again, you meet me in Lagos. I supply you the books at Company's rate (discount rate), then you from house to house, so that if you put out one book, you put out many lectures'.

Shortly afterwards, Gideon went to Lagos and collected books, booklets, pamphlets, and leaflets on credit, amounting to £25 (twenty-five pounds) in value. Since some were selling at pence each, this represented a fair bulk. When he returned to Benin from Lagos, Urhobo shared the literature into three parts, giving a part to Orode at Ughelli and a part to Agbenoma at Warri. The last part he retained for distribution in Benin. As usual, the three leaders shared their literature with the friends to help distribute it to subscribers and whoever was interested. But this time they demanded money from the recipients. The latter were surprised at such a demand since the literature had previously been offered free of charge. Some, however, promised to pay at a later date, while some argued that the sellers were now commercializing what they got for nothing. Benjamin says that some of their neighbours, who were regular readers of the literature, came to quarrel with Urhobo when he visited Warri from Benin, for asking them to pay for the literature. Urhobo explained that he was buying the books and he needed money to keep replenishing the supply line. At Benin, Urhobo was very active. The Jehovah's Witnesses' account says, "Ukoli (Urhobo) distributed a lot of literature, especially in the Benin area." My Benin sources clearly indicate this and add that Urhobo gave out part of his literature free to people while he allowed those who offered to pay to work out their own terms. Notwithstanding this, many did not pay. He was, however, able to collect a fair amount from his buyers, to which he added his money to get more literature from Brown. But his debt of £25 to Brown was not paid, nor did Brown insist on his paying it before buying more from him. This sum was later to be the subject of court actions between 1939 and 1944 when the debt was paid in the court.

The question of literature is important in the history of the God's Kingdom Society because though the G.K.S. claimed that Urhobo had paid the debts, Urhobo is still regarded in Witnesses' circles as a debtor because of the literature he collected on credit. There seems to be consideration that it is one of the Witnesses' stated policies that those who are interested but have no money to pay could be offered free literature.

Towards the end of 1932, Urhobo was becoming more involved in the reading of the Holy Bible, and he is said to have prayed fervently for more wisdom and strength to do the work of announcing the Kingdom message. More literature came from Brown to Urhobo at Benin and Urhobo paid for it. He supplied a small amount of the literature to his friends at Warri and Ughelli even when, as the G.K.S. claimed, no account of the shared £25 literature was rendered to Urhobo by his friends. The fact that the quantity was so small was displeasing to Omoneukarin, who was the leading friend at Warri. Omoneukarin may have seen the paucity as resulting from Urhobo's inability to pay his debt to Brown. Sometime in November 1932, he wrote to Urhobo about "the proper course, but he proudly scoffed at such." No details are given as to what is meant by "proper course," but it seems likely to be connected with the debt of Urhobo to Brown. Omoneukarin did not join Orose and Agbenoma in sharing with Urhobo the literature which the latter got on credit. No reason was given for this than perhaps that he was too occupied with his work at the Resident's Office. It is however, believed that Omoneukarin, like other friends at Warri, got some of the literature from Agbenoma, which he may have paid for. Obviously, Omoneukarin would not be happy that some of the friends had sold the literature, especially if they used the money for their personal ends. However, in spite of this coolness between Urhobo and Omoneukarin, the latter was still reading the Bible for Urhobo during his preachings at Warri. Later, Omoneukarin made contact with Lagos, and the friends began to receive copies directly from there to supplement what Urhobo was sending to them from Benin.

The Call of Urhobo and his Resignation from the Civil Service

By February 1933, Urhobo was convinced of a wider ministry because he claimed Jesus made himself manifest to him in a vision. In his own words:

"I was in the Government Service, as a third-class postal clerk and telegraphist in June 1930, when after three and a half years of diligent and prayerful studies of the Holy Bible, Jesus Christ revealed himself to me in a vision and commanded me to go and preach the everlasting Gospel, or the Gospel of peace, to all nations and Kings, as the only remedy for all the human sufferings and woes, and to expose all the false doctrines which Satan had used to deceive the whole world and to keep the people in ignorance of God's established Kingdom or Government of Righteousness and peace. I gladly left the Government service in February 1933 and fully devoted all my life to the Kingdom service of the Lord."

This vision marked the beginning of a new life for him. Unfortunately, Urhobo did not give any more details, if there were any, how the command came, such as hearing a voice or whether there was a sort of conversation between him and Jesus. Without delay, Urhobo resigned from the Civil Service and became a full-time preacher of the gospel.

As regards the moment of the vision, a scene at the General Post Office, Benin, where Urhobo received his call is worthy of attention. My informant is one Mr. T. A. Aguta, a retired Government Education Officer who shared the same Government quarters with Gideon Urhobo in 1933 at Benin. According to him, in the afternoon of a particular day in February he could not remember, Urhobo rose up from his chair in the office and shouted, "Look at

this bright star circling the Post Office." People who had come into the Post Office to do business and the workers were surprised. The way he was pointing at the star as it circled the office convinced some of the people that Urhobo was seeing something they could not see. Others thought Urhobo was going mad; suddenly Urhobo was quiet for a few minutes while the people, including the chief clerk, waited to see any further actions from Urhobo. The commission from Jesus to him is believed to have come at this moment of intense silence and witnessed by the people. But unlike the Apostles of Christ, who were empowered to perform miracles to attract the audience, Urhobo was simply mandated to preach about the Kingdom of God and to expose wrongly circulating ideas about God. While people were still wondering over what was happening to Urhobo, Edet and Aguta agree that;

A magician who strayed into the Post Office was immediately knocked down by the 'angel' of God and began to foam in his mouth.

The incident, though remembered by many people even in 1979, is not told in the G.K.S. and is not used as a confirmation of Urhobo's call, but it is merely regarded as an attempt by the devil to interfere with the work of God. It is understood that the devil was not permitted by God to use the magician to do any harm to Urhobo before he was knocked down by the 'angel' of God. Urhobo tendered his resignation verbally even while the magician was being helped out of his unconscious state. Later, Aguta and others tried to persuade Urhobo to remain at work and engage in his evening preaching. Urhobo's reply was that anyone chosen of the Lord for a special work of preaching should not remain a servant of man in the secular sphere.

One point seems clear in Urhobo's determination to preach. His decision to take up preaching does not seem to have been provoked primarily by status consideration. Socially, he belonged to the elites of his time. It might therefore be said that Urhobo abandoned a successful career in the Government Service for religion. Gideon Urhobo, in view of his education, was on a comparatively high salary of £36 a year at that time and prospects for promotion were before him.

Reactions to his Resignation and Preaching Activity

The first person to react to his resignation was his wife, who deserted him. The news that Urhobo had resigned from the civil service to go preaching full time reached Warri before he got there. It is said that when he arrived, his family, including his father, approached him in the way a group of people would approach a madman. First of all, Urhobo was tested out with words to judge if the brain was working normally, but he appeared to be quite clear-headed. Then he was asked to explain the wisdom of his actions, and he narrated how God had sent Jesus Christ to give him the commission to preach the good news of the Kingdom. But he was still thought to be mad. He says in his autobiography that:

Immediately after I left the Government service, all my relatives and friends forsook me. Some said I was a devil and I was mad and that I shall lick the dust.

Some people recalled that the same opinion was raised about him in 1930, when, after reading the Holy Bible, he left the Roman Catholic Church.

Gideon Urhobo settled down at Warri with his children and without enough money to live on. He is said to have become a changed man with more zeal to preach. Most of his friends at Warri could not understand what Urhobo was doing, but they saw in him a man with a clear

vision of what he was doing. They therefore rallied around him and welcomed him. He had made it known to them that he had been commanded by Jesus to go and preach the gospel full time. (Though his vision of Jesus was not put into writing until years later, he constantly remarked about it.). Already, Urhobo was laying the foundation of a new church without much link with the Lagos headquarters.

As Urhobo returned to Warri, Brown redirected all Watchtower literature for Warri to him since he had resigned his appointment to become a full-time preacher. Urhobo then distributed the literature among friends. But part of the literature he reserved for sale during his preaching from place to place. The friends, it would appear, were not happy that Urhobo was keeping part of the literature for sale during preaching. Since they were themselves getting commission on every copy of what they sold, they wanted Urhobo to share all the literature. During this time too, Urhobo, according to Benjamin, was already opposing the sale of literature from house to house. He cited a portion of the Holy Bible that says, "Go not from house to house" (Luke 10:7). Apart from the profits on literature, Urhobo got monetary gifts from many of his sympathizers not only because of the preaching work but also out of pity for a friend who had engaged in an activity without "counting" the cost.

In Warri, Urhobo began to preach against Mission Christianity in general, but with more attention to Catholic teachings. He was said to be backing up his exposition of teachings on the trinity, hellfire, etc. with Biblical texts, and many people appeared convinced. In any case, it is clear that many people who had admired Urhobo's 1933 preaching were not experts in scriptural exegesis. "His efforts were highly appreciated by his friends who were of like mind, and it is said that Urhobo won the confidence of all his friends again and were prepared to press on preaching the word with him.

It reached a stage when Urhobo decided to take his gospel outside Warri. As a full-time preacher, he had the opportunity to go from place to place to preach. He would write the topic of preaching on black boards or wide planks, inviting people to a particular spot. He would discuss the topic and invite questions about it on anything listeners wanted to know about God, and he would give the answer. There used to be a good attendance. His preaching from place to place thus created a new awakening about God in the area now known as Bendel State. According to Benjamin, Urhobo travelled widely this time visiting Benin, Sapele, Ughelli, etc. His father is known to have regularly celebrated Urhobo's arrival in Warri from preaching trips with his children, and he never failed each time to ask him whether he was well, that is, whether his senses were functioning normally. But the old man was convinced that his son, Gideon, was going to be a peculiar child among his children. He told the other children this before he died in 1935.

Gideon was persuaded by his family to travel less because of his little children, particularly Morgan and Emmanuel, who had to accompany him. He agreed to do much of his preachings at Warri, but this was not liked by his family, most of whom were Roman Catholics. Asking him to remain in Warri meant that he spent his time opposing the Catholics and other churches. Augustine remembers telling Gideon to stop preaching if he wanted to stay in Warri, that he should preach against idol worship to possibly destroy confidence in the famous Agbassa Juju called OwHurie, and to educate people generally about God. Gideon saw the advice as opposed to one of the principal points of his commission, namely, to expose falsehood.

He preached for a while in Warri and decided to travel out again. He went to Sapele, about 30 miles away to preach. Before he could do so, he was arrested because he put a public notice on a tree for what he described as "Free Bible lecture.". He was released without a

fine, and he left Sapele for other places. It seems he was not granted a permit to preach, and no one is sure if he asked for one.

In a short time, news started coming to Warri of his activities in other places. This period fits what Assimeng says: "Urhobo was a Bible expositor and lecturer, preaching from place to place.". At last he returned to Warri only to discover that he could no longer work there due to opposition from members of his family who were wholly Roman Catholics.

Much opposition drove Gideon from Warri, and he went to Sapele again. This time instead of a notice on a tree, he simply invited people with his locally made megaphone to where he would preach. He preached about twice, in the course of which he attacked the Roman Catholic teachings as false. The Catholic Church, according to him, reacted. He said in his autobiography thus:

Owing to much opposition at Warri, I had to move to Sapele to continue the kingdom work there. Here I was reported to one Mr. C.C. Legg, the Assistant District Officer, by one Father Shine, a Roman Catholic priest, that I was insulting the Roman Catholic Church in my public lectures. The A.D.O., without allowing me to defend myself, sentenced me to two pounds fine or two weeks imprisonment with hard labour. I was detained in the cell overnight and taken to the prison until three days after, before I was released after the fine had been paid.

After this, he came back to Warri again, having been refused a permit by the Assistant District Officer.

At Warri, Gideon resolved to fight for his right to preach the gospel. He began immediately to prepare to preach against Christian churches generally. But, while he was preparing to do this, an invitation came from W. R. Brown in Lagos to him "who required my services". Before he left Warri for Lagos, the relationship with his friends was becoming strained again. It was all about the literature, which was coming in greater quantity, with much of the gain going into the maintenance of Urhobo and his family. Perhaps the Warri friends were happy that Urhobo was leaving them because they would have the opportunity not only of selling more literature on a commission basis but also of doing so from house to house, a system Urhobo was already opposing among them. As soon as he left, they cut off any dealings with him.

Urhobo notes in his autobiography thus:

Some young men whom I got interested in the Bible and with whom I always ate when I was in the government service, namely Clifford Omoneukarin, Macaulay J.

Orode and Gabriel Agbenoma, suddenly turned against me and began to persecute and oppose me after I had left the government service.

Evidence at Warri suggests that the opposition began not when Urhobo was at Warri but when he was in Lagos. Omoneukarin became the leader of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Warri.

CHAPTER SIX

GIDEON URHOB0 IN LAGOS AND THE FOUNDING OF THE GKS

In Lagos, Urhobo became close to Brown, who also admired his knowledge of the scriptures. Almost immediately, Urhobo became the main preacher and shortly afterward the study leader of Brown's workers there. Urhobo introduced a new method of evangelization.

In the 1933 Year Book of the Jehovah's Witnesses, it is noted that "there are now more than 80 Witnesses singing forth Jehovah's praises in West Africa." West Africa for Brown comprised Nigeria, Gold Coast (now Ghana), Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Some of these people were in Lagos, and these followed Brown in his bookselling work. They joined him to place literature in people's hands at home and street corners and also helped in playing phonograph records at the doors of homes (a policy that was to be abandoned in 1944). The records carried Rutherford's sermons about the critical age they were in.

Each time Brown was out, there was a ready audience who, it seems, were mainly interested in getting cheap books. In fact, one writer noted that Africans sought Watchtower literature not because of what it contained but because it was cheap or often obtained free. "Very popular and vividly remembered in Lagos by those who saw it for themselves was Brown's method of showing pictures of various Bible characters and stories. While doing this, he would tell their life stories. The commonest picture was that of life in Eden before the fall of Adam and Eve from the favour of God. Brown would follow with explanations as to how the Edenic condition would be regained soon by those who joined him in witnessing by spreading Rutherford's books from place to place. However, salvation at that time appears to be the mere circulation of Watchtower books. This appears to have been the general situation under the presidency of Rutherford where emphasis was "on the placing of literature" or "place books by the millions" instead of "emphasis... previously been laid on Bible study, character development, and the cultivation of the fruits of the spirit...", characteristic of Russell's time. In fact, the Witnesses did not start serious Bible study until 1943, the year after Rutherford's death.

It would appear that Brown made no attempt to organise those interested in his work into a group of Bible students. Oral interviews in Lagos tend to show that the sale of literature was uppermost in Brown's activities. The Jehovah's Witnesses' Year Book of 1934, reporting the events of 1933, stated that Brown had people called "company workers." There were 184 of them in West Africa, excluding 38 pioneers and 28 auxiliaries. The pioneers and auxiliaries were those who received the literature at company rate and gave it to company workers, who in turn sold it to the public. The whole set up appeared then as a wholesale and retail business and was very lucrative since everyone involved was making a profit.

From Lagos, Brown toured to places to establish bases into which his literature was sent. Thus, before Urhobo came to Lagos, many people were already familiar with Brown and his literature, but there seems to have been no emphasis on studying the literature. This aspect came in through Urhobo and was to be seriously encouraged by Brown after Urhobo had left the Watchtower.

Gideon did two main things. First, he organized those who were interested in what Brown was doing, especially the company workers in Lagos, into a study group. Urhobo later claimed that;

Since the past fifteen years (1923-1938) in West Africa, this man, Brown, has not organized any Bible study class... The only Bible class here (Lagos) was started and organized by me in 1933, and until recently (1938), it had 309 attendants. The one at Warri was also organized by me in the same year (1933) with 26 attendants.

Second, he began to preach in public places using his Warri method, namely discussing a topic and inviting listeners to ask him questions if they were not satisfied. At the end of the preaching, he would introduce the literature to his listeners to buy and read. This method made more money available to Brown and Urhobo, who were living in common, "as listeners paid on the spot, compared with leaving literature with people who might pay sooner or later. However, Urhobo's second method of imparting the Watchtower message was an additional

dimension to Brown's method of preaching. Lagos people were impressed and were surprised to hear someone from the interior (a derogatory appellation in Lagos for the rest of the country) discussing the Bible and quoting profusely from it. Urhobo became more popular and was rated by the members above Brown for the knowledge of the scriptures. Brown was, however, happy that a capable African had joined him in drawing more attention to the Watchtower Society.

When Gideon had settled down properly, he began to intensify objections to certain things Brown was doing or wanted him to do. It soon became clear to him that Brown's emphasis on placing literature in people's homes contradicted his own, which was on the public preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom. These personal interests created a difficult situation for the two men to work harmoniously, and soon seeds of discord began to be sown, and these grew rapidly. However, Brown allowed Urhobo to do the work in the way he felt right. And so Urhobo preached in many centres in Lagos and its suburbs, such as Campus Square, Ajegunle, Willoughby, Ebute Metta, and in various halls and Coliseums. Brown was present when Urhobo preached in Lagos, and Urhobo was also present whenever Brown was using his method of showing pictures of Bible characters and discussing them. The main difference noticed by the members was that while Brown featured Armageddon much in his lectures as being imminent, Urhobo did not discuss an impending Armageddon. If any mention was made, it was usually at question time when a listener wanted a comment from him. Urhobo explained each time that Armageddon was the battle of the great day of the Almighty God, which no human could forecast when it would start. Thus came the first disagreement. Brown is alleged to have put the Armageddon to some time in 1936 or 1937.

The second source of disagreement was when Urhobo refused to join Brown and others in house-to-house preaching. It may be recalled that Urhobo was already opposed to this system before he went to join Brown in Lagos. At first the members thought that Urhobo's absence from door-to-door preaching and selling of Watchtower publications was to enable him to prepare himself for his public preaching. But later they came to see the reason as theological. The Bible, as far as Urhobo was concerned, did not support the idea of preaching from house to house nor the selling of God's word from door to door, and this he imparted to the members.

Urhobo took another radical step when he organized the members into a study group. This affected mainly the men. It is said that in one particular meeting, he drew the attention of the members to Joshua ch. 24 v. 15, viz., "*But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,*" and so members began to involve their families in Jehovah's service. Female members on Brown's instruction started to take part in house-to-house preaching and the placing of literature. Urhobo opposed Brown for such use of women, but Brown did not desist from it. Urhobo's understanding was that the Bible forbade women to preach in that manner. They were only allowed to preach to themselves and their children.

The fourth cause of discord was when, at a public preaching with Brown present, Urhobo, in answer to a question on polygamy, explained it to be scriptural. This was in direct opposition to what Brown himself believed about polygamy. To Brown, polygamy was a mortal sin. But it is said that most of the members were convinced by Urhobo's exposition of marriage as regards polygamy. Brown therefore was in a difficult position and unable to raise it as a point of argument openly, for Urhobo's influence among the members was already great. It is, however, remarkable that, in spite of these differences, these men could not part yet. Later, Brown began to discuss the issues raised by Urhobo at their study meetings. Brown made it clear to the members in one of the meetings that he was in full support of public

preaching (members were already expressing concern over the differences of opinion between Brown and Urhobo) in the way Urhobo was doing it. But he stood on the declaration of Rutherford in 1931 that the work of a Jehovah's Witness was to preach from house to house. Brown further advanced an argument which seems to have convinced the members that not everyone would be reached with the word of God through public preachings. Those who could not attend public preachings could be reached at home with the word of God, having thus heard the gospel before the day of judgment. And so members were satisfied to support Urhobo's preaching as usual and engage in the business of selling Watchtower books with Brown.

Remarkably, Brown and Urhobo kept their differences without an open quarrel before the members. Some time in 1934, Urhobo suggested to Brown that a kind of missionary journey be taken to other parts of Nigeria, especially where Brown had visited and introduced Watchtower literature and where a few company workers were operating. Urhobo, according to the Watchtower, requested a 28-passenger bus, literature, and funds for the nationwide tour. Urhobo asked Brown to lead the team, but the latter declined and condemned the zeal of Urhobo. Urhobo probably, as we shall show shortly, appealed to New York for the above items.

From the moment Brown refused to approve Urhobo's plan to tour the nation, it began to be clear that the number of members who were active distributors of Watchtower literature began to decline. According to Edet, Urhobo had engaged some of the members in arguments and convinced more of them that such a system was wrong. The mere fact that this happened intensified the disagreements between Brown and Urhobo, yet Brown remarkably found it difficult to quarrel openly with him. From the point of view of most of the members, Urhobo was an accomplished Bible student. He was leading Witnesses whose main task was to place literature, and not so much concerned with what they were giving out.

According to Edmund Gruss,

Under Rutherford the average Publisher did not know much about the Bible because all he needed to do was to play the phonograph of President Rutherford's book or booklets. Under Knorr (who became president in 1942), the Witnesses have been trained in their doctrine and in better methods of presentation.

This may give an idea of what knowledge the members possessed of the Bible as late as 1934. It must have been very small compared to that of Urhobo, who had studied the scriptures for three and a half years before the vision where Jesus Christ gave him the command to go and preach. Urhobo thus appeared as an exponent of the Bible before the members, and he was greatly respected.

Appeal to New York?

In the short history of their work in Nigeria, the Watchtower Society gives the impression that Urhobo's zeal in the work in Nigeria "was largely motivated by self-interest." He wanted to discredit Brown in order to supplant him as overseer of their work in Nigeria. Urhobo, it is stated,

Wrote to the headquarters of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in New York and requested a 28-passenger bus, literature, and funds for use in the expansion of the work throughout the country.

The Jehovah's Witnesses and the GKS do not agree on the question of appeal to New York. Some members of the Watchtower of the period say that when Brown refused to give Urhobo the chance and the materials he needed, he wrote to Rutherford for them, as indicated in the history. On their part, the GKS members who were at that time in the Watchtower could not say whether Urhobo communicated with America to get a bus, literature, and funds. They are, however, aware that Urhobo suggested expanding the work to Brown, but the latter became "wild and angry." While not doubting the possibility that Urhobo could write for such things, they thought Urhobo would have told them, and in fact, would have written a letter to that effect to be signed by all of them as their request. The chances are that Urhobo had written for those things which he thought necessary for expanding the work. Two instances may suffice to show this. First, a leader of the Jehovah's Witnesses, D. O. Ibeke, writing about the events of the time (1934), noted in 1938 that Urhobo wrote for a 28-passenger bus and some other items, but "failure to obtain them brought about the vilification." Second, a 1951 West African Pilot editorial written against Urhobo but pointing to the events of 1934 says that Urhobo asked for such equipment as a car, loudspeakers, gramophones, books, and booklets "independent of Brown" but was rebuffed. It is clear that such a request, if made, was directed to New York. Continuing on the subject of expansion itself, the Watchtower writes that:

He (Urhobo) betrayed the trust that was reposed in him by misusing the Society's money and his privilege as a representative of the Society was taken away.

Urhobo was also said to have "defrauded the Society of some quantity of money." But there is no evidence that Urhobo got the money he is said to have misused. There is, however, constant allegation among Watchtower members about Urhobo's debt to the Society on the sale of literature which Urhobo collected from Brown in 1932.

In spite of the rebuff, Brown and Urhobo remained in association with each other. After a while, Urhobo asked Brown to work out the possibility of his going to America to study and gain more experience. Brown not only refused to help but also made Urhobo's request known to a few of the members, and an idea spread that Urhobo wanted to go to America to make a name and to enjoy himself, and Urhobo was greatly embarrassed. Urhobo, recalling the events of 1934, said thus:

On account of my zeal and activity in the field, he (Brown) tabooed my going abroad when I told him that I wanted to go to America for further studies and experience; he became very angry and wrote a letter to Joseph (Judge) Rutherford, the President of the Watchtower Society in America, stating that the devil is using me to disorganize his so-called faithful workers in Nigeria.

Urhobo's ambition to go to America and Brown's reaction resulted in a clear division among the members, who were now beginning to see an internal quarrel between their two leaders. Brown began his opposition to Urhobo at this stage by trying to show that Urhobo was an impostor and was not one of the anointed. (Brown is regarded in the Watchtower as one of the 144,000 chosen and anointed Christians.) Brown, according to Urhobo's account, told the members that Urhobo was not a Jehovah's Witness because he had "no credentials or permission from Rutherford to preach the gospel, which is contrary to the scriptures." As a GKS minister who then was a member puts it,

There was no one in Lagos in those days, 1934, who could say that Urhobo was not an anointed Christian, if Brown could claim to be one of them.

Events Leading to the Separation

What hastened the final parting of Urhobo and Brown began in Warri. Omoneukarin, as we have noted, had, at this time, cut off every dealing with Urhobo from the Warri company of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Probably aware of the difficulties between Urhobo and Brown over the teachings and practices of the Watchtower, Omoneukarin and his fellow Witnesses took serious action against Urhobo. A verbal message "disfellowshipping" Urhobo was sent to Urhobo in Lagos through someone whose name cannot be remembered by my informant. About September or October, or simply before the separation from the Witnesses, Urhobo was said to have expressed concern over the attitude of Warri Witnesses and resolved to visit Warri. He went, but he was stoned, called opprobrious names, etc. by the Jehovah's Witnesses. Urhobo could not understand why such hostility. His brother, Benjamin, says that Urhobo ran away to Lagos to avoid being seriously wounded. When he got back to Lagos, he expressed the view that Brown and Omoneukarin were working hand in hand against him and so decided to come out before the members against Brown on the issue of teachings. He was yet to do this when Omoneukarin wrote to Brown from Warri that the aim of Urhobo was to go to America and return to displace Brown as the accredited representative of the Society in Nigeria.

The Separation and Beginning of Urhobo's Independent Movement

As Urhobo was preparing to take the issue of doctrines to the study meeting of the members for a debate with Brown, Brown called an emergency meeting of all members in Lagos. Urhobo, who did not know the reason for the meeting, was involved in inviting members. B.O. Edet, who was in the meeting, noted that Brown began to tell them of how Urhobo was intent on going to America with the aim of returning to replace him. Brown did not allow Urhobo to defend himself when he finished talking:

What took place was separation. The members separated into two, some went with Brown and some with Urhobo. This was how separation came about... at Tom Jones Hall, at Victoria Street, Lagos.

It would appear that before the separation, reports had reached America complaining of Urhobo's activity. Not long after the separation, Urhobo got a letter dated 31st October, 1934, from Joseph (Judge) Rutherford concerning his activities:

Information that comes to this office is that you are trying to interfere with the Witness work of the Lord's people, and that you are prompted by a selfish desire.

This is to advise you that the Society will have nothing more to do with you and all of our brethren who are loyal and faithful to God are hereby advised to have nothing whatsoever to do with you, unless you fully reform and show that you are devoted to the Lord and are willing to work in harmony with the Society's organization in that land.

Urhobo was surprised when he received that letter and he accused Omoneukarin of sending reports that he had insulted Rutherford and all Jehovah's Witnesses when, according to him, *I only corrected their teachings about Armageddon, Jehovah's Organization, selection and ordination of the 144,000 chosen and anointed Christians, leadership, ybutor memorial supper, and marriage.*

Urhobo explained in a later newspaper article that

In spite of all my efforts to prove that Omoneukarin's accusations were entirely false and were due to envy and jealousy, Mr. Brown confirmed his report.

Brown is said to have sent the report and followed it with a personal note to support Omoneukarin.

After the separation from Brown in 1934, Urhobo "established the Lagos Division of Jehovah's Witnesses. This name was to change several times until finally, in 1943, it changed to God's Kingdom Society, by which it is still known. Urhobo himself said that it was in October 1934 that the Lord instructed him to go to Lagos and stay. "Here I founded the God's Kingdom Society, according to the Lord's instruction. No one knows what type of instruction God is said to have given him to found the GKS. What is clear in the history is that Brown invited him to join him in Lagos some time in 1934 to continue his preaching as a Witness. He himself noted that he withdrew from every connection with Brown in 1934. For the Jehovah's Witnesses, however, this connection was not only with Brown but also with the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

It is certain that though Urhobo was presumably preparing himself for an independent movement (since he was deeply studying the Bible with no intention of joining any Mission Church). The WBTS's literature were in accord with his beliefs, and so he used it in his preaching. He preached these doctrines until he got his vision of Jesus Christ. His dissatisfaction with the teachings and practices of the Watchtower brought about a deep gulf between the GKS and the WBTS. In any case, the body which was to become the God's Kingdom Society was organized in Lagos in 1934 and has since grown enormously. It is not common to come across a Jehovah's Witness in Nigeria who will say that Urhobo cut off his affiliation or link with the Watchtower organisation on the issues of doctrines, but many know the major difference in doctrines between the Watchtower and the GKS as a result of their frequent arguments with the GKS people. Whatever may be the Watchtower viewpoint, one must not underestimate the issue of doctrine as a factor why.

Conclusion

Before Urhobo came across WBTS's literature, he had developed independent thinking in religious matters. He had shown the sign of predestination by his wonderful interest in Bible reading. He was very inquisitive and careful about what teachings he accepted. It was this frame of mind that led him to part with the Catholic Church. Urhobo was also already preparing himself for an Independent Church of his own; for after his disillusionment with the Mission Churches, he began to study the scriptures prayerfully and test his knowledge with arguments with Church and people before he stumbled upon Watchtower literature. He must have seen the literature as an aid to his ambition. He began to organise his own preaching and had a crop of admirers before he knew of the Watchtower Organization in Nigeria. But before this, he had already formed his pattern of thought and method of preaching. And even after he had known and contacted the Watchtower in Nigeria for the supply of literature, he remained completely independent of control by the Nigerian Organisation.

The W.R. Brown whom Urhobo went to work with in Lagos was a faithful, unimaginative organization man, a man who may be said to have devoted his energy to the selling of literature and its distribution to other English-speaking West African countries, and with no plan to teach what it contained. He was, however, working in an era when emphasis in the Watchtower Organization was placed on literature distribution. Thus, Brown was ill-prepared

in the knowledge of the scriptures to take on Urhobo, who had studied the scriptures, including Watchtower books, when the latter began to question the Organization on doctrines and practices. Urhobo could not see any reason to preach an imminent Armageddon nor for the practices of preaching from house to house and of using women to preach the gospel. As for most Africans, including Gideon Urhobo, polygamous marriage was not an offence to God, nor was he Urhobo prepared to outlaw a system that carries no penalty before God the Creator and Possessor of heaven and earth. In the face of such opposition, Brown must have felt insecure about his position as the leader. He was a foreigner being helped by a brilliant and ambitious indigenous man who became his rival. Urhobo proved to be a charismatic leader, and his influence not only swayed the members but also held Brown for too long to act against him. As already stated, Brown was determined to stop every move by Urhobo to expand the work or preach nationwide with "contrary" doctrines. It is on the whole remarkable that they worked together for so long. Urhobo was able to maintain his hold on those who followed him, and to this we shall turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

GIDEON M. URHOBOD'S KINGDOM SOCIETY AND THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY, 1935-1939.

His Preachings:

The Year Book of the Jehovah's Witnesses for 1935 says:

Satan, the devil, tried to disorganize the faithful workers in Nigeria and succeeded in a measure with a few of them by using one, Ukoli by name, to interfere with the Lord's work. Some of the Jonadabs (i.e., faithful and zealous workers) took sides with him but after a while, because of his egoistical manner, many sincere ones withdrew from him, after learning that organization instructions are not discretionary but mandatory.

It is said that when Urhobo read this piece, he simply resolved to intensify his disputes with Brown by exposing what he believed to be the wrong teachings of the Watchtower. He called on Brown to meet him and defend the teachings, a challenge Brown never accepted. It is also claimed that Brown's work almost collapsed in Lagos in 1935 as a result of Urhobo's opposition to him, an opinion which was not denied by any of my Watchtower sources. The Witnesses believed that because Brown did not accept Urhobo's challenges, the first two years after the separation were quite tough and hectic for Brown. This assertion would tend to confirm the Watchtower Year Book report of 1937, which spoke of opposition in Nigeria. Certainly, there was no other opposition to Brown, either from the government or the people, than that of Urhobo in Nigeria of the 1930s.

A view was expressed by the GKS that Brown became very generous to those who were with him so as to prevent them from defecting. Urhobo himself, while reviewing his problems with Brown, said in 1938 that Brown gave out books and other things free to some of the followers. He said;

"W.R.Brown can only deceive the simple and gullible ones like C.O. Omoneukarin of the Resident's office, Warri, J.O. Arie, the Marine Boat Boy, Lagos, and D.O. Ibeke, the wayside lad, Lagos by supplying them Judge Rutherford's books and gramophones freely, but he cannot deceive me."

Urhobo could not be deceived because he considered himself one of the very elects of God. Besides that, he was no lover of materialism.

As a result of the separation, Urhobo was no longer in a position to use the loudspeaker and car for public announcements and preaching and went back to his profitably tried old methods developed at Warri. As S.U. Erivwo says, Urhobo would write notices on conspicuous corners of Lagos, inviting everyone to come to his chosen venue in the open streets. Many residents and traders around where his notices were put up were said to have willingly offered to keep an eye on them to prevent them from being stolen or erased by his detractors. Blackboards and wide planks were used in writing out the notices, and these Urhobo would carry himself with the help of a few of his followers to several centres. His readiness to do this menial preparatory work for his public preaching won for him the admiration and approbation of many Lagos people.

While he was placing notices in several centres, his followers and supporters would carry along printed cards to their places of work or market. These cards carried the subject of preaching, the name of the preacher (usually Urhobo himself), the place and the time, and some Bible passages to be cited and explained by the preacher. They were shown to people along the streets and in markets and places of work. The current information was written in pencil along dotted lines and would be erased after each meeting in preparation for the next announcement. It was not until the late 1930s that Urhobo began to advertise in the newspapers and to print handbills into which he would insert, "If you are unable to attend, please read the following Bible quotations."

Arrest and Release

From about September 1935, Urhobo began to intensify his preaching not only against the Watchtower but also against Christian Churches generally. He felt that only he and his followers had the true knowledge of God in Nigeria, and so the teachings of Churches which were his targets, must be regarded as lies. Specifically mentioned among many false teachings were the Trinity, Hell-fire, the assertion that polygamy is a sin, and preaching from house to house.

On a particular day, Urhobo and his followers went to the Campus Square, Lagos, to preach. But before Urhobo was fifteen minutes on the platform, on the topic "Is Heaven for all the Faithful?" policemen arrived, went through the crowd to meet Urhobo, and demanded his permit to preach. Urhobo could not produce any since it was hardly known for preachers to be required to have a permit. Urhobo was arrested and taken to the Oke-Suna police station. After the arrest, the followers of Urhobo trooped to the police station. and asked the police Inspector, Mr. Davies, an expatriate, to put all of them in the cells because they were all involved in the preaching. The police attempted to push them away. Having failed peacefully to do this, they applied force, which eventually became brutal. As Edet wrote:

Members consisting of brothers, sisters and their little babies at their backs, a very big crowd that followed to the station, were badly beaten up by the police with their batons; pregnant women were (among those) wounded. Other police men in the barracks (who were not on duty) ran out from their houses with their batons, chasing members who ran helter skelter, and I, the writer, ran through barbed wire where my new trousers were torn to pieces.

Notwithstanding this treatment, a few of the members came forward again, asking Davies to put them into the cells and bring out Urhobo. This group was severely beaten up again by the police, who saw no reason to free an offender and detain the innocent.

The next day, Urhobo was charged. He later described what happened as follows:

In 1935, I was arrested and kept in the cell overnight at the Oke-Suna police station, Lagos, and fined £4.10s for preaching the gospel without a police permit. This amount was oversubscribed by the members of GKS (then Lagos Division of Jehovah's Witnesses) who were present in the court.

When Urhobo came out, he petitioned to the Governor of Nigeria, Sir Bernard Bourdillon, asking him to warn the police and religious leaders to let him do his preaching work without molestation, and after this "I was allowed to carry on my God-given work without interference from the police".

After this incident, there was speculation on the part of the followers of Urhobo that W.R. Brown had engineered the arrest of Urhobo for preaching without a permit. Christian religious leaders and the police were also believed to have conspired against Urhobo with the sole aim of preventing him from preaching. Urhobo himself wrote later concerning Brown that:

like Judas Iscariot, he, Brown was responsible for my arrest in 1935 when I was fined £4.10s in Sant Anna Court, for preaching the gospel without permit, which was purely a religious persecution.

He also printed a handbill where he said,

I humbly beg to inform the public that Mr. Brown is in conspiracy with his followers and friends to deprive me of my God-given rights and privileges of preaching the Gospel of God's Kingdom...

The Government's report (to be discussed shortly) says that Urhobo was charged for endangering the peace and for insulting religion. The question of permit which I think was the cause of the arrest, is not mentioned. The GKS says that the question of permit was never heard of by them until this arrest. But it is unthinkable for the Colonial Government, especially in the Governorship of Sir Bernard Bourdillon to arrest and charge anyone without breach of an existing ordinance. Bourdillon was perhaps simply tolerant in not enforcing the ordinance, if it was in existence. He could not, however, connive at preaching such as that of Urhobo in 1935 that was geared towards Brown and his brand of Watchtowerism. Perhaps Brown and those suspected by Urhobo for his arrest had acted in a way to influence the Government to anticipate a civil disorder and to stem it with action.

The arrest incident brought the Watchtower Society in Nigeria to the official notice of the Colonial Government. Up to the arrest of Urhobo in 1935, there seems to be no mention of the Watchtower in any Government records. None could be found in the Public Records Office in London or in Nigerian archives.

Government records show that in November 1935 the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. J.H. Thomas, asked the Governor of Nigeria, Sir Bernard M. Bourdillon, to submit every six months a short report on the activities of the Watchtower. The Governor's first report dated January 18, 1936 shows that a measure of action to regulate the preachings of Brown

and Urhobo, had been taken. The Governor, after mentioning that a rival movement had been started in Lagos by Mr. Ukoli, informed the Colonial Secretary that:

Lectures are delivered by them (Brown and Urhobo) at meetings held under police permits.... police officers attend the meetings and make reports on the proceedings, but none of these reports has hitherto contained any record of utterances of political significance.

But in a specific reference to the Watchtower, the Governor noted as follows:

...its teachings and pamphlets are subversive in tone, its activities are religious; its influence, whether for good or ill, appears at present to be slight. The potentialities of the Society, however, as a source of political unrest are realized.

He noted that the official attitude of his Government towards the movement "has always been one of watchful tolerance." And in what should be seen as a specific reference to the group led by Urhobo, Bourdillon said,

On two isolated occasions, disciples of the movement were prosecuted for insulting religion and for endangering the peace, and fines were imposed, but no general restrictive measures have been adopted.

The two cases referred to Urhobo because W.R. Brown was never arrested for preaching without a permit in spite of his direct references to Churches as Satan's organizations, nor for endangering the peace. Urhobo, according to H.W. Turner, was "twice imprisoned on charges such as public preaching without permit and insulting Roman Catholics."

We may at this point note the difference between Brown's and Urhobo's condemnation of the religion of the Churches. Brown would call the Churches by name and declare them Satan's organizations, and their members to be victims of the coming Armageddon. Urhobo (except in his early days at Warri) would pick on a doctrine, for example, Trinity, and proceed to show from the Bible why he considered it unscriptural, going on to say that any Church holding to it was false.

Governor Bourdillon gave the impression that the Society (Watchtower) deserved to be repressed, but his Government was unwilling because:

If repressive measures were taken, the effect might well be to focus attention on the movement and to attract to it people who might never otherwise hear of it nor consider it worthy of notice. I am of the opinion therefore that no direct steps should at present be taken in Nigeria to restrict the Society nor suppress its publications, but... I propose that a very strict watch should be kept on its activities, and I am calling for a periodic report to be rendered to me.

Bourdillon's watchful tolerance came to an end, as we shall show below, during the Second World War, when Brown and his followers became more of problems than agents helping the colonial government to resolve the war conflicts. Watchtower publications were then banned from importation and circulation.

In his report to the Governor, the Inspector-General of police, Mr. S.H. Grantham, noted that he had discussed the Watchtower movement with some colonial officers and that,

...these officers were of the opinion that this movement is a menace to the future tranquility of Yorubaland... They would be glad to see the last of Mr. Brown and his literature in this country.

To Mr. Grantham, it seems "better to remove a potential source of unrest before any serious damage is done." It must be stated that apart from the Urhobo incidents, there were in Yorubaland some Watchtower followers that were disrespectful to the Obas, insulting them and refusing to prostrate to them as the custom required. There is no sign of any remarkable incident before the Second World War apart from that of Urhobo that could have dictated the tone of the reports given both by the Governor and the Inspector-General of police. In December 1935, Urhobo printed and distributed by the hundreds a handbill for a public lecture at the Empire Hall Coliseum, Lagos. The headline of the handbill read "W.R. Brown Must Go, we want no Judas in Nigeria." The attendance at this meeting was large. The police came in large numbers, presumably not only to watch out for subversive utterances but also to keep peace in case there should be trouble. There was, however, no trouble. The followers of Urhobo claimed that W.R. Brown fled Lagos to hide as there seemed to be much support for Urhobo's demand. But, while the Jehovah's Witnesses claim that Urhobo preached on the 24th December 1935, the police report made it clear that Brown was at Ibadan for meetings held on the 24th, 25th, and 26th of December. It is difficult to accept that Brown fled Lagos to hide at Ibadan. However, Brown did not go as some Colonial Officers and Urhobo had demanded. In fact, Brown remained for many years actively expanding the Watchtower movement in Nigeria in the face of much opposition, especially from Urhobo. Quite clearly, Urhobo's use of the Bible in his opposition to Brown won the admiration of those who heard him.

Severance of ties with the Watchtower and from further dealings with Brown

In February 1936, the Watchtower President, Judge Rutherford, wrote to Brown instructing him and his followers to have nothing to do with Urhobo:

As to Ukoli and such men as he, follow the Apostle's admonition in Romans 16:17, 18, and absolutely avoid them. Notify the brethren everywhere, as you have the opportunity, that this man has no authority from me to do anything... it is quite manifest that he is bitterly opposed to the truth.

The 1937 Year Book of the Jehovah's Witnesses says that there was much opposition against the Society in Nigeria, among the opposers "are those who were once with us but whom the angels of the Lord have gathered out," that is, expelled.

Between October and December 1936, Urhobo was preaching in the Midwest (now Delta and Edo States). He did not go to Warri but preached in Benin. Urhobo had many sympathisers here, including the Oba of Benin, Oba Akenzua. Urhobo was a noted preacher in Benin in the years 1932 and 1933 and, as we have mentioned above, it was here he received his call. It seems from information that the story of the magician who was said to have been knocked down at the General Post Office was still remembered by many people. This incident publicised Urhobo, and as soon as he arrived, many people came to hear him. In Benin, Urhobo preached for a while. According to his wife, the Oba of Benin invited him to his palace and requested him to remove the headquarters of his Society from Lagos to Benin. Considerable land was promised by the Oba to Urhobo for that purpose. Urhobo, it is said, could not consider the request because he wanted to be in Lagos, where he engaged

himself in a religious struggle with Brown. Most of his Society members at that time were those who were in the Watchtower with him, and he would rather be with them to consolidate their faith in his teachings than to leave them at that moment.

The Oba of Benin was a deeply religious man and was probably keen to have an African Church in his city. Five years later, in 1941, the Oba founded the Edo National Church, but properly "Aruosa Cult." One of the aims of the Edo National Church was to enable the Edoman to worship God in the Edo religion and language. The "Church's Bible is made up of myths and Edo legends. It is not clear whether these aims were put before Urhobo, but certainly, Urhobo was not the type of African religious man that Akenzua wanted. Urhobo was opposed to the African traditional religion and would not agree to lead a church where legends and myths would supercede the Bible. On the other hand, if Akenzua's aim was to establish a church to promote the natural religion of his people, it is not clear why he should want someone with little or no ideas of the Benin religion. Before Urhobo left Benin for Lagos, one man, as has been mentioned, was sufficiently moved by his preaching to offer him a girl to marry free of charge.

We may wish to state that though the breach between Brown and Urhobo had occurred since October 1934, Urhobo was still using the Watchtower literature. The reason for this situation was that Urhobo claimed to be quarrelling with Brown and not the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. Urhobo himself noted in 1938 that "since 1934, I withdrew every connection with the local branch of the Watchtower Society."

The Watchtower wrote later, contesting Urhobo's position, "that he does not oppose Judge Rutherford and his books." This was a reaction to Urhobo's claims that "I have nothing against Judge Rutherford, his publications and the main body of the Watchtower Society." From the beginning of 1937, Brown came under pressure from many of his followers to stop selling literature to Urhobo since Urhobo was using the contents of some of the literature to criticize the Watchtower. Brown had to stop selling to Urhobo. Urhobo was surprised at Brown's reaction, and so he instructed Edet, who was then the Secretary to his group, to write to find out from Rutherford if he gave the instructions that literature should not be sold to him. Edet wrote in a letter dated 31st January, 1937 thus:

Just this month, January, 1937, the local representative, Mr. W. R. Brown, has given instruction that the books should no longer be sold to us, stating that he has got instruction from you to do so. We want to be assured if you really sent such instructions. Already, we are 139 (members) in the list.

Rutherford's reply to this letter, dated February 24th 1937, says that:

It is not for me, or anyone, to say who will or will not serve Jehovah. If you, brethren, are fully devoted to the Lord Jehovah and His Son Jesus Christ and making known His Name and His Kingdom, then we will furnish you (with) the literature. The responsibility will be upon those who use the literature for personal gain. I reiterate, if you, brethren, are fully devoted to the Lord, go ahead with the work the Lord of the Temple assigned you to do.

From the point of view of the GKS, this letter from Rutherford was encouraging and it suggested to Urhobo and his followers that there was a change of heart on the part of America to them. But Brown, it is said, wrote to Rutherford explaining why he refused to sell literature to Urhobo. Brown, it is remembered reported among other things that Urhobo was an opposer not only to him but also to the teachings of the Watchtower. And in July, 1937, Rutherford wrote to Brown:

That man, Ukoli, is manifestly a part of the evil servant and should be completely ignored and ask the friends to decline to co-operate with him in any way and advise them of my

conclusion about it. He is clearly one who is trying to cause trouble and not to preach the gospel. All such wicked ones should be avoided.

In another letter, he sympathized personally with Brown for all the troubles he had had in Nigeria. He said,

I am sure that you have many difficulties in dealing with the ignorant and vicious, but always be assured of my continued confidence and love for you... Be not discouraged, but keep on pushing the work.

It is likely too that Rutherford had written personally to Urhobo remonstrating with him for all his activities with the Watchtower Society in Nigeria. A personal letter went forth from Urhobo to Rutherford, dated 2nd October 1937:

Please know that I am not following you nor any other man on earth. I am a true and sincere follower of Jesus Christ and a Witness to Jehovah's Holy Name and Truth. Jehovah God has visited all nations to take out a people for His Name and by His Grace, I am one of them.

This letter is known to many GKS people because the statement therein was the clearest made by Urhobo that he was one of the anointed Christians chosen by God to preach about the Kingdom. The GKS quoted Rutherford as saying in his booklet Favoured People that "the blackest man from Africa will have the same opportunity as the white man of America". Meanwhile, Urhobo directed his attack against the teachings of the Catholic Church, challenging the Catholics to meet him in a debate on the Trinity. The Catholics, however, ignored his challenge, but Brown took advantage of the waiting crowd at the Forester's Hall, Lagos, where Urhobo asked the Catholics to meet him to distribute copies of a letter said to have come from Rutherford to the people of Nigeria. The letter said that Urhobo should be avoided by the public because he was a devil, Judas, evil servant, etc. Urhobo doubted whether Rutherford actually wrote that letter, and so he instructed Edet to write to find out from Rutherford if he did. In a letter dated 9th October 1937, Edet wrote as follows:

Just after challenging the Roman Catholics Priests here for a public debate, the Society's representative, W.R. Brown, privately distributed many letters in your name telling the people to avoid Mr. G. M. Ukoli (Urhobo) and calling him devil, Judas, evil servant, etc ... will you kindly let us know whether you actually wrote those letters ...

The reply to this letter dated November 3rd 1937 says:

Your letter came to hand, your charges against Brother Brown (Edet had charged Brown with lack of interest in advancing the Kingdom work, I am not willing to accept without some proof. So long as the Lord keeps Brown there, and unless there is some proof that he is wrong, the charges by Ukoli's crowd will not be considered for a minute. The letter published by Brother Brown I wrote myself and is authentic.

In another letter addressed to a prominent supporter of Urhobo, Mr. G. A. Johnson, Rutherford said:

It is manifest that Ukoli is a murmurer, complainer, and opposer, such as mentioned by the Lord's word that I care no longer to be giving consideration to him or anyone who supports him. If you really want to work in the Lord's service, cooperate with the Society's representative and have in mind Proverbs ch. 6 v. 20 and 21.

(This passage says that one should keep his father's and mothers's commandments.) Johnson was expected to cooperate with Brown by keeping to the commands as given by Brown, but Johnson remained a strong supporter of Urhobo.

There was a further attempt by Urhobo to get literature from America after Brown had stopped selling to him. Urhobo told Edet to order literature directly from America. This was some time in November 1937 or thereafter. Edet sent in an order of £2 for books and booklets but when this got to Rutherford, he directed it to the General Office, who later replied to Urhobo and wrote to the Lagos office that,

We have received two orders from G. M. Ukoli. Enclosed therewith were two British Postal orders for 20 shillings each. We believe that you have an account with this person and that he owes money to the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society for literature furnished to him previously which he has not paid for. We are enclosing herewith his two orders. You may fill those orders if you desire, or if it is deemed advisable, apply the 40 shillings to his account and then write him that you have done so. Enclosed you will find a letter which we are writing to Mr. Ukoli acknowledging receipts of these postal orders and stating that we are referring his orders to your office to handle as you see fit. We are cashing the money orders and crediting same to your account.

Brown handled the order by applying it to part of Urhobo's £25 debt to the Watchtower Society. (Brown did not demand the balance from Urhobo until sometime later in 1939). There was however, no reaction from Urhobo to this diversion of his money to another purpose, but he ceased to try to obtain Watchtower literature.

In 1939, Urhobo was busy preaching in Lagos and was gaining members. His target this time included the Muslim religion generally. At the Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos Urhobo preached on two topics. The first was entitled "Bible Vindicated, Koran Examined and Found Wanting", the second was "Christmas Exposed." The first drew many Muslims especially Ahmadis, into the hall. As a result, the hall was overcrowded, and it is said some people fainted through lack of breathing space. Many of the Muslims who came did not come to listen but to fight Urhobo for insulting the Koran. However, apart from many Christians drawn in to hear mainly the second topic, there were many police officers whose main purpose was to keep the peace. Though the Muslims disturbed to a measure, the preaching ended peacefully. At this time it would appear that the Government was not only interested in watchful tolerance but also in keeping the peace wherever the gospel was being preached. In 1938, Urhobo inaugurated what he called the Christian Feast of Tabernacles. (see Appendix B on G. K. S. Activities.) For the first time, Brown came to argue with him on this. Brown also took this opportunity to raise the issue of the name being used by Urhobo to designate his movement. Urhobo's group was known as "The Lagos Division of Jehovah's Witnesses." Brown had argued that the name was being used by Urhobo to confuse Lagos people. Brown's followers were using the name "Lagos Company of Jehovah's Witnesses." Not long after, Urhobo changed the name of his Society to "Lagos Company of Christian People".

Urhobo's opposition to Brown was much more intense than any other time in 1939. The reason was that Armageddon did not start at the end of 1937, as Brown was alleged to have

said. According to Urhobo in 1938, Brown had preached that Armageddon must be fought in one or two years, 1936 or 1937. Brown, it must be noted, was following Rutherford concerning the "impending Armageddon," though Brown was more specific. In 1930, Rutherford said, "the great climax is at hand", and in 1931, he believed that "His (Jehovah) day of vengeance is here, and Armageddon is at hand, God's Judgement... must shortly be executed." And in 1932, "the end was only a short time away."

The failure of Armageddon to arrive at the end of 1937 therefore gave Urhobo the opportunity to attack Brown as a false prophet. The G. K. S. says that some of Brown's followers left him and a few joined Urhobo. However, in his report to the Resident, Owerri Province, dated November 14, 1938, the Superintendent of Police, Owerri Province, said, among other things, that the Watchtower had lost much ground, especially in his Owerri Province. He noted further that,

... the reason given for this is that the leader of the movement in Nigeria, Mr. W. R. Brown, has been inconsistent in his preaching of the tenets of the Society, and because he has fallen out with Mr. Ukoli, who at one time was one of Mr. Brown's strongest supporters.

The Police officer may be correct in charging Brown with inconsistency because, as Edmund Gruss says, "The decade 1930-1939 saw the abandonment of specific date setting, but readers of the Watchtower material were assured that the battle of Armageddon was near." Whether Urhobo was a cause of defection or not, it has been a common occurrence in the Watchtower for some of its members to leave it when Armageddon failed to appear.

Brown's other act against Urhobo in 1938 was his petition to the Trustees of the Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos, asking them not to allow Urhobo the use of the Hall, which had already been handed over to him for public preaching. Urhobo had drawn up a list of topics, some of which were directed against the Watchtower. The Trustees had to cancel the permission given to Urhobo because Brown threatened to disrupt the preachings. It would appear that attacks on Brown and Watchtower feature in Urhobo's preaching. Brown was, to a lesser degree, discrediting Urhobo in his preachings, especially when people asked him or his followers during house-to-house preaching anything concerning Urhobo.

In 1939, Urhobo became more vocal against Brown and other churches. Edet in his papers tells a story (a common one among the early followers of Urhobo, though Brown's presence was denied by the Watchtower) of how in 1939, Brown joined with eight top leaders of the Mission Churches to appeal to the Governor and others holding a meeting at the African Club, Ikoyi, that Urhobo was correcting or at that time quoting the Bible to condemn their Churches. The Governor asked the Church leaders if they could recite instances of quotations Urhobo used to abuse them. According to Edet, none—not even Brown could. Then the Governor was said to have remarked:

Look here; you must understand that I was not sent to Nigeria to interfere with the work of God. If you people know that G. M. Ukoli is quoting the Bible to condemn your churches, you go and quote (the) Bible to condemn his church, O. K.?

The story, with the previous one in which the Governor, Bourdillon responded to Urhobo's petitions, has made Governor Bourdillon to be fondly remembered by the G. K. S.

Brown's Legal Actions Against Urhobo

In 1939, Brown took Urhobo to court to be examined on the debt of £25 which Urhobo owed to the Watchtower in 1932 and which hitherto Brown had not bothered to demand. Why Brown decided to demand this money is not clear, but Urhobo said that,

In 1939, when Brown saw that many young men had joined the G. K. S. (then the Lagos Company of Christian People) and the Lord was blessing His Kingdom work, he became jealous and took action against me in the Sant Anna Court No. 1, Lagos, claiming from me the sum of £25 being the balance of the cost of religious books supplied to me for sale in 1931 (1932) and which I gave out on credit...

The Watchtower wrote that action was taken against Urhobo because he had defrauded the Society of some quantity of money. Brown was heard saying that he was going "to remove Urhobo from the streets of Lagos".

As regards the quantity of money, the G. K. S. drew my attention to a 1938 West African Pilot issue where the Watchtower published that Urhobo's debt to the Watchtower was £22.19s. left out of the £25". (We may recall here that Urhobo's £2 was confiscated by the Watchtower in America to pay part of the debt which should stand at £23 instead of £22.19s.). But it is common to hear some Watchtower people in Nigeria mentioning thousands of pounds, hundreds of pounds or simply a huge sum of money. Most of the Witnesses who read the Pilot copy from me felt the paper may be right. The Lagos headquarters did not deny the letter published was theirs. Yet in many Nigerian villages, one will hear thousands of pounds, and those who did not know what a million is will say millions of pounds.

The case was first heard by Mr. O. O. Jibowu, who was the Magistrate. Jibowu dismissed the case because Brown had created a difficult situation for Urhobo to collect the money from those who owed him. Urhobo claimed that he could not collect the money because of,

The warning letters distributed to the people that I was no more a Jehovah's Witness (1934) and that no one should give me a penny for the books given out to me.

The G. K. S. wrote in 1949 that two-thirds of the said literature was given by Urhobo to two Jehovah's Witnesses' leader in Warri and Ughelli, but "these refused to pay what they owed Brother Urhobo." The Jehovah's Witnesses in Lagos did not deny that such a letter was circulated, and in fact it was a specific injunction from Rutherford in his October 1934 letter that the brethren everywhere should be informed not to have any dealings with Urhobo. It would appear that Brown had thought all along that it would be wrong or unjust to demand that money in the face of that warning letter. (As it will be clear, Brown was very reluctant to demand this money even after the court had ruled that Urhobo should pay it). Furthermore, as we have seen, some amounts had been confiscated and also after the debtors had been warned not to pay. All of these must have caused the magistrate to dismiss the case. However, Brown was not satisfied with the dismissal of the case and two weeks later, according to Urhobo,

Brown took another fresh action and I was asked to pay the whole debt with three guinea cost, which I agreed to pay by monthly installments of one pound. But Brown refused and cast me into thirty days debtor's prison.

It is not shown in Urhobo's records, whether it was the same Magistrate or another who dealt with the fresh action.

When Urhobo came out of the prison, he did not make any attempt to pay his debt. Instead, he wrote to Judge Rutherford to defend himself against "Brown's false reports against me." And for referring to Brown in that letter as wicked and malicious fellow, Brown

took another action against me in the court for libel, claiming £100, for himself and his wife, and I was asked to pay £84.6s. as damages and costs by magistrate C. F. Reece at the Ebute-Metta Police court.

Urhobo agreed to pay £1 monthly instalments, but Brown demanded £7 monthly instalments. The G.K.S. says that Brown, in spite of his action, did not appear serious in demanding the £84.6s. It is not even certain whether Brown at any time reminded Urhobo about the debt. But it was not forgotten. Brown perhaps thought that Urhobo, with such debt on him to pay, would stop or at least minimise his attacks on the Watchtower.

Urhobo did not, and in 1941 Brown came up to demand his money for some reasons which belong to the next chapter.

Thus far, we have described Brown's legal action against Urhobo in 1939. We can now come back to other matters in 1939. When the Second world War broke out in 1939, Brown became more concerned with how the Witnesses in West Africa, particularly in Nigeria, might escape being involved in what was described as "human wars." Much trouble attended this attempt by Brown. The Government had to take steps through the medium of the Emergency Powers (Defence) Acts of 1939 and 1940 to promulgate an Order-in-Council No.15 of 1940, prohibiting

... importation into Nigeria of all books, newspapers, and documents published in the U.S.A. by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society...

Other matters, as related to Urhobo, will be discussed among the events of the 1940s below. As for Urhobo, he decided to leave Lagos in January 1940 for Warri, his home town, until calm returned to Lagos. But because of Brown's campaign at the beginning of 1940 on the theme that Armageddon had arrived, he went back almost immediately to Lagos to campaign that the war was not Armageddon. He noticed at Warri that several farmers and traders were giving up their profession. Rubber planters, in particular, did not only stop to plant but also to weed their plantations. Witnesses were then preaching there as elsewhere that Armageddon had come and it would be a waste of effort to plant what would be overtaken by Armageddon. And so Urhobo felt that the best way to help the people he thought Brown was deceiving was to go to Lagos and meet Brown face-to-face. And in the next chapter, we shall show how much Urhobo challenged Brown not only in Lagos but also at Port Harcourt over the issue of Armageddon.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GIDEON URHOB0 AND THE WATCHTOWER IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR, 1940-1945

The period 1940–1945 is an eventful one for Urhobo and his society, the G.K.S. It is within it that Urhobo engaged the Watchtower in real polemic. In the interwar years, which continued intermittently thereafter and reached a breaking point in 1948. Gideon Urhobo returned to his

home town, Warri, with his family in 1940 during World War II. He left Lagos because he thought that Lagos, the seat of the Colonial Government, might be attacked by Germany as Nigerians decided to support Britain with men and materials in the war. The news of Gideon's arrival rung round the whole town and beyond. He soon decided to preach at Warri and organize a branch of his G.K.S. in his home town, but he met equally quickly with opposition from the Catholics and the Jehovah's Witnesses in the town. The Catholics urged on Gideon's elder brother, Augustine, the Catechist of the Roman Catholic Church, not to allow Gideon to stay in Warri. The Catholics decided on this attitude because they knew the style of Gideon's preaching, that is to heap abuses on other churches. The situation was such that it was wise for Gideon not to preach. Gideon suspected that the police would not come to his aid if he should decide to preach."

Probably unaware that Urhobo had decided not to preach in Warri, the Jehovah's Witnesses quickly sent for W. R. Brown in Lagos to come and preach there. Elizabeth believed that Omoneukarin, the leader of the Witnesses, was afraid that Gideon would win over some of the Witnesses into G.K.S. On this invitation, Brown responded quickly by coming to Warri with several books, booklets, pamphlets, and leaflets, many of which were given to the public free of charge by Brown and his followers in Warri while usually being sold elsewhere. Brown's presence in the town had brought into Warri many Witnesses from neighbouring towns and villages in Urhoboland. The G.K.S. says that before Brown arrived in Warri, Clifford Omoneukarin had advised all the Jehovah's Witnesses in Warri to beat up Gideon when and wherever Gideon appeared in the streets. Urhobo himself described what happened to him at Warri and what he did after.

When I returned to my home town Agbassa (Agbarha), Warri, in 1940, during the World War II, I was beaten and flogged with canes by the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses headed by C. O. Omoneukarin, the local representative of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, when Brown came to give a lecture at Warri. Anytime I appeared in the streets of Warri these counterfeit Witnesses would shout my name, calling me a devil, Judas, man of sin, and other evil names in the Bible. When I saw that my life was in danger, I went back to Lagos.

Gideon's family and the Roman Catholic Church were happy that the Witnesses had taken over the role of sending Gideon away from Warri, though, according to Benjamin, some of the Ukoli family members, including some Catholics, were not happy about the way the Witnesses treated Gideon, for he was treated like a criminal whereas he was a storehouse of Bible knowledge. However, they could not do anything to help Gideon in his troubles. Further, the Colonial Authority in Warri simply connived at what was happening, especially in Agbassa (the city centre), to Gideon. In any case, Gideon sensibly resolved that the only way to avoid the harassment of the devil was to leave the town, and so in the same January 1940, Gideon went back to Lagos.

Gideon Urhobo in Lagos and Port Harcourt

Gideon Urhobo returned to Lagos with the determination to meet with Brown face-to-face on the platform of public preaching and to take his gospel, especially to the places where Brown had organized branches of the Watchtower Society. Port Harcourt was the first place he visited as soon as he got to Lagos. The Witnesses were active in Port Harcourt as a result of the activities of three leaders. One Okwuosah, who left his job as a Public Works Department's (PWD) contractor to preach about the Witnesses' impending Armageddon, Moses Merrick Yellowe, who also left the United African Company (U.A.C.) to become "a

preacher of the Armageddon", and one T. Ozurumba. Brown had visited Port Harcourt in 1935 and preached there, as a result of which a branch of the Watchtower was organized. Witness pioneers in Port Harcourt included A.O.D. Green, Ozurumba, M.M. Yellowe, and Okwuosah became Watchtower Witnesses in 1938.

In January, Gideon Urhobo and a few of his members, including Edet, left Lagos for Port Harcourt to preach. The following topics are still remembered: Who are the Jehovah's Witnesses? The falsehood of Trinity, God's Kingdom, What is Resurrection? What is hell? and Who is Jehovah? dominated the list, being used not only as a topic in itself but as an introduction to other topics. Urhobo had worked very hard in Port Harcourt according to his first convert Mr. I.K. Aguh (now I.K. Karibo, 1979). The arrival, activity, and result of the activity are contained in a report to the Resident, Owerri Province, from the Senior Superintendent of Police. It says

G. M. Ukoli arrived in Port Harcourt in January to Goyosimama organize Bible classes. So far he has met with little by done, nitho or no success. He left for Lagos in March and has EXTR delivered 3 or 4 lectures at the Roxy Cinema Hallw since his arrival. Many people attended but it is doubtful if he will have many adherents here. So far his followers have numbered.

Urhobo's presence in Port Harcourt caused a division in the ranks of the Witnesses. The same report noted the following:

The activities of the Society continued to decline since the beginning of the year (1940) due mainly to the arrival of Mr. G.M. Ukoli in the town. Mr. Ukoli is a rival of Mr. W.R. Brown, the head of the Society in Nigeria.

The report said that some of the Witnesses, particularly one Mr. Ewu of the Resident's Office, wanted to reconcile Urhobo and Brown but

The local branch members resented this move and have excommunicated Mr. Kwosah (i.e. Okwuosah) the local head, and there has been a split. One section following Mr. M.M. Yellowe, the newly appointed head, and the others have chosen to go with Mr. Kwosah.

Though Okwuosah was later reinstated into the Watchtower, it was from those who went with him that Urhobo got some of his early followers at Port Harcourt. The confusion in the Watchtower was also aggravated by the growing feeling among some of the Watchtower members that their Organisation was wrecking their economic well-being. Brown was insisting that it was unnecessary for the members to give more time to economic pursuits at the expense of preaching about the "imminent" Armageddon. That apart, some of Brown's followers were already wondering whether Brown's Armageddon was really coming upon the world. Thus the ground was prepared for Urhobo to make converts among them.

In March 1940, Urhobo left Port Harcourt for Lagos to condemn what Brown was preaching there: that Jehovah's Witnesses, as the true servants of God, must not take part in the war then going on in 1940. Brown preached in the manner of Jehovah's Witnesses everywhere that Jehovah God forbids His Witnesses to join the armed forces. At several places in Lagos, Urhobo preached against Brown's doctrine of Witnesses' neutrality and exemption from war and called on Brown to meet him publicly for a debate on the issues. While calling on Brown for a debate, he was also at the same time calling on Nigerians to support the British

Government, in the war effort. In addition to the call to support the British Government, Urhobo, it is said, preached that Brown was deceiving people by saying this war was Armageddon. Writing specifically about Armageddon, Urhobo recalled in his later newspaper article of 1944 that,

Before the present war (1939-1945), certain deluded men and women nearly went mad preaching that Armageddon was coming. And that only those in their organization shall be saved, and all others who refuse to join in preaching Armageddon and selling their literature shall die. When the present war started, they said that Armageddon, or the great tribulation, had begun and published that their responsibility ended.

But their responsibility to preach did not end.

One effect of Brown's apocalyptic vision echoed by his followers in many Nigerian towns and villages was that farmers who were expected to produce food-stuffs, including palm oil, groundnut, etc., needed in the course of the war were frustrated to think that they might not reap what they had planted. As a reaction to the activities of Brown, the Colonial Government promulgated an Order-in-Council in May 1940, preventing further importation of Watchtower literature into Nigeria." Giving reason later for the Order-in-Council, C.C. Wooley, the Chief Secretary to the Government, informed Lord Moyne, Secretary of State for the Colonies, that the activities of members of the Society were subversive and that they were inimical to the security measures adopted for the duration of the war." Some G.K.S. people believe that Urhobo contributed more to the need for this Order-in-Council because he had told people that the war was not Armageddon. However, it is claimed for Urhobo that Watchtower publications were poisoning the minds of those who came into contact with them in so far as support for the war was concerned. After a while in Lagos, Urhobo went back to Port Harcourt.

At Port Harcourt, M.M. Yellowe was preaching and telling people not to take part in the war. Yellowe addressed Port Harcourt people in June 1940 on "Germany, the World War and the Theocracy. He ascribed the outcome of the war to Satan's determination to destroy the world. He said that Satan used Germany to start the war, but God was going to stop the war and Armageddon would follow." He preached that the war, which "would soon cease", was "like a drop of water in the bucket compared to the battle of Armageddon which will immediately follow." Yellowe added also that Jehovah's Witnesses must maintain their "righteous neutral stand in the wars between nations." Yellow himself, who was known to have persuaded many people not to take part in the war, was charged and convicted "for refusing to serve in the wartime special constabulary". At Port Harcourt, Urhobo preached against the expectation of Armageddon as a sequel to the war and advised the people to go about their normal work and that they should not mind the Watchtower preachers and prophets of doom. As in Lagos, Urhobo called on the Witnesses to meet him for a debate on whether the Bible justifies the neutral stand of the Watchtower members. There was no answer from the Watchtower.

Towards the end of June 1940, Urhobo returned to Lagos to take Brown to task again. Brown had put an article in the press that the world was ending. In the West African Pilot of Thursday, June 20, 1940, W.R. Brown put out the following release on behalf of all the Jehovah's Witnesses in Nigeria:

Jehovah's Witnesses have obeyed the mandatory command of Jehovah as recorded in Matthew 24 verse 14. Now take note of the physical facts, Judge Rutherford's books and

booklets have exceeded in circulation over 300,00,000 during the past twenty years. The Kingdom message was broadcasted by radio throughout the five continents, also by sound cars (i.e., cars equipped with microphones), phonograph lectures, books, and booklets and by oral lecture. And now the fulfilment of Luke 21 verse 22 has come... As it was in the days of Noah... so it is today. Our responsibility ends."

Brown's publication was read and refuted by Urhobo from place to place. in Lagos. Urhobo kept on reminding Lagos people that Brown was deceiving them and that neither Brown's nor Yellowe's responsibility would come to an end when the war ceased.

The Witnesses themselves were said to have paraded the streets in some big towns with placards bearing bold inscriptions, such as "Destruction cometh", and warning people to join the Watchtower or be prepared to face Armageddon's destructive forces. According to the G.K.S., some of the Witnesses"... who were traders, ceased from going to market; some sold their sewing machines and rubber plantations and stopped their children from going to school. S.U. Erivwo expressed a similar view when the Witnesses set their eyes on 1975 as the end of the world. The Witnesses "fail to send their children to school". They also "refused to build houses or plant rubber trees at a time in Urhobo when many cultivated lands and owned large rubber plantations.

The claim is made for Urhobo by G.K.S. that his activities in Lagos and Port Harcourt made Brown's preachings of non-effect. But it must be remembered that other enlightened Nigerians, such as Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, H.O. Davies, and Ernest Ikoli, to mention only a few, were also busy in Lagos calling on Nigerians to support the British Government. But while the above names could only be heard in newspapers, Gideon invaded all nooks and corners of Lagos, asking people to shun the Watchtower and support the British in the war efforts. Between June and November 1940, the G.K.S. leader was tirelessly moving from Lagos to Port-Harcourt, preaching not only against Brown but it seems also against the Mission Churches. For example, sometime in 1940, Urhobo planned to preach against the Roman Catholics at Port-Harcourt. The police saw the advertisement, and they stepped in to prevent Urhobo from preaching by refusing him a permit. Urhobo had proposed to address his audience on the "Iniquities of the Roman Catholic Church".

In 1941, it is said, Brown was losing his audience in Lagos and accused Urhobo of misleading the people," and Brown also attacked the Government for stopping the importation of Watchtower literature. Brown decided to deal with Urhobo by sending a solicitor's letter concerning his unpaid debt of 1939. It was an attempt, so it is believed, by Brown to keep Urhobo away from preaching by sending him to prison if the latter could not pay. When the action was taken Urhobo could not afford to pay £7 monthly instalments decided by the court. And as he wrote,

Being unable to pay seven pounds monthly instalments, as ordered by the court, I was again sent to twenty-one days imprisonment with hard labour, upon Brown's motion for contempt of court.

As in 1939 (see Chapter 7) Gideon Urhobo did not make any attempt to pay after coming out of prison. Brown, also as in the first, did not ask him to come and pay, and so there was a complete silence again until 1944, when, as we shall show below, the debt was paid in one bulk sum. When Urhobo came out of prison in 1941, he put out a message in the press against Brown on the same topic of Armageddon. It reads thus:

Present war, not Armageddon. The Bible plainly shows that the present European war is not Armageddon. Armageddon is the world's greatest final tribulation or battle in which Satan and all his forces of wickedness, visible and invisible shall be completely destroyed by the army of Jehovah God under the command of His Executive Officer, and Field Marshall, the Lion of Judah, Christ Jesus our Lord. That during that battle all the false christs and prophets and teachers and those who falsely claim to be Jehovah's Witnesses shall be destroyed. And that that great day is now approaching.

Several passages of the Bible including Matthew 24 verse 21, Revelation 16 verses 13-16, 17 verses 11-20, and Matthew 25 verses 1-46, were cited unexplained to support the above quotation.

In June 1941, the Government seized Watchtower literature and passed a law banning all publications of the Society and the speech recordings. The Commissioner of Police then ordered the removal of about 118,000 pieces of literatures and about 700 records to the police stores. In spite of these actions against the Watchtower, Brown remained undaunted and in August he put out another release to strengthen the minds of his followers: "... war is on between the lamb (Jesus Christ) and the beast, (Satan the devil) but the lamb shall overcome them (him)". The G.K.S. claimed that Urhobo was partly responsible for the Government's actions against the Witnesses, because he preached in Lagos in Campus Square, the most popular square in Lagos, and that Brown and his preachers were ruining some rubber and cocoa farmers. Urhobo himself gave reasons for the Government's action. He wrote in 1946 that Watchtower publications were nabbed in 1941 because the Witnesses "blindly attacked the Government", and had

Deceived many simple and gullible Africans especially the illiterate ones; some of them sold their properties and left their jobs waiting to be taken to heaven when the war would be over.

In November 1941, Urhobo printed a handbill for a public preaching at Foresters' Hall, Odunlami Street, Lagos. It reads, "Hitlerism Must Be Destroyed, when and by whom? The handbill also contained another topic: Can a true Christian or Jehovah's Witness imprison or cause to be imprisoned his fellow Christian or Jehovah's Witness for any reason whatsoever? On this preaching of Urhobo, the West African Pilot noted:

Both the inside and the outside of Foresters' Hall was overcrowded by a large audience to hear Mr. G.M. Ukoli's lecture on Hitlerism must be destroyed. For one hour and a half, Mr. Ukoli spoke, citing the scriptures to prove that the man Hitler is a direct agent of man's greatest enemy, Satan the Devil, a demon in human form. He said that Hitlerism is demonism and shall be completely destroyed in God's due time... At the end of the lecture, many questions were asked, and Mr. Ukoli answered them with scriptural proofs.

The title of this preaching is said to have brought some Europeans into the hall to hear how Hitler would be destroyed. Urhobo is quoted as saying, "I am seeing the destruction of Hitler and humiliation of Germany." And for the next few days, Urhobo's preaching is said to be the main topic of conversation among Europeans at the European Club, Ikoyi, Lagos." Urhobo also used this opportunity to accuse Brown of sending him to jail for failure to pay his debt to the Watchtower. After this preaching, many people, as it is claimed by Urhobo's followers, enlisted their names to become the members of Urhobo's Society.

In 1942, when membership of the Society had increased to a few hundreds in Lagos and Port-Harcourt, the issue of a name for the followers of Urhobo came under discussion. Hitherto, Urhobo's followers were bearing the name "Lagos Company of Christian People." Port Harcourt members said the name was exclusive to Lagos, and so the name was changed to "Nigerian Christian Society".

In February 1942, the Nigerian Christian Society issued its manifesto, which affirmed the Society's belief that the second world war was not Armageddon, as we have noted. The manifesto says that no man could safely and correctly interpret God's word except the chosen servants, of which the Society believed their leader to be one. The Nigerian Christian Society was only a small part of God's universal organisation which God had promised to set up at the last day of Satan's world. Such arms of the universal organisation of God would serve as places of safety for those living around the area of the arm of the universal organisation. The manifesto also said that it was the duty of the members of the public to support Urhobo and his Church, and that any person who opposed Urhobo or any anointed Christian had marked himself or herself for everlasting destruction by the Lord. As far as Nigeria was concerned, salvation was confined to Urhobo, God's anointed servant and his church, the Nigerian Christian Society.

We may note a difference here between the G.K.S. and the Witnesses concerning the anointed servants or 144,000. While the Witnesses believed that the anointed servants must all belong to the Jehovah's Witnesses sect, the G.K.S. says that the anointed servants are chosen by God independently from all parts of the world to establish God's Kingdom as part and parcel of the universal empire of God. We shall examine this issue again, but we observe that Urhobo's claims of 1942 to be God's anointed and his Society as the only true Church in Nigeria are still emphasized by the G.K.S.

Urhobo's Return to Warri and After, 1942-1945

In March 1942, Urhobo decided to go back to Warri with his family to stay until the war was over. He wanted to preach there also, as he had unsuccessfully proposed in 1940. This time he succeeded in doing so for a while. Gideon was encouraged to preach by a few Urhobo and Itshekiri men who were his followers in Lagos but had, like him, returned to Warri till the war was over. He began to preach in Warri and succeeded in organizing a branch of his church there. Otomewo, who was one of those who were converted to join the Lagos returnees, told me that Catholics and Witnesses were disturbed by the formation of the G.K.S. in Warri and wanted to drive Gideon away again. Urhobo himself later described his experiences of 1942 at Warri in the following manner:

When I returned to my home land, Warri, in March 1942, to continue the Kingdom work, C. O. O. (Clifford Oritshegbeyiwa Omoneukarin) sent me a letter dated April 17, 1942 ... telling me that Warri is not Lagos, where I have deceived the prostitutes and wayo men (i.e. tricksters) and that here in Warri, I shall find things difficult and all my propaganda would be failure... On many occasions, some of his followers would meet me on the way and call me a thief, a liar, and a prisoner in the presence of many eyewitnesses.

Meanwhile, as Gideon noticed that even his own family had joined the Jehovah's Witnesses in opposing him, as it happened in 1940, he went to Sapele, 30 miles away, to preach. In Sapele, he preached to a number of people and converted some and organized his G.K.S. branch there with a private businessman, Mr. M. O. Ikoba, to lead the new converts."

Later, Urhobo was to visit Warri and Sapele to teach his followers about the doctrines of the G.K.S.

From Sapele, he went back to Warri to discover that he could no longer preach there. Persecution from his family had increased. He was asked to quit the family house and told to stop preaching in Warri. The few pioneers of the Warri branch of his Society were not in any position to interfere with the family matters of the Ukolis. Gideon, it is said, did not listen to the threat, and he went out to preach, but this was his last preaching in Warri in 1942. Shortly after, Gideon and his family left Warri. He himself described the situation which led to his going away from Warri to Onitsha:

In March 1942, I came back to Warri with my family of nine to live in my late father's house at Agbassa Village, to hide myself a while until the war was over. Here again I was strongly opposed and persecuted by my two brothers, particularly the eldest one by the name Augustine A. Ukoli, the Catechist of then Roman Catholic Church, Warri, who told me to quit our father's house. As I refused to quit, he came one day (Augustine was then living in the mission compound) to fight me... and tore all my clothes to pieces until I had to run away from him and hid myself. When I saw that the hatred of my two brothers (Benjamin had left Warri to Yorubaland) was developing to that of Esau and Jacob, I removed to Onitsha with my family, where I lived peacefully for seven months before I went to Port Harcourt to continue the Kingdom work of the Lord after organizing a small branch of the G.K.S. at Onitsha.

Onitsha, to which Gideon moved, has been one of Nigeria's commercial towns and the strongest Roman Catholic Centre in the whole of Nigeria. It is said that as soon as Urhobo arrived in Onitsha, his attention was drawn by the Catholic authority to the fact that Catholics in the town would not tolerate any abuse in his preaching." Urhobo preached many times at Onitsha, and though he did not specifically mention the name of any Church, he did mention the Watchtower repeating all his preachings against them. The Society, however, was not strong in Onitsha. Onitsha was firmly under the grip of Roman Catholicism, and Catholics had been taught not to listen to any other preacher because there could not be two universal churches in the world. Nevertheless, a few of those he organized into a branch at Onitsha were Catholics who were convinced by what Urhobo had explained concerning trinity and hellfire.

From Onitsha, Urhobo was making brief visits to Lagos and Port Harcourt, occasionally while his family was at Onitsha for seven months. Urhobo and his family received the cooperation of Onitsha people, who helped them in cash and kind. Clearly, at this time, Urhobo had enough money in view of the frequency of his movement between Onitsha, Lagos, and Port-Harcourt. For example, he was in Lagos in June 1942 when Brown advertised a public preaching in Lagos titled "To hell and Back." Brown was telling Lagos people that

the twelfth chapter of Daniel and physical facts proved conclusively that Daniel and the other ancient prophets are expected soon to return to earth. Look forward with confidence to seeing them amongst us anytime from now.

For about three weeks after Brown had preached, Urhobo went from hall to hall and stadium to stadium (there were three stadia then in Lagos) preaching and telling Lagos people that as long as the war was not Armageddon nor precursory to it, it would be self-delusion to expect to see Daniel and the other ancient prophets now (1942). Urhobo believed what

Brown preached about Daniel and the prophets, but he maintained that the European war had nothing in common with their advent. It is believed that, after Urhobo's three weeks preaching in Lagos, Brown did not publish any such article again but confined his preaching about Daniel and others to Tom Jones Hall, where his members were meeting for their study and worship."After a while, Urhobo returned to Onitsha after calling at Sapele and Warri briefly to exhort his followers. He made several moves between his church branches to strengthen the members. At a date in October, he moved with his family to Port Harcourt. Much of the data for the period 1943 to mid-1945, so far as preaching was concerned, amounts to repeating the same theme over and over. Brown did not cease to raise the expectations of those who believed the war to be an Armageddon, and Urhobo himself did not cease to discredit the belief that the war was on between Jesus and the Devil, a war made visible on earth according to a Witness known simply as Ayo, through the conflict started by Hitler of Germany. However, 1943 is important in several respects. First, it was in 1943 that Gideon changed his surname Ukoli to Urhobo. Second, in 1943, some of his church members who had been transferred to the Gold Coast with their Colonial masters wanted a change of name for the Society to reflect their membership of it. Thus the name Nigerian Christian Society was changed to God's Kingdom Society. Again, the visit of Urhobo to Warri in 1943 is said to have resulted not only in mass conversion but also in the baptism of some converts of the previous year. And it was in 1943 that the G.K.S. adopted the present, "Hail Jehovah and Christ Jesus".

We may say something concerning the fourth point above. The salutation, "Hail Jehovah and Christ Jesus" (which to them stands for 'Glory to Jehovah and Jesus Christ, who only can give life and blessing to man') was adopted in opposition to the Nazi salute, "Heil Hitler." A minister of the church, Pa. E.A. Adedokun, a pioneer member and later a minister, told a story in 1979 at an assembly of G.K.S. people at Warri about how Hitler was believed to be against God during the second world war. The story, which was also related by G. O. Olusanya goes like this.

Hitler was said to have gathered some children into a hall and asked them to pray to God for bread when they began to be hungry. The children, after a while, became hungry, and they began to pray to God for bread, but there was no bread from God. When they were tired of praying, Hitler, according to the story, asked them to pray to him for bread. The children prayed, "Hitler, give us bread," and bread began to rain down like rain showers from the roof above them. (Hitler had stored bread in the roof of the hall to be released by a press button.)

The outcome of this exercise was that the children hailed Hitler as their saviour. Urhobo believed this to be an ungodly act on the part of Hitler and called on all his followers to Hail Jehovah and Jesus Christ day and night. Since then members of the G.K.S. have continued to Hail Jehovah and Jesus Christ. This is a simple salutation but sometimes awkward in the tongues of non-members. In 1944, as in 1941, it seems Urhobo had provoked Brown to an unbearable anger again, with his opposition to the war being regarded by Brown as Armageddon or precursory to it. In May 1944, Brown called on Urhobo to pay his debt within 7 days or he would send him back to prison. Urhobo noted:

Brown sent me a letter through his solicitor, Mr. I. O. Ajose (now dead), threatening to send me back to prison if I refused to pay all what I owed to Brown and that I would die in prison.

Seven days passed without Urhobo paying. However, Brown too did not take action despite his ultimatum to Urhobo. It would appear that Brown was not intent on collecting the money but simply on harassing Urhobo and curbing his activities against the Watchtower. In July 1944, the G.K.S. members met in Lagos and passed a resolution not only to support Urhobo's criticism of Brown and the Watchtower but also to pay his debt. The resolution says:

... We have arranged to pay the whole debt, so that Mr. Urhobo may be free to carry on the Kingdom work of the Lord without any further interference. We now appeal to all members of God's Kingdom Society and all those who are friends of Mr. Urhobo for voluntary contributions towards the payment of this debt.

Mr. Johnson Iwebo Ekoemweye and J. O. Ojeh moved the resolution. And so in August 1944, a "G. M. Urhobo Relief Fund", to pay the debt was launched in Lagos, Warri, Port Harcourt, Sapele, etc. The money was oversubscribed, and it is recorded on newspaper pages that non-G.K.S. members contributed more, and the balance was given to Urhobo. When finally the whole debt was paid, it had amounted to £122.9s. See Appendix for names and amount paid by each. But see below for another fresh action, this time by Mrs. Brown against Urhobo.

It seems that by 1944, Urhobo and Brown were already tired of their repetitive preachings. In November 1944, Urhobo threw an open challenge to the Witnesses in an article in the Eastern Nigerian Guardian entitled, "Counterfeit Jehovah's Witnesses Must Go." Urhobo wanted the Witnesses, notwithstanding the title of his publication, to debate with him or accept that the Witnesses were "part and parcel of the false christs, prophets and teachers and the evil servant's company," which Jesus spoke of in the Bible. Two principal topics were chosen by Urhobo for the Witnesses to defend:

- (1.) To show from the Bible where God ordained women to preach, and
- (2) Where it is stated in the Bible that except a Christian preached from house to house, he would never be saved.

Neither Brown nor any of his followers accepted the challenge. Rather, Brown told his followers that he was not prepared to debate the Bible truth as found in Jehovah's organization, the Watchtower. To debate would mean unfaithfulness to what he believed. Urhobo was an opposer and Rutherford, in his life time has directed that nobody should have any dealing with Urhobo.

It is claimed that in February 1945, Urhobo succeeded in turning the public against the Witnesses. He followed up this success with a publication in a newspaper warning the members of the public in Port Harcourt to avoid the Witnesses. The outcome of Urhobo's warning was that many members of the public refused to listen to the Witnesses who came to preach to them in their homes. Others deprecated the attitude of the public toward the Jehovah's Witnesses and blamed their attitude on Urhobo and the G.K.S. The G.K.S. was accused of being a busybody by some who demanded whether the G.K.S. had any reason for existence other than opposition to the Watchtower.

By June 1945, some members of the public were becoming impatient whenever Urhobo preached. They insisted that Urhobo must tell them whether the G.K.S. stood only for opposition to the Watchtower. Owing to the demands from the public, Urhobo organised a series of preachings at Port Harcourt and later at Lagos on "What G.K.S. stands for." The Port Harcourt preachings were not reported in the papers. But the West African Pilot

advertised Urhobo's preaching of July 1st, 3rd, and 5th, 1945, preached in some centres in Lagos. We may note the main points.

(a) God's Kingdom Society is an organisation which is made up of many poor and humble Christians from different religious organizations now in existence (in Nigeria) which having heard the good news or the truth about God's Kingdom or righteous government, pledged themselves together to learn more of God's ways and to worship Jehovah God in spirit and in truth:

(b) The chief mission of the Society is to preach the good news of God's Kingdom and the ten fundamental truths contained in the Bible and to expose all the false teachings and doctrines which Satan has used to deceive the people and to keep them in ignorance of God's Kingdom and purposes:

(c) That the G.K.S. is the only Church in Nigeria which preaches the whole truth in the Bible.

We may note first that converts into the G.K.S. were mainly from the existing churches. Non-Christians were not or were very rare in the G.K.S. until after the war, when branches of the G.K.S. began to increase, especially from 1946. It is worth noting also that G.K.S. is of its nature controversial, being committed to exposing any doctrines which appear to it as false and furthering its claim to be the only true Church in Nigeria. This type of exclusive claim is made by both the G.K.S. and the Witnesses. While there can be no two true Churches in a locality, it would require real epistolic efforts to convince other churches that they are not for God. In September 1945, Urhobo added the Muslims to what he called Churchanity. He was in Lagos then. On the 8th of September, he put up an advertisement in the West African Pilot to preach on "Churchanity, Mohammedanism or Islam cannot save, Bible or Koran, which?" It was to take place on the 9th and 11th of September at the Massey Square, Lagos, an area of many Muslim residents. (See chapter Ten for the G.K.S. and Islam in Nigeria.) There was much confusion generated by the Muslims who accused Urhobo of coming to abuse them in their own homes. Urhobo had made bitter remarks about the Islamic religion and had described the Koran as an ordinary book like all other books that were not inspired by the spirit of God, as was the Holy Bible. The situation around the Massey Square where Urhobo preached was such that he had to abandon the preaching scheduled for the 11th of September. Some Muslims told Urhobo to his face that he must not come back to repeat what they termed, "blasphemy against Muhammad," the Holy Prophet of Islam.

But while Urhobo was in Lagos, the Port Harcourt Witnesses were arguing among themselves that it would be shameful if they failed to engage the G.K.S. in a debate on scriptural matters. While some of them felt it was necessary to show the public that only the Watchtower was God's organization on earth, others felt there should be no debate between God's organization and the agent of the "devil." However, the demand of the majority was for Yellowe and Okwuosah to challenge Urhobo publicly in a debate. Some of the Witnesses began to tell G.K.S. members that their leaders, Yellowe and Okwuosah, were preparing for a debate with G.K.S. As the matter of the debate began to spread, "we sent for Urhobo to come to Port Harcourt quickly."

When Urhobo arrived he began to preach that Watchtower leaders should hurry their plans to meet him for a doctrinal debate. It seems Yellowe and Okwuosah were ill-prepared to face Urhobo and so decided, as the G.K.S. had done, to ask Brown in Lagos to come down to Port Harcourt immediately. The Superintendent of Police told the Resident that,

The activities of this Society (Watchtower) which consist of Bible study meetings continue to decline, Mr. G.M. Uhrobo (Urhobo) who left the Society to become the founder and head of God's Kingdom Society continues to intensify his propaganda against the Watchtower. Mr. Brown, president of the Society (local representative), made a second attempt to get larger followers. He was invited by the local leader, Mr. Merrick Moses Yellowe, to come to Port-Harcourt. He arrived on the Ajassa, (a mail boat) on the second of November. He was the guest of I. B. Johnson (a Bishop of the Anglican Church). He met with no success. His members would not listen to him.

Brown was more interested in preaching his Armageddon. The same report added that

Mr. Brown delivered a lecture at the African Club Stadium on the 4th November. His subject was 'Escape from the impending Crises, the battle of the Armageddon'. He said the world would soon come to an end and that the Atomic Bomb was just a small specimen of what Jehovah would employ to destroy the world. He added that only Jehovah's Witnesses would be saved. Very few people, mainly of the illiterate class attended this lecture. The majority of those who wanted a debate with the G.K.S. refused to attend Brown's lecture. Before Brown came from Lagos to Port Harcourt, Witnesses in Port Harcourt were said to be boasting in the town that Brown was coming to "flog Urhobo with Bible". As Brown did not debate, some Witnesses left the Watchtower in protest. Urhobo himself waited for Brown to accept a debate, but as there was no sign that Brown would do so, he travelled back to Lagos.

CHAPTER NINE

URHOBO'S MISSIONARY ZEAL, 1946-1950

This chapter is not only difficult to split but also to title because it covers a great deal of what was the best of Urhobo's missionary zeal and drive for the sheep of God in various Nigerian societies. His movements from one region to the other, touching people and institutions, were so frequent that we must do with the leading title, as I have put it. I believe it may not take the reader too long to accept our title to this chapter. I deliberately elect not to create anticipation for the reader, as it may increase his anxiety to continue.

Urhobo tours in 1946

In January 1946, Urhobo turned his attention to the midwest, now Delta and Edo States, where, according to G.K.S. sources, there were demands from his followers and some individuals to come and work among them. The G.K.S. leader arrived in Warri from Lagos with Otomewo and Edet. From Warri, he visited Forcados, Burutu, and Ughelli, where the demands for his presence were very strong. Forcados and Burutu, a short distance apart, are, with Lagos, Port Harcourt, Sapele, Warri, Calabar, and Koko, Nigeria's main sea ports. Many of the Forcados and Burutu members were workers with the United African Company, i.e., for example, Mr. S. A. Bazunu (died 1975) and the Nigerian Marine (now Ports Authority), for example, Mr. G.U. Okpako, who in 1979 was the Chairman, G.K.S. Port-Harcourt. Often the members had been transferred to these places from Lagos, Warri, Sapele, and Port Harcourt. These transfers brought in members from different Christian denominations to Forcados and Burutu. We have noted in Chapter 1 how in the second decade of this century, the Roman Catholic Church sent ministers to those places to care for the spiritual needs of the converts.

Before 1946, the Jehovah's Witnesses were already preaching and having arguments with followers of Urhobo who had been transferred there. One G.K.S. member who became very active after his conversion at Forcados was Benjamin O. Tietie, who in 1978 was appointed G.K.S. Vice-President though in 1990 he deflected from G.K.S. over domestic issues. Tietie says that Urhobo moved between Forcados and Burutu very frequently, preaching and attacking the Witnesses and Catholics, his usual targets. As a result of the preachings, branches were organized in those two places and were visited occasionally afterwards by Urhobo and some members from Warri. After preaching and converting many people in those two places, Urhobo and his men returned to Warri.

Urhobo's next place he visited was Ughelli (now Nigeria's main gas-producing centre). Urhobo was invited by some people, including David Akpoteheri, who was to become a local elder and G.K.S. Administrative Committee member, Port Harcourt in the 1980s, to come and preach against the Witnesses there. Ughelli has been a strong centre of the Witnesses in Urhoboland as a result of Macauley Orode's activity as a house to house preacher. Orode became a member of Urhobo's group in 1931, but joined with Omoneukarin in revolting against Urhobo, principally on the sales of literature and doctrines. Those who invited Urhobo had heard him preaching either at Warri or at Sapele.

From Warri Urhobo came to Ughelli in an unusual manner. He rode on horseback amidst his members who followed him from Warri." Soon the whole town came to hear of his presence, and a large crowd gathered around him, and he preached against the Witnesses. Some Christians were not happy with the manner of Urhobo's coming into the town. 'His entry, described as "the triumphant entry of Urhobo into Ughelli," reminded Christians of Christ's entry into Jerusalem, and they accused Urhobo of making himself like Jesus. This act alone caused alienation among some who would have listened to him. However, Urhobo made several converts that day, and that started the Ughelli branch of the G.K.S. The Witnesses in the town did not show up when Urhobo preached because they were not inclined to go and see a man who made himself a Jesus by riding on a horse. After staying for a few days, Urhobo, his ministers and other members returned to Warri.

From Warri, Urhobo travelled to Sapele, where it is claimed he made the greatest movement in 1934. He had preached about the Kingdom of God and polygamy. Concerning polygamy, he told the crowd that, as far as God was concerned, marrying more than one wife was not a sin. It is remembered by my informants that many of the listeners were impressed, and some of them enrolled their names as G.K.S. members."

Urhobo came to Warri from Sapele preaching at Agbassa against the Roman Catholics and the Witnesses. He repeated his topic, polygamy, which appeared to have made a greater impact on the Sapele people than the God's Kingdom he preached there. He condemned the Roman Catholics and Witnesses for preaching wrong doctrines, for example, forcing the European marriage system on Africans and as though it had come from God through misapplied passages taken from the Bible. As usual, the G.K.S. claim that many people were converted that day to the G.K.S. Urhobo stayed in the compound of one of the early converts of 1942.

Urhobo tours East in 1946

In March 1946, the G.K.S. leader came to Port-Harcourt and was told that some Witnesses were saying that they had driven him to Urhoboland. He was also told that the Muslims in the town were preaching that the Bible was of little value in comparison with the Holy Quran. Urhobo announced his arrival to town by publishing in the newspaper a series of topics for preaching for four days in some centres in Port-Harcourt, and thereafter challenged anyone

who disputed his assertions. On March 31st, April 2nd, 4th, and 7th, 1946, the G.K.S. leader treated the following topics:

- (a) the Bible is the only authorised law book of God which contains all the facts about the Creator of the universe
 - (b) True Christianity is the only remedy for all the human sufferings and woes and not Churchanity, Islamic or Mohammedanism
 - (c) Many persons who now claim to be Jehovah's Witnesses are part and parcel of the false christs, prophets and teachers mentioned in the Bible.
- Finally, Urhobo made an appeal to the public that

Let the public demand that S. B. Dawodu (Dawodu was the leader of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Port-Harcourt) or any person who disputed the above facts, meet Mr. G. M. Urhobo at the place and time stated above (Barracks Road by Victoria Street, 5 p.m.) for a public debate.

Urhobo concluded his preaching by saying that if his challenge was not accepted, those people he challenged should regard themselves as serving Satan and not God. The Witnesses did not accept a debate with Urhobo because there could be no communication between light and darkness, or as a Witness put it, "Christ and Belial have nothing in common." While the Witnesses refused to debate with Urhobo, Alfa S. B. Dawodu promised to face Urhobo when he was ready. By the month of December 1946, Dawodu was prepared for a debate with Urhobo, which we shall examine in the next Chapter. In the following month, April 1946, Urhobo went to Onitsha and preached to a large crowd on "Man can have seven wives." This topic was of a particular interest to some Onitsha people who, though in the Mission Churches, were sceptical about what the Churches taught them on polygamy." According to the local newspaper, the Nigerian spokesman,

The President (Urhobo) has offered a reward of £20 to anyone or person who could cite from the scriptures both Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible, where it is specifically stated that it is a sin for a true Christian to marry more than one wife.

It is said that many Christians among those who listened to him were satisfied, and they asked Urhobo to come again to Onitsha, which he did after three months. Urhobo had said that the prophets of God, for example, David, Solomon, Jacob, and even Abraham, were polygamists and that God did not at any time denounce them for being such. However, no person could come forward to prove to Urhobo that it was sinful to marry more than one wife. Between May and June 1946, Urhobo went from one branch of the G.K.S. to the other. In July 1946, he came again to Onitsha to preach, but this time on "Unmarried Priests are sinners against God." It is alleged that the local paper, the Nigerian Spokesman, refused to report this preaching, but the Daily Comet correspondent in Onitsha reported it, and it was published in Lagos. The Comet quoted Urhobo as saying, "Any bishops or priests who refuse to marry when they are not eunuchs have sinned." Urhobo quoted Isaiah chapter 4 verse 1 and explained that time was coming when seven women would hold to a man and saying to the man, "we will eat our own bread and wear our own apparel, only let us be called by thy name to take away our reproach." Urhobo told his hearers that there were thousands of surplus women in many countries of the world and that harlots and prostitutes were increasing everywhere. He said, though he did not quote his source of information, that

"Before that last war, 1939–1945, in Italy alone, which is the headquarters of the so-called organized Christianity, there were 1,000 registered harlots." He believed and noted thus:
Supposing all the Bishops and Priests now in the world should marry one wife each and all other Christians are allowed to marry one or more wives according to their several abilities and the instructions of the Bible are closely followed, the problem of surplus women or harlots, or prostitutes should have been partially, if not altogether, solved.

He also noted that,

"unnecessary self-affliction to become holy, which is sanctimoniousness and not holiness, is a sin... Any Bishops or Priests who refused to marry is contributing to harlotry."

It is said that the Catholics in Onitsha did not take kindly to what Urhobo preached about the priests and bishops. The G.K.S. suspected that some Catholics in Onitsha were contemplating court action against Urhobo for defaming the priests, saying that they were sinners and contributing to harlotry simply because they refused to marry in order to keep the vow of sanctity.

The threat, whether real or unreal, was taken seriously by the G.K.S. and quickly in the same month, July, the G.K.S. all over the Country launched an "Urhobo Defence Fund". According to what the G.K.S. published in the press, G.K.S. members contributed £43.60p while non-members described as Nicodemuses (secret friends) contributed £30. For the purpose of history the names of donors and the amount donated are listed as follows:

Names	£	S	D
G. O. Ogbogolo	4	0	0
E. O. Eremosele	3	5	-
J. A. Shakowade (now I.A. Olukowade)	3	3	-
K. A. Amachree	4	4	-
J. A. Kumuyi (J.A. Kuye Obafemi)	4	4	-
M. A. Akpoto	2	0	0
D. O. Eweje	2	0	0
J. O. Okhiri	1	5	-
J. I. Akponughe	1	1	-
J. I. Ekoemueye	1	10	-
J. A. Agho	1	5	-
J. A. Okeke	1	4	-
J. R. M. Bazunu	1	12	-
S. D. Oginni	1	1	-
J. O. Aghoro	1	1	-
Elizabeth A. Ndubisi	1	10	-
S. G. Ebiyebi	1	-	-
R. A. Wenibowei	1	1	-
J. N. Ngwaba	1	-	-
T. S. Akowei	1	-	-
J. O. Kumoluga	1	-	-
G.U. Nnordu	1	-	-
E. S. Duru	1	-	-
E. Onkwe	1	-	-
Nicodemuses	30	-	-
(including some prominent G.K.S. members)			
Total	73	6	0

NB: Many of the above-named members are dead already, while a few are still living (as at when writing this book) despite their old age.

In spite of the money collected to defend Urhobo against the Catholics, the Catholics did not take any action. It was certain that Urhobo would hardly preach such a sermon again in Onitsha. After the preaching, Urhobo went to Port Harcourt and moved his family to Lagos. In November 1946, the Eastern Nigeria Guardian announced that the G.K.S. would be holding the Feast of Tabernacles from 20th to 22nd December 1946 at Port-Harcourt for the first time. Some weeks later, the same paper reported that the Jehovah's Witnesses would also be holding their National Assembly at Port-Harcourt from 11th to 15th December 1946. In a letter dated December 9th, 1946, E. T. Otomewo, who was then Secretary of the G.K.S., wrote to the Resident of Owerri Province about the Feast and added, among other things,

We seize this opportunity to inform you also that we have no connection with those who call themselves Jehovah's Witnesses and their Society known as Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in America, who also, according to information, will be holding their meetings and lectures about the same time in order to confuse the minds of the people about the real work of the Lord.

The Resident minuted on this letter, "The police may be informed of the proposed celebrations." They were informed and were ready to do their work, but the respective celebrations were peaceful in the city.

Urhobo's Radio Broadcast in Lagos

On 13th April 1947, Urhobo made a radio broadcast over the network of the Nigerian Broadcasting Service on "The Everlasting Peace of God." It was a thirty-minute broadcast, and is fondly remembered by G.K.S. people, who claim that on the whole the public reacted favourably to the broadcast. But some Christian and Muslim leaders were against the chance given to Urhobo to use the radio. Some people also felt he had gone to the radio to preach politics and that the G.K.S. was a political organisation. Urhobo dealt extensively with world politics and various systems of government, such as democracy, monarchy, anarchy, and communism, and claimed that it was impossible for any worldly system of government to bring peace to the world; that it was only in theocracy, a government subject to the direction of God, that the everlasting peace of God was attainable. No such opportunity to use the radio was again given to Urhobo. The Broadcasting authority told Urhobo when he pressed for another one that the public had reacted against his broadcast because it was political and that he might use the radio to encourage polygamy.

In May 1947, Urhobo began a series of preaching in Lagos on "God's Kingdom Society, not a Political Organisation". According to the G.K.S. Urhobo contended that any discourse on the everlasting peace of God without mention of how and why peace was eluding the world ruled by men was incomplete. In all the places he preached, he mentioned that the Churches were responsible for the refusal of the Broadcasting authority to give him more chances to broadcast.

In June 1947, Urhobo preached on "African Churches and the Bible." In its report, the Guardian said that Urhobo made many revelations from the Bible about "African life and customs which are acceptable and approved unto God but which are corrupted and condemned by church missionaries and imported religion". Eye-witnesses in Lagos claimed that Urhobo dealt extensively with the African system of marriage, which approved

polygamy, (as did the Jewish nation of God), beautiful ways of dressing and salutation, but he condemned severely African traditional religion, which he described as Satanic.

Urhobo tours parts of East and Western Region

Urhobo left Lagos for Port Harcourt and repeated his preachings on "G.K.S. not a political organisation" and "African Churches and the Bible". Until July 1947, Urhobo had not gone beyond this part of the country, but this month he decided to go into the riverine areas to preach.

He went to Abonnema, a strong centre of the Anglican Church, where Witnesses were already preaching and had organized a branch of the Watchtower. At Abonnema, Urhobo preached on "God's Kingdom" and "Who are the Jehovah's Witnesses?" Urhobo said God's Kingdom was the government that God had promised to set up on earth to take the place of governments of the world where neither peace nor satisfaction were found. He described the Jehovah's Witnesses as false Witnesses, witnessing for Satan and not Jehovah. According to a government report, he once described the Witnesses as Counterfeit Witnesses and a Jezebel Organisation. The Guardian reporter said Urhobo answered "four questions fired at him, to the satisfaction of the audience." From Abonnema, Urhobo moved to Bonny and thereafter to Buguma, but it was only at Abonnema that a G.K.S. branch was organised as a result of the conversion of one Anglican member, a Mr. A. Ekpo who is said to have convinced a few others.

In August 1947, Urhobo was invited to Aba to preach by some people who claimed to have heard Urhobo at Port Harcourt. (Aba is 30 miles away from Port Harcourt). The specific topics he treated at Aba have been forgotten, and even the newspaper simply reports that Urhobo's preaching "was a success; listeners' questions were answered satisfactorily with scriptural proofs. Urhobo was strongly asked to return to Aba for more lectures." But it is remembered that Urhobo preached against the Catholics and the Jehovah's Witnesses. (Usually, when Urhobo preached on Trinity, Hellfire, Purgatory and Limbo, Graven images and Virgin Mary, it was regarded by the G.K.S. as an attack on the Catholics. Urhobo's preachings against the Witnesses were on Armageddon, preaching from house to house, women preaching and the name, Jehovah's Witnesses assumed by the Watchtower). "

In September 1947, Urhobo went to Asaba, an Igbo-speaking town in the then Midwest and a strong centre of Roman Catholicism, to preach. His topic was defined as "Africa (will) find rest in Christ alone." (A, for Africa; f, for find; r, for rest; i, for in; c, for Christ; and a, for alone). No mention of the Catholics or Witnesses was made. No conversions were made at Asaba, and up till 1979, no G.K.S. branch was there. A branch, however, sprung up in Asaba about 1992.

In October 1947, Urhobo went to Aba to preach again, still against the Catholics and the Witnesses. The crowd was not as much as that of August, but remarkably, about thirty people came together to start the G.K.S. branch at Aba. Frequently, G.K.S. members visited from Port Harcourt and Onitsha to exhort the new converts and to strengthen their belief in G.K.S. teachings. It was at Aba that Urhobo learnt that some Witnesses were about to arrive in Nigeria from America to work principally in the Eastern areas of the country. Urhobo travelled straight to Lagos (after two days at Port-Harcourt, where he asked his members to arrange accommodation for him and his family and for Otomewo, the General secretary of the G.K.S.)

Urhobo got back to Lagos and found that it was correct that some Americans were on the way to Nigeria to help expand the work of the Witnesses. Urhobo told Lagos G.K.S. members that he was going to stay at Port Harcourt to be close to the activities of the

Witnesses who were coming to work principally in the East and advised that he would be visiting them when necessary. And so in October 1947, Urhobo left Lagos with his family of ten for Port-Harcourt, where they were accommodated in 98 Aggrey Road, a compound occupied by several people, two of whom were G.K.S. members. The Secretary's Office, Enugu, wrote to the Resident, Rivers Province:

Information has been received which indicates that a serious attempt to extend the scope of the activities of the W.B.T.S. may be made. Three European workers recently arrived in Nigeria, and one of them, Mr. A. C. Attwood, has recently been touring the Eastern Provinces giving lectures... The other two workers are Mr. E. V. Moreton, aged 37, and H. Masinick, aged 23. I am to ask that the activities of the Society may be watched, and any extension of its scope reported at once. If any of the three workers shows any sign of settling or intending to settle in any part of the Eastern Province, it should also be reported.

The report guessed that Mr. Attwood might replace Brown in Nigeria. However, contrary to what the G.K.S. expected, the three men settled in Lagos and not in the Eastern Provinces. (There is no evidence that they intended to settle in the East but were not allowed by the Government.) Mr. A.C. Attwood came to Port Harcourt towards the end of October and preached on "Who will Survive Armageddon?" G.K.S. members in Port Harcourt went there in large numbers, but Urhobo did not go himself. The purpose of G.K.S. members going there was to assess the knowledge of the scriptures Attwood possessed. It is said that the G.K.S. people disturbed Attwood greatly with disruptive remarks like "Is that what the Bible says?" "This is a lie," "What of John chapter this or that?" etc. Attwood had told his audience that only Jehovah's Witnesses would survive Armageddon because all other religious groups were founded by the devil to oppose the true organisation, the Watchtower. At this remark, many listeners put up their fingers, saying, "question, Mr. Speaker." It became so rowdy that Attwood declared the preaching closed and the listeners booed him. The Witnesses held the G.K.S. responsible for the reaction. Henceforth, it was to be a battle of words and later of fists between them and the G.K.S. people.

Before the month of October ended, two G.K.S. men were arrested by the police and charged with detaining or assaulting a Jehovah's Witness. Uka Udensi, the Witness, came to preach to Jonah Hart and Felix Nweke of the G.K.S. They asked Udensi to go away, but he insisted on preaching to them. Their reaction was to lock Udensi up in one of the rooms in the compound, 119 Niger Street, Port Harcourt. Udensi threatened to break things in the room, and so the door was opened. When Udensi came out, he began, the G.K.S. men claimed, to fight them, and Udensi was beaten up. The case dragged until January 26th, 1948, when the G.K.S. men were convicted and jailed for six months each for detaining Udensi. The Guardian reports that Alfa Dawodu of the Ahmadiyya gave evidence against the G.K.S. people. We may mention that Urhobo himself was arrested the same day with his two members by Mr. Melville Roberts, sub-inspector of Port Harcourt. He was kept in the cell and refused bail until the following morning before he was charged and brought before Magistrate F. O. Lucas. Roberts wanted him punished for "preventing the cause of justice" (Urhobo seemed to have resisted the arrest of his members). Urhobo said the charge was withdrawn for want of evidence and was set free.

In February 1948, it is believed that Urhobo visited some of his G.K.S. branches. On 11th March, 1948 Urhobo preached at Aba and converted many people who began the Aba branch of G.K.S." On 14th March, Urhobo addressed the public at Port Harcourt about a

conflict which was then raging between Itshekiri and his Urhobo people. His title; "Urhobo and Itshekiri in the day of God's Judgement." He traced the migration story of the Urhobo and Itshekiri to Benin and reminded both that they were brothers and sisters and that God would not forgive them if they fought one another. The following Sunday, 21st March 1947, Urhobo went to Lagos, one of the main centres of the conflict, and addressed a gathering to which many Urhobo and Itshekiri people were invited. He repeated the migration story while he referred to his great-great-grandfather as one of the early founders of the Agbassa. Till date (as of when writing), the Urhobo and Itshekiri have yet to resolve their political differences. It has been the political fashion for them to belong to opposing political parties.

Port Harcourt Jehovah's Witnesses beat up Gideon Urhobo

By 26th March, Urhobo returned to Port Harcourt from Lagos. He prepared to preach on "Facts about Good Friday and the Origin of Easter." But on 28th March 1948, at about 11.30 a.m., Jehovah's Witnesses swooped on Urhobo and his family in his house and fought with him. The Eastern Nigeria Guardian published a bold typed front page article, "Port Harcourt Jehovah's Witnesses and Kingdomites welcome Easter Day with Open Scuffle," relating how the Jehovah's Witnesses, over fifty of them, visited 98 Aggrey Road, Port Harcourt, the residence of Urhobo, and fought him and five members. Urhobo himself was reportedly knocked down by a mob of angry Witnesses. Police were called in immediately, and they made arrests. Urhobo reports this incident in his autobiography, thus:

On Sunday, March 28th, 1948, at about 11.30 in the morning, over fifty members of the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses, (Counterfeit) came to attack me in my home at 98 Aggrey Road, Port Harcourt, and willfully damaged my doors, windows, chairs, a large mirror, and photographs by throwing stones, bricks, and missiles into my house in an attempt to kill me. By the grace of God, I was unhurt with my children, whom I hid under the bed and chairs.

But by the miracle of Jehovah, these Counterfeit Witnesses, fought and wounded themselves until the police came and arrested six of them, M.M. Yellowe, Bassey, Uzoma Iwumune, Nwachukwu (Ibo), E. Monioro (Urhobo), Rudock Ulocha, and took them to the General Hospital for treatment before they were taken to the Police Station and charged for assault and wilful damage.

The Witnesses had reportedly assaulted G.M. Urhobo, E.T. Otomewo, Richard Okeme, and Charles Itene, all of the G.K.S. and residents at 98 Aggrey Road, Port Harcourt, and were charged with assault and wilful damage.

While the case was pending, some social gatherings were organised by G.K.S. members and the Urhobo Community in Port Harcourt for Urhobo and his family and members, on account of their deliverance from death and as gratitude to God. The G.K.S. get-together took place on 25th April, the Urhobo Community in Port Harcourt also held a get-together for Urhobo and his family. The Urhobos, according to the Guardian, presented a Bible, a purse containing money, and a lighted candle with the following statement:

Use the Bible to make known more of God's purposes and this lighted candle as a symbol that you should continue to show the light of God's word that all lovers of truth may see the right way to worship Jehovah God.

Urhobo thanked them for their interest in him and promised to do God's work with more zeal and determination.

In May 1948, the case of assault and damage against some Witnesses was heard by Magistrate L.N. Mbanefo. In his evidence, the Assistant Medical Officer attached to the General Hospital, Dr. O. J. Vanderpuye, said that he saw Richard Okeme at the General hospital and he examined and treated him. Vanderpuye also treated M.M. Yellowe, Rudock Ulocha, Uzoma Imuwune of the Witnesses and also Otomewo of the G.K.S. Earlier, the defence counsel, Dr. Udo Udoma, had suggested that Urhobo and his wife gathered all the exhibits, including mortar, pestle, bricks, wood, iron rails, and marchet tendered in the court, to incriminate the Witnesses. The prosecution disagreed because of the wounds of many of those who took part in the fight. The Witnesses did not deny fighting with Urhobo. After a few exchanges, the case was adjourned again. But Urhobo informed the court that the Witnesses had said in his hearing that they would make him "run away from Port Harcourt". While judgement was yet to come in the case, the Witnesses, according to the G.K.S., began to threaten Urhobo that if he mentioned their names again in his preachings, he should be prepared to suffer the consequences. It came to a stage when it was becoming unsafe for Urhobo to move freely. On 25th May, 1948, the G.K.S. sent the following telegram to the Secretary, Eastern Province, Enugu:

Chief Commissioner, Enugu. Over 1,000 loyal tax payers members of God's Kingdom Society, peaceable Nigerian Christian Institution request Government protection on President Gideon Urhobo. Life in danger. Warn police, take serious step, mob assault and wilful damages, President's home by Jehovah's Witnesses American religious organization. God's Kingdom Society.

But on 28th May, the Secretary, Enugu, sent a copy of the telegram to the Resident, Rivers Province, A.T.E. Marsh, who in turn sent it to the police for report.

The police submitted their report to the Resident, mentioning that judgement was given in the case on 5th June 1948. The magistrate (Loius Mbanefo) acquitted four of the six Witnesses charged on counts of assault and wilful damage, but two of them, Yellowe and Nwachukwu were convicted and fined 5.5s. or one month imprisonment. The fines were paid, and both Societies were bound over to keep the peace for five years.

Urhobo leaves Port Harcourt for his homeland

No action was taken by the police to protect Urhobo from the alleged threats of the Watchtower. But it was evident to Urhobo and his followers that there were threats, and so about the middle of July, 1948, Urhobo and his family and Otomewo, the G.K.S. Secretary, left for Warri, their native land. Edet, who was in Lagos, came to Port Harcourt for a brief period before joining Urhobo later at Warri. Urhobo was received by his members and accommodated. And on 22nd July, a victory service was held by Warri G.K.S. members to thank God for delivering Urhobo from the hands of the devil. The G.K.S. believed that the devil used the Witnesses as instruments to plot the death of Urhobo, but God had not allowed the plot to succeed.

Urhobo had hardly settled down in Warri when he discovered that there was an opportunity for him to acquire a piece of land for his G.K.S. Urhobo began immediately to negotiate with the Igbudu people for land. Igbudu, an Agbassa village, was in 1948 about a quarter mile away from Warri metropolis. It is now in the heart of Warri. The discovery of oil in Urhobo and Isokoland has since the 1960s resulted in the expansion of Warri, being the nearest sea port. From the Igbudu people, Urhobo bought a parcel of land, 1550 feet by 850 feet, and began immediately to build on it.

By 1948, the Warri branch of the G.K.S. was firmly established and receiving the support of some influential people in Warri and, in fact, some businessmen and elites of the town, such as Messrs. S.E. Lessor, later G.K.S. General Secretary (now late), R. I. Bakpa, J.S. Ogisi, Wilson Obelikpeya, Aaron Eke, Michael Ukoko, the Ukotsovbera family, Jeremiah Akpokpokpo, Christian Itene, D. A. Ejerowo, Theophilus Abido, Evelyn Okpeki, Otokutu Okotie, Pius Ogbighele, Stephen Doghron, Ojakovo Nwajere, Benneth Ukekeruke, Daniel Okpeki—to mention but these. The result was that neither the Jehovah's Witnesses nor the Ukoli family could any longer make any impact on whether Urhobo should stay in Warri or not, though later an unsuccessful attempt was made by the Ukoli family to sell his land to the Catholic Church, as we shall see later.

In November 1948, Mrs. Brown, the wife of W. R. Brown of the Watchtower, took Urhobo to court "to be examined as regards the payment of £31.3s damages and cost awarded her in the Lagos libel case of 1939." Urhobo said he was ill at Warri and judgement was given in his absence that he should pay this amount with £2.2s costs at the end of that month. When he got to Lagos, as he said, his solicitor, Abiodun Akerele, pleaded with the magistrate to allow Urhobo to prove to the court that he did not owe Mrs. Brown. This plea was not granted, and "thus I was compelled to pay £33.5s debt which I never owed to Mrs. Brown". The month of December 1948 and much of 1948 was mainly taken up with a political theory, "Zikism", and religious debates with the National Church of Nigeria, as well as encounters with Muslim leaders in Lagos, to which we shall return, in later chapters.

Urhobo in Lagos, 1949 and 1950

Early in October 1949, Urhobo was in Lagos to preach, in the course of which he attacked racialism. The African Echo is reported to have said that G.K.S. would send a delegation to the United Kingdom "to preach against racialism to mankind." While condemning it, he also linked white missionaries with its support. In its report of Urhobo's preaching, which was on "Religion mixed with imperialism", the Echo said,

According to Mr. G.M. Urhobo, life President of the God's Kingdom Society, South African Presbyterian Reverend D. A. Diederick stands condemned for having been associated with vexing statements that racialism received Jehovah and Christ's blessing.

Urhobo also gave reasons why his G.K.S. was hated by foreign Churches. It is because the G.K.S. is opposed to any hypocritical form of religion.

...religion has been mixed with imperialism and ultimately adulterated with the result that christianity had been bartered for churchanity. Jesus Christ... throughout his life preached oneness of humanity. He had nothing like discrimination in his curriculum. Whether Jew, Gentile, or black or white, brown or red, Christ saw all from the same stock.

Urhobo returned to Warri after this preaching. Urhobo's preaching identified him with the common concern of many Africans and Christian missionaries, namely, that inequality was evil. Even in Nigeria, where the question of racial inequality was less visible, some Nigerians suspected the missionaries as partners with the Colonial Government in repression. As Coleman says, it was easy for some Nigerians to suspect a conspiracy between missionaries and Government officials because the missionaries could not be open critics of the imperial Government. Urhobo, however, seems not to have emphasised that problem in Nigeria, though he spoke of religious imperialism. Urhobo was also concerned with racial

attitudes in other parts of the world. (We will see that Urhobo had been keen about 1937 to go abroad to meet Marcus Garvey and join in preaching to the white race to give the black man a dignified place in history.)

On 14th October 1949, Urhobo made what is remembered by the G.K.S. as "Urhobo's triumphant entry into Lagos." He rode on a horse prepared by his followers into Lagos, his car equipped with a microphone, following with the announcement of a reception for Urhobo later in the day. Urhobo's reception in the evening of Friday, October 14th 1949, was overcrowded because Urhobo had become popular with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and therefore, with many followers of Azikiwe's N.C.N.C. Evidently, among those who came to receive Urhobo to Lagos were those who saw Urhobo as playing a political role rather than a religious one and saw his preachings mainly as political support for the nationalists. Urhobo preached in several places in Lagos and went to Port Harcourt, where another reception was held, and a football match was played in his honour by G.K.S. and some Port Harcourt footballers. After a short stay, he returned to Warri.

The G.K.S. says that about the end of 1949 and early 1950, Urhobo got into trouble with the Ukoli family and the Witnesses. He had gone to a popular open space in Agbassa to preach, but some people described as Catholics and Jehovah's Witnesses and some Hausa men began to make trouble, as a result of which there was a skirmish. Urhobo was arrested by the police and charged for conduct likely to cause breach of the peace. While the case was still pending, Urhobo alleged that two of his brothers were planning to sell his land, which he had bought, to the Roman Catholic Church. In an article in the Pilot entitled "Agbassa land must not be sold," Urhobo appealed to all sections of the Urhobo People to persuade his brothers not to look for trouble. However, the land was not sold, and the brothers withdrew their claim.

In January 1950, judgement was given in the case of breach of peace. Urhobo was made to sign a bond to keep the peace for one year. Later he wrote an open letter (see Appendix E) to the Governor of Nigeria (then Sir John Macpherson) about the treatment he was receiving in the hands of "some of the religious leaders and my own Adamic brothers." Urhobo told him that his brother, Augustine, was supported by the Roman Catholic Church priests and Jehovah's Witnesses to bring false accusations against him and that Augustine himself gave evidence against him in court. One person Urhobo described as a "hireling, who is a notorious liar" (identified now by the G.K.S. as Omoneukarin) also gave evidence against him. As regards the Hausa men, who were said to have joined in opposition to Urhobo, it is noteworthy that the West African Pilot said on another occasion when there was confusion at Warri over Urhobo's preachings that an Hausa man had confessed that he was hired by the Jehovah's Witness. Gideon Urhobo appealed to the Governor to issue a special warning to all religious leaders in Nigeria and those he described as their fellow conspirators to stop interfering with "my God-given work of educating the people about God..." Macpherson, it seems, did not take any action, but it is remarkable Urhobo was freer in his preaching thereafter, and many Warri people assumed Macpherson did something about the petition. In August 1950, Urhobo went to Lagos to preach to make preparations to go overseas. While in Lagos, Urhobo was interviewed by Smart Ebbe, known as Marshall Kebby. Marshall was a journalist and editor of a daily newspaper in Lagos, the African Echo. He also wrote a booklet about that time entitled "President Gideon Urhobo, the Lion of Salem City" (21pages). Marshall declared in this book that he was upholding the G.K.S. because of the Society's political ideals and its religious ideologies, the teachings and methods of denouncing evil and falsehood. Urhobo was a messenger risen from Africa to colonize the world spiritually. Marshall's praise for Urhobo stemmed mainly from Urhobo's involvement in

politics. In fact, the book was described later by the Tribune as "one of the latest sensations in political circles."

Marshall Kebby said that Urhobo was in Lagos to begin a nation-wide tour before "his Holy crusade to Europe and America." He claimed to have come across a document in which Urhobo had applied to the Public Relations Department, Lagos, for permission to preach to the entire white population of Ikoyi, Lagos, whose brothers at home and overseas were preparing for the destruction of the world. He said too that Urhobo had intended to contact the Colonial Office to preach at Buckingham Palace to the King and Queen and the Royal House of Britain. He understood Urhobo to have believed that the Royal House of Britain were God-loving people, and as such, they would be interested in hearing about the Everlasting Peace of God. As to whether the Colonial Secretary would grant such application, Urhobo was quoted as saying, "He will not refuse, but granting he does, their Majesties and the inmates of the Royal House will still hear of me." Gideon believed, according to Marshall, that if he could reach Liverpool,

Britain will feel the presence of a force mightier than the Atomic bomb. That the force is not mine. It is the force of the magnitude and immensity of the word of God. The war-weary ones will rejoice to hear of peace.

Marshall wanted to know why Urhobo intended to visit America, the home of hundreds of missionaries who believed they were working for God. Gideon's answer was that,

America has given herself too much to godlessness and taken much pleasure in the invention of the weapons of destruction. The Atomic bomb was perfected there. The Hydrogen bomb factory is built there. They have built towers like Babel's called skyscrapers; perhaps they intended to reach on high. It appears that their factories cannot turn out anything good nowadays other than war instruments, so also in Britain. The United Nations Organization holds there in Lake Success, but funny enough, they meet twice everyday but find no success in Lake Success, all because they put God and the Bible aside and arrogate to themselves what Jehovah alone could do.

But Urhobo considered peace a necessity for the world; therefore,

The G.K.S. intends to show them (the Americans) the way to Everlasting Peace of God, which will be a great comfort to all American Negroes, who had for ages borne the burden of oppression and racial snobbery. Thus the G.K.S. shall have done her sacred duty to the world.

Marshall Kebby concluded his interview presenting the latter to Nigeria and the world as the preacher of truth and he did not hide his admiration for Urhobo. While Urhobo actually intended to go overseas especially when his members were beginning to contribute money towards it, the politics of the time, as we shall see, made him give up the idea for the time. In fact, he never accomplished it before his death.

G.K.S. Builds its Headquarters at Warri

The foundation of the G.K.S. Headquarters was laid in December 1950, during the feast of Tabernacles celebrated there from the 15th to the 17th. The laying of the foundation of G.K.S. Headquarters in Salem-City, Warri, is said to have attracted many important

personalities. The Colonial Government was represented by two officials, the Resident, Warri Province, R. Vosper, and Mr. Haig of the Local Authority, Warri. After the ceremony in the morning, there was a very long procession of the G.K.S. population with President G. M. Urhobo, well dressed in a kingly white velvet robe, mounted on horse in the midst of his followers, and was surrounded by the poor and needy whom he gave monetary alms all over Warri township. The poor were said to be very glad and were heard shouting. 'Hosanna! na God bless and make you king!' (Hosanna! God has blessed you and made you king.) This kingly demonstration was described as "the first of its kind in the annals of Christendom." From the above quotations, it appears Urhobo was more than receiving the traditional honour of mounting a horse amidst followers. Many of those who lined the streets to watch the procession had cried, Hosanna, which in "Christendom" is associated with Jesus Christ. However, the Colonial officers did not join the procession, but other officials were present in the evening preaching.

In the evening, according to the Pilot, there was an address by Urhobo at the Rex Cinema. There was also a Cinema show after the address. The Medical Officer, Warri, and according to the Pilot, "a few other Europeans were present throughout the address and the cinema show. It is noted that Gideon Urhobo was still addressing the audience when some hooligans, among whom were seven Hausa men, began to throw stones in an attempt to scatter the audience. The Hausa men, who were very prominent, were rounded up and taken to the police station. The Pilot added that "at the time of going to press... many were expressing the desire to join the G.K.S." and also that report was received later that "one of the Hausa men had confessed that they were instructed to create a disturbance by some Jehovah's Witnesses and other religious leaders." The Jehovah's Witnesses in Warri denied such involvement. It is clear, however, in Warri that Urhobo was greatly troubled by hooligans who were said to be Hausa men. Yet Urhobo does not seem at any time to have preached against Islam in Warri.

In 1951, the Nigerian Tribune reported that Mr. C. O. Omoneukarin, the leader of the Witnesses, was severely beaten with his wife, Mary. Two G.K.S. men, Timothy Oghenegweke and Michael Ukoko, were suspected and arrested. Omoneukarin had gone with the Witnesses to preach at Agbassa on 13th June 1951. When he got to the front of his house, two men were waiting for him and his wife and dealt them several blows. The two escaped, but Omoneukarin "suspected the God's Kingdom Society members because they were at variance in Bible teachings." The men were arrested and charged with assaulting Omoneukarin and his wife.

In the report, the Tribune correspondence said that the assistant Superintendent of Police saw "no ground of prosecuting the accused persons on mere suspicion, and the statement of the complainants did not corroborate." However, the court believed that Omoneukarin and his wife were beaten by G.K.S. people, and the two men were found guilty and were fined £5 each. The money was paid with notice to appeal." Ukoko told me that he and his colleagues were asked by Urhobo to give up the idea of appealing. Ukoko said also that Omoneukarin suspected him because he was the closest G.K.S. member to his house, while Oghenegweke was one of Omoneukarin's G.K.S. bitterest enemies in Warri.

Urhobo did not use the first half of 1951 in continuing his preparation to go overseas as he had intended but in waging religious battles with a church—the National Church of Nigeria, which he regarded as essentially a political body." The second half of 1951 and the beginning of 1952 were a period of quarrels with some parts of the nationalist movement. And to all of these we shall turn after examining the relationship between Urhobo's G.K.S. and Islam in Nigeria.

CHAPTER TEN

THE G. K. S. AND ISLAM IN NIGERIA

Introduction

Urhobo's first public polemic against Islam was in 1938. After that polemic, the contents which we shall examine below, he seems to have considered it a risk to his life to mention Islam again until 1946, when he was compelled to defend Christianity against Islam. In this year (1946), he debated with the Ahmadiyyah Movement in Port Harcourt, an area of predominantly Christian residents. Thereafter, occasional references to Muslim religion were made by him in his preachings. In 1949, a threat he seemed to have taken seriously was issued to him by some Muslims in Lagos to force him to stop to mention Islam any more. In 1951, Islam came heavily on the side of Urhobo when the latter began his struggles against godless nationalism in Nigeria.

Debates between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria especially among the Yoruba, are not new. The religion of Islam has been in the Northern part of Nigeria among the Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri for many centuries. It came from there to the South among the Yoruba probably in the eighteenth century or earlier. Lagos has known Islam since the eighteenth century, when a group of Hausa slave catchers there began to practice their religion, though in secret. The Muslim presence became much more evident around 1840 when the Muslims gained the favour of a Lagos prince, Kosoko (they were first supported by Adele, the king of Lagos). Since Kosoko's time, the faith has grown to claim more adherents than any other religion in Lagos."

While Islam was developing in Lagos in the nineteenth century, Christianity was also spreading among the people."From the moment the two religions met, competition for the souls of the people began. The competition took the form of arguments and discussions on many theological questions. There were, for example, controversies on whether the Quran or the Bible was the word of God. These arguments and discussions were in most cases cordial and friendly." But later, these arguments and discussions began to be conducted in an unfriendly and belligerent manner. These aspects seem to have come mainly with the appearance of Ahmadiyyah in Nigeria. They brought conflict and division into the Nigerian Islamic scene. They attacked other Muslim bodies and attacked Christianity more openly than other African Muslims did. The Ahmadiyyah claim to harbour the very Islam revealed to Muhammad and all other Muslim bodies are in error.

The Ahmadiyyah movement was founded in India in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani, born 1835 in Qadiani, a village of the Punjab. Ahmad saw himself as the promised Mahdi (an expected saviour who would come to revive the religion and save the people), an incarnation of both Jesus and Muhammad, and an avatar of Krishna. The movement has developed peculiar teachings about Jesus and the Christianity he founded. These teachings, some of which are examined below, were the cause of Urhobo's controversy with Islam.

The Ahmadiyyah movement came to the notice of some Lagosians through Ahmadi literature in 1916, and 21 of them sent membership application forms to Qadiani. In 1921, the first Indian missionary, Abdur-Rahim Nayyar, arrived in Lagos. Later the Ahmadi split into various conflicting groups. One of such was the Ahmadiyya Movement-in-Islam (1940), an indigenously run movement unrecognised by Ahmadi headquarters or its Nigeria branch. It was this group that Urhobo contended with in Lagos and Port Harcourt, to which we shall turn shortly. The Ahmadiyya generally have introduced into the Islamic scene a vigorous missionary activity in imitation perhaps of the Christian institutions, and the establishment of schools alongside Christian schools.

Urhobo begins his attacks on Islam

Urhobo's attention was drawn to the Muslim religion in 1938. At the Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos, Urhobo preached a sermon, "Bible Vindicated, Quran Examined, and Found Wanting." Many Muslims, especially the Ahmadis, came to this preaching, and a great deal of what Urhobo preached is remembered. Urhobo said the Quran and all other "sacred" books of that faith were written by people inspired by the devil and were therefore unhelpful to whoever wanted the knowledge of God. He is quoted as saying that "Koran" (Quran) is from the word "Korah" in the Bible. Korah was the man who opposed Moses, the prophet of God, and God destroyed him. (See Numbers, chapter 16, verse 31.) He preached that Muhammad was not a prophet. He also told his audience that they should regard the Quran and its prophet, Muhammad, as part of the works of darkness, works of magic and magicians, and of ancient mystics who were enemies of God. As for the Holy Bible, he preached that it was his opinion that if Muslims must enter God's Kingdom on earth, they must worship Jehovah the true God through Isaac the son of the free woman Sarah. And that it is through Isaac, the son of Abraham that all families of the earth would be blessed. Urhobo saw Isaac as a type of Jesus, and that as God blessed all the families of the earth through Isaac, so would he bless all the families of the earth through Jesus Christ. To him, Jesus is the Way of life and not Muhammad. Thus Jesus founded Christianity, the only religion to be embraced by those who want to be saved. It is instructive to know that Urhobo's opinions about Islam are found in the works of some writers.

After the preaching, Urhobo was nearly mobbed by angry Muslims for insulting their Holy Prophet, Muhammad, and his sacred scriptures, the Quran. There were commotions and threats against Urhobo so much that he was afraid, so it is thought, to make reference to Islam again in his preachings. It is likely that Urhobo did not bother about the Muslims because of his preoccupation with the Watchtower preachers of Armageddon in the interwar years. After the war Urhobo did not seem to have bothered himself with the Muslims until he heard the Muslims attacking Christianity.

In 1946, Alfa M.S.B. Dawodu, probably an Ahmadi missionary to Port Harcourt, went from place to place preaching that the Bible was not inspired by the spirit of God because of what he regarded as inconsistencies. He argued that Jesus was crucified but he came down from the cross alive and went to India where he died and was buried. The Quran, according to him, was the only sacred writing in the world inspired by Allah (God). He wanted all Port Harcourt people to become Muslims to be saved by Allah from going to hell. It is still remembered that Dawodu condemned Christianity as a religion founded by a man who was full of immoral conduct, a drunkard, etc.

At this time, Gideon Urhobo was busy preaching in the then Midwest. In his absence, some people came to ask his followers whether they heard what Dawodu was saying about Jesus, the Bible, etc. It seems Gideon was sent for because he returned to Port Harcourt while Dawodu was still preaching. Gideon was told of what was described as "the latest in town." He attended one of Dawodu's preachings at one of the four fields in the middle of the town. Two days later, Urhobo advertised his preaching programme for the 31st March, 2nd, 4th, and 7th April, 1946, in the Eastern Nigeria Guardian. He preached in all the fields (Nos. 1–4), and at the end of those preachings, he issued a challenge to Dawodu. His topics were:

- (a) *The Bible is the only authorized law book of God which contains all the facts about the creator of the Universe and not the Koran or Quran.*
- (b) *True Christianity is the only remedy for all human sufferings and woes and not Churchanity, Muhammadism or Islamism.*

(c) Many persons who now claim to be Jehovah's Witnesses are part and parcel of the false Christs, prophets and teachers mentioned in the Bible.

Gideon added that,

Let the public demand that Mr. M.S.B. Dawodu or any person who disputes the above facts meet G.M. Urhobo at the place and time stated above for a public debate. Failing to accept this challenge, the public should note that Mr. M.S.B. Dawodu of the Ahmadiyyah Movement-in-Islam and the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses, do not worship the Almighty God, whose name alone is Jehovah, but Satan, the mimic God, and they should henceforth stop deceiving the people by misrepresenting God's word, the Bible.

The Jehovah's Witnesses did not respond to the challenge, but Alfa Dawodu did by sending a verbal message to Urhobo that he would debate but not immediately. After this message, the G.K.S. says that Dawodu went to Lagos to meet some top leaders of the Ahmadiyyah in Nigeria to be thoroughly schooled in readiness for the debate. He is said to have met Alhaji Y.P.O. Shodeinde, whom Urhobo debated with in Lagos later.

Religious Debate: Urhobo versus Dawodu

By December 1946, Dawodu was ready for a debate with Urhobo. The Eastern Nigerian Guardian of Saturday, December 8th, 1946, indicated that a public debate would be held in the Roxy Hall on Sunday, December 8th, at 4pm between Messrs. G. M. Urhobo of the G.K.S. and M.S.B. Dawodu of the Ahmadiyyah Movement-in-Islam. The subject would be "Bible or Quran, Which?" Two prominent gentlemen consented to act as chairmen.

According to the Guardian (see also H.W. Turner's papers), there were about 1,000 people at the debate, and Gideon Urhobo used forty minutes in the course of which he cited thirty-four Bible citations. The Guardian is to be believed; Urhobo simply rained down quotations without really explaining them. The aim of Urhobo was to show that the Bible was a book of prophecy. He used Bible texts to show the spiritual implication of major historical events to move the fulfilment of Bible prophecies. Urhobo used the United Nations Organization as an example of a body showing a fulfilled prophecy, thus proving the Bible was inspired.

Other matters were discussed concerning the place of Jesus and his resurrection. The G.K.S. leader insisted that Jesus died on the tree and was buried. He said, Jesus resurrected the third day and, after a brief period with his disciples, appearing to them occasionally, having put on a spiritual body, ascended into heaven. Urhobo refuted Dawodu's claims that Jesus was taken down alive or went to India. Urhobo quoted passages from the Bible to describe "... God as accurately as he could and pointed out that the Koran (Quran) did not describe God".

To begin with, Alfa Dawodu prayed in Arabic. Dawodu then gave "15 Bible passages showing divergences and omissions between the American Version and Revised Version of the Bible." Dawodu held up the Quran and described it as "same all over the world; no question of authors or versions." He contended that "God must be worshipped in one language, plain Arabic." And that any religious sacred books written in any other language was unacceptable to Allah.

The crucial moment of the debate was when Urhobo asked Dawodu to tell the audience, who wrote the Quran? "Alfa Dawodu seemed to have hesitated while the audience fidgeted." Urhobo posed another question, "where in the Quran is the name Muhammed mentioned?".

This question seemed baffling to Dawodu because "the answer was not forthcoming," and so "for sometimes, during which Alfa Dawodu waded through the Quran from cover to cover looking for passages to cite, the crowd reacted again due to the delay." Finally, Dawodu succeeded in showing Surah 64:4, 44, which mentioned Ahmad with Muhammad as a footnote. The correct place is Surah 61:6. Dawodu then told the audience that Jesus did not die on the cross but came down and went to India. On this remark, the public booed Dawodu. This was to be expected in a Christian centre like Port Harcourt.

The verdict of the judges went to Gideon Urhobo, but the judges did not fail to remark that "hooliganism upset Alfa Dawodu." The judges were however Christians, and it was not impossible for this to influence them. Dawodu was disappointed with the decision of the judges and made up his mind again to face Urhobo on the same topic, Bible or Quran. And in January 1947, Dawodu issued a challenge to Urhobo to meet him at the Roxy Hall. Dawodu advertised this debate in the Guardian. According to the G.K.S., Urhobo accepted the challenge and was at the Roxy Hall, waiting, along with many people already seated. But as it turned out, Dawodu could not attend. He sent a verbal message to Urhobo that he was indisposed. He was really sick, according to informants. Dawodu did not repeat his challenge to Urhobo after his recovery and gave up his preaching in public altogether. Dawodu gave evidence against two G.K.S. members who fought a Jehovah's Witness, Uka Udensi, in October 1947.

Dawodu, however, came up again in September 1947, against the G.K.S., when he condemned the Society for accepting Sunday Cinema shows. Dawodu was reacting against a preaching of the G.K.S. in Port Harcourt when a minister of the G.K.S. was asked to say something about Cinema on Sundays. Dawodu said it was the Christian holy day, and it would be improper for Christians to both worship God in the morning or evening and then later in the night to watch what he described as immoral and obscene cinema films. There was no evidence that the films were immoral or obscene. But all films cannot be immoral. At this point, we may say something about Urhobo's use of the cinema. He used it as a strategy to get audience to preach to. He began in 1939 to use the cinema, and he continued to do so until his death. He had two methods: first, he would collect some of his weaker members and pay for their tickets to watch the films. Second, he would occasionally charter the film and invite members of the public to a free Cinema show. In this case, he would preach for some time before the film was shown. Commonly remembered films include "King of Kings" and "Sanders of the River". We have mentioned how he used the Cinema in 1950.

Urhobo and Lagos Muslims

In February 1949, Urhobo again preached in Lagos against Muhammad and the Quran. Edet says that Urhobo knew the Quran very well, though not in Arabic. Before this preaching, Gideon said he had debated with some leaders of the Ahmadiyyah in Lagos, whom he named as Alhaji Y.P.O. Shodeinde and E.B. Balogun. My Ahmadiyyah source says that there were several debates with Urhobo and that no side claimed victory.

In the February preaching, Urhobo described Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as the representative of true democracy. He also discussed "Who is Jesus Christ?" and "Who is Muhammad?". Concerning Jesus, Urhobo said Jesus was the Saviour of the World, the only way to God, and when he came to Muhammed he said,

Like other sinners who died in ignorance of God's purpose of creation Muhammad is sure to come back to life again on this earth for judgement on the day of ressurection.

Urhobo cited from the Bible the following passages: Acts 24:15; John 5:28–29; 1st Corinthians 15:22; Revelation 20:13–14, and remarked that Muhammad was not a prophet. Urhobo believed that John the Baptist was the last prophet of God. Anyone claiming to be a prophet after him must be regarded as a false prophet.

Urhobo's remarks offended Muslims of all groups in Lagos. On the 4th March, The West African Pilot carried a reply of Mallam Said Zungur the Muslim Secretary of the N.C.N.C. Zungur had asked Urhobo "and his gang of religious nincumpoops to withdraw his infidel statements against the Holy Prophet Muhammad. It was dangerous for any Nigerian to start religious debate, which, if not properly controlled, would affect the concerted efforts of Nigerians towards political freedom. Religion, if properly understood, would exert a unifying and harmonious influence. But the crucial fact was that it was not likely that religion would be properly understood in a world where everything was liable to be misunderstood. Urhobo's preaching on Jesus, Muhammad, and Zik was unusual. He praised Jesus and Zik and condemned Muhammad. Zungur told Urhobo not to make Zik the centre of some sect or the philosophy of Zikism to acquire sanctity. Urhobo, as he said, was a politico-religious opportunist. He then warned that from January 1st, 1949, the youth had resolved "to destroy all obstacles that may stand in the way of Nigerian unity and freedom" and "were prepared to destroy anyone making effort to obtain cheap popularity, political, religious, or otherwise, at the expense of militant Nigerian nationalism." Zungur then asked Urhobo to withdraw the following statements which he made during his preaching immediately.

- (a) *Muhammad was not sent by the true God to be his prophet.*
- (b) *If he was a prophet of God, what did he prophesy Nothing?*
- (c) *Muhammad was a murderer and he killed many people.*
- (d) *The word Koran came from the word Korah in the Holy Bible.*
- (e) *Like other sinners, Muhammad will come back to life for judgement, and*
- (f) *The Koran is purely the work of magicians and opposers of God.*

Zungur asked the Pilot not to accept "such nonsense"

I hereby also call upon the West African Pilot as the leading nationalist organ in Nigeria to refrain forthwith in the interest of Nigerian unity and nationalism from publishing such nonsense, whether as news items or advertisements paid for by the advertiser; the latter is no doubt business, but it may weaken our nationalism.

The following day, March 5th, the Zikist Movement (see next chapter) pleaded for religious tolerance. It wanted spiritual balance to be maintained in the country.

Urhobo replied to Zungur's later. But the Pilot refused to publish the reply, not wanting to be seen as fanning the embers of religious controversy. In 1949, most nationalists of all religious groups, including the Muslims, looked upon Zik as the captain steering the nation's ship towards freedom. It would have appeared unreasonable for his paper to do anything to alienate the Muslims who were themselves supporting Zik. Zik was the president of the N.C.N.C. Zungur was the general secretary of the N.C.N.C., and Zungur's voice and influence were not to be ignored if Muslims were to continue their support for Zik. It is likely too that Zik, who was that time an "off and on" editor of the Pilot, would not allow such a potential source of religious unrest to surface. Zik may not have forgotten the press controversy he had in Lagos in 1934 when he referred to Muhammad as a camel driver. The crowd reacted to that remark and Zik wrote, "... but I was able to appreciate how such a

reference might be considered as derogatory." The point is that Zik and the Pilot would not allow the conflict to persist.

Another Lagos daily newspaper, the African Echo, accepted Urhobo's reply. Urhobo told Zungur not to be weakened in his effort to free Nigeria from political serfdom but wanted him to emulate Dr. Azikiwe's philosophy of spiritual balance. Religious tolerance and freedom of worship.

If he feels that I have not spoken the truth about his Holy Prophet, Muhammad, let him challenge me for a public debate as Mallam Y.P.O. Shodeinde, S. B. Dawodu and E. B. Balogun once did.

He, Urhobo, was a nationalist too and wanted Nigeria to be both politically and spiritually free. The next few chapters would show how Urhobo staked his life for the freedom of Nigeria. Mission Churches and Islam were religions of imperial powers. Mission Churches had supported imperial powers to suppress political freedom, and Urhobo's reactions to this attitude are commendable, as we shall see.

Finally, Urhobo told Zungur that he had spent more than £400, "in advertising my lectures for the past eleven years" (1938-1949) and that Zungur could not stop the Pilot from accepting his advertisements. However, Zungur, for a while, did stop the Pilot from accepting anything from Urhobo. More importantly, he stopped Urhobo, so it seems, from preaching against Islam in Lagos. It is believed that Zungur, using his influence as N.C.N.C. general secretary, mobilised the Zikist Youths to disturb Urhobo's preaching by shouting "Zee Zee (Zik Zik). But while Zungur disappeared from the scene, other Muslims decided to engage Urhobo in arguments. On 9th March, the Mujahiduna Islamiati Society of Nigeria, an arm of the Ahmadiyyah, invited what they called "Religious interrogations for public interlocution." When the discussion took place, only two Christian religious leaders in Lagos attended. They were Orupabo and Ihogbanmu. Urhobo was absent, though he was the one specifically wanted in the discussion. The discussion was going to take place in a hall in Lafiaji, an area occupied mainly by Muslims and at a time when Urhobo had abused Muhammad and the Quran. Urhobo was not specifically invited, as no special invitations were sent out.

Later, Alfa S.B. Bolaji of the Mujahiduna met Urhobo "at Balogun Square, Lagos, on April 7th and got him to agree to preach on "Islam and Christianity". My Ahmadi informant told me that the effort was to put Urhobo on a platform for questioning by them after his preaching. Urhobo agreed to preach on that topic, and so Alfa Bolaji invited all members of the public to "this controversial treat at the Ansar-U-deen School ground, Alakoro Lagos". Urhobo, in spite of the publicity, did not attend. The Colonial Police could not guarantee Urhobo's safety in an area where the great majority of residents were Muslims. He was convinced the Muslims were not going to learn by the preaching they had arranged, but that they wished to mob him for denouncing Muhammad and the Quran. Urhobo would have attended if it were to be in such places like the Glover Memorial Hall, Foresters Hall, or Campus Square. Urhobo's threat was to be taken seriously in areas like Lafiaji, Alakoro and Isale-Eko etc.

As Urhobo did not attend, another effort was made by Bolaji to get him to preach. Urhobo is said to have asked the Muslims to come out of their houses, that is, from their residential areas, into the open, meaning the main halls in Lagos, if they wanted any debate with him. The Muslims did not come out of their houses to debate with him. In what seems to be a review of his problems with the Muslims, Urhobo is said to have remarked that Muslims were difficult people to bring to reason in scriptural matters.

Conclusion

In West Africa, "there is a history of implacable denunciation and denigration on the part of Christian preachers where there should have been love". A writer quotes a Muslim as saying that any man who had no knowledge of Islam was a mere creature of the bush who ought not to live with men. Clearly as J.S. Trimingham observes, Christians and Muslims have yet to learn the things that belong to their peace.

Gideon Urhobo is one of those typical Christians who did not regard Islam as a way to salvation, though there is no evidence that he hated the Muslims as such. The revelation he believes he had received was to expose false teachings about God. As many people mentioned in the Bible also feature in the Quran, he had a basis to contend about doctrines with Muslims. This he did successfully at Port Harcourt where he defended Christianity against the claims of the Ahmadiyah. Urhobo knew the Quran in English, and after he had examined it, he said he found it wanting. When he attempted to popularise his findings, Muslim anger descended upon him to such an extent that he withdrew from mentioning them any more before he died less than two years later.

PART II

THE G.K.S. AND NIGERIAN POLITICS, 1948-1952

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE G.K.S. AND THE ZIKIST MOVEMENT, 1948-1950

Introduction:

This section or part deals with the various roles Urhobo and his church played in Nigeria's political matters in the period 1948-1952. We chose this period because the activities were almost exclusively confined within it, and we have allocated three chapters to the political activities. The first chapter covers mainly the confrontation between the G.K.S. leader and the Zikist Movement in Lagos and Port Harcourt. To make the chapter much more meaningful to follow and for a good grasp of later chapters, we have a brief history of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (N.C.N.C.) and that of the Zikist Movement which was a youth wing of the N.C.N.C. The second chapter treats the various religious debates with the National Church of Nigeria, a Church Gideon Urhobo described as a political movement parading itself as a religious body. The last chapter brings us to the much reported polemics with some N.C.N.C leaders who were described as "godless" by the G.K.S. leader. Under a title "Godless Nationalism" the G.K.S. leader opposed those nationalists who thought it was very unnecessary to concern God with the struggle for political independence. This chapter brings up Urhobo's interest in Nigerian politics as a result of which, as the reader may have known, he befriended and supported Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in his leadership of the nationalist movement. It speaks of the G.K.S. disagreements with Zik and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons when the leadership of the party later declared Jehovah of the Bible a tribal God of the Hebrews and that he had no role in Nigerian nationalism. Of particular treatment are the G.K.S. political efforts for the Action Group, a rival political party to the N.C.N.C formed by Chief Obafemi Awolowo "and God-fearing people", and the outcome of the general elections held in 1951-1952. But the dawn of Urhobo's political interest is dated at some time in 1937. Mention will also be made of his interest in the affairs of the Secular State before 1948.

Urhobo denied several times that he was a politician but asserted that he intervened when certain things were going wrong in the country. He seemed to have intervened in politics to

wrestle with two major problems generated by some Nigerian nationalists. First, against violent political revolution then being planned by some impatient nationalist leaders who formed the Zikist Movement; Second, with what we have described as "godless nationalism".

As a result of Urhobo's intervention in politics, almost all the popular national newspapers of the period took interest in reporting something about Urhobo and his church. Urhobo mainly dealt with the top nationalist leaders of that era, like Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Mazi Mbonu Ojike, etc.

The Years before 1948

In 1937, Urhobo showed his interest in politics in a bold way. Nothing is known of his interest in politics before 1937. But it may be noted that the various treatment he received from the Catholic Church, presumably with the support of District Officers or Residents, and with the colonial authority in the latter's efforts to enforce an ordinance, may explain his subsequent attitude to Church and State.

In this year, Urhobo made contact with a race-conscious militant movement, the Universal Negro Improvement Association, founded by Marcus Garvey. Marcus Garvey was born in Jamaica on August 17, 1887. He founded a race-conscious militant movement, the Universal Negro Improvement Association. He was determined to restore to the Negroes their sense of dignity and to emancipate them from degradation to which they felt the white race subjected them. His influence spread far and wide, and it touched some Nigerians who became nationalist leaders. This contact was, however, superficial; Urhobo did not show any Garveyist influence in his actions or speech until 1949, when he attacked racial discrimination in South Africa. But Zik and Urhobo knew each other even before 1939, or at least Zik knew about Urhobo then. In September 1938, Zik, as editor of the West African Pilot, referred to Urhobo as "A brilliant Itshekri (Urhobo) Bible Expositor." That apart, all Zik's group of newspapers still gave Urhobo press coverage very frequently from 1941 onwards. Edet claims that Zik and Urhobo were friendly but that Zik's role in politics did not influence Urhobo to become a politician: Urhobo was called to preach the gospel. Edet could not explain the ground for friendship but the Daily Service of June 20, 1951 noted that

If ever anyone has helped Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe financially and morally, it is President Urhobo. Yet he had said he would denounce Zik publicly if he turns round and denies Jehovah..."

It is not certain when this link started, but if it was from 1939 or earlier, then one might guess that Zik, who was undoubtedly anti-Christian in his 1937 publication was influenced by this friendship to change. For in 1949, Urhobo was still referring to Zik as "a Christian, a disciple of Christ himself."

Urhobo's interest in secular matters was much more evident in the interwar years, 1939 to 1945, when he decided to support the Government to educate public opinion. We have discussed his role and dealings with the Watchtower Society in Chapter 8, but we may recall that he joined forces with many enlightened Nigerians to call for support for the British Government in the war. He opposed the Watchtower Witnesses for their neutral stand in the war. He preached against Watchtower Armageddon which may have discouraged farming to the extent that the Government had to conscript people to farm. Urhobo opposed the Watchtower whose preaching had affected many farmers around Warri and Sapele. He also set aside his gospel of the Kingdom for a while in 1941 to strengthen the minds of the people that Hitler would be defeated in the war.

After the war, there seems to have been no activity of Urhobo's that tended to be political in nature until 1948, except perhaps in 1947, when some people thought the G.K.S. was a political organization. Urhobo then organized several preachings to deny that charge in Lagos and Port Harcourt.

Urhobo's Intervention in Politics: 1948

Gideon Urhobo found towards the end of 1948 an imperative call to intervene in Nigerian politics. He expressed great concern over certain statements coming from some leaders of the Zikist Movement on politics in Nigeria. (The Zikist Movement was a youth wing of the N.C.N.C. and both groups are examined briefly below). The Nigerian Tribune notes in a later publication that when Gideon Urhobo

noticed that the Zikists were becoming very irresponsible and unconstitutional in their approach to national matters concerning freedom and self-government for Nigeria by calling responsible people and leaders imperial agents, etc. (When Urhobo began to attack them, he became the chief imperial stooge to Zikists.) He stepped in by preaching Zikism and harmonising it with true Christianity, as Zik himself claimed to be a Christian. He advised the Zikists to be cool and collected; to do things constitutionally and with the fear of Jehovah; otherwise, that organization was only a matter of a short time. He was not only winked at but denounced openly... by the Executive Council of the Zikist Movement.

The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (N.C.N.C.) The N.C.N.C. was inaugurated on August 26, 1944, at the Glover Memorial Hall, by the newly educated youths of Nigeria. The youths had observed that Nigeria lacked a national front for a move towards self-rule. But before the N.C.N.C., there were other political parties mainly based in Lagos. For example, there were the Nigerian Youth Movement, which was led by Ernest Ikoli and the Nigerian National Democratic Party led by Herbert Macauley. It seemed to the youths that these parties were not active enough for the type of politics they wanted. The young men who were mainly in the Nigerian Union of students were said to have met Dr. Azikiwe and told him of their preparations to work for the attainment of self-rule for the nation, but there was no effective leadership. Many of the organisations actually assembled, but the Nigerian Youth Movement was absent. It was in this meeting that Herbert Macauley and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe were elected as President and Secretary, respectively, of a party formed there and named the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (N.C.N.C.). In January 1945, the N.C.N.C. held its constitutional conference and set its aim, which included the following: "(a) The extension of democratic principles and the advancement of the interests of the people of Nigeria and the Cameroons under British mandate; "(b) the imparting of political education to the people of Nigeria in order to prepare them for the achievement of self-government; and "(c) the provision of the medium of expression for members of the N.C.N.C. through which they would endeavour to score for Nigeria and the Cameroons political freedom, economic security, social equity, and religious toleration..." Backed by Zik's group of newspapers as propaganda media, the N.C.N.C. played a significant role by educating the Nigerian masses about the need for political freedom. The N.C.N.C. fought against the 1946 Richards Constitution, described as obnoxious by the nationalists. It seemed to offer them greater participation in discussion in legislative council meetings but lesser participation in the whole process of government and administration. Zik described the constitution as autocratic in origin, and by 1947, he was at the head of an N.C.N.C. delegation to London to ask for its revision.

The N.C.N.C. controlled Lagos politics between 1944 and 1951, when it was defeated by the Action group, a political party formed by the Yoruba, in a federal election in the Western Region. But before that defeat, the N.C.N.C. which was the union of various groups and organisations from all parts of Southern Nigeria, had gradually become virtually an Igbo party.

Urhobo and Zikism

As we have mentioned, Urhobo noticed towards the end of 1948 that the Zikists were becoming irresponsible and unconstitutional in their approach to national matters concerning freedom for Nigeria. The Zikists had demanded a new philosophy that would require the use of force besides Zikism. Several statements were made by the Zikists, all tending to force if freedom was to be attained. Urhobo was not pleased with their attitude, and he resolved to do something. He was said to have told his followers that the philosophy of Zikism, or Azikiwe's political thought, was in harmony with the Holy Bible and therefore the will of God. He said he was going to preach it, for it had no provision for violence.

After Agwunna's statement in October 1948, Urhobo began to plan his own move, and in December he organised a religious campaign at the Yaba Stadium. At the stadium, Urhobo discussed some topics under the Chairmanship of the Zikist Movement president, Mallam H.R. Abdallah. Abdallah was not convinced of a violent revolution as Agwunna was in October 1948, but early in 1949, he joined his colleagues with such statements as

I hate the Union Jack with all my heart because it divides the people wherever it goes... It is a symbol of persecution, domination, a symbol of exploitation... of brutality.

At the Stadium, Urhobo discussed the following topics: "(a) Zikism and the God of Africa as seen through the Bible. (b) God of Africa and the philosophy called Zikism, and (c) Is the man Zik a curse or blessing to the Renascent Africa?" Urhobo told the crowd that,

I have studied Zikism alongside with the Bible: he who follows Zikism follows true Christianity; empires have come and gone and ministers of religion had from time to time contributed to their decay: they had distorted christian principles and supported imperialism in its mad exploitation... the God of Africa is the God of gods, the only true God.

It seems this was the stage the G.K.S. had reached when James Coleman describes it as one of the anti-imperialist religious groups in Nigeria. But as a later writer, Professor John M. Assimeng, noted, "James Coleman seems to have exaggerated the political aspirations of the God's Kingdom Society". It seems too sweeping for the G.K.S. to be regarded as an anti-imperialist religious group, especially when Coleman groups it with the National Church of Nigeria. Urhobo's attitude seems to suggest that Colonial presence was a blessing to Nigeria in terms of spiritual blessings and many other contributions. But while it should not be removed by force, it should also not continue to dominate when capable local hands were available. On the question of religious ministers supporting imperialism, Urhobo may have felt like most Africans of the time that missionaries were a part of white colonial society and perhaps the handmaid of colonialism.

During his preaching at the stadium, Urhobo is said to have explained that Zikism was freedom from political, economical, social, and religious bondage. He considered Zik a blessing to Africa because Zik was out to help liberate the Africans from dependence on foreign rule, and that God's mind is expressed in Zik's beliefs. Zik himself had written in an

earlier period that he, Zik could be "...one of the apostles of the new Africa". This lecture was a success, and demands for Urhobo to preach in other places were made.

In February 1949, the G.K.S. leader went to Port Harcourt to explain "Zikism, in the light of Bible teachings." He was heard saying that (one of the reactions to Urhobo's preaching in Lagos was that he had put aside religion and turned a politician) "It is not a political lecture but purely a Bible exposition of that famous philosophy known as Zikism." He began by describing the Holy Bible as the best gift God has given to man and then went on to explain the mottos of the Zik's Group on Newspapers to show their harmony with Bible teachings. (a) The West African Pilot: "Show the light, and the people will find the way." (b) Eastern Nigeria Guardian: "That universal brotherhood shall become a reality", (c) Nigeria Spokesman: "That man shall not be a wolf to man", (d) Southern Nigeria Defender: "That man's inhumanity to man shall cease", and (e) Daily Comet: "Truth, justice, public Service" Urhobo is quoted further,

The philosophy of Zikism harmonises with the teachings of Jesus Christ, which are truth, justice, and public service for the poor and common man. Zikism is freedom of worship, freedom of speech, live and let live, and spiritual emancipation, all of which the Holy Bible fully supported... Zikism is also economic determinism and security.

Concerning the revolution being planned by the Zikists which he probably considered a hindrance to the peaceful realization of his Zikist philosophy, he said,

Zikism is not Nazism, fascism nor hooliganism which the scriptures entirely condemned.

As a conclusion to his "religious" preaching, Urhobo was heard to say, "self-government for every nation is one of God's purposes of creation" and that only in God's Kingdom will real self-governemnt be attained. Urhobo's attempts to spiritualise Zikism came under condemnation from some quarters. C.O. Omoneukarin, one of the leaders of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Nigeria, published in the Daily Service of February 25 and 26 that Urhobo's preaching on Zikism was an attempt "to gain the favour of angry politicians." He asserted, and this is expected from the apolitical Witnesses, that a servant of God had nothing to do with politics. Christianity, according to him, was not a philosophy and could not be harmonized with politics. Omoneukarin was also embittered by Urhobo's reference to God as "God of Africa," contending that it made God exclusive to Africans.

The next day, February 27, Urhobo came out in Lagos to preach and to explain why he was supporting Zik and his philosophy. Urhobo was quoted as saying,

I am supporting his philosophy because I believe it will help to bring about full establishment of God's Kingdom in Nigeria...

*Like Dr. Gamaliel who saved the lives of the Apostles, Acts 5:34-42,
I believe Zikism through the power of Jehovah, the God of Africa, true Christianity shall be firmly established in Nigeria.*

Urhobo then warned the enemies of truth and righteousness (a reference believed to be on Jehovah's Witnesses) to beware because "the common people are solidly behind him (Zik)" After that preaching, Urhobo instructed Moses Ola, the then acting Secretary of the G.K.S. to respond to Omoneukarin's articles. Ola told C.O. Omoneukarin in a newspaper article that Urhobo did not seek the favour of any political organisation. Urhobo was preaching about

God's Kingdom of righteousness. On the charge of Urhobo restricting God to Africa, Ola noted thus:

What is wrong if one calls the Almighty God whose name alone is Jehovah, the God of Africa? Does this mean that He is not God of the other continents? If to call Him the God of Africa is wrong, then how could C.O. Omoneukarin explain, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Does this mean that Jehovah is no more a God to any other persons?

Urhobo is reported to have said that "the God of Africa... was none other than Jehovah. He was not only God of Africans but also of the whole world."

In Lagos and Port Harcourt, Urhobo's warning against violent political revolution became vehement. It is said by people of the time that his was the only known articulate voice raised against the Zikists. Earlier in March, Zungur, angered by Urhobo's abuse of Islam, had warned him on behalf of the Zikists that the youths of Nigeria were prepared to destroy anyone looking for cheap popularity. From that moment or a little after, the Zikists were said to have started openly to disturb Urhobo's public preachings. Earlier too, the Zikists had told Urhobo that no one was asked to preach Zikism.

G.K.S. sources claim that the Zikists would shout "Zee Zee" (Zik Zik) even when there was no cause for it, to prevent people from hearing Urhobo's preachings. The Zikists publicly accused Urhobo of using religion to discourage nationalism in Nigeria. The Pilot's editorial of July 3, 1951 even said that Urhobo had declared "hostility against Nigerian Freedom."

Urhobo was also accused of preaching peace when it was impossible to achieve self-rule from Britain through peaceful means and that Urhobo was not only working against Nigerian independence but also a British tool against Nigerian nationalism. Urhobo himself noted that he was being regarded as a stooge in the hands of the British and therefore seen as "an enemy of Nigerian freedom." Some Urhobo's advertised preachings may have been put off as a result of the Zikists storming the area or shouting "Zee Zee Zee." A 1951 copy of the Nigeria Tribune (August 18) reported Urhobo as having told his audience in Warri that he was assaulted by the Zikists at Port Harcourt (some time in 1949) when he went there to preach. The Zikists were arrested and punished by the Government. When Urhobo, according to the Tribune, wanted this news published in the Pilot, he was asked to pay twenty-two pounds. The money was not paid, and so the verdict was not published. But in spite of these problems, Urhobo continued to attack the Zikists. He was encouraged to continue because of support from many N.C.N.C. leaders. We shall meet Zikists again. Meanwhile, we must turn to the National Church of Nigeria to examine Urhobo's attitude towards the "Church".

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE G.K.S. AND THE NATIONAL CHURCH OF NIGERIA

In November 1949, the G.K.S. leader, true to his character and feeling that Christianity had been challenged by the Zikists who formed the National Church turned against the Church because, as he said later, "It is the same Zikist spirit that obtains in the so-called National Church. Their teachings are very unchristian!" Because of its role in the history of the G.K.S., we will show briefly its origin, teachings, and spread in Nigeria before its involvements here. Most writers have linked the National Church of Nigeria with politics rather than religion. It has been seen as a structure which was erected with the borrowed scaffolding of the Christian Church and that it had nothing to do with Christianity. Indeed, "It is a repudiation of

Christianity" As far as function is concerned, one writer believes that "the activities carried on by the church were more political than religious." It was also a movement committed to the preaching of "an indigenous God and denounces foreign religions such as those from Rome, Canterbury and Mecca." H.W. Turner, an authority on new religious movements or independent churches, while not denying the National Church a political role, would think of the church more as part and parcel of the traditional religion or simply as a neo-primal movement since it is set to revive the natural religion of Nigeria. James S. Coleman and Hans-Jurgen Greschat believe that the National Church of Nigeria was the religious expression of the political party-National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (N.C.N.C.)" The National Church of Nigeria was organized by Zikist Movement towards the end of 1948 in the Igbo town of Aba in Nigeria. Before its formation, according to Gideon Urhobo, Zik and his men, including Mazi Mbonu Ojike (died 1956), invited him to be the Archbishop of the Church. Urhobo said he declined the offer because it was "the religious branch of the political N.C.N.C." The first fellowship initiated by Jamike Anyanwu Iwunna (died 1953) and a few others after an alleged consultation with Zik and Ojike was called the National Church of Nigeria and the Cameroons.

In 1949, a branch of the National Church was founded in Enugu, and by January 1950 or probably earlier, another branch in Lagos. Through the instrumentality of Kalu Onu Kalu Onyioha, then Assistant Federal Secretary of the N.C.N.C., and assistant editor of the West African Pilot, the Aba and Enugu branches were joined with Lagos and transformed into a centrally led organisation. Onyioha in Lagos became His Highness, the High Chief Priest and President-General and the name of the organisation changed to the National Church of Nigeria.

The National Church laboured under the impression that it might become the third religion of Nigeria in the sense of organisational structure like Islam and Christianity. But by late 1950, when political radicalism was becoming a thing of the past as more concessions were granted to the nationalists, the National Church as a religious arm of militant nationalism began to decline. It later developed into Godianism with emphasis on the God of Africa, which must be worshipped by Africans, as the Ishmaelites worshipped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The National Church affiliated with the Edo National Church in 1963, and as we have seen above, the aim of the Edo National Church, or Aruosa Cult, was to promote Edo tribal religion. The National Church thus founded an ally in its bid to revert the nation to traditional religion.

The National Church had many theorists, and so no agreement exists in their view of an African Church. Much in their writings is explained by the angry attitudes of the years before political independence in 1960, when radical militant nationalism became increasingly critical of mission Christianity.

The central teaching of the National Church was that Christianity was the religion of a foreign race and so it had no value for Africans. Africans have the God of Africa, which they defined as love, kindness, and peace." This impersonal God, who is believed to have sent prophets and saviours to all races of mankind, is also known to be the God of the universe. Yahweh, the God of Israel and the Christians mentioned in the Bible, was seen as a tribal God of the Hebrews. On these claims of the National Church, Urhobo said that,

To say the God of Africa was different from the God of other continents, and he was black... was another capital foolishness and spiritual derangement. The God of Africa... was none other than Jehovah. He was not only God of Africans but also of the world. He was neither black nor white...

Urhobo also condemned the National Church, making special references to Mbonu Ojike, whom he described as a "reknowned infidel," and J.A. Iwunna, "who desecrates sacred things." He referred to J.A. Iwunna's book, *Road to Religious Freedom*, where it is said that the sun is the God of Africa and that Abraham and Sarah brought prostitution to Africa. He mentioned also the claim that Ala (the earth goddess of Igbo) is the mother of Africa and that Africans descended from giants who were demons in human form. On the claims of the National Church, Urhobo thinks that,

Only a pack of spiritually crazy people would believe and associate themselves with the so-called National Church,

The National Church believed that Christianity had enslaved Africans mentally because the missionaries had asked the Africans to bear the trials of this world patiently so that they could receive a reward in the world to come. In Urhobo's words "we owed the British Government gratitude for helping to preserve the Bible, which... was the precious gift given to mankind by God." Urhobo's Secretary of that time says Urhobo held that Christianity did not enslave anyone mentally. While Urhobo said several times that missionaries had adulterated the word of God by preaching their home customs along with the gospel, Christianity was to him the only religion with life-saving power. Urhobo believed that Christianity contributed greatly to the political, educational, social, and spiritual advancements of Nigeria. Christianity must not be seen as a foreign religion, nor must Jesus the founder be seen as belonging only to the Jews. The National Church had taught that as the Jews had Jesus as their saviour so "Africans had Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe." Urhobo did not see Azikiwe as such. He was quoted in 1949 to have said that "Zik himself does not claim to be our Saviour or our modern Christ..."

The National Church had the following books as their scriptures: The Holy Bible, the Holy Quran, Dr. Azikiwe's *Renascent Africa*, Mbonu Ojike's *My Africa*, Nwafor Orizu's *Without Bitterness*, and the N.C.N.C. Manifesto. The Bible and the Quran were believed to be important mainly to Israel and Arabia, but the National Church used them because they taught that all men were equal before God. The rest of the books were political writings geared towards self-rule for Africans, or precisely, Nigeria. Urhobo is reported as saying, For refusing to substitute *Renascent Africa* for the Holy Bible, I have become the bitterest enemy of the so-called National Church. But I am not moved because I believe Jehovah God is with me and the God's Kingdom Society is growing steadily and from strength to strength. Earlier, a *Daily Comet* columnist, Roving Hobo, had suggested to the leaders of the National Church that the Church should be united with the God's Kingdom Society, headed by G.M. Urhobo. He wanted Urhobo to be made the Archbishop of the National Church of Nigeria and the Cameroons. If such unity could be achieved, then the Church should be more seriously organised to collect funds and build church houses. In addition, the Church should "send missionaries to all parts of Nigeria, West Africa, and England to save their (English) souls.

It is clear that because of Urhobo's attitude to the National Church, he became a hated person to Mbonu Ojike. Urhobo had described the National Church as "religious Zikism and which must be destroyed." And so he declared a preaching war against the National Church—not in Lagos, because there were no National Church missionary activities there—but at Aba, where J.A. Iwunna was preaching. Urhobo called for debates with the National Church.

Urhobo Debates with J.A. Iwunna

In 1949, J.A. Iwunna, the leader of the National Church, Aba, began to preach at Aba and Port Harcourt that the sun was the God of Africa, that the Holy Bible was the tribal history of the Jewish people, and therefore the Africans were not the descendants of Adam and Eve, as the Christians believed. Iwunna said also that Africans descended from the giants in Genesis, chapter six of the Bible.

By October 1949, Iwunna had done much preaching at Aba, and just as G.K.S. people at Port Harcourt sent for Urhobo about the preachings of Dawodu, so G.K.S. people at Aba sent for Urhobo to come to Aba from Warri. Urhobo answered the call, but first he went to Port Harcourt, where a football match was organised in his honour by his members. It was on this occasion that Urhobo announced that he was challenging the National Church to a debate. Urhobo preached at first in Port Harcourt, telling his audience that "Mr. J.A. Iwunna had made comments about God and the Holy Bible" and that he had come to expose Iwunna's ignorance about the Bible.

On October 30, 1949, Urhobo went to Aba to preach against Iwunna. Topics were made headline news of the Eastern Nigeria Guardian: "Lambast on Bible is no road to Freedom", and "Mr. Iwunna's Ignorance of the Bible Exposed." Iwunna himself was said to be in the large crowd that gathered to hear Urhobo. Urhobo said that he had no personal animosity against Iwunna; all he wanted to do was "expose his ignorant views and senseless writings about the prophets of God and the Holy Bible." Iwunna's book, Road to Religious Freedom, was used by Urhobo to attack the views of Iwunna. The crowd also heard from him that

Dr. Azikiwe, the political father of Iwunna, is not opposed to Christ and the Bible, being a Christian, a disciple of Christ himself... condemning the Bible and the prophets of God will not bring political freedom to Nigeria but rather it will incur God's anger and bring more confusions to Nigeria... If Mr. Iwunna had only attacked religious imperialism, he would not have stepped beyond bounds by condemning the Bible... This is where I disagree with Mr. Iwunna.

After these remarks and treating his subjects, he challenged Iwunna to come for a debate on "God and the Bible."

It is said that barely a few minutes after Urhobo had issued his challenge to Iwunna, Iwunna passed his acceptance, including place, date, and time, to Urhobo, who announced it to the crowd. The date was 6 November 1949 at the African Club, Aba, time 6 p.m.

On November 6, 1949, the two men met at the place and time under the chairmanship of one Mr. Njoku with the support of Dr. Ekpo and Mr. Arinze. The topics were (1) whether the sun was the God of Africans, (2) whether the Holy Bible was a mere collection of Jewish tribal history, and (3) whether Africans were descendants of giants recorded in Genesis chapter 6 of the Bible.

The audience was almost balanced in terms of whom it supported. Christians, particularly the Roman Catholics, generally supported Urhobo and his church. They cheered Urhobo when any significant point was made. In like manner, Iwunna was cheered up by his National church members, who of course were Zikists. Intermittently, the shout "Zee, Zee" filled the air while Iwunna spoke.

In his own contribution, Urhobo said that the sun was not a god but a part of nature created by God to serve man. Characteristically, Urhobo contended that the God of the Bible called Jehovah, who also created man beginning from Adam and Eve, was the God of Africa and the universe. The Bible was neither mere mythology nor Christianity, a Jewish religion; it only

started with the Jews. Jesus Christ who founded the Christian religion, according to Urhobo, made it clear that the religion would spread to the uttermost parts of the earth. If it were a religion of the Jewish people only, Europe, America, and Africa, for instance, would not have embraced it to the point of missionaries laying down their lives to propagate it. He contended again that Africans did not descend from the giants in Genesis and that the giants under reference here were wicked and rebellious creatures or angels.

Iwunna's points were those we have made already in regard to the teachings of the National Church. Iwunna told the crowd that Jehovah had no link with Africa and continued to emphasize his belief that the Bible was a collection of Jewish history, fables, and folktales. Urhobo was said by the judges to have won the debate. This is understandable in such a Christian centre as Aba.

The report of the debate was not published by any newspaper. The G.K.S. believes that there were newspaper reporters in the hall during the debate, but the papers were instructed by the N.C.N.C. not to publish the result. The Eastern Nigeria Guardian and Nigerian Spokesman, which Zik said were the first daily newspapers in the east, were controlled from Lagos. They were the junior arms of the West African Pilot. Mbonu Ojike was the General Manager and K.O.K. Onyioha was the assistant editor, respectively, of the Pilot. However, the Eastern Nigeria Guardian published the resolution passed by the G.K.S. people after the debate. The resolution says that Urhobo had defeated Iwunna and called on the party and the Igbo State Union to check Mr. Iwunna, in his unchristian crusades. Iwunna was likened to Hitler, who was said to have led German youths into condemning the Bible, Jesus, and everything sacred. The G.K.S. believed that Iwunna was unfit "to lead the youths of Nigeria... spiritually and politically." Copies of the resolution were sent to Azikiwe, Ojike, Orizu, Abdallah, Mbadiwe, etc.

There was another major debate in 1951 between Urhobo and Iwunna but this time at Port Harcourt. The atmosphere in this debate was quite a different one from that of 1949 because of several developments between the G.K.S. and the N.C.N.C., which must be considered first.

It is interesting to note the relationship between Zik and Urhobo himself during the years 1948 to 1950, when the G.K.S. and the National Church were quarrelling over Jehovah, the Bible, and Christianity. It would appear that Zik was very tactful in dealing with both sides. In the opinion of the G.K.S. Zik did not make any untoward remark against God or Christianity until much later in 1950. As we have noted, the Zikist Movement and the National Church were ignored by leading politicians, though they were still closely linked with political Zikism. Zik, perhaps found Urhobo's preaching, which tended towards a peaceful nationalistic approach, more useful for his purposes than the preachings of the National Church, for which many Christians had shown much detestation. After about a year's existence of the National Church and propagation of its anti-Christian teachings, Urhobo, as we have mentioned, was still referring to Zik as a disciple of Jesus. The point to note is that though Zik was strongly linked by Urhobo with the origin of the National Church, Zik did not show any support—at least openly—for the National Church.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE G.K.S. VERSUS "GODLESS NATIONALISM"

In 1950, the N.C.N.C. was still popular and active in Lagos. It is believed that Urhobo contributed to this by his preaching on Zikism. Some Yorubas were getting offended by the attitude of the N.C.N.C., as the Igbo began to show as if the party belonged to them. The

Igbo were unanimous in this view. Before 1950, the Igbo and Yoruba were already displaying tribalism against each other. In a disagreement in 1948, the Igbo "bought cutlasses in preparation for a civil war against the Yorubas", especially in Lagos but the Colonial Government promptly intervened to ward off the crisis.

Though Lagos inhabitants were mainly Yoruba, and a good number of them were in the N.C.N.C., it remained, in Quartey's words, "Azikiwe's political and financial stronghold." Some Yoruba decided to have their own political party to oppose the N.C.N.C. This decision was kept secret until the party Action Group was launched openly at Owo in April 1951 by Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

Some Yorubas were aware of what Awolowo was planning, and there were those who began in Lagos to quarrel with Urhobo and his G.K.S. for espousing Zikism. The Yoruba were angry, and this anger was copiously demonstrated. They wanted Urhobo to stop campaigning for a political party in the name of promoting Zikism or Zik's political thought. Urhobo, however, began from about April 1950 to go from place to place in Lagos preaching and explaining to Lagosians why he was preaching Zikism. Nonetheless, the Yoruba protest seemed to have weakened his efforts for the N.C.N.C.

Meanwhile, the Pilot suspended covering Urtiobo's preachings for his role in the destruction of the Zikist Movement. As for the Daily Times, Muslim influence made that paper shut its gates against Urhobo for espousing Zikism. The Daily Service, which was the propaganda organ of the Nigerian Youth Movement, tended before this time to be Yoruba-dominated and was not prepared to report on Zikism or any merit in it. Much happened between April and October 1950, that was not reported in newspapers.

However, beginning from November 1950, a new turn was visible in the N.C.N.C. Zik and some of his party leaders, notably Mbonu Ojike, turned their attention away from politics, at least for a while, to religion. Urhobo himself, who was always sensitive to anti-Christian statements, turned against Zik and the N.C.N.C. The West African Pilot also tightened its "ban" against Urhobo, but the Daily Service came in on the side of Urhobo, so that a great deal of information exists in newspapers. For the resulting polemics, all the leading Halls in Lagos, Warri, Ibadan, and Port Harcourt were used by Urhobo. It seems Church leaders were not active. Urhobo accused them of keeping quiet when "infidels" were abusing Christianity. The same thing applied to Muslim leaders; a Muslim called on Muslim leaders in Nigeria to imitate Urhobo in what we shall now see as polemics against what Urhobo called "godless nationalism". On the 16th of November, the Pilot carried a statement made by Zik, that

If there is a God, and if he is a just God, why has he allowed Africans to be used as the football of the white race for ever and ever."

Urhobo was surprised to hear this from Zik, who hitherto had not questioned God thus. He made some attempts to know if Zik actually made such remarks, but he could not succeed. Further attempts were to be made, but on the 28th of that month, another statement came from Zik, and this was from the platform of the National Church of Nigeria. The National Church was holding a service to mark Azikiwe's 46th birthday. In the course of reading the second lesson of the service, Zik told the congregation that

...the Jehovah of the Bible worshipped with fanaticism by Africans today was nothing more than a Hebrew tribal God, called in Hebrew language, Yahweh.

More surprise was expressed by Urhobo on reading the Pilot. Edet says that Urhobo went immediately to see Zik but he failed. Zik's Secretary was alleged to have refused bluntly to allow Urhobo into Zik's office. Several times Urhobo left a note behind for Zik, but nothing came from Zik to him. Henceforth, Urhobo resolved to defend Yahweh against the claims of Zik and his followers of like mind.

Several statements were made by Urhobo, and some are reproduced by the press to show his anger and resolve.

Christendom had been challenged by Dr. Azikiwe and his lieutenant, Ojike, and he was prepared to tell them that he would never support a party that preached violence minus God and assassination plus godless, blasphemous, and rabid nationalism... he would rather die than to see the name of God challenged.

In a later interview with a newspaper correspondent, Urhobo said,

To expect a preacher of the gospel (to) keep mute when infidels who aspire to leadership deride God and mix politics with religion, is arrant nonsense and spiritual derangement. It would have been well to steer clear of religion and go about their dirty and fraudulent politics.

Urhobo is said to have remarked that to leave Zik and the N.C.N.C. unchallenged could spell destruction not only to the G.K.S. but also for Christianity as a whole in Nigeria. There seemed to be signs at that time that religion generally would suffer under an N.C.N.C. government. An editorial comment of the Daily Service spoke of how Mbonu Ojike, as a member of the Lagos town council, proposed, though unsuccessfully, that religion should not be taught in Lagos schools.

The G.K.S. says that after Zik's published statements, several people, including the Jehovah's Witnesses, began to taunt G.K.S. members about the opinion expressed by Zik. In Lagos, people came to Urhobo's residence at No. 1, Pike Street, to ask him to comment on "his master's voice" and when he would have his next preaching on Zikism. Then more authentic statements appeared in the Pilot, but this time from Ojike, the N.C.N.C. Vice-President.

In the January issue of the Pilot, a reader, one Mr. N. Umodioli of Yaba Estate, Lagos, asked Ojike to answer in a Column, "Weekend Catechism," the question, "Is there any God?" Among the answers given by Ojike were

God is an idea of goodness and no more... My belief in God is therefore merely metaphysical, that is, the intellectual, religious, or epistemological attempt to explain the origin of the universe. There it ends... surely, if we, wait for God to deliver us from British imperialism, we shall wait for ever, not to the end of the world because ours is the world without end.

Ojike added that Europe had discovered deadly weapons of religion and bullets with which Nigerians were kicked about. He said God (though he believed God to be mere goodness) should be blamed for allowing Africans to be used as the political, economic, and religious football of the white race.

Urhobo told his followers his often repeated statement that Christianity was not invented by Europe. Christianity was accepted by Europe as the Africans accepted it. His quarrel with Europe was that it has passed along with Christianity part of their national culture, which was

also preached as part of Christianity. He told his followers also that he did not believe that Africans were being used by Europe as a football in any way. He mentioned many things Nigeria had gained as a result of contact with Europe. He believed Europe would leave Africa one day and so Africa would not wait for God's deliverance from imperial rule for 24. He then charged his followers to be prepared to defend their faith in Jehovah against atheism in Nigeria. They should be prepared to suffer persecution if the need arose, for they were going to face some of the nation's powerful and influential nationalists. On his part, he was fully prepared for battle. Urhobo is quoted in a later newspaper report as having said that

As for me, I have started the spiritual battle and shall never retreat, as Jehovah is on my side until African Hitlerism and terrorism are wiped out of Nigeria.

His major concern in his declared battle was to preach and remind Christians that the two political leaders, Zik and Ojike, must not be voted into power.

Between January and May 1951, Urhobo's attention was taken by other matters. One was a response to Iwunna of the National Church, who challenged him to another debate in April 1951. Before June, when Urhobo began in earnest to oppose Zik, he travelled round his society branches in Nigeria, numbering some eleven, to explain what he wanted to do, and he was fully supported.

Urhobo versus Iwunna Again

In April 1951, the next debate between Urhobo and Iwunna initiated by Iwunna took place at Roxy Hall, Port Harcourt. Already, the move by the N.C.N.C. leadership against the God of the Bible had made N.C.N.C. support for Urhobo to dwindle. Very prominent in the politics of Port Harcourt at this time was the Freedom Movement. The Freedom Movement, which James Coleman described as the re-emerging of the banned Zikist Movement, "aimed at the destruction of all forms of imperialism and the establishment of a free Socialist Republic of Nigeria." The Freedom Movement urged on Iwunna to bring Urhobo to Port Harcourt for a debate. Iwunna, who was not happy with the decision of the judges against him in 1949, did not hesitate to do so.

The topics were the same as those of 1949, namely, whether "the sun is the God of Africa", whether "Africans descended from giants (the demons) and not from Adam and Eve," and, of course, the Bible was also discussed, whether "it is a collection of myths or an inspired book." In addition to the Councillor Oyeri mentioned by H.W. Turner, there were E.U. Eronini, I.K. Aguh, and Iwarime Jaja as judges in the debate.

There was nothing spectacular in this debate. It was more or less a repetition of Aba, 1949. What was, however, prominent was the readiness of the supporters of both men to fight if possible. Unlike 1949, when it was the Zikists who troubled Urhobo, this time it was Urhobo versus the N.C.N.C., the party. But Urhobo was greatly supported by mainly the Christians of various denominations in Port Harcourt, and the police were of course in attendance. And while the Freedom Movement were actually prepared to mob Urhobo, the G.K.S.-organized Christ Youth Movement was belligerently present too to counter any such move. There were skirmishes here and there when it was time for the debaters to start.

Urhobo was the first called to speak. It was at this point that the combined forces of the N.C.N.C., National Church, and Freedom Movement (all were almost one and the same thing) began to argue that Iwunna should speak first. It is suspected that the intention of the Iwunna group was to allow Iwunna to speak first thereafter to shout "Zee Zee" to prevent

Urhobo from being heard. We may recall that the Zikists had come to disturb his preaching at Port Harcourt so much that a good number of them were arrested and fined for disturbing the peace.

It would appear that the decision to call on Urhobo to speak first was specifically made by the judge, one of whom was the local leader of the G.K.S. Port Harcourt, I.K. Aguh (now I.K. Karibo). Urhobo spoke for some time but still in rowdy conditions. Iwunna had a better chance to speak, though the shouts of "Zee Zee" to cheer him on caused great delays. The most interesting moment was when it was time to announce the result. The judges seeing the situation as delicate, decided to declare the debate closed before announcing the result. The Chairman, Mr. E.U. Eronini, was flanked on all sides by the police before he announced that Urhobo won. But a newspaper article says that "Mr. Iwunna, in public debates at Aba and Port Harcourt, had utterly defeated Gideon Urhobo."

There were other, less formal debates. During Urhobo's public preachings, some National Church members used to come and engage him in argument. But from June 1951, Urhobo focused his attention on the N.C.N.C. and its leadership, not only preaching against their "infidel statements but also campaigning on behalf of the Action Group to defeat the N.C.N.C."

Urhobo Preaches Against the N.C.N.C.

It was in June 1951 that Urhobo came out, as he promised, to attack godless nationalism. The publicity he received and the crowd, sometimes described as "mammoth" or "thickly crowded" halls, were perhaps equal to those of the political parties. This is understandable, as the G.K.S. at this time could be said to be a campaign group for the Action Group, which had its strength in the Yoruba-dominated centres like Lagos and Ibadan. Urhobo's activities extended to the Igbo-dominated areas, which meant a great deal of activity for the police. And the Midwest was not left out.

Henceforth, the Daily Service intensified its publicity of Urhobo's activities, and the same applied to the Tribune. Both were Action Group papers, and almost everything about Urhobo appeared on page one. Both papers backed Urhobo also with editorial comments and perhaps adding more sugar to Urhobo's tea than the latter could take. The West African Pilot was completely opposed to Urhobo in the campaigns.

Urhobo's first act was to write an open letter (see Appendix for the letter) to Zik through Mbonu Ojike, whom he described as Azikiwe's "Chief mouthpiece." Urhobo asked to know from Zik whether the British people condemned the Holy Bible, Jehovah God, and Jesus Christ before they were free from the Roman Empire and whether Mr. Nkrumah of Ghana (then Gold Coast) was abusing Jehovah and the prophets as the N.C.N.C. leaders were doing? Urhobo also condemned the National Church and described it as encouraging idol worship.

Urhobo was fully prepared to support Azikiwe and his party if Zik could answer his questions. Neither Zik nor Ojike answered Urhobo's questions. But if the Daily Service is to be believed, "many Ibo people are understood to have sent telegrammes to Mr. Urhobo... to carry on the war against godless nationalism". Two such telegrams were published. The first was sent by one Minaju whose identity is not known to the G.K.S. but believed to be an Igbo.

Urhobo c/o Mountain Lagos (G.K.S. telegraphic address) Solidly behind thee, carry on warfare against godless nationalism. Minaju.

The second was by one Boniface, also not known to the G.K.S. but believed to be an Igbo.

Urhobo c/o Mountains Lagos Proclaim loudly Jehovah's supremacy. Away with godless nationalism. Victory sure at end. Boniface.

In reaction to Urhobo's open letter, the Pilot styled him as "the strangest bird in the Action Group rally." What the Pilot called an Action Group rally was thought of as a religious public preaching by the G.K.S. We may note what Lagos politics looked like then to understand henceforth why Urhobo had so many supporters, many of whom were Christians and Muslims.

Lagos politics in 1951 was not very competitive. The N.C.N.C., in spite of the differences between the Yoruba and the Igbo, was the dominant party. The goal of the N.C.N.C., which was accepted by the majority of Lagosians, was "to provide a medium of expression in order to secure political freedom." Tribal feeling was inconsequential to this goal. There were Hausa and Yoruba among the leaders of the N.C.N.C. But clearly, the Igbo, unlike the Yoruba and Hausa, were undivided in their loyalty to the N.C.N.C., and this loyalty was to raise suspicion among other ethnic groups.

The Action Group, which was officially launched two months earlier, was principally confined to the Yoruba West, where its goal and aspiration were yet to be properly understood by the people. Even there, as we shall see, internal quarrels among various Yoruba groups affected the Action Group, as it was thought of as an Ijebu party. In Lagos, the Action Group was present but small and opposed to the N.C.N.C., though its aim like that of the N.C.N.C. was "freedom for all (from British rule, ignorance, disease, and want) and life more abundant. The reason for its small strength in Lagos then seems that the party, as Coleman says, "shunned Lagos partly because of Awolowo's emphatic belief that the capital city was a cesspool of intrigue, petty bickering, and confusion." It seems many Lagosians were not happy with the formation of the Action Group. It gave "the impression that the Action Group was a Yoruba party..." at a time the nation needed one voice to negotiate for self-rule. And as we shall see, the Action Group was flatly beaten in the general election in Lagos and parts of the Yoruba West by the N.C.N.C. There were probably not many Action Group campaign groups in Lagos for the general election to be discussed. But as long as Urhobo and his G.K.S. decided to fight against the N.C.N.C., his public preachings were bound to attract the supporters of the Action Group. It should be made clear at this point that Urhobo's quarrels or fears seemed to have been that the N.C.N.C. was going to outlaw Christianity in Nigeria. This was said to be the notion of Urhobo. As Coleman says, the nationalists were already spreading "the notion that missionaries were opposed to African freedom." Already, key leaders of the N.C.N.C. had given the notion, as we may have noticed, that Jehovah, the Bible, and indeed Christianity were not only foreign but also inventions by Europeans to kick Nigerians like football.

It is said that many Christians and, in fact, Muslims were not happy with the anti-Christian or anti-god statements of the N.C.N.C. leaders. For this reason, they, the Christians, notwithstanding the fact that Urhobo had attacked their religious beliefs even harder than he was now attacking the N.C.N.C., were to be his supporters against the N.C.N.C., hooligans or Zikists as they were still known in 1951. The supporters were to let Urhobo down, as we shall see.

The Daily Service saw an advantage for the Action group in Urhobo's public preachings against anti-God statements of some of the leaders of the N.C.N.C. On June 20, its editorial assured

Dr. Azikiwe and the fanatics among his followers that there is no force like the force of Jehovah God... for defying and quarreling with Jehovah, the fanatics among Dr. Azikwe's disciples will become more crazy when President Urhobo shall fire the spiritual cannon at the godless nationalism of the N.C.N.C.

What the Service, now seemed poised to Urhobo into more action, described as spiritual cannon, was fired by Urhobo on the 24th June, 1951, at the Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos. He preached on "Freedom for Africa." One of the important points Urhobo is said to have made was that Gold Coast (now Ghana) would be free in the near future because Nkrumah, then leader of the Convention People's Party, relied on Jehovah's help in fighting for political freedom. He is remembered to have mentioned that godless political leaders in Nigeria would prevent the help of God from reaching the nation so as to be free politically. The crowd was said to be great, and this is expected since the title of the preaching was a political one. The preaching also attracted comments from Dr. Azikiwe, the Pilot and the Service. In his column in the Pilot, "inside stuff", Zik said, among other things, that "there will be many weeping Jeremiahs when we shall come to power." This statement was taken by the G.K.S. to be a reference to Urhobo and his supporters, having been made two days after the preaching. The Pilot described Urhobo as "a recalcitrant offshoot of Jehovah's Witnesses... a religio-politico commercial upstart... veering like a weathercock... a turncoat." It regretted that Urhobo, who once compared Zik with Gandhi of India, Muhammad and even Christ, had now turned around to oppose him. The Daily Service in its editorial column "preached" that the fundamental belief of its party (the Action Group) was "God first" and added

We believe in God as Ruler of Destinies. As a newspaper, we believe in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. We, therefore, detest and eschew that godless nationalism, which, at a mass meeting held last Saturday, Mr. G.M. Urhobo depreciated so much. Godless nationalism is the greatest danger facing Nigeria today.

The Daily Service believed that Zik and Ojike were trying to build in Nigeria a carbon copy of Hitler's godless regime in Germany. It also accused the N.C.N.C. leaders it described as "the discredited band of godless politicians" of attacking, with impunity, God that gave them life and from whom all blessings flow in the name of self-government and nationalism. It is clear here that the service for political or religious reasons or both had amplified Urhobo's campaigns against atheism. Urhobo was overwhelmed by the mass following and launched out deeper and more directly at the N.C.N.C. He said that "N.C.N.C. Self-government is Demonism", and reproduced some of the statements of Zik and Ojike, some of which we have heard. But he advised all Christians who were to vote in the 1951/52 general elections then pending.

Let all true Christians unite now against this satanic organisation (N.C.N.C.) by supporting the Action Group... If you support and vote them (Zik and Ojike) into power, you have signed your death warrant.

The Pilot was unhappy with such a direct call on Christians to support one party only. It was necessary, says the Pilot, for anyone crusading for God's Kingdom to serve as a conscience reminder to prompt erring Nigerians into the tracts of true consciousness. Instead of doing this, Urhobo had become "a political bandwagon drawn by the hands of politicians whose

heaven is the West of Nigeria... Urhobo was probably calling on Christians to vote against the N.C.N.C. because that party was seen to cast aspersions on God whose worship has been accepted by millions of Nigerians.

In one of his lectures, Urhobo remarked on the lukewarmness of Christian leaders whom he expected should join him in his battle against atheism in Nigeria.

Priests, bishops, and spiritual heads had steered clear of politics at one time or the other have been quiet when God's name had (been) blasphemed.

Urhobo may have been mistaken, though his voice seemed a lone one in the wilderness, because certain missionaries actually condemned Zikist nationalism in their sermons. In the heat of the campaigns for the general elections, the N.C.N.C. could not let Urhobo, now made too popular by the Press, to preach undisturbed. The Pilot and the Service reporters were at the Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos, when Urhobo preached on July 1, 1951. The banned Zikists were also there. Many Christians believed to be mainly Roman Catholics were there, and so were Muslims and Action Groupers. All except the Zikist Pilot, were on the side of Urhobo. Both the hostile Pilot and the friendly Service agree that there were disturbances during the preaching. The topic was "N.C.N.C. and Action Group as seen through the Holy Bible." The Service reported that there were "planned disturbances of a number of banned Zikists who were, however, held in check." The Pilot stated that "Urhobo was dismayed to discover that he had more hecklers than listeners... who shouted Zik! Zik! Zik! It added that "the G.K.S. had taken care to line the hall with cops in a well-calculated anticipation of trouble". It is said that the Zikists greatly disturbed Urhobo and Urhobo felt his life was under threat.

If you hear them say they kill me or flog me tomorrow na N.C.N.C. people do it. Make reporters take note.

In spite of the threat, Urhobo issued a challenge to Zik and Ojike to meet him for a public debate to examine if Jehovah was not the God of Africa.

Neither Zik nor Ojike came forward to accept the challenge, but the Pilot advised Nigerians that they should not "bother about Urhobo's declaration of hostility against Nigerian freedom." It stated that "Urhobo has become a traitor to the Nigerian cause as the Action Group themselves are." The Pilot believed that the scriptures warned against false prophets who would emerge to deceive people, it says.

If then Urhobo should get up today to quote the scriptures and tell the people that freedom should be a geographical virtue in Britain and vice in th Nigeria... need one have more evidence to show that a false prophet has risen in our midst and has been at large all the time?

In any case, the Pilot did not dwell on the religious issue, which was the main preoccupation of Urhobo. Rather, for reasons which are not clear, it began to preach against false prophets and citing the scriptures, which some N.C.N.C. leaders regarded as inapplicable to Africans or foreign to Africans.

Having been so troubled and probably pestered by people, Urhobo came out to defend himself on what he was doing, namely, denouncing the N.C.N.C. and recommending the Action Group. Some reasons for supporting the Action Group are as follows:

(1) In the Action Group, there are many God-fearing people, and none has openly condemned God and the Holy Bible as the leaders of the N.C.N.C. have done. (2) They do not believe in violence or physical force to get self-government, which is scriptural and proper. (3) The leaders of the Action Group are constitutional in their approach to the solution of problems of important national matters....

He said he was being regarded as a politician. He denied being one and told the crowd that

I am not standing for election into any political office but will ever support any political leader or leaders who fear God and encourage true Christianity or worship of the true Almighty God of the Holy Bible.

Urhobo could not support the N.C.N.C. because, among other things

Zik and Ojike do not believe in the Bible and the existence of a just and true Almighty God whose holy name is Jehovah in the Hebrew language and whom the Ibos call Chineke Jehovah in the Ibo Bible and Olorun Jihofa in the Yoruba Bible.

This preaching, which took place at Sabo Market Square, Yaba, was said to be very challenging to Urhobo and his supporters. Urhobo felt he was going to be killed by the Zikists. He told the crowd that his blood was upon Zik and Ojike. He published his fear the next day (See Appendix). Despite the fear on his life, Urhobo published a few days later that the N.C.N.C. was fighting against Jehovah and warned thus

If any Christian and Muslim vote N.C.N.C. into power, they will bring more sufferings, oppression, poverty, and destruction upon themselves because Azikiwe said that there will be many weeping Jeremiahs when they shall come to power.

In his struggle with the N.C.N.C., Urhobo got support from many people and places. From East the Igbo, Ibibio, Efik and Ijaw G.K.S. members said and resolved

We have been reading with disgust in the West African Pilot of... the unbecoming, unpleasant, disgraceful, and godless statements of the leaders of the N.C.N.C.... It is the will of God that this country should enjoy good government. We believe that peaceful means of effecting political change are still available in this country and that this being so violent revolution should not be (resorted)... Therefore be it resolved and it is resolved that we shall never support any person or persons who abuse Jehovah the Almighty God and try to turn the youths of our country into destruction as Hitler did."

In this struggle, it seems the Muslim leaders were like church leaders who were not active or helping Urhobo to condemn godless nationalism. On 18 July, the Nigeria Tribune carried an article written by a Muslim in Lagos in which the N.C.N.C. was described as "A pack of infidels". Yesufu Akinbode whose political leaning is unknown, warned Nigerians that infidels would constitute a nuisance if voted into power. According to him, all chief Imams in Nigeria should emulate what Urhobo was doing and that any Muslim who voted the N.C.N.C. into power committed an unpardonable sin against Allah. We may draw attention to the fact that there were Muslims, for example, Dr. Olorun-Nimbe, in the N.C.N.C., who did not share

the views of N.C.N.C. leadership on this question. (The meaning of Olorun-Nimbe in Yoruba is "there is God"). Akinbosedé believed that the "faithful Christians have denounced the N.C.N.C. because of their godless nationalism." He also raised a question.

What are we doing? After all, the G.K.S. under the leadership of President G. M. Urhobo, who has aroused Christendom to consciousness, are not as many as we are.

Already, however, the Muslims, like the Christians, were playing their part in attending Urhobo's preachings, probably to outnumber the Zikists. It is clear so far that Urhobo aroused the people of Lagos to consciousness as regards atheism in Nigeria.

Urhobo preaches at Ibadan

In July 1951, Urhobo went to Ibadan to preach on "N.C.N.C. is a Nazi Movement." It is believed that Urhobo was invited there by the followers of the Action Group" since his society had no branch there in 1951. Ibadan was one main centre in the Western Region, where N.C.N.C. was very strong. The Ibadan people did not trust the Ijebu nor the Ibadan, and this mutual distrust began long before this century. So the Action Group founded by Awolowo, an Ijebu from Ikenne, was not trusted by most Ibadan people in 1951. Ibadan, under Alhaji Adegoke Adedibu (died 1954), supported the N.C.N.C. But as a cosmopolitan city, Ibadan contained not only other Yoruba but also other peoples of Nigeria. The crowd Urhobo preached to at Ibadan was thus as mixed as that of Lagos. Urhobo used the Open Cinema Theatre, the equivalent of Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos. We may mention that apart from the Ibadan people in 1951, other Yoruba groups like the Ilesha and Ekiti favoured the N.C.N.C. for the same reason of Ijebu domination or perhaps preference for a national party. Urhobo remarked that many people were confused and worried when he interfered (intervened) in the politics of the country.

Christians could interfere (intervene) in political matters if they foresaw the dangers facing the youths by reason of the godlessness of the political leaders.

Urhobo used Hitler and Mussolini as examples of godless nationalism and vowed to expose what he called "the danger of African Hitlerism," which he saw in Zik and Ojike. During the preaching, an N.C.N.C. lawyer and secretary in Ibadan, Mr. Odumbaku, was seen drinking beer in the hall. A moment later he started shouting "Zee, Zee," but Urhobo checked him by referring to him as an irresponsible drunkard. It is reported that Mr. Odumbaku had organized a group of hooligans to disturb the preaching, but the police were able to hold them in check. Urhobo, however, remarked that it was disastrous for the government of a nation to be in the hands of drunkards. The N.C.N.C., he believed, was intolerant of any criticism of their leaders, and for this it was a Nazi Movement. Finally, he called on

democratic spirited people, all Christians and Muslims to do something immediately so as to put a stop to the terrorism and Nazism of the N.C.N.C.

Urhobo's mission to Ibadan must have been a failure because Ibadan people were in fact not prepared for anyone calling on people to vote for the Action Group. Urhobo may have been a pawn of the Action Group in this case. His success in Lagos had probably made the Action Group invite him to Ibadan to sway the religious susceptibilities of the people.

Urhobo in Port Harcourt

From Ibadan, Urhobo travelled to Lagos and to Warri, from where he moved to Port Harcourt. Going to Port Harcourt, the stronghold of the N.C.N.C. was a risky venture. He seems to have been moved to go there by the resolution passed there in support of his fight against the godlessness of the N.C.N.C. leadership. Urhobo, it is said, counted very much on the support of Christians, as was the case when he debated with the National Church. As the G.K.S. expected, the Freedom Movement, then acting as the youth wing of the N.C.N.C., came into the Number 3 field, where Urhobo preached against the N.C.N.C. As usual, there were many Christians, among whom were many N.C.N.C. supporters who respected spiritual things. It is said, these N.C.N.C. people were not there to support any preaching to vote them out. They did not join the youths who filled the air with "Zee, Zee, Zee.". Urhobo managed to preach and warn against putting God aside in the important task of fighting for self-rule.

Urhobo preaches at Warri

In August 1951, Urhobo carried his campaign against godless nationalism to his home town, Warri. Like Lagos, Ibadan and Port Harcourt, Warri was a stronghold of the N.C.N.C. Warri had a good population of Igbo who were, like many Igbo in Nigeria, determined to bring N.C.N.C. to power. The Midwest people were generally alienated by the political programme of the Action Group to which we shall return. Urhobo was thus coming to face opposition from the N.C.N.C. in his home town.

Urhobo preached in the King George Hall, Warri. His topic was "G.K.S. versus N.C.N.C. and godless nationalism." It is reported that both the Hall and its premises were crowded. If so, in view of the size of King George Hall, the crowd must have been extremely large if the Tribune had not exaggerated. He began by remarking that any citizen who paid tax had a voice in the politics of his country. Warri people, according to Urhobo, thought he was a member of the Action Group, and he was very unhappy about it. He remarked that when he was a strong supporter of the N.C.N.C. and the Zikist Movement, no one told him that he was interfering in politics, nor did anyone call him a false prophet. He said he did not see anything wrong in the man of God "condemning godless nationalism and dirty politics." He was convinced that "if Christians were not to interfere in godless politics, why did Christ condemn godless lawyers, doctors, and Roman imperialism for which he was charged with sedition?"

The G.K.S. Youth Movement and Urhobo friends were prepared to fight if that was the only way Urhobo could preach peacefully in his home town. Disturbance by the N.C.N.C. was minimal because the police were in attendance. But most importantly, there was no need for the N.C.N.C. to bother with Urhobo because Warri people were concerned with their own political future, the key of which the N.C.N.C. had. As usual Urhobo defended his stand in opposing the N.C.N.C. and repeated much of what we have noted in his Lagos and Ibadan activities.

His mission to Warri seems a failure, though, as elsewhere, his attacks on godless politics were appreciated by the Christians. He could not, however, change their minds from the N.C.N.C. Warri people were then to vote in the general election, on which we should say briefly why N.C.N.C. was favoured.

For sometime the Midwest people wanted to remain a separate people from the Yoruba, with whom the Colonial Government grouped them into a region. The Action Group wanted the regionalization of the country into North, East, and West to remain as it was. But the Midwesterners wanted a separate and completely independent administration from the

Western region. The Groupers were not ready for it at that moment, but the N.C.N.C., banking on this weak point, promised to create the Midwest a fourth region in the country if voted into power. Thus in the elections, which we shall turn to shortly, Warri and indeed the Midwest stood by the N.C.N.C. throughout. We may remark here that when the N.C.N.C. won Warri in the elections, it did not use its control of the city to molest the God's Kingdom Society. Some Midwesterners were, however, offended by G.K.S. efforts to cause the defeat of the N.C.N.C.

Urhobo, the N.C.N.C. and the Watchtower in Port Harcourt

In October 1951, Urhobo planned a preaching tour to Port Harcourt. He learned that N.C.N.C. people were behaving belligerently towards G.K.S. members, many of whom were Igbo people. Urhobo, it is said, intended to preach against godless nationalism to destroy the aspiration of the N.C.N.C. to come to power in Nigeria. It seems the news of his plans got to Port Harcourt because the N.C.N.C. and, it is alleged, the members of the Watchtower began to plan how to disturb him from preaching anywhere there. Their preparation included invading en masse anywhere Urhobo was to preach. The G.K.S. members in Port Harcourt claim that the N.C.N.C. members warned them to tell Urhobo not "to cross the Niger," that is, not to come to that side of the country. Port Harcourt G.K.S. wrote a letter to the G.K.S. Secretary, Warri, asking him to write to the police in Port Harcourt to protect Urhobo when he came.

Samuel E. Lessor, the then G.K.S. Secretary, wrote to the Superintendent of Police, Port Harcourt (Colonial Report Paper II) on the tenth of October that some people were ganging up seriously at Port Harcourt against Urhobo. He wrote that

Information has reached us that one Mr. L.O. Nolisa, in company of one Mr. T. Ozurumba, the local head of the Jehovah's Witnesses and some leaders of the N.C.N.C. at Port Harcourt, are organizing a gang of hooligans to disturb President Urhobo's lectures whenever he comes to Port Harcourt. As we do not want to take the laws into our hands, we appeal to you to make use of your good office to see that these men be called and warned to avoid causing Space the breach of the peace...

Copies of this letter were sent to various people, including the Resident, the District Officer, the local Authority and the G.K.S. Port Harcourt. On receipt of this letter, the Superintendent of Police met some leaders of the G.K.S. there and told them that they, the G.K.S. leaders, were better judges of the situation. As far as he was concerned, it would be unwise to ask Urhobo to come into Port Harcourt to preach there. The police could not guarantee Urhobo's safety. As such, Urhobo could not make it.

Dr. Azikiwe on Religious Toleration in Nigeria

Since June 1951, when the G.K.S. began its opposition to Zik and the N.C.N.C., up until October 1, 1951, when Zik wrote in the Pilot on "Religious toleration in Nigeria" Zik did not publish anything against religion. The only exception, perhaps in the opinion of the G.K.S., was Zik's occasional statement that "there shall be many weeping Jeremiahs when we shall come to power.

On October 12, Zik made it clear in his article that religious leaders in Nigeria, and specifying Gideon Urhobo and his G.K.S., "can use religion as a weapon to criticize any political leader and possibly to destroy his political aspirations." It seems that Urhobo's campaigns, which

Zik may have openly declared to be of non-effect, reached a stage when Zik had to make known the stand of the N.C.N.C. on religion in Nigeria. Zik said

I must say right here that, from my personal observation, the N.C.N.C. respects the religious susceptibilities of the peoples of this country and conceded to them the right to conscience and freedom of worship.

He referred to the N.C.N.C. constitution and quoted the "five freedoms" guaranteed by his party. They are as follows: (1) "Freedom of conscience: the right to believe in religious or any other doctrine or dogma. (2) "Freedom of speech: the right to express opinion on religion or any other issue. (3) "Freedom of Association: the right to associate for religious or any other purpose. (4) "Freedom of Assembly: the right to meet in public or private for religious or any other purpose, and (5) "Freedom of procession: the right to demonstrate publicly for religious or any other purpose. In Zik's opinion,

These five freedoms, having been guaranteed, the N.C.N.C. would secure for the people of Nigeria and the Cameroons freedom for any religious organization to exist within its territorial limits, be it indigenous or alien.

He specifically mentioned Animism, Totemism, Islam, Christianity, Rationalism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. But he warned that "alien missionaries have no right to participate in our politics and to educate our children to disrespect their political leaders." Though Zik was cool all the while Urhobo was attacking him, he seemed to have felt disrespected by Urhobo. Zik expressed the view that the N.C.N.C. guaranteed the right to conscience so that any believer of any religion would affirm, confirm, reaffirm, denounce, and renounce any religion.

It is possible that, consistent with the universal experience in the whole world, certain members of the N.C.N.C. might express their opinion favourably or otherwise on any facets of religion or religious practice. That would depend upon the facts of each ore that case, but certainly it cannot be justifiable ground for accusing the N.C.N.C. or its officers, or even the person concerned, as being godless.

Zik believed that it was unfair for any person to accuse the N.C.N.C. as an organization of being atheistic or godless, or anti-religious when there was no sufficient evidence to prove. 87 However, as we could see from Zik's reply to his critics and that of his party, it seems enough has been said to allay the fears of the people that religion would not have a place in Nigeria when the N.C.N.C. came to power. Zik's article made some impact on Lagos people and thus increased his support again. I think Zik's article was capable of changing the minds of many Nigerian Christians and Muslims. They must have come to know after the N.C.N.C. had stipulated and guaranteed freedom in their constitution. But most importantly, Zik's and at least Ojike's views on religion were personal and exclusive.

The G.K.S. did not regard Zik's defence as sincere. It is pointed out that an N.C.N.C. legal adviser, Jaja Wachukwu, had once written concerning Zik that "indeed the man's tongue is honey, but we know very well that his heart is more poisonous than cobra's fangs." G.K.S. fears may be justified for some time. N.C.N.C. leaders have said, "N.C.N.C. is one man's society." (Kola Balogun) "no man is equal to Zik in the N.C.N.C.; N.C.N.C. is Zik, and Zik is N.C.N.C." (Ajuluchukwu) And as James C. Coleman says, "Zik was intolerant of any political competition" and would shun "any movement unless he could dominate it." It must be

remembered that Zik had said consistently that many Jeremiahs would weep when he came to power.

It seems after Zik's article many people, the press, and so forth began to question the wisdom in Urhobo's attacks on the N.C.N.C. But an article of the minds of the people at that time stated:

I have had the privilege of reading for some time now the editions and opinions from certain section of the Nigerian press and some individuals against Mr. Urhobo. I am not in a position to defend Mr. Urhobo... I am yet to be convinced that those who oppose Urhobo are well meaning and true to heart. To go against one man because he dares to say out his mind is not a medium to determine true Citizenship... I do not know exactly what our party politicians and some sections of the press are driving at in Mr. Urhobo's opinion of the activities in this country today. If he supports the N.C.N.C. today and kicks against it tomorrow, he is quite right according to his conscience... That Urhobo connects religion with politics should not flabbergast anybody; it is only because we are not critical and do not exactly know where the wind blows...

One truth which seems to emerge from the above quotation is that Urhobo was at the centre of politics in Nigeria without being a participant.

Urhobo, Zik and the General Election 1951/1952

In the year 1951, Nigeria had a new Constitution, the John Macpherson Constitution, which replaced the Richards' Constitution of 1946. The Macpherson Constitution was promulgated by an Order-in-Council in the Parliament of the United Kingdom in June 1951 and came into operation in January 1952. It provided for Nigeria's first elections, the arrangements for which began as soon as it was promulgated. The elections were conducted on a three-tier basis: primary elections in August, intermediate elections between November and December, and the final election in January 1952. Three main parties contested the elections: the Action Group, which at first was mainly intent on securing Western region interests and only later took on a national character; the N.C.N.C., whose dominant policy was the achievement of a unitary Nigeria; and the Northern Peoples Congress, founded in December 1949, determined to secure the North for Northerners. Only the intermediate and final elections in Lagos and the West concern us here. But we may note that in the primary elections the N.C.N.C. won Warri and immediately one Nolisa, an N.C.N.C. member, sent a telegram to Urhobo from Port Harcourt dated August 22, 1951. It says as follows:

To Mountain Warri/ Despite your visionless attacks on Zik and Ojike, N.C.N.C. sweeps the polls in Warri Shame Urhobo/ Nolisa.

Intermediate election

The 1951 Macpherson Constitution had incorporated Lagos into the Western Region. The incorporation of Lagos into that region would mean that in the final elections, when candidates would be nominated into the Central Government, it would be the prerogative of the West to nominate or approve the candidates to represent Lagos. Five seats were allocated to Lagos, and it was a straight fight between the N.C.N.C. and the Action Group. As the result turned out, the N.C.N.C. won the five seats. Zik stood for one of the seats. The election in the West went peacefully for all the parties. The N.C.N.C. members represented Warri and won. They were Chief Arthur Prest and Chief Festus Okotie - Eboh. Prest later

crossed over to the Action Group. When the final result came, the N.C.N.C. that won a majority in the Eastern region was under the impression that it had also won the election in the West with 43 members out of 80. But 20 of the legislators who were known or regarded as N.C.N.C. members or supporters decided to align with the Action group. The count in January in the Western House of Assembly then came to 57 Action Group to 23 N.C.N.C. members. The Action Group formed the Regional Government.

It would seem that it was prearranged by some Yoruba leaders to outwit the N.C.N.C. in that region and even in Lagos, as we shall see shortly. As Coleman says, because the Macpherson Constitution would establish the power structure of the Nigeria of the future, internal tensions between leaders of ethnic groups emerged. Tribalism, regionalism, and the fear of one tribe trying to outrun and dominate others became commonplace. Even before the elections, the Yoruba were already talking of "a challenge to Westerners" or "a national insult" for the Igbo to come and rule in the West when the door to the East had been shut against the Hausa and the Yoruba. The Igbo were heard singing, "Igbo go shit, Yoruba go carry am" (that is, the Igbo will use the toilet, the Yoruba will cleanup). In short, "tribalism was the dominant note," but that stage was used mainly by leaders who wanted their region to be their own. The masses seemed not to have been yet affected. But tribalism was not the only main reason to explain the election, for as we have noted, Ibadan, Ijesha, etc. voted N.C.N.C. for the main reason that Ijebu people formed the Action Group, though those who voted into the House of Assembly crossed the carpet to join the Action Group.

Zik and Urhobo in the elections

The quarrels of the two leaders took a new turn in November 1951 immediately, and after the intermediate election held on November 20, 1951, which gave victory to the N.C.N.C. in Lagos. Before the election, Gideon Urhobo sent the following telegram, dated November 18, 1951, to Zik from Salem-City, Warri.

*Nnamdi Azikiwe Yaba Table has turned x repent confess Jehovah as true God and be saved
x Gideon Urhobo.*

After the election, Zik replied Urhobo's telegram with a telegram dated November 23, 1951, thus:

*Gideon Urhobo Warri/ your telegram received x has the tide turned x repent you viper or be
doomed to eternal damnation/ Zik.*

But in spite of the victory of the N.C.N.C. in Lagos, we have noted that Lagos was already part of the Western Region and that Zik had won a seat in Lagos, something happened. The Constitution stipulated that candidates should be nominated from Lagos to the Central House. But though the N.C.N.C. won the five seats in Lagos, three of the candidates came forward for nomination. Zik was one of the three, the others were Yoruba, Prince Adeleke Adedoyin and Dr. Ibiyinka Olorun-Nimbe. And so when votes were taken to determine the two to be sent to Lagos, the Action Group gave support to the two Yoruba N.C.N.C. members. An attempt to make one Yoruba step down for Zik failed. Thus Zik was not only deprived in the West of leadership of Government but also of a place in the Central House. While it was yet to decide who should be nominated into the Central House, Urhobo sent the following telegram to Zik and the Pilot, dated January 11, 1952.

Wazik Yaba (Pilot's telegraphic address) Zik can't climb further.

As it came to be a few days later, Zik, as we have noted, did not climb further than being a member of the Western House of Assembly. Zik was frustrated with the outcome of the election.

On the 19th of January, 1952, Urhobo wrote an article in the Daily Service captioned "My prophecy on Zik comes true." He said:

Today, where is this fake Joshua and Counterfeit Jesus of Nigeria? He is now spiritually humiliated and dead to himself because of his opposition to the Almighty God, Jesus Christ, and all sacred things. Let this be a lesson to all our youths who are without the fear of God and respect to elders. England survived the world war II caused by the godless Hitler and his Nazi party because of her belief in the Almighty God. So too, Nigeria has survived the godless attacks and hooliganism of the Zikist N.C.N.C. because of her kindness to the God's Kingdom Society, a purely African Christian Organization in Nigeria. Everlasting shame and confusion await the N.C.N.C. leaders except they fully repent and confess that Jehovah is the true Almighty God and stop their satanic propaganda in the columns of the West African Pilot.

After the elections and their outcome, the N.C.N.C. and the G.K.S. stopped attacking one another. Urhobo began in earnest to preach the gospel of the kingdom. He travelled to some of the Society branches, including Port Harcourt, to preach and exhort his members, and resumed his public preachings.

Conclusion

Urhobo focused his attention, besides preaching the gospel of the kingdom, on what was happening in and outside his country, believing perhaps that the church and state must work together for the good of the people. Thus he attempted, though without success, to work with the Universal Negro Improvement Union for the betterment of the lot of the negro.

There is no doubt that Urhobo was interested in the politics of Nigeria, and he gave his support to whoever he thought deserved it. But having gone through his activities in the politics of his time, several questions may be raised. Was he a politician or simply intervening in politics? If he was not a politician, why did his church become what may be regarded as another campaign group for the Action Group? We may also ask that, why, in spite of the massive support he got from Christians and Muslims, could he not rally them to defeat the N.C.N.C., the object of his labor? If he failed in rallying the support of his supporters, how can we say he succeeded, as it seems in his fight against violence? Lastly, did he really achieve anything by intervening in politics?

It would appear unjustifiable, notwithstanding his many political roles, to regard Urhobo as a politician. In spite of the fact that he defended himself several times against being regarded as a politician, evidence suggests that if violence had not been planned to quicken the race for self-rule, Urhobo probably would not have intervened. Zik had known him since October 1938, and he began to watch the activities of Zik in 1939. As a newspaper says, it was when the Zikists were becoming unconstitutional and irresponsible that he (Urhobo) plunged body and soul into the political arena to oppose them. And in this, notable politicians supported him. A writer has said that "the greatest obstacle (why the Zikist Movement was shortlived) was the hostility of the Nigerian political leaders, due to the unfounded fear that they might be supplanted" by the youth.

While Urhobo may not be regarded as a politician, he campaigned vigorously for the Action Group against the N.C.N.C. It seems Urhobo would not have done this if some of the

nation's most powerful and influential nationalists had not become, in his eyes, anti-Jehovah, Bible, and Christianity. In opposing their views, he seems to have done what might have been expected from any serious Christian leader. Zik, who made some of the statements, has been described as "the leading political figure of Nigeria" and "one of Africa's half dozen best-known personalities." It was also important that Urhobo humiliated the National Church, as it was beginning to be missionary. We may note here that apart from Bishop Charles Joseph Heerey of the Roman Catholic Church, Onitsha, who called on all Igbo to condemn the National Church, no other Christian leader is known to have joined Urhobo in that crusade.

A necessary question may follow. Was Urhobo then not an Action Grouper by campaigning for that party? Urhobo was in fact confronted with this question. He explained that he was not a member but wanted the Action Group to win the election because the leaders believed in God. He was motivated by religious reasons for the campaigns. His main obsession seems to be to go anywhere, anytime, to condemn godless nationalism. The Action Groupers might have thought Urhobo was being goaded by them to do their will, but Urhobo, it seems to me, was just being naïve politically. There was perhaps no other place apart from the camp of the Action Group, the political rival of the N.C.N.C. to fight to deprive the N.C.N.C. of leadership in the impending elections. I think what Urhobo did in the Action Group camp can be done in any other party by anyone without becoming a member. At least every political party will welcome such assistance since the motive is to put it into the seat of power.

But why, in spite of the massive support he got from the Christians and Muslims, as we asked earlier on, could he not rally them to defeat the N.C.N.C., the object of his labour? This will raise the question as to how many of Nigerian Christians and Muslims heard him or considered Zik or Ojike's statements as representative of the view of the party, N.C.N.C.? But, if many heard and supported his views, Zik's defence of the N.C.N.C. as a party was enough to change or correct misunderstanding among the electorate. In any case, there seems to be no evidence that Zik's or Ojike's statements affected the growth of Christianity in Nigeria. But it is important that someone had fought the unwholesome idea that Christianity, its God, and sacred writings are foreign or alien to Africa. It should be expected that Christianity would at least have suffered a setback with people like Iwunna in power, and of course some Jeremiahs would have wept.

If, however, Urhobo's appeal to the religious susceptibilities of the people was not overtaken by anything, there were other factors perhaps more important to the people than religious which determined the direction of their votes. As the 1951 Constitution was geared to establish the power structure of the Nigeria of the future, "ethnic nationalism" or tribalism became the dominant note among the people of Nigeria, whether Christian, Muslim, or any other. The case of Lagos may be different, as many Yorubas were not then in favour of the regionally based Action Group. In any case, it is true, as a report of the World Mission of the Church noted that "The rise of nationalism has a tendency to control all the religious feelings of a nation." This did occur then and has continued. One other factor was the Igbo determination to gain political power in Nigeria. They formed the Igbo State Union, and one of its basic purposes included "the organizing of Igbo linguistic groups into a political unit in accordance with the N.C.N.C. Freedom Charter." And so all the Igbo men knew at that time was that Zik must be voted into power. Again, while every Igbo man in 1951 was billed through the Union to cast a vote, not all the people did likewise. I found that almost every Igbo G.K.S. person, including those who passed the various resolutions in support of Urhobo, voted for the N.C.N.C. Generally, it was the feeling of these Urhobo followers,

especially as Zik had assured the nation that religious toleration was enshrined in the N.C.N.C. Constitution, that the question of religion could come later.

Again, the fear of domination of one group by the other also influenced votes. Ibadan and the Midwest are examples. At Ibadan, the fear of the Ijebu-led Action Group drove Ibadan people to form a political group—the Mabolaje "do not spoil honour" Grand Alliance. This alliance won the Ibadan seats for the N.C.N.C. Certainly, it was this fear which led the hands that cast the votes. In the Midwest, the yearnings of the people to be free of political connections with the Yoruba became the determinant political issue. This expectation swept almost completely all their votes into the N.C.N.C. ballot boxes.

Finally, one may ask, what has Urhobo and his Church achieved in all their efforts for political sanity in Nigeria? Urhobo was quite popular, and for this we may note that though he supported the Yoruba-based party, he was not, so it is believed, influenced by tribalism. There were many Igbo followers in his Society, and these resolved to fight godless nationalism with him.

It may be said that Urhobo succeeded in his fight to prevent violent political revolution against the Colonial Government in Nigeria. The planning was centered in Lagos, and Urhobo was in Lagos. The President General of the Zikist Movement once chaired his preaching, where he attacked violence. If he was not making some impact on the people, his G.K.S. would not have suffered so much persecution in the hands of the Zikists who were planning the revolution. His fearless attacks on the Zikists were helped by the hostility of Nigeria's political leaders, who probably regarded the Zikists as political upstarts. It would appear also that his Society was the only body, religious or political, that used the public forum to warn against the attempts of the belligerent Zikists. The problem he tackled was in itself of public interest, and there were no popular squares, halls, stadia, fields, coliseums that he did not use in Lagos, Port Harcourt, etc. Again, Urhobo was "a crowd puller." We have come across newspaper phrases like "mammoth crowd," "thickly crowded," or "a large crowd of people" in respect of Urhobo's preachings. Urhobo and his Society could therefore be said to have achieved their aim against violence or contributed to the end of it for the period under discussion here. If Edet of the G.K.S. may be believed, there was a refusal on the part of the Pilot for a brief period to report on Urhobo and his Church because the paper thought that Urhobo drew too much public attention, to the attitudes of the Zikists. It is believed this attention contributed to the banning of the Zikist Movement. In any case, many Nigerians hated violence.

Urhobo and his Church may be said to have at least minimized the growth of anti-Christian feelings, which some leaders of the N.C.N.C. and the National Church wanted to foster. His debates, as we have noted, were humiliating enough for the church. These fueled the hatred which some Christians had for the National Church. The G.K.S. has at least shown that it is the duty of the Church to "serve as a waking and active conscience to emphasize Christian principles (such as non-violence) in social life." Though Urhobo and his Church were not responsible for the defeat of Azikiwe and his N.C.N.C. in the West, the G.K.S., I think, has contributed to the spiritual atmosphere which was conducive to the granting of political independence.

PART THREE
CHAPTER FOURTEEN
THE LAST DAYS OF URHOB

A minister of the G.K.S. mentions that a few months before Urhobo died, the members at Port Harcourt were disturbed by some statements from him. From mid-1951, Urhobo began to admonish the Port Harcourt members that they would, in the near future, face a temptation, but those who were able to withstand it would be firm believers of Christ. G.K.S. members at Warri and Lagos were also alleged to have had similar feelings and worries about such statements made to their hearing. This was their state of mind when suddenly Urhobo died.

Urhobo had attended the first meeting of the Western House of Assembly at Ibadan and also that of the House of Representatives in Lagos. It is said that Urhobo came to Ibadan "with a squad of lieutenants (to) watch the new Western House of Assembly in session." At this time the Action group had been swept into power by some N.C.N.C. carpet crossers and had been called upon to form the government of the Region. Urhobo was therefore happy that one of his objectives had been achieved. It is said that he was received by the Action Group and given a special place in the Assembly to watch the proceedings. When Urhobo was asked of his impression about the meeting, he said:

I thank Jehovah for turning the confusions created by the godless politicians who vowed to make Jeremiahs weep against them and their planless Nazi Party (N.C.N.C.). Do you not read the papers? The answer is best given by the Prophet Isaiah, who said 'Take counsel together (obviously the infidels), and it shall come to nought. Speak the word, and it shall not stand, for God is with us'.

Urhobo, who was again quoted as saying, "There are sincere and godly politicians with whom I would always cooperate morally and spiritually," believed that it was the will of God that the N.C.N.C. was toppled and bundled into opposition.

Later in January, he was moved with joy to watch the meeting of the House of Representatives. He was happy because Dr. Azikiwe, who thought he was going to be a member of Parliament, was overthrown by his supporters with the support of the Action Group members in the Western House of Assembly. Urhobo's labour in politics had been directed mainly to the defeat of Dr. Azikiwe, Mr. Ojike, and the N.C.N.C. He stayed on in Lagos to preach the gospel. It was unfortunate that Urhobo's love for Zik could not continue as he had to choose between Zik and God's will.

Urhobo returned to Salem-City, Warri, the Headquarters of his Society on the 10th of February 1951, where "he was accorded a rousing reception by the Warri Community (a rather mixed crowd of G.K.S. and well-wishers) and the Christ Youth Movement." The reception was attended "by prominent personalities in the township." The members said in an address presented to him,

We welcome you with joy because you have several times, by your preachments and prophecies, convinced us and all men of goodwill that you are a true servant of Jehovah, the Almighty God.

Urhobo was further described as a "fearless fighter, an important figure, and a man of courage."

The Daily Service says that Urhobo had gone on a preaching tour to Burutu, where he became ill. It is said that Urhobo called the Burutu members and told them he was a little bit feverish. He asked them to hold fast to the service of God, and that they should hold fast the faith, and that he was going to Warri. It was such a sudden decision that members there were left wondering whether it was well with him.

A few days after his arrival, he called Otomewo, the Vice-President, and admonished him, charged him, and prayed for him, and he is said to have committed the running of the Church into his care. The baffled Otomewo, who could not understand what Urhobo meant sent for a few top ministers of the G.K.S. to Urhobo's bedside. Urhobo held Otomewo's hand and after a few seconds, he withdrew his hand and died. This was on February 25, 1952, and at the age of 49.

All that the other Salemites knew from announcement in their prayer meeting was that Urhobo had a fever. Suddenly, the news went round the city that Urhobo was dead. There was no news of his being ill in the town until the news of his death. In the city, shouts of grief and surprise went up, and as the Daily Service puts it, "the shocking news of his death spread like wildfire throughout the township." A little after, the leaders of the G.K.S. appointed E.T. Otomewo as the President. Urhobo's charge to Otomewo was seen by the leaders of the church as the confirmation of the latter as President. It is generally said in the G.K.S. that as Elijah's mantle fell on Elisha, so has Urhobo's mantle fallen spiritually on Otomewo. There was no dispute or untoward incident except perhaps the defection of Mr. Ikechukwu Onukwube, Secretary of Christ Youth Movement Lagos, from the Society. It is said that he could not believe that Urhobo would die.

Many stories have circulated concerning his death. The commonest is that Urhobo said he would be resurrected from the dead after three days in the manner of Jesus Christ. As a result of this alleged statement, some people who claimed to be around when Urhobo died said that Urhobo took some tablets, which he got from De-Lawrence, described as a magician in America, with the intent to induce uninterrupted sleep for three days after which he would wake up and claim to have been resurrected by God.

The G.K.S. has been refuting this story of an alleged promised resurrection since the time of Urhobo's death. The G.K.S. noted that,

When in 1952, the God's Kingdom Society lost her but od first President, the late G.M. Urhobo, his detractors forged lies and slandered him with a view to bringing the Lord's organization - G.K.S. into disrepute. It was wickedly alleged that St. Urhobo had earlier said he would rise the third day after his death. Some added that he took certain pills so that after being in a coma for three days, he might wake so as to be claimed by G.K.S. members as having risen from the dead. People like those who Job called 'forgers of lies' or the enemies of truth and righteousness did their worst to spread these fabricated tales far and wide.

According to Mercy Alagoa, who was at Warri during this period, the story about this alleged resurrection was so commonly told that it was difficult not to take it seriously. Some people I interviewed in the city of Warri about what they knew of Urhobo and his church began by saying that Urhobo said he would wake up three days after death. Whether the story is forged or not, it has come to stay. In any case, the G.K.S. is unhappy about it. And in a later publication, the G.K.S. pronounced blessing and judgement over it.

If it is true that St. Urhobo said and did all that they alleged, then he was a false prophet, blessing will surely be upon those who are saying it; but if he did not, then whosoever is

responsible for or has contributed to that false story against the innocent must give account of himself to God who says 'vengeance is mine.' 2nd Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 12:19.14.

However, as the news of his death spread, some people, on account of the story just related, comforted themselves that he would rise again on the third day. The whole situation was heightened by the fact that on that day, there was an eclipse of the sun, visible throughout Nigeria. The eclipse was understood by some Warri people to be the sign of the passing away of a great man of God. From the fact that Urhobo had ridden on horseback in several places to the shouts of Hosanna, people could imagine that he was going to rise from the dead.

Three days after his death and burial, many people (said to be thousands) came to Salem-City to see whether Urhobo was going to be resurrected from the dead. Some people came from places like Sapele and Benin, 30 and 60 miles away, respectively, to see for themselves. Police came to keep people away. While the crowd surged forward to see what would happen, Otomewo claims that he said to them that Urhobo did not say he would rise again after death. As Otomewo says, it was common knowledge within and without the G.K.S. that Urhobo knew himself to belong to the class of Christians who would go to heaven after death. Such Christians, unlike Jesus Christ, are, according to G.K.S. doctrine, not to resurrect visibly before they wing their flight into heaven. Generally, how do the members regard Urhobo himself? This may have become evident in this work, but the best answers to the question are taken from the resolution passed in 1950 by the G.K.S. and by its Women's Section. The general resolution included the words.

That Brother Gideon M. Urhobo is one of the chosen and anointed servants, priests, kings, and Tabernacles of God, representing Jesus Christ, the true and more perfect Tabernacle now in our midst. John 14:1-4, 12, 19; Hebrew 3:6; 2nd Cor. 5:1, 2; Hebrew 8:1-2; Revelation 21:1-5.

That President Urhobo for the past eighteen years has laboured successfully in spite of the abuse, persecutions, and prosecutions of ignorant men and of irreligious fanatics. And Jehovah has used him as the Master Builder to lay the foundation of His Established Government on earth... and by Jehovah's grace, we shall build on this foundation... That we have implicit faith in President Urhobo's leadership by reason of his uncompromising stand in declaring Jehovah's Kingdom of Rigtheousness...

In their own declaration, the Women's Section noted thus:

When we think or visualise your worth, we are short of words to pour or rain all the necessary encomiums on you... From your movements... your activities... and the power of the gospel in you, we do not hesitate to acclaim you our able leader... It is true that the vision was clear to you before you left your salaried work for an unsalaried one. You know that by taking your cross and following Christ, you would sail across seas of persecutions, oceans of prosecution, rivers of hatred, streams of abuse, lakes of insults, springs of assaults, lagoons of torments, and fountains of misrepresentations. Now that you are glorified from above... now that you twinkle and shine amidst friends and enemies, you will maintain the master's words by not showing personal aggrandisement, or seeking worldly glory.

It is clear from the above why Urhobo is regarded and addressed as Saint. The members believed that Urhobo is not only in heaven but also aware of how much the G.K.S. is doing to carry on his labour. And as the members understood their role as building upon the foundation Urhobo laid, there was no trouble or rivalry, or secession when he died.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The earlier experiences of Urhobo's life, may have caused him to resolve to do the work of God. It is not unlikely too that the clarifications he sought from the Roman Catholic priests were preliminary moves to join the priesthood in imitation of his elder brother, who had become a Catechist. If Urhobo had any such intention, then he must have been disappointed by the advice that he should not read the Bible. In any case, he was not satisfied with the explanations the priests offered. But certainly, the offence must have been great to cause him to resign from church and teaching to sit at home jobless with wife and children.

When he left the Catholic Church, he was still full of zeal for the scriptures. Yet he did not join either the C.M.S. Church or the African Church, or any of the others that were in Warri. It is not clear what he prayed for, but at this time, the news of the sources of the Aladura prophets and the Cherubim and Seraphim was well known.

Was Gideon preparing himself for an independent church of his own? This is not unlikely. When he got the Watchtower literature from South Africa, he does not seem to have identified himself with membership of the Watchtower, though he probably saw the literature as an aid to his calling. For over a year he preached and got a following without knowing of a Watchtower movement or representative in Nigeria. It is remarkable that Urhobo did not, as might have been expected, make contact with New York. Even after contact with the Watchtower in Nigeria had been accidentally made, on a literature supply basis, he remained completely independent of Watchtower control. There was evidence of a spiritual pull on him to begin a corrective mission.

The answer to his three and a half years of prayerful studies came when God called him to preach the gospel and expose false doctrines. He began with the Watchtower itself, which later resulted in his separation from the Watchtower.

The question of the reality of his call or vision is not what we may judge. He was convinced that he had received a call from God, and his reaction to it, leaving a well-paid job to go preaching from place to place, suggests he was not acting on mere impulse. His followers believed he was anointed to preach the gospel. He himself proved to be a really effective preacher and a charismatic figure. When compared with Brown, an organizational man, Urhobo was a mighty man of the scriptures. At least the Oba of Benin seems to have noted this, and Dr. Azikiwe described him as a brilliant Bible expositor. The Witnesses he came in contact with in Lagos, including his bitterest enemy, Omoneukarin, could not help saying Urhobo was commissioned to preach. Brown himself is said to have described him as an anointed servant.

Urhobo displayed two characteristics that seem to define his professional career- ambition and leadership. The two may actually be different aspects of what was a singular charismatic quality. His ambition was to be true to his calling to preach the gospel to everyone. He had seemingly inexhaustible store of energy and time to do this, but he wanted what he regarded as the truth to be preached. He wanted to go to Europe and America to carry on the work of preaching. His ambition offended those who chose to interpret it as hunger for power.

As far as one can gather from his early followers, Urhobo had cause to lead others. He saw himself as one of the remaining anointed servants to be chosen to set up the Kingdom of God. He could not see the Watchtower as fulfilling his understanding of the works of the

remnant. The remnant are to preach the truth of God's word. What he discovered in the Watchtower could not be the truth, and he made efforts, as he said, to correct the wrong teaching since the Bible says "no lie is of the truth." For him to see himself as an anointed servant through the pages of his Bible, it became necessary for Urhobo to start his own movement where his vision might be achieved. Though he did not initiate what brought about the separation from Brown and the Watchtower Movement, no doubt separation would still have come sooner or later. As J. Wilson says, schisms occur most frequently over doctrine, though of course, personal differences may be disguised by doctrinal schisms. Urhobo's charismatic qualities were much more visible while on his own. He supported his claims with skill and sensitivity. He appeared always inspired, and his preaching attracted thousands, most of whom were already Mission Church members. He now knew how to organize and reach the public. A keen advertiser and debater, he seemed well informed in the contemporary issues of his time. His position at the head of his movement was never questioned by those who relied on his direction. He was seen as an instrument used by God to lay the foundation of God's Kingdom in Nigeria. They welcomed his activity and backed him throughout in any way possible. If Urhobo was attacking other churches, it was because those who are to be saved must come to the knowledge of truth, which Urhobo only possessed. It is not in doubt that Urhobo and his G.K.S. preached the gospel in the way they knew it and energetically too.

However, a distinguishing feature of Urhobo's labour is his active secular involvement. His outlook was comprehensive rather than exclusive, something one does not often find in millennial movements like the Watchtower. He believed that Church and state must work together to serve the total needs of the people. The two main issues that compelled him to intervene in politics were not outside the scope of a religious leader—warning against violence and defending religious truths. He intervened fearlessly and without regard for his safety.

Urhobo defended God and Christianity against anti-Christian remarks of some prospective leaders. It is not in doubt that the nationalists, particularly those in the N.C.N.C., fought against two forms of imperialism, political and religious. Two movements, one political (N.C.N.C.) and one "religious" (National Church), were formed by almost the same people. And it is doubtful whether the success of the political system would not have been used to undermine the religious life of many Nigerians. By standing up against the N.C.N.C. and the National Church, Urhobo may be said to have destroyed the missionary zeal of the National Church and drawn attention to the mind of some nationalists who wanted to rule the nation. Urhobo's struggles with those leaders was a national struggle. Most national papers of the nationalist parties were involved. Prominent politicians were involved, and perhaps, as a Muslim Commentator noted, Christendom was aroused to consciousness by Urhobo. Urhobo said that Zik and Ojike challenged Christendom and that he would rather die than see the name of God challenged. Urhobo, it seems to me, achieved this goal. He wanted Zik in particular to be defeated and denied leadership opportunity. This aim was achieved, and Urhobo did not fail to publish that his prophecy on Zik came to pass. He believed that it was God who did this in answer to his prayer. Many Christians and Muslims, people he had attacked polemically, were on his side in the struggle.

A possible question emerging from this work is the relationship between Urhobo and the concept of the Messiah. Urhobo seems not to have regarded himself as the Messiah. It is evident that he defended himself against the charges that he was behaving like Jesus or Jesus himself. He saw himself simply as a Servant of God and also asked his followers to give glory to Jehovah and Jesus Christ every day, and this has become an established form

of greeting in the G.K.S. - "Hail Jehovah and Jesus Christ." That apart, he said, it was Jesus who called him to his work. His followers saw him as a king and gave him kingly honour but they added that Urhobo was one of the representatives of Christ on earth. They have not, so it is claimed, regarded Urhobo as the Messiah since the inception of the Society.

The public no doubt saw him behaving like the Messiah, and the Biblical language such as "Hosanna," applied to the Messiah, Jesus, was applied to him, more so as he was fond of riding on horseback. They could not understand that Urhobo was not behaving like Jesus. The G.K.S., by honouring Urhobo in many places by riding him on horseback, gave the public ground to suspect their leader. The public thronged Salem City to watch if Urhobo would be resurrected three days after his death. The eclipse of the sun confused the issue further and was most likely God's way of honouring him. The opinion is widespread that Urhobo said he would resurrect, but there is no one in the G.K.S., who heard Urhobo say this. However, the question remains open as to what extent Urhobo behaved in this regard. But it seems clear that Urhobo did not claim to be the Messiah to his members. The bitterness of this allegation had led the G.K.S. to bless and to curse.

Lastly, should the G.K.S. he founded be regarded as a Church? The G.K.S. members believe their organization to be a Christian Church. They believe they are serving God through Jesus Christ and by the help of the Holy Spirit. They use the Old and New Testaments, and there seems to be nothing to suggest that Jesus has been ousted from his place in the life of the Church Universal. The Society has contributed greatly to religious education of the nation, speaking from the point of view of the academic. It seems appropriate to call the G.K.S. a Christian Church. Though some contest the G.K.S. claim to be the only true church in Nigeria, the G.K.S. has lived up to this expectation since no one has succeeded in challenging her doctrines.

Gideon Urhobo did his best to promote Christianity. However, the best tribute to Urhobo was paid by an editorial comment of a daily newspaper after his death. Urhobo was hailed as

One of the enterprising Nigerians who demonstrated convincingly that the Africans can build and sustain his own organisation.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

EPILOGUE

THE HISTORY OF THE G.K.S. FROM 1952 TO 1980

The period since 1952 has been one of expansion amidst other activities. Beyond 1980, a great deal of exciting history is being made, and we shall interject a few demanding ones. Even up to the year of publication. I have followed this expansion regionally, retaining the old structure of regions for the purpose of this work. For example, when I talk of the Eastern region, I am referring to the area covered by the states, Anambra, Abia, Ebonyi, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River, Imo Bayelsa, and Rivers, that came out of the old Eastern region.

When Urhobo died in 1952, Otomewo was elected President by the G.K.S. Executive Committee, assisted by some key members from the big branches like Lagos, Warri, Port Harcourt, etc. Hitherto, he had been the Vice-President. Ebenezer Temisanren Otomewo was born in 1922 by Olaye Ejemudaro (died 1959) to Otomewo Obelikpeya (already a centenarian in 1979). His parents, like those of Gideon Urhobo, are of the Urhobo people from Agbarha (Agbassa) in Warri South Local Government Area of Delta State of Nigeria. His father, as of 1979, was the Arijio (a renowned warrior) of Agbassa. Arijio is a traditional title. In his years of vigour, Otomewo Obelikpeya was a fisherman.

Like Gideon, E.T. Otomewo attended the Government School, Warri, whence he graduated in 1940. He taught in the Ogitsi Memorial School in Okere, Warri, from 1942 to 1945. Otomewo had no Secondary School nor University education, but over the years he improved on his education through home studies. He says that he began to study religious and other matters in 1945, when he devoted his life to follow Urhobo. Otomewo did not write a book in his lifetime, but many of the booklets, pamphlets, leaflets, and some sermons of the G.K.S. are said to have been written by him. No reader of the G.K.S. materials will fail to note the depth of knowledge contained in these publications.

Before 1942, when he began to follow Urhobo after hearing the latter's preaching in Warri, he had attended the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican (C.M.S.), and the Baptist Churches, but irregularly. He says he was searching for the truth, which he believed was contained in the Holy Bible. The Bible did not teach Trinity, purgatory, or that the world would end in 1937. His Bible talked about marriage but did not condemn polygamy. It was when Urhobo preached in Warri that Otomewo discovered the truth he was searching for and put all his might later to propagate it.

In 1943, Otomewo was baptized by Urhobo at the Igbudu river, Warri. In 1945, when he had risen to Part C teacher (a promoted grade in the teaching service of his time), he resigned his teaching appointment to become fully devoted to God's work in the G.K.S. His decision to devote his life to soul-winning for Christ was not without persecution. His father, who by the 1950s had become a well-wisher of the G.K.S., harrassed him greatly by incessant scolding for following "Ukoli's mad son Gideon." (To some Warri people, Gideon was still mad in 1945). Otomewo's mother, though a traditionalist, encouraged her son to work for God. From 1945, when he entered the G.K.S. ministry, till 1951, he was the General Secretary of the G.K.S. During this time, Otomewo claims to have endured the temptation of friends and relations to leave the G.K.S. and go abroad to study Law. In May 1951, Otomewo was appointed Vice President.

Otomewo is a polygamist with three wives, Dora, Ruth, and Elizabeth, and eleven children, most of whom are university graduates. In a statement, Otomewo said,

I have no qualms for saying that I am a polygamous Church leader because no portion of the scriptures forbids polygamy. If God were against polygamy, He would have punished Jacob for being a polygamist. Rather, Jacob and his sons were blessed by God. And he was the polygamous ancestor of the twelve tribes of Israel.

One of the first acts of the G.K.S. under Otomewo was to arrange overseas training for Emmanuel Urhobo to study Law and Journalism as we have noted in chapter 3.

The G.K.S. also began to remind the nation through occasional newspaper articles about Urhobo's struggles with some Nigerian nationalists he regarded as godless. Otomewo warned the politicians to reckon with God in all they were doing. The G.K.S. was vocal in 1954 when it was time for another general election in Nigeria. The Macpherson Constitution of 1951 could not work due to many factors, one of which was the exclusion of Dr. Azikiwe from the House of Representatives." The exclusion of Zik tended to weaken the support the N.C.N.C. gave to the Constitution.

Before the 1954 elections, Otomewo preached in the main centres of Lagos, Port Harcourt, Warri, Sapele, Aba, etc. His main themes were "the reward of ungodly nationalism"," and "a warning to the Politicians". "He wanted politicians to note that "political freedom without spiritual (religious) freedom is spiritual bondage." He wanted them to remember the "godless" politicians and how they had ended up a few years later. Lastly, he advised the

politicians not to talk "godlessly, wickedly, and proudly on the soap box during campaigns". He believes that his warning was heeded by politicians during the campaigns. He congratulated some top politicians who drew the people's attention to God and the Bible while campaigning."

The 1950s saw also a great number of conversions from Jehovah's Witnesses to the G.K.S. in Port Harcourt. In 1955, Otomewo moved into Port Harcourt to preach against the Jehovah's Witnesses, who were said to be parading the streets with insulting words about Urhobo, such as thief and evil servant. Otomewo says that, on account of his preachings, several Witnesses left the Watchtower Organization to join the G.K.S. Government records and oral evidence support Otomewo's claims. In his report to the Resident, Rivers Province, the Senior Superintendent of Police, Port Harcourt noted,

I have to refer to your endorsement number C.201/ 151 of the 7th October 1955, and desire to report that for some time now there has been a tendency for members of the Watchtower Society to desert this Society for the God's Kingdom Society...

It is claimed that those who crossed over to the G.K.S. were mainly convinced that house to house witnessing was unbiblical and that polygamy was not a sin. The conversion of Watchtower people to the G.K.S. seems to have continued. The G.K.S. published, with a picture of the converted Watchtower pioneer, what they claim was a conversion of some Watchtower people, in 1974. "It may be noted that one of the attractions in the G.K.S. is the belief in polygamy, but the God's Kingdom Society claims that only very very few of their adult male members are polygamous. We could say with certain certainty one out of three hundred or two of five hundred or less five.

The 1950s witnessed a preaching tour of the G.K.S. into the Western Region of the mainly Yoruba-speaking people. It also witnessed a preaching tour to Kano and Kaduna in the Northern part of Nigeria, a predominantly Muslim area occupied by the Hausa, Kanuri, and Fulani peoples. There are also some areas occupied by mainly Christians, that is the Jos and Tiv areas. There can also be found traditional religionists in the North. But in all parts of the North, southerners who went there to work or trade are found, and among these Southerners were those the gospel of the G.K.S. mainly attracted in Kano and Kaduna. The 1960s were years of activity for the G.K.S. They issued a challenge to all churches who preached that Jesus Christ was born on December 25. A Purse containing £20, was prepared by the G.K.S. to give to any religious leader or organization, in Nigeria or abroad, who could prove from the Bible and history that December 25 was Christ's birthday. This challenge was not or has not been accepted by anybody. Dr. Billy Graham, a well-known evangelist from America, and his evangelistic team came to Nigeria in January 1960. Graham preached in some major towns in Nigeria, usually to a large crowd of people. In Lagos, he preached at the Tafawa Balewa Square to a mammoth crowd where Bishops, apostles, priests, evangelists, etc. from various churches in Nigeria were present. At one point, a woman was asked to pray for everyone. This offer was a surprise to some G.K.S. people who were in the crowd.

A few days later, the G.K.S. wrote an open letter, which was published in the press, to Billy Graham, demanding from him, among other things, why he asked a woman to lead in prayer where there were Bishops, priests, etc. The letter dated February 8, 1960, was sent by airmail express delivery to C.M.S. House, Enugul, where Graham lodged in his Eastern Nigerian tours. Graham did not reply the letter. In 1962, the letter was turned into a pamphlet, and it circulated widely in Nigeria. In 1962 Otomewo wanted to write an open

letter to Jomo Kenyatta, then the leader of Kenya. Kenyatta was said to have remarked that he would rewrite the Bible. The G.K.S. considered it unreasonable to attempt to do that and decided on writing an open letter to Kenyatta on the impossibility of such a task. But while the G.K.S. President was writing that letter, a release from Kenyatta's office in Nairobi denied the statement. What Kenyatta meant was that he hated the idea of painting angels white and devils black. He simply wanted a change to correct erroneous impressions about the African race in the Bible.

The G.K.S. would have desisted, but, as Otomewo noted, some people congratulated Kenyatta for saying he was going to rewrite the Bible. On this ground, the letter was completed but turned into a pamphlet and was titled "Jomo Kenyatta and the Holy Bible." This pamphlet was widely circulated in Nigeria simply to inform the public that the Bible could not be rewritten. Some copies were sent to Nairobi.

The other great event was the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970, in which the G.K.S. headquarters was invaded by Nigerian federal troops. When the war broke out in May 1967, there were persecutions in some parts of Nigeria, mainly against resident Igbos. (The Igbo had unlawfully declared the Independence of the Republic of Biafra over the Eastern Region.) On the 9th of August, the Biafran troops invaded the Midwest and declared it the Republic of Benin.

During the Biafran occupation of the Midwest, some Biafran soldiers confiscated foodstuffs from market stalls and beat up people who were against their presence or occupation. They also shot dead some Midwest people, among whom was one Pius Uwhubetine of the G.K.S. Sapele. These activities were no secret in the 1967 Midwest.

The result of these activities was that there was a concealed hatred for the Biafrans and the Igbo on the part of the Midwest people. And so when the Federal troops took over the Midwest, Colonel Murtala Muhammed (Later General Muhammed and head of State) who led the troops into the Midwest

... was greatly assisted by the civilian population, who were furious against the Igbos for dragging them into the war, and now full of zeal for the federal side. As a result, Igbo civilians in the region had a bad time, and in order to escape with their lives they had to fly (run) as refugees to the East with the retreating Biafran forces.

In 1967, there were 11 Igbo G.K.S. ministers living in Salem-City, Warri. Some of them were in the East preaching and settling the G.K.S. victims of the 1966 disturbances in the North in which many Igbo were killed, and some managed to escape to the East empty-handed. When the Igbo were retreating with the Biafran troops from the Midwest, the G.K.S. Igbo ministers and a few of their members remained behind. What happened was that some Warri people told the federal troops of the presence of some Igbo people living in Salem-City. The number of Igbo must have been grossly exaggerated. About a hundred troops surrounded the city and marched in. 24 Several Igbo who could not escape to the east were shot dead in the town. When the G.K.S. heard the news of the would-be invasion, the Igbo ministers were hidden outside the Salem-City. On arrival, the troops asked for the Igbo, but none of them was produced. The soldiers gave the G.K.S. a short time to produce them, or else the Salemites would be treated as Saboteurs. But, while all this was going on, Otomewo and a few of his executive ministers went to meet the commander of the Warri troops, Colonel Benjamin Adekunle. After pleading and explaining what the ministers were there for, Otomewo convinced Adekunle to withdraw the troops. But before that, some of the soldiers had badly treated some of the G.K.S. ministers of non-Igbo origin.

Otomewo was not satisfied with the assurance given by Adekunle that he would keep out the federal troops from Salem-City, and so he took a few of his executive ministers and travelled to Benin to see Colonel Murtala Muhammed himself. The gallant and kind-hearted soldier expressed his sympathy and personally issued permits for all the G.K.S. Igbo ministers to move freely in the Midwest. Though it took several months before the ministers began to move freely, they were free at last.

While the war was on, the G.K.S. sent a telegram to the then Governor of the Eastern Region, Sir Francis Ibiam, asking him to use his position as a respected leader to persuade Ojukwu, the Military Governor, to stop the rebellion and support a united Nigeria. After the war, the G.K.S. organized financial and material support for the victims; G.K.S. members in the country donated generously in kind and in cash. Bags of garri, rice, beans, yams, and plantains, bales of clothes mainly used ones, money, shoes, etc. were loaded into hired lorries to the east "... for distribution among the destitutes, members, and non- members alike." The gesture of the G.K.S. in this regard played a major role in the expansion of the G.K.S. in the eastern region to which we shall turn shortly.

The 1970s were remarkable as well. In 1973, the G.K.S. protested against a film, "Jesus Christ, a bank robber and a lover," about to be shot by a state-controlled Film Institute in Denmark. Many Christian bodies also protested against the proposed film. The G.K.S. "being committed to defend Jesus Christ and all righteousness" sent a cablegram to the Danish Government.

Shocked at news item in Nigerian Daily Times of eleventh August that your Government is giving support to your state-controlled film institute about to film Jesus Christ portraying him 'as a bank robber and a lover', we warn you in the interest of your nation to refrain from supporting such an irrelevant, blasphemous, and damnable film...

The G.K.S. then advised the Danish Government that it could use Barabas, a notorious robber in Jesus' days, or "any known convicted robber in Denmark," if it wanted, and not Jesus Christ, concerning whom the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, declared, "I find no fault in him." In 1976, the G.K.S. began the building of its biggest service hall so far, in Salem-City, Warri. The hall, measuring 170 feet long by 140 feet wide, with a balcony to seat about 300, was nearing completion in 1979. It is built in an area designated "Saint Urhobo Square." The building began with a large part of some N250,000 collected by the members to develop Salem-City. In 1979, it was claimed that more than half a million naira had been spent. Beginning from 1976, a yearly launching for the building was done by G.K.S. members. The 1979/1980 launching, which I witnessed in Lagos, Warri, and Port Harcourt according to Brother L.E. Legbedion, fetched about N274,000. Lagos alone got about N86,000; 1981/1982 was N158,000.

Care is taken to include the needs of modern-day halls and of the worshippers. For this, some G.K.S. members, who are mainly overseas-trained builders, structural engineers, town planners, and designers, travelled widely in Europe and America to get the best possible design and how to construct it.

The G.K.S. Weekly television service programme, "Watch and Pray" has brought inspiring sermons to many people in Nigeria, especially television viewers. There were, in 1979, Television stations all in colour transmission in Nigeria. From 1978, when the television services began, Lagos, Ibadan, Aba, Benin, and Port Harcourt Television Stations were being used by the G.K.S. Except for Aba, which had a 30-minute slot at that time, other stations were one hour each. Thousands of naira were to be collected to extend the

broadcast to some other Television Stations. Over twenty thousand naira was paid each week for all the programmes at that time. It was no problem to the G.K.S. to raise the money for the programme. Several important people or elite had been converted through the television programme. In Benin City, the television studio manager and an engineer who was to become the NTA Benin-General Manager were among the converted. With special references to Benin, the G.K.S. President told me that an ultramodern hall, about five times the size of the one in use then was under construction. In all, the G.K.S. has in the recent years had more converts through the TV ministry than by other sources.

For long after Urhobo's death, the G.K.S. had no vice president. The Society did not consider it necessary to have one. The Executive Board of the G.K.S. had worked in very close cooperation with the president so that no such post was necessary. But in 1979, the Society had grown so big that some responsibilities of the president should be given to someone else. It seemed Otomewo was to give more time to preaching and the vice president to administration and broadcasting. His longtime private secretary, Benjamin Oghenerume Tietie, was appointed. For 25 years, Tietie served Otomewo as both private and press secretary. Unfortunately, in a crisis that rocked the Church in the late 80s, Tietie left the G.K.S. to form his "Church". To this we shall return later.

Tietie was born in 1928 to the late Mr. German Tietie, an agent of the African Church at Aladja, a town in Udu Local Government Area of Delta State of Nigeria. He is an Urhobo by tribe. Tietie attended the African Church School, Forcados, where he completed his elementary education in 1946. In that same year, he joined the G.K.S. at Forcados, thus becoming one of the pioneers of the G.K.S. Forcados, which Urhobo organized in 1946. In that same year, Tietie and others began the G.K.S. at Aladja, his home town, and he became a Bible Study leader. He remained in that post until September 1950, when he joined Urhobo in the G.K.S. ministry.

While in the ministry, Tietie took a course in English by correspondence with Regent Institute, London, and also a course in Journalism with the School of Journalism, Reading, England and had his certificates and diploma, respectively. Tietie was appointed Private Secretary to the President in 1954 and became an intermediate minister the same year. A few years later, he was appointed the Publicity Secretary to the G.K.S. and in 1964, a Senior Minister. He was ordained Vice President on Sunday, 15th April 1979, at the G.K.S. Headquarters. As a present to him, the members all over the country bought him a 504 GL Peugeot car. Like Urhobo and Otomewo, Tietie is a polygamist with three wives, many children and several grandchildren.

The Expansion of the G.K.S.

We shall answer later the question of how and why people joined the G.K.S. Here we simply mention certain factors which contributed to the expansion. There is no history of schism or secession in the G.K.S. as is common in African Independent Churches, and there is no history of tribal rivalry as it sometimes happens after the death of a leader. Neither are there sensational crusades for events such as divine healings and miracles, which often make many conversions, though how converted is another matter.

The first factor contributing to the expansion of the G.K.S. during the first four decades or so was the presence of the Jehovah's Witnesses in several towns and villages. From the days of Urhobo, it was usual for a G.K.S. person to engage the Jehovah's Witnesses people in scriptural arguments. The commonest topics were house-to-house preaching, the role of women in preaching, the propriety of the name Jehovah's Witnesses itself, and polygamous marriages. The latter was the commonest. If a listener gives the G.K.S. person some

support, that link was vigorously exploited by friendship. G.K.S. members were usually attracted to wherever a Witness was preaching, and questions quite unconnected with the Witness' topic of the day were to start an argument. The G.K.S. members usually see themselves winning as Witnesses get confused at some point. In the language of a Daily Times correspondent who witnessed G.K.S. preachings in 1979. "You can never fault them with the scriptures..." This knowledge is, however, common in Nigeria. Several religious leaders seem to see themselves scripturally inadequate to take on the G.K.S.

When a few people in the town or area have fallen on the side of the G.K.S. person, he will ask for a minister of the Society to organize a preaching tour to that town or village.

Preachings there must be directed first against the Jehovah's Witnesses and thereafter other doctrines of the mission churches are attacked. A few more people may be interested and asked to come for more enlightenment in the home of a member. With those who turn up, a branch is formed. This method was not always successful, but it accounted for G.K.S. branches like Ughelli, Burutu, Maiduguri, Kano, Umuahia and a lot more. It occurred mainly through G.K.S. transferred people into new places.

The second factor was the Nigerian civil war, which scattered many people in Nigeria. After the cessation of hostilities between Nigeria and Biafra, most people in the affected areas returned to their homes or former places of domicile. Some regained their jobs and market stalls, while others travelled to other places to start a new life. Some of the affected G.K.S. members decided to form branches of the society. This was necessary because attending another church is a serious sin in the G.K.S. Unlike some Independent Churches, plural church membership is not permitted in the G.K.S.

The third factor is the resolve of the G.K.S. people to pave the way for the expansion of their Society. In 1971, Lagos G.K.S. members decided that the G.K.S. gospel should be taken to their towns and villages where there was none, and if there was one, more people should be converted. The decision reached was that the G.K.S. ministry be equipped with additional materials for preaching. Members in the main branches were asked to donate money generously to buy electric plant, microphones, vans and to equip the choral groups with "sophisticated electric equipment." This appeal was answered by the members, and by 1972, the Yoruba, Igbo, Ijaw, Isoko, Urhobo, Efik, Itshekiri groups, etc., had contributed and bought the above items separately. Some branches like Aba, Sapele, Benin, and Port Harcourt bought portable organs in addition. Aba and Lagos bought, in addition, Nissan and Volkswagen vans (buses) and equipped them with microphones and loudspeakers for public announcements.

The result was that some of the ministers of the Church were allocated to their ethnic areas. Thus, ministers like W.W. Tabor and J.T. Ukuta supported by Ijaw Choral Groups from Warri and sometimes from Lagos, took the gospel into the Ijaw area. Likewise, Jonathan Esimagbele, the G.K.S. Choirmaster-General, aided by the Itshekiri choral groups in Warri and sometimes from Lagos, went into the Itshekiri area. And so too, J.T. Okome, Edward Oki, Paul Adiawa and other ministers backed by various groups, such as Ukoko Ejoro' Oghene and Okpe Choral groups from Sapele and Suile Aghogho Choral groups from Warri penetrated the heart of the Isoko and Urhoboland to preach. The same thing happened in the Yoruba area with I.A. Olukowade, E.A. Adedokun, Joel Olusola, and Michael Akinwale, who were backed by various G.K.S. choral groups, mainly from Lagos. In the East, ministers like E.I. Udoji, Gideon Ugoji, M.O. Iwoh, G.O. Ifeacho, and Chukueze continued their preaching tours, which were earlier interrupted by the civil war. They were aided by the Ibo G.K.S. Orchestras scattered all over Igboland. The outcome of the members efforts was that several branches were organized in the 1970s.

The Expansion of the G.K.S. in Lagos.

Lagos was the only place of Urhobo's early activities, 1933–1940. He remained confined to Lagos mainly because he wanted to make sure that his separation from Brown of the Watchtower succeeded. But from 1940, Urhobo, in the process of his opposition to Brown, went out of Lagos to preach but still retained Lagos as his main centre. Lagos was the Capital City of Nigeria and is a combination of an island and a mainland. The island is made up of several quarters, including Ikoyi, Obalende, Lafiaji, Ereko, Idumota, Elegbata, Alakoro, and Isale-Eko. The mainland, which is bigger, is made up of several quarters, including Ebute-Metta, Yaba, Shomolu, Bariga, Maryland, Surulere, Mushin, Shogunle, Ikeja, Agege, Apapa, Ajegunle, Ijora, and Itire. Urhobo started his preaching on the island and spread into the mainland. At the time he separated from Brown, those Witnesses who followed him included some from the mainland, and they all agreed to come to Urhobo for meetings at his No. 1 Strachan Lane residence, Lagos. The distance was great.

For example, from Mushin to Lagos is 17 miles, but the members were prepared to go to any length to keep their separation from Brown. It is said that by 1952, when Urhobo died, the G.K.S. population in Lagos was nearing a thousand, but the members were still holding their meetings in the Forester's Hall, Odunlami, Lagos. But after Urhobo, changes were made regarding places of worship.

The bulk of the G.K.S. membership by 1952 was in Lagos Island, particularly in the Ikoyi and Obalende areas and some points in the city itself. By 1952, there were more than 100 members coming from Ajegunle to Lagos to attend church activities, a distance of about 12 miles. The G.K.S. then decided to have a sub-branch in Ajegunle on the mainland for Wednesday Service meetings and to go to Lagos on Sundays. At the end of 1952, it was decided that Sunday Services could also be held in Ajegunle and that the whole congregation in Lagos would assemble in Lagos the first Sunday every month. At Ajegunle, the meeting was held at the Ajegunle Customary Hall. One of the first leaders was an active youth, Festus Oke, who in 1979 was a Senior Lecturer at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Other leaders were Mr. Okinedo, Bedford, and Tugbele. Lagos Island was led by E.A. Adedokun, I.A. Olukowade, Mr. Dumbiri, K.A. Amachree, Adedeji, Johnson, etc.

As members increased, another area with about a hundred members, Surulere in the mainland, about 10 miles from Lagos Island, was in 1958 made a sub-branch. It started like Ajegunle as regards Wednesday meetings, but unlike Ajegunle, which waited for several years to start its Sunday meetings, Surulere began its Sunday Services barely two months after its establishment. The meeting was held in the Hall of Surulere Commercial College. But by 1976 the College had ceased to function and the G.K.S., to retain the use of the College, decided to rent the premises, converting the offices and some classrooms to dwelling places for some members of the church. By 1960, another area, Maroko, followed the examples of Ajegunle and Surulere. In 1979, the Ajegunle and Surulere branches were further subdivided for two main reasons: an increase in members and distance, especially as Lagos had expanded geographically since political independence in 1960. Out of the two, branches had therefore emerged: Olodi, Shomolu, Mushin, and Shogunle, but these were still confined to Wednesday Service meetings.

The general meetings of the branches with Lagos Island was still being held but no longer at the Forester's Hall. By 1968, the Forester's Hall and its premises were already becoming too tight to accommodate the combined meeting. Over one thousand chairs were hired to line the outside space, yet it became too tight. In 1970, the general meeting was moved to the Lagos City Hall, the largest in Nigeria, which accommodates several thousands at a time. For each hour the G.K.S. spent in the Hall, a fee of about N190 (£150) was paid. Sometimes

four hours were spent, and never less than two. The G.K.S. has, however, built four halls in Lagos, and the fifth, which is intended to take the place of the City Hall, is nearing completion at G.K.S. Street off Ago Palace Way, Okota. It is a massive hall but may constitute more problems than it solves. Distance may discourage some members who live in far places.

Some members did not find the continued practice of combined meetings convenient, and this could also be a potential cause of discouraging many from attending church assemblies regularly. Floods in the area might remain a possibility for sometime, though there were plans by the G.K.S. to solve this rainy season problem. However, by 1997, there were five churches of the G.K.S. at Lagos Island, Shogunle, Apapa, Okota/Surulere, and Ikorodu. Among those who pioneered the Lagos branch with Urhobo since 1934 were G.O. Ogbogolo, I.A. Olukowade, B.O. Edet, E.A. Adedokun, S.A. Sakutu, D.O. Eweje, J.O. Okhiri, T.S. Akowe, J.O. Aghoro and J. O. Ejowo, all still alive and are in the G.K.S. in 1979. Others were Kuye Obafemi, Amachree, Enyen, Wenibowei, P. E. Affen, Adedeji, J. N. S. Onabanjo, Johnson, Kumoluga, Oginni, P. E. Idiabeta, Eremosele, Ojeh, and M. A. Akpoto. Except E.A. Adedokun, who became a Senior Minister, Trustee and Spiritual Adviser to the G.K.S. Executive Board, all others have died. Some pioneers like J.O. Agho and S.G. Ebiyebi left the G.K.S. even before Urhobo died.

The Expansion of the G.K.S. in the East of Nigeria

Port Harcourt was the first branch of the G.K.S. in the East. Pioneers here included I.K. Aguh, changed to I.O. Karibo, Z.D. Ubo, Andrew Ibekwe, Samson Edosomwa, and B.A. Oji. Oji is no longer in the G.K.S. Urhobo went to Port Harcourt not necessarily to begin a branch of his Society but to disrupt the works of W.R. Brown of the Watchtower, who was raising false hope concerning the second world war. Urhobo vehemently opposed Brown over the issue of Armageddon. But while Urhobo did this in Port Harcourt, he discovered that about 12 men were prepared to begin the G.K.S. in the cosmopolitan city of the east. He remained with the 12 for a while before returning to Lagos. In 1942, Urhobo went to Onitsha and organized a branch of the Society. His main converts here are said to be mainly Catholics. The next branch in the East was Aba. Aba was organized in late 1947. The last place a branch was established in the period of Urhobo was Abonnema, in the riverine area of the Rivers State.

Between 1947 and 1955, Port Harcourt is said to have greatly increased in membership, and by 1956, the G.K.S. had built its first minister's residence and a Service Hall. The hall was designed to accommodate about a thousand or more. Before the civil war, M.O. Iwoh, a minister, architect, and builder of the church, had drawn a plan to double the intake of the hall. The problem of accommodation for all the Port Harcourt members in a hall, was temporarily solved when a branch was opened at Diobu, Port Harcourt in. But war conditions made this extension to the hall impossible. Many Igbo who constituted about three-fourths of the Port Harcourt membership of the G.K.S. left. After the war, a good number of the Igbo returned to Port Harcourt, but among those who did not return were some who had helped the G.K.S. in organizing the branches in the East in the late 1960s and early 1970s. By 1979, an extension to the hall became inevitable as more members were won to the G.K.S. Iwoh was at Port Harcourt in 1979, making plans to extend the hall after the completion of Ogu Hall. Ogu is about 26 miles away.

Before the beginning of the 1960s, there were branches at Uzuakoli, Enugu, Bonny and Degema. Uzuakoli was pioneered by one A. Iheonuekwu through a preaching organized into that town by Port Harcourt members, some 90 miles away. Through this preparatory effort a

team of ministers led by M.O. Iwoh, which included Gideon Ugoji and Onukugha, went to Uzuakoli to preach. After the preaching, it is said that more than 15 people began the branch. One Nwaogu began the G.K.S. branch at the then Eastern regional capital, Enugu. Later, ministers of the Society visited Enugu to preach. Bonny was organized by one Mr. Hart, and M.O. Iwoh, a native of Bonny, organized the Port Harcourt members to Bonny to preach. Another branch of the 1950s was Degema. The G.K.S. local leader or chairman, as the leader was called, Mr. I.K. Karibo, a native of Degema, wanted the G.K.S. branch in his home town, and he achieved this after about three preaching trips by the G.K.S. members of Port Harcourt to Degema.

In the 1960s, some branches were set up in the East. In the first half of the decade, only Umuahia was organized by a team of ministers operating through Aba, some 40 miles away. In the second half of the 1960s, when some Igbo were made to return to the East, more branches were organized. The G.K.S. said that the Church was active in 1967. I quote the G.K.S. News Bulletin for that period.

A team of ministers of the G.K.S. under the leadership of Brother E. I. Udoji has been touring some towns and villages in Eastern Nigeria and giving lectures since the beginning of the year. Others in the team are Brothers J.I. Chukueze, Gideon Ugoji, and Godwin Ifeacho.

In September 1966, there was a disturbance in Kano and later in other parts of the North, in which several thousands of Igbo were killed by some Northern soldiers serving in the Nigeria Army. According to Ojukwu, the rebel leader, 30,000 died. 61 Other estimates ranged between 5,000 and 10,000. The terror was such that hundreds of thousands of Igbo fled not only from the North but also from other parts of Nigeria to the East. A few G.K.S. members were said to be among the dead, but a lot more fled to the East. This was the situation in which Otomewo sent out a team of Igbo ministers to the East to locate the members and to help them morally, financially, materially, and spiritually, and above all to encourage them to organize themselves if there were enough of them in any particular place to start the G.K.S. branch. Between January and February 1967, the ministers preached in several places and organized new branches at Orlu and Orji, and prepared other places. When the war broke out in May 1967, the G.K.S. ministers were still in the East and were working among the members. But the frequent evacuation of the Igbo as federal troops moved deeper into Igboland, proved destabilizing for them and the members to remain united, and like those they went to help, the ministers became victims of hunger, want, and war sufferings. When the war ceased in January 1970, the G.K.S. organized relief fund, as a result of which lorries were loaded with food and clothing and were sent to the East through some Igbo ministers who remained at Warri throughout the war. The ministers included D.O. Eme, David Nwabuiku, and Peter Mazi. The foodstuffs, clothing, and money were given to members and non-members who were beginning to return to their villages and towns after the dispersions, dislocations, and displacements of war. This humanitarian gesture of the G.K.S., though other churches helped too, was to project the G.K.S. as a Church worthy of the acceptance of the 'people when it was to organize in several places in the 1970s. Some of the Igbo members returned to Warri with the ministers for a period., When it was time for the members to go back to the East, a good number of them including Andrew Ibekwe, Godwin Ochiagha, Samuel Nwaeke, Igbo Atumuto, and their families, became devoted as ministers of the G.K.S. and remained in the G.K.S. headquarters.

In December 1970, the Igbo in the G.K.S. made a special declaration of faith during the Feast of Tabernacles. I quote a portion of the declaration to show how the G.K.S. expanded as a result of the crisis of 1966 to 1970.

The scattering of our brethren to different towns, villages, and hamlets has brought with it blessings in one form or another. This has resulted in multitudes of branches of the Society springing up in many places. For instance, since the crisis, which started no later in 1966, the Society has opened up new branches in the following towns in the East Central State: Osina, Orji-Uratta, Owerri, Mbieri, Mbomiri, Obosi, Nara, Enugu-Ngwe, Umunkwe, Aguata, and Ihiagwa.

Between 1970 and 1979, more branches were organized in the East. They include Okpalla, Umuakpara, Umuozu-Isu, Oba, Nnewi, Amaokpara, Calabar, Uyo, Omoku, Ogu, Okigwe, Emuoha, Ikot-Ekop, and Umuawuka.

In the above places, Uyo and Ogu deserve some attention as examples of how some Church groups were reportedly converted en bloc to the G.K.S. The first is the Uyo branch. According to the "G.K.S. Advocate," a group of Christians at Afaha Ikot Obio Nkan in the Cross River, formerly South Eastern State, drawn from various Church denominations in the area gathered together during the civil war to invoke God's protection through constant prayer. Writing about religion and the press in Biafra during the civil war in Nigeria, Andrew F. Walls noted concerning my area of reference that not only was there a swing to Christianity by traditional religionists, but also the increase in the need for prayer. Reference was made in the article to a statement made by a Nigerian churchman that when the troubles came upon us, we turned religious overnight and "decided to pray." Many prayer groups emerged everywhere in the South East during the war to pray to God to stop the war and give them protection." There is evidence of a swing to prayer and the emergence of prayer houses. Among such groups or prayer houses was that at Obio Nkan. This group engaged constantly in prayer until the war ended.

When the war ended in January 1970, the Obio Nkan group, which had acquired land, built a hall, and collected enough funds, decided not to return to their former denominations. They desired to join with any church which God would choose for them. And so they listed the names of many churches in Nigeria and abroad, both African Independent Churches and Mission Overseas connected, and then prayed to God to choose a true church for them among those listed. The process of selection took the form of casting of lots and unanimously the lots "fell on God's Kingdom Society as their choice of the true Church." The decision for the casting of lots seems to have been influenced mainly by the opposition they received from the Mission Churches for setting up a prayer group.

As soon as the result of the lot was known, the group, about 80 in adult membership, entered into correspondence with Otomewo of the G.K.S. Eventually, in July 1971, a delegation of three men, Offiong E. Obot, Etim, A. Akpan, and Okon S. Obot, travelled to Salem-City, Warri, to narrate their story of the lots and to hand over the administration and property of the group to the G.K.S. ministry." Almost immediately, the G.K.S. organized a team of ministers to go to Uyo and preach. It is believed that preaching and subsequent ones accounted for the increase of the members at Obio Nkan, Uyo.

The next branch is Ogu. In 1966, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church Ogu seceded from its parent body at Ikot, some 120 miles away. Two reasons were given for the secession. The first was that the Ikot headquarters of the Church had collected money from the Ogu branch for many years without caring about their welfare or branch in terms of

building halls or maintaining their pastor, who was trained at Ikot. The second reason was that the teachings they had accepted from the Ikot Church were scripturally unsustainable. One teaching commonly available was polygamy, though no G.K.S. member at Ogu seems to have been interested in becoming polygamous as at 1979. For ten years, the Ogu Church remained independent and was said to be increasing in membership. In 1976 they were altogether 126 adults and had for sometime been looking for a church to join the Ogu Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. By chance, according to Pastor Peter S. Tuboareri, some of their men who travelled to Port Harcourt came across the God's Kingdom Society minister preaching and were impressed. When these men returned to Ogu they narrated their experiences, and after a few days, the Ogu Church sent two men, Solomon Cheyenaboso and Roman Alaworima, to attend the G.K.S. religious worship at Port Harcourt. The two men, one of whom was the chairman of the Ogu Episcopal, were impressed, as they narrated to me. Immediately on the same day, they made arrangements to meet the G.K.S. resident minister at Port Harcourt, Mathias O. Iwoh. Iwoh arranged for the men to go to Warri to see Otomewo. A week later, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church of Ogu sent their men to Warri, and after discussions with Otomewo and his executive ministers, they returned with a new label, God's Kingdom Society, Ogu." As with the Uyo group, everything the Episcopal had including land, houses and a hall, was given over to the G.K.S. and the G.K.S. in turn assumed the responsibility of maintaining Pastor Tuboareri and his family. When I visited Ogu in November 1979, the G.K.S. had demolished the old hall, and a bigger one was being erected under the supervision of M.O. Iwoh. A small number of the G.K.S. members at Ogu had left the G.K.S. and joined the United Native African Church and Assemblies of God's Mission, all in Ogu. The main reason was that the Holy Spirit was not, as in the Aladura Churches, given any chance to physically direct the affairs of the G.K.S. We can now move to the Midwest.

The Expansion of the G.K.S. in the Midwest

The expansion of the G.K.S. in the Midwest started in the days of Urhobo. Warri was the first branch, and that was in 1942. Pioneers of Warri included Ebenezer Otomewo, Benneth Ukekeruke, Christian Itene, Stephen Doghron, M. Okandeji, J.S. Ogisi, Aaron Eke, P. Ogbighele, Ejerowo, Ojakovo Nwajere, and Chief Akpokpokpor. Urhobo had preached here in 1942 and had got the above men and a lot more interested to be able to form his Church while persecution from his family drove him out to Onitsha. By 1948, Warri became the G.K.S. headquarters and has continued to grow in membership so that in 1979, Warri would claim not less than four thousand members. No attempt was being made to establish sub-branches. However, my oral samplings at Warri to determine members opinions about sub-branches proved that very many preferred coming to Salem-City for worship. To be in Salem-City was to be in a holy land.

The next branch was Sapele, one of Nigeria's ports and centre for the world's second-largest plywood factory. Sapele was pioneered by M.O. Ikoba (died 1979). Like Warri, it was organized in 1942 as a result of the preachings of Urhobo. A few people, including Isaiah Jebba and S. Ojarikre, are said to have joined Ikoba in his house at Urban area (an area with over 500 houses but no motorable street until 1975) to begin the G.K.S. branch. Urhobo stayed briefly with Ikoba and his friends and taught them G.K.S. doctrines. From Onitsha, Urhobo was visiting Warri and Sapele to preach and was said to be converting people. Since its establishment, the growth of Sapele has continued. This growth was attributed mainly, especially after 1948, to the transfer of Samson Bazunu, a U.A.C. worker from Forcados to Sapele. Bazunu (died 1975) according to the G.K.S. used his influence as a U.A.C. manager

who was in direct contact with many rubber and timber dealers, to get many people interested in the G.K.S. By 1960, Sapele was said to be about two thousand in membership and by 1979 from my rough estimate should be about a thousand plus. In 1958 the G.K.S. acquired a vast but partly swampy piece of land for the use of the Church. That same year much of the swampy area was reclaimed by the aid of the Sapele refuse disposal unit. In 1961, a service hall was built there. The rest of the land was apportioned to some members to farm as gardens for yams, vegetables, and so forth. In 1979, the G.K.S. Sapele was still collecting donations from members there towards an extension to the hall to double its intake. Branches at Burutu, Forcados, Aladja, and Ughelli have already been treated as part of our history. The branches were still growing in membership, but none of which had in 1979 exceeded three hundred, an admittedly slow growth compared with other newer branches.

After Urhobo's death, branches were organized in Edjekota, Kokori, Benin-City, Ovir-Olomu, and Irri, all by 1954 and Ayagha. Adadja, Oleh, Patani, Bomadi, and Agbor were founded in 1955, and between 1956 and 1960, Ekakpamre, Aden, Ovworigbala, Ogume, Obiaruku, Ozoro, Ofagbe, and Orokpokpor. In the 1960s, new branches were established at Abraka, Jesse, Ajawini, Egbo, Orogun, Elume, Pame, and Aghalope. In the 1970s, new branches were established in Obi-Ayagha, Orerokpe, Uromi, Urhonigbe, Sabongida Ora, Okwagbe, Siluko, Orho-Agbarho, Ofomo-Okparabe, Ubuluku, Koko, Otagba-Ogbe, Ogbe-Ijaw, Ofoni, Igueben, Mereje, Ogharefe, Onicha-Olona, Iluo-Ologbo, Ogulaha, Ojobo, and Sampou. The Benin-City branch of the G.K.S. is claimed to have increased fivefold in membership as a result of the T.V. religious broadcast of the G.K.S., which began there in April 1978. In 1977, membership was just a little above a hundred, but in 1979, the branch was not less than six hundred.

In 1960, some of the ministers of the Church who were well known as public preachers left the G.K.S. ministry. The ministers were, F. Nzeaka, Jonah Erayen, Abel Orakpo, F.O. Uguru, Michael Urherhe, and N. Onukugha. They left because they were tired of being ministers. Another set of ministers were excommunicated from the Society for some indiscipline. The ministers were Gaius Ehiwele, Samuel Ayeyan, J.T. Jas Amayigha, then the Choirmaster-General and composer of the G.K.S. Hymnbook and Jonathan Okechukwu. Some of the ministers named above came back into the G.K.S. but only one into the ministry. He was Jonathan Okechukwu. Uguru, Onukugha, Urherhe and Amayigha were serving as laymen. The rest were still out of the G.K.S. in 1979.

The creation of new branches slowed down as a result of the war in Nigeria from 1967-1970. Several people were dislodged by the invasion of the Midwest by the Biafran troops. The ministry of the G.K.S. did not do any outside preaching throughout the war but concentrated more on the circulation of G.K.S. sermons and bulletins. The 1970s saw a good number of branches spring up as a result of a decision taken by members to expand the G.K.S.

The Expansion of the G.K.S. in the Western States.

What took Urhobo to the West in 1951 was his fight against some Nigerian politicians. Urhobo did not preach his gospel anywhere in the West apart from Ibadan, nor was any branch existing in the West before his death. In fact, what he preached at Ibadan was his political thoughts. (See Chapter 13.)

In 1953, the G.K.S. decided on proselytising among the Yoruba and the first place visited under the leadership of Otomewo was Ilesha, the main centre of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Nigeria at that time. The G.K.S. bulletin of 1967 recalled the events thus:

Though the crowds of Ilesha confessed in 1953, and subsequent years when the ministers of G.K.S. stormed the town with handbills and lectures, that the truth is in G.K.S. yet they did not respond to the call of Christ Jesus. Only very few of them converted. Rather, it was the preachments of false prophets who deceived them...that they believed.

In 1967, the G.K.S. decided to close the minister's residence, occupied in turn for many years by ministers I.A. Olukowade (now late), E.A. Adedokun, Joel Ukotsovbera (now late), E.E. Oghoghome (now late), W.W. Tabor, and Joel Olusola.

On the 21st of November 1979, I attended the Wednesday Service meeting of Ilesha branch and found a little less than 50 members being led by one Gbadebo Olowokere, and one Ezekiel Oladiran. I insisted on meeting two former members, Mr. Oye and Apostle Ponjuolosu. Oye was the famous interpreter of Otomewo in 1953. According to Oye, church services generally no longer appealed to him and that he saw nothing wrong in G.K.S. teachings. He would prefer to serve God in his closet. But it seems to me through discussion that Oye has a point of disagreement with the G.K.S. When Ponjuolosu left the G.K.S., he joined one of the Aladura movements in Ilesha and was made an Apostle. He told me that the G.K.S. did not allow the Holy Spirit to work through him for the benefit of the G.K.S. Ponjuolosu wanted to pray and heal, a practice which the G.K.S. would see as devilish. In 1957, a branch was opened at Ibadan, the Western State Capital. This branch, though it had its pioneers, like Eyankwaires, had suffered many setbacks. It has been a branch mainly of G.K.S. people transferred into that city from various parts of Nigeria for work. As they came into Ibadan, so they went out to other places. Members like R.M. Imoh, E.O. Ayuyah, B. E..Ajuyah Moses Omatsheye, M.I. Koko, Michael Uduefe, Ruth Uduefe and a lot more were once at Ibadan. But there was a fairly stable membership, including Young Edike, O. Odewunmi, and I.E. Samson. Joel Olusola has been in charge of Ibadan and the other branches in the West for some years now. Olushola told me that the Yoruba tended to love prayer churches and so not many of the Ibadan people were in the branch. 82

In the 1960s, through Olusola and other ministers with the help of Lagos Yoruba G.K.S. members, Ile-Ife, Oshogbo, and Akure were formed. In the 1970s, other places, Ondo, Ijebu-Ife, Odogbolu, Igbotako, Okitipupa, and Ijebu-Ode, had been added. One of the rapidly developing branches of the G.K.S. as Olusola claimed and which I visited myself, was Ondo, one of the main Yoruba towns in Ondo State. Ondo branch was pioneered by one of the ministers, F.O. Uguru, who deserted the church ministry in the early 1960s. F.O. Uguru in his early 60s could hold his audience as long as he wanted with his forceful preaching of the gospel. The membership here was large. It is however, said that the Western branches were increasing, and this was attributed to the G.K.S. television programme which began in the Western States in 1979. While Tietie preached in English. E. A. Adedokun and later Joel Olusola preached in Yoruba on the G.K.S. TV programme, 'Watch and Pray'.

The Expansion of the G.K.S. in the North and Overseas

In the days of Urhobo, no effort was made to penetrate the Muslim Northern States. However, by 1957, a strong and what was described as "an energetic campaign" was organized and led by President Otomewo to Kano and Kaduna. The G.K.S. leader was invited there by some G.K.S. Igbo who were once at Port Harcourt and had an intention to start a branch of the G.K.S. Among the G.K.S. members in Kano in 1957 were Christian Itene, E. Oluku from the Midwest and from the East, J.N. Chibuike (now dead), and P.A. Okwudili. It is said that at different times and places, these G.K.S. members had proved to other people, mainly Igbo traders, that the Jehovah's Witnesses were not as advanced in the

scriptures as the G.K.S. It became a point of duty for the G.K.S. members to advance to anywhere Witnesses were preaching and to ask questions such as "What scriptural authority have you to preach from house to house?" or "Why do you allow your women to preach the gospel?" or "What have you to say about polygamy?" The G.K.S. men were fortunate to convince one of the richest Igbo traders in Kano, Mr. E.O. Ikara, who later asked for the G.K.S. leader to come to Kano. At Kano, Otomewo and his team of ministers were accommodated at No. 7 Gold Coast Road, the house of Ikara. With Ikara behind it, the campaign of Otomewo appeared to many Igbo as an Igbo religious affair. The preachings of Otomewo, which were also extended to Kaduna won several converts. Ikara told me at his home town, Orlu (he left Kano for Orlu during the 1966 disturbances in the North) that before 1960 there were as many as 500 members. Of this number, over 400 were Igbo. He said that many people were convinced that the G.K.S. was preaching the gospel. They saw for the first time that the doctrines of the Ascension of Mary and Her Perpetual Virginity were unscriptural. He did say, however, that his influence among Ibo traders was a major factor in establishing the Kano branch; very few Hausa were attracted, as he said.

At Kaduna, Otomewo preached for a while and returned to Kano. As there was no such preparation as in Kano, Otomewo did not convert many, but the branch was able to start with the few, who were mainly Southern Nigerians in Kaduna. The branch was coming up well before the civil disturbances and war broke out in 1966-1967. Some of the converts, especially the Igbo, left. This fate was also suffered by the Kano branch. A minister of the G.K.S., J.T. Okome, an Urhobo by tribe, was in Kano when the disturbance of 1966 broke out and claims to have saved the lives of some Igbo by hiding them for a while until a safe escape route was available.

In the 1960s, three branches were organized through a series of preachings to some towns in the North by J.T. Okome. They were Lokoja, Zaria, and Maiduguri. Maiduguri was pioneered by two G.K.S. members, Matthew Okolobe from Sapele and E.O. Ayuya from Kaduna N.B.C. to N.B.C. Maiduguri. Members were mainly Igbo traders who came back to Maiduguri after the civil war and some Midwesterners who were themselves trading. In the 1970s, a few more branches were established. They are Jos, Kainji (New Bussa), and Sokoto. The new branches are still struggling to survive. They are mainly for Southerners living in the North. Ayuya mentioned that it was unnecessary for the G.K.S. to try to convert Muslims. The mission of the G.K.S. in the North would, on the basis of Ayuya's opinion, mean that of the conversion mainly of Southern people in the North of Nigeria. But in Jos, the G.K.S. is making great strides in converting some of the mainly Christian Tiv people. Jos seems to be a branch of the future with some hope of an increase in membership.

Overseas, there are branches in London, New York, and Bonn in West Germany. These branches were organized by mainly G.K.S. students. The London Branch started with a few G.K.S. students, including Emmanuel Urhobo, before 1960. They first met to discuss and later organized for service. It is clear that by 1960 the G.K.S. was already in London. Some members included Patrick Okotie, Young Odebala, Isaac Urie, and the late Ekwenbibì. H.W. Turner says that in 1964, the God's Kingdom Society was advertising itself as the "first African Evangelical Christian Organization outside the Continent..." So far no European had become a member, but there were non-Nigerian blacks. Meetings are held once per month and attended by G.K.S. students from Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Sheffield, Bradford, etc. The place of worship is the Lambeth Methodist Church Hall, Lambeth Walk, London. Olugbenga Kuye Obafemi has been active in the London branch.

The New York branch is also limited to G.K.S. Nigerian students in the United States. The branch began in 1964 but, unlike London, remained unorganized in terms of regular service meetings. The main problem is that of distance between students, but once in a while or quarterly they assemble in New York. The number was not more than 22 in 1979. I met two of them, James Obiese and Edafe Oddo, at Warri during the G.K.S. Feast of Tabernacles in 1979. Bonn in Germany is said to be a branch, with a few perhaps not more than 8, under the leadership of one D. G. Scott-Emuakpor.

By September 1999 the G.K.S. had been registered as a church in Detroit, Michigan, with some members named trustees. These include Brother Dr. Samuel Imarhiagbe, Brother Emmanuel Owirri, Brother and Sister Charles Jessa. Due to logistics disadvantages, members resolved to converge occasionally for fellowship. The inaugural assembly was held in Detroit on Sunday, September 2000, and by December, the members converged in Atlanta, Georgia to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

BELIEFS AND TEACHINGS OF THE G.K.S.

Introduction

The main source for the material here is the literature published by the G.K.S. many of which are doctrinal discussions as taught by Urhobo himself. In addition to this main source, information has been secured from individual leaders, particularly the President.

The G.K.S. tends to adopt an interpretation which is peculiarly their own, using Biblical citations to back up every statement while at the same time using the same terminology with the mainline churches. Where they are at variance with other Christians is exactly where they feel strongly convinced that they are right and are certainly not to be shaken by question or moved by argument.

No attempt is made here to compare their teachings with other new religious Movements in Africa. While the G.K.S. is mainly concerned with the doctrines of christianity, most of the Independent Christian Movements in Africa are mainly pre-occupied with divine healing, special form of prayers, speaking in tongues, anointing with oil, blessing of water to make it holy, laying hands on the sick to cure them, the use of candles, incense, pilgrimage to mountain tops, etc.

Some of the differences between the two organisations are as follows:

(i) The Holy Bible

The G.K.S. believes in the Holy Bible as the word of God and is made up of 66 books, and that it was written under the inspiration of God. It says,

*What makes the Bible more distinguished among
other books is not only for the fact that it expresses God's will and purpose towards mankind
but also because it was written under the inspiration of One
(God) whose Wisdom and Power are infinite.*

God himself began the process of producing what is now the Bible when he called Moses the prophet up into the mountain (Sinai) to receive instructions from Him for the children of Israel. And so, it was "Moses... who wrote the first 5 books of the Bible—namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy." Apart from Moses, several others, including

kings, statesmen, herdsmen, men of learning, and men without secular learning were at various times and circumstances inspired by God's spirit to write.

The G.K.S. do not suppose that any understanding of the Bible can be gained through reason or personal reading without the help of the spirit of God. They say,

Owing to the divine nature of the Bible and the highly spiritual inditement of its contents, it requires the direction of the spirit of God to be able to grasp the significance of its allegories, prophecies, symbolisms and other sublime revelations... So anyone who has not the inspiration of the Almighty no matter how academically bookish he may be, cannot understand or interpret the Bible correctly.

It is believed that only a few Christians are favoured with this inspiration of the Almighty, and from those few other Christians can understand what the will of the Lord is. The inspiration to understand and interpret the Bible correctly in Nigeria is found only in the G.K.S. This explains why the G.K.S. speaks of itself as the only "true Church of Christ" in Nigeria." The claim has been an open challenge in Nigeria, which, as far as the writer knows, no other church has accepted.

As far as "all matters of faith and doctrines" are concerned, the Bible is the only "guidebook of authority to Christians." And so, "If anybody tells you to accept a dogma whose authority is derived from a source outside the Bible, never must you give in." This last point leads the G.K.S. to say that any other book, such as the Quran, the Church traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, described as of "equal effect and reverence" with the Bible for the Catholics, are not inspired or authoritative in religious matters.

While some translations of the Bible, for example, Moffat, the Emphatic Diaglott, and the New English Bible are sometimes used when they appear to favour their interpretation, the G.K.S. still look at the King James Version of the Bible as the only truly inspired Bible. While an investigator into G.K.S. use of the Bible may tend to conclude that more use is made of the Old than the New Testament, it is the view of the G.K.S. that,

Anyone who believes in the New Testament must equally believe in the Old because the New testified to the vital importance, reliability, and indispensability of the Old Testament. It is both the Old and the New that make up 'all scripture, 'which Paul says is given by inspiration of God..."

(ii) Who is Jehovah?

God has a name with which he distinguished himself from all his creatures, including Jesus, who is believed to have been created by God. That name is Jehovah and is in the Hebrew language, meaning self-existing one. The G.K.S. writes: "In both heaven and earth, He (Jehovah) alone is uncreated; He has neither beginning nor end." Psalm 90:2 is cited to show that God lives from everlasting to everlasting.

Before anything was created, it is said, "God was certainly upon nothing," during which period he covered himself with light (Embodiment of uncreated light) as with a garment. When he started to create, it was the Logos (Word, standing for Jesus) he made first. This Word, says the G.K.S. was

an angel who was later made flesh or human for the purpose of redemption of sinful mankind and is known today as Jesus Christ.

God is seen as a spirit personality having all parts of the human body, but as a spirit, he has no flesh, blood, and bone. It is thought by the G.K.S. that "angels are spirits too, but they are persons," so God himself must be in like manner. The angels have spirit forms that are invisible to humans, but they can materialize if they choose or have to. Paul is quoted to show that "there is a natural body and there is a spiritual body." (1 Corinthians 15:44). Several more reasons are given by the G.K.S. to prove that God is a personality. We may mention three only. First, in giving interpretation to Genesis 1:26-27, which says that God made man in His image after His likeness, the G.K.S. says:

Jehovah made man in His image after His likeness: The word image means form, resemblance, or an imitation of the external form of an object. The fact that man, who is God's image, is a person having a body and shape proves conclusively that the creator W(terul auast od Himself is a person.

Second, Stephen is quoted in Acts of the Apostles chapter 7:55–56 as saying that he saw heaven opened and the Son of Man (Jesus Christ) standing on the right hand of God. On the strength of this quotation, the G.K.S. argues that it does not "make sense to say that Christ stood or sat at the right hand of God if He, God, has not a body or form or is not a person." And third, a prophet of God, Micaiah, is quoted in 2nd Chronicles Chapter 18:18 as saying, "... I saw the Lord sitting upon His throne and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and upon His left hand." Like the second point, the G.K.S. argues that if God is without shape, form, or body, he would certainly not have occupied a seat or throne.

Jehovah has four infinite attributes, and the G.K.S. sees them as Wisdom, with which he created the heavens and the earth; Power, with which he destroyed the first world with a deluge of water, saving Noah and seven members of his family; Justice, which he showed when he sentenced Adam to death for violating his perfect law in the Garden of Eden; and Love, which he demonstrated by sending his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to come and shed his blood to redeem mankind from sin and death.

The question of God's existence, in the view of the G.K.S., need not be discussed, at least, in Africa because God's existence is taken for granted here. Urhobo once preached that before Christianity came to Africa with the Bible as God's direct message to man, Africans had called on God represented in images and worshipped him, though all were in ignorance. The G.K.S. says that "to disbelieve or doubt or to be ignorant of God's existence is folly at its worst." The Church makes the point that no man can, by academic research or scientific instruments, find out God or understand him. It is only through the revelation of God, and this understanding of God's existence is "highly spiritual and requires faith."

(iii) Who is Jesus Christ?

The G.K.S. believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God Almighty who, in manifestation of His love towards mankind, sent him down to earth to shed His blood for the remission of sin. Jesus, it is believed, had been in heaven as

the Chief of the angels of God in heaven who were sent by God to communicate with the holy men and prophets of old, Moses Abraham, Jacob, David, Jeremiah, etc., and deliver them from troubles on certain occasions.

The G.K.S. says that Jesus Christ was the first creation of God. (Revelation 3:14), God made Him by the word of his mouth, and after this, God addressed Him. "Let us make a man

in our image after our likeness..." (Genesis 1:25-27). It was therefore Jesus Christ "who became the creative instrument through whom the Father Almighty God created all other good things." Paul is quoted to say that God "created all things by Jesus Christ." (Eph. 3:9). At a point in time, man fell away from the favour of God because of his disobedience to God's just law in the Garden of Eden, and God sentenced him to death. As a result of the sentence of death passed upon man by God,

It became necessary that the blood of a perfect man should be shed according to God's purpose (Deuteronomy 19:21; Hebrews 9:22) to redeem man from sin and restore him to perfection. It was impossible to get such a perfect blood from the offspring of Adam since they were all born in sin... It was to this end, Jesus Christ, through the infinite power of Jehovah, the Almighty Father was transformed from the spirit plane to human in the womb of Mary, the Virgin, and born into this woeful world.

Christ was baptized by John the Baptist at the River Jordan, after which He began His preaching and doing of many good works, such as opening the eyes of the blind, the lame were made to walk, etc. At about the age of 33½ years, He was killed by ungodly Jews, and hanged not on a cross but on a tree. God resurrected Him on the third day as a divine being and not as human. Peter is quoted for the opinion that Christ's resurrection was a divine one because he said, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." 1st Peter 3:18

(iv) The Holy Spirit

The G.K.S. view of the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit is neither God nor even a god. In his booklet, Falsehood of Trinity, Otomewo says thus:

The Holy Spirit does not mean a person, creature or being in any part of the scriptures, but it means the invisible force or power of Jehovah God, which is entirely devoted to righteousness—the pure force and power of God which works in and directs God's servants in the execution of their righteous and spiritual duties.

As we noted when we discussed the place of Jehovah in the G.K.S., the Holy Spirit is believed to be responsible for the inspiration of the writing of the Bible. The G.K.S. is clearly sure that its founder, Gideon Urhobo, got the Holy Spirit from God. This bestowal enabled Urhobo to understand and interpret the Bible.

In any case, what Urhobo believed and taught and is still being perpetuated by the G.K.S. seems very far from what most Christians in their understanding would normally expect from the Holy Spirit.

(v) The Trinity

The G.K.S. is Unitarian, for it does not believe in the Trinity. Unlike the G.K.S., many independent churches in Africa, for example, the Kimbanguists, the Church of the Lord, Aladura, etc., believe in the Trinity doctrine. The G.K.S. thinks that it is misleading from the point of view of the scriptures to say that God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one indivisible entity, co-equal and co-eternal. God, in their interpretation, has no beginning, and this appears to be what the Bible says in Psalm 90:2, that God lives from everlasting to everlasting. The Son was created and this is what the Bible appears to say in Revelation

3:14, cited by the G.K.S. to say that Jesus was the beginning of the creation of God. The Holy Spirit, as we have seen, is the force or power of God, and the G.K.S. sees no proof in the Bible to assign personality to the Spirit. The Society therefore recognises God and Jesus as persons, individuals like the ordinary way of Father and Son; otherwise, "when Jesus was sent to this earth and even in the womb of Mary, there was no God in heaven".

There are, however, several passages in the Bible which in the view of G.K.S., militate against the generally accepted view of the Trinity. Jesus is quoted in John 14:28 as saying that "My Father is greater than I." Another passage is John 6:38, where Jesus says, "For I came from heaven not to do my own will but the will of Him that sent me." Jesus seems to imply in the two passages just cited that He was lower and subordinate to God, whom he addressed as Father. Further, the G.K.S. argues that when Jesus was baptized, a voice came from heaven declaring upon Jesus a son beloved of his father and that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus. Here, the three subjects, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, acted separately. Even the prayers of Jesus to God when he was on earth might raise the question of co-equality.

There are equally weighty passages of the scriptures which seem to afford countenance to the Trinity doctrine. Jesus made a statement in John (John 10:30) that "I and my Father are one." The problem with this statement is that the Holy Spirit is not mentioned. This would have given way to Unitarianism (two persons in the Godhead), but this has been a doctrine of the church. Concerning John 10:30, the G.K.S. believes or explains what they believe Christ meant. Jesus was talking about the unity of purpose between him and his father and never of one substance or co-equality. This interpretation seems to me more reasonable because John, in another passage (John 17:21-22), represented Jesus as praying to God to make all believers one as he was one with the Father, and that the Father, Son, and all believers also to be one.

Another favourable Bible text is 1st John 5:7, which says, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." The G.K.S. looks at this passage as an addition to God's inspired word or, at worst, an interpolation and says that it has been exposed to be false. The G.K.S. quoted Benjamin Wilson's The Emphatic Diaglott to say that verse 7 of 1st John 5

... is not contained in any Greek manuscript... It is not cited by any Greek ecclesiastical writer nor of the Latin Fathers: It is therefore evidently spurious.

In his comment on this passage, Matthew Henry says that there are contests and controversies about the genuineness of verse 7. He noted further that many old Greek manuscripts do not have it, but admitted that some writers claim that this is genuine. The G.K.S. has, however, tried to explain away a seemingly important prop for the Trinity. Though the doctrine is old and there seem to be traces of it in the Bible, contention will continue to attend to it as long as it is declared incomprehensible for lack of accepted proofs. In any case, based on scriptural texts alone, a case can be made for the G.K.S. claims and those of the trinitarians. We may note that many learned theologians have doubts concerning the trinity doctrine.

(vi) The Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God, understood in a general sense, means a society in which God's will will prevail. Jesus came to inaugurate the Kingdom, and it was both a present reality and a future hope. But some Christians believe that the Kingdom is only a future reality and its

coming is expected anytime, especially at this age. To some other Christians, the Kingdom of God would be established through the Christian reforming power at the end of an age to come. While G.K.S. believes the Kingdom has come, she holds that its full establishment will be preceded by the destruction of the wicked. The G.K.S. defines God's Kingdom as,

the universal empire or government of righteousness and peace covering both heaven and earth, to be inhabited by Spirit persons and human beings, under the control race of Jehovah, the Almighty God.

The message of this Kingdom was brought by Christ as the hope of salvation for the world. The promise of it was made to the prophets of old, but it was the responsibility of Christ to bring it about. Thus, in his earthly presence, Christ asked his disciples to seek it first above all things, and their needs shall be accomplished. The G.K.S. believed that God's Kingdom, unlike the kingdoms of this world, which rise and fall, "knows no decline nor decay—it's an everlasting, perfect government."

The G.K.S. believes that like some governments of this world, God's Kingdom would have its leaders, cabinet, ministers, and a capital city.

The Holy Bible clearly shows that God Almighty has appointed and crowned Jesus Christ (1914) as the head and King of his glorious government... Isaiah the prophet prophesied, 'for unto us a child (Jesus) is born, unto us a Son (Jesus) is given, the government shall be upon his shoulder (Isaiah 9:6-7).

The capital of God's Kingdom

...is Mount Zion in heaven. It is the seat of Christ the King... With Christ in heaven, apart from the holy angels, are those who constituted his cabinet. These are the anointed Christians, the saints numbering 144,000, chosen from among men on earth beginning from the twelve apostles. They make up the Little Flock as distinct from other countless disciples who are the other sheep of John 10:16.

The G.K.S. is convinced that the selection of those to inherit heaven would be completed before God's anger is poured upon the wicked. The selection has been on for a long time, beginning from the Apostolic age until 1918, when those chosen that were dead were resurrected and taken into heaven. From 1918 onwards, God began to select and detail the remaining number of this class to set up the true Church and to preach about the Kingdom. Thus, Urhobo was chosen in 1933 to preach the truth so that those who joined him will be the branch of the universal kingdom in this part of the world.

As for the earth,

There are countless numbers of others—men and women—who will be saved. But the point is that their place in God's Kingdom is not heaven but the earth made glorious, a paradise wherein abounds perpetual happiness for the saved ones.

But unlike the Watchtower Society, which says that only the Witnesses would be saved, the G.K.S. teaches that Christians in other parts of the world will be saved as long as they belong to a church formed by one of the remaining saints in this world. The G.K.S. knows two classes of people who will dwell on earth. The first class is made up of all the holy men

and women, the ancient worthies who lived and died before Christ's first advent on earth, and the dead faithful Christians of all ages. The second class is made up of

...a great multitude of faithful Christians whom no man would number that will survive the battle of the Lord and enter the third world.

But before the battle of the Lord, the holy men and women will be "raised to life at the resurrection of the dead to become heirs of and great rulers in God's Kingdom on earth." After this resurrection

the final end of this evil world will be marked by the greatest tribulation and conflict that the world has ever known...

The G.K.S. says that it is during this battle that the devil and all his visible and invisible followers (the demons and the willfully wicked persons) will be destroyed by God—a perpetual destruction. The millennium will then follow, and so much is recorded for this event that we should quote at length for a full grasp of their opinion.

The millenium, which is the reign of Jesus Christ for a thousand years, will begin after the battle of the great day, Revelation 20:4-6. It is at this time that there will be a general resurrection of the just and the unjust. While the just will be rewarded with everlasting life in the bliss of paradise on earth, the unjust, who either did not serve God before their death or worshipped Him but not in truth, will be punished according to their sins. Daniel 12:1-3; John 5:28-29; 2nd Timothy 4:1; 1st Peter 4:5-6. This (Punishment) serves as a second chance for them to know God, show their obedience and subjection to Him and Christ, and it all bespeak the justice and mercy of God. And of them who prove obedient will at the end of the 100 years (see Isaiah 65:20) be given eternal life, but the disobedient ones will be sentenced to the second death, which means everlasting destruction. Revelation 20:12-15, 21:8 57

In addition to this presentation of future events, the sources of which are believed to be the Bible, the G.K.S. thinks that the world will be reconstructed by Christ. This means the removal of all the vestiges of the old world and the rebuilding of the earth into a paradise like the beautiful Garden of Eden. Isaiah 60:13 and Ezekiel 36:33-38 are cited to support this future event. The work of reconstruction will span over a thousand years, and once this has been accomplished, Jesus Christ, the "honorary contractor," will hand over the entire Kingdom to his father, Jehovah. And in the language of Saint Paul, "God may be all in all." In this glorious kingdom of God, all wild beasts shall live in peace and harmony with men. Also, the wolf shall dwell together with the lamb, the cow and the bear shall feed, the lion shall eat straw, and dust shall be the serpent's meat, for all of them "shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." (God's Kingdom).

At the end of one thousand years, people shall then speak properly about "the new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." It is at this time that,

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain for the former things (in the present evil world) are passed away... (Revelation 21:4)

What we have said so far about the Kingdom is described by the G.K.S. as "hidden wisdom which the rulers and intellectuals of the world do not know of." But in whatever way one may look at the G.K.S. teaching on God's Kingdom, it may be important to point out that there are several Bible passages which seem to give striking expression to millennial ideas. These could be found in Revelation and the book of Daniel.

(vii) Salvation

The G.K.S. believes that salvation means "complete deliverance from sin and death." And that "anyone who is saved is one to whom God through Jesus Christ has given everlasting life," a condition which is still future. In short, no one should feel saved at any time because the future declares one's position whether he would be saved or not. The G.K.S. holds very strongly that "any Christian believer who later turns to be an apostate having caused his faith to be overthrown (by disbelief) is not worthy of salvation."

The G.K.S. has outlined conditions under which salvation can be obtained. We look at four major embracing ones. First, the belief of the Christian must be genuine in the sense that "it is based on the unadulterated truth of Christ." The reason is because it is the express will of God that all those to be saved "must come to the knowledge of the truth." Any belief therefore that is built "on false doctrines cannot lead to salvation." Second, the belief must be adorned with Christ-like virtues such as love, faith, patience, gentleness, goodness, meekness, and so forth. Third, the belief must be constant and unwavering: "for we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." (Hebrews 3:14), and fourth, the belief must be demonstrated by works of love and righteousness in support of the truth. The first condition is the most important to the G.K.S. and indispensable to salvation. The others are important only to the extent that they are made fruitful by the first.

(viii) Hell and Heaven

The belief is strong among Christians like the Roman Catholics that there is fire in hell burning the wicked forever. Most independent churches in Africa also closely associate it with fire for the punishment of sinners everlastingly. Heaven, on the other hand, is believed by many Christians as a literal place where God lives and where the saved would enjoy their reward, and live in bliss forever and ever. Even today,

many theologians are now attempting to redefine heaven and hell in this-worldly terms not as places where humans survive after death but as states of mind and modes of being that begin here on earth.

The G.K.S. believes in literal heaven, and in fact there are other heavens apart from the one inhabited by God. It is said, "no one who has a clear insight into God's revelation as contained in the Holy Bible will ever doubt the reality of the existence of heaven." God created the heavens, and the Bible describes the firmament as heaven and so the G.K.S. believes that it must be somewhere up there. The cloudy region of the air where birds fly is spoken of as heaven, and that the Bible speaks of the third heaven where Jesus ascended after his resurrection (2nd Corinthians 12:1-2). This is where God himself lives.

Hell is said to be the pit, tomb, grave, or heart of the earth, and no fire is there because Christ went there when in fact he was never a sinner. The word hell is derived from the Hebrew 'Sheol' and the Greek word 'Hades', and it means the common grave of mankind. Another Greek word is translated as hell or hell-fire. That word is 'Gehenna'. The G.K.S.

believes that hell, as grave, harbours all the dead because both good and bad would come from the grave on the day of resurrection. (John 5:28–29).

Having said that, we must make references to at least a passage of the Bible which seems to imply the existence of a fiery hell. A commonly cited story is that of Lazarus and the rich man. Lazarus, a poor beggar, was deemed righteous, while the rich man was wicked. But what made them so is not stated. Luke 16:22-24 says as follows:

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died and was buried. And in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torments and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he said Father Abraham, have mercy on me ... for I am tormented in this flame.

The G.K.S. however, describes this story as parabolical and therefore cannot admit of literal interpretation. For instance, hell is not literally within speaking distance of heaven to enable such a real conversion to take place. Again, if the rich man were in a literal burning lake of fire, how could Abraham send Lazarus to cool his tongue, as further reading of the story shows, with just a drop of water on the tip of his finger? Moreover, the G.K.S. sees no reason to regard Abraham's bosom as heaven. In their further interpretation, the rich man stands for "false religious leaders" who rejected Jesus and later killed him". Lazarus, which means God's help, stands for all the people of God—lovers of truth and righteousness—who need the help of God but unfortunately came "under the dominion of bogus religious leaders who fed them with untruths symbolized by crumbs in the parable." The rich man tormenting in the flame (fire) represents the bitterness in the hearts of religious leaders today when the G.K.S. and perhaps the Watchtower, expose their false doctrines, evil works etc.

While the G.K.S. interpretation appears very subjective, a much more convincing argument against a fiery hell is made when the love of God is considered. The G.K.S. says that, if it is taken that God punishes evil doers with everlasting fire, then he may no longer be termed a merciful God. The teaching, it is said, would portray God as a heartless and cruel father, and no one could imagine how God, who is infinitely kind and loving, can keep human creatures to be tormented in sharp fire. Such endless punishment will certainly not be justified for any wrongdoing during a relatively brief spell of mortal existence in this profane world. In any case, both sides, as in many religious questions, can always find support for believing not only in a spiritual or literal heaven but also in a hell with or without fire.

(ix) Resurrection of the dead

Resurrection, which generally means a rising from the dead or act of bringing to life, is "the belief that Jesus Christ actually died upon the cross and had been raised by God to life in a new sphere." It is a hope taught by Jesus in the New Testament. Many people, especially Christians, believe in resurrection notwithstanding the fact that good people are sometimes said to be in heaven after death and bad ones in hell tormenting. It seems not clear how resurrection will take place in such a situation.

The G.K.S. believes in resurrection of the dead and that it will embrace both good and bad people, though with a few exceptions, whether they be Christians or not. The G.K.S. writes:

Among the promises of God Almighty, that of the resurrection of the dead is one of the most outstanding, showing the greatness of His power and His good purpose towards mankind. It is the pivot upon which rests the hope of Christians concerning the dead, and if not for this hope, man cannot count himself as anything better than a beast.

It is said that belief in resurrection is not new. It preceded the New Testament era because Old Testament figures like Jacob, Job, Isaiah, etc. spoke about it. Isaiah, the prophet of God, was of the opinion that he was going to participate in it. He said, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise... the earth shall cast out the dead" (Isaiah 26:19). 75 Jesus himself disputed with the Sadducees, who doubted the reality of resurrection, and he said that people should not be surprised that dead people would rise from the grave. Christ, the G.K.S. said, implied bodily resurrection when he said thus:

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice. And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. John 5:28-29.

The apostles of Jesus Christ also believed and preached about the resurrection of the dead. Apostle Paul, in particular, was emphatic in driving home this doctrine before his hearers, though some did not only reject the message but in fact persecuted him. The G.K.S. notes thus:

Because of Saint Paul's belief and teaching about it, he suffered persecutions and prosecutions at the hands of the unbelieving Jews. When he was indicted before King Agrippa, he declared, 'And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers... For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. He then asked, 'Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead? Acts 26:6-8

The G.K.S. talks about three kinds of resurrection. The first belongs to Jesus Christ and the saints, who are numbered as 144,000 and will be with Christ in heaven. It is deemed that the 144,000, except the remnant of this number, had been resurrected and taken into heaven about 1918. This event is important, but many people, including religious leaders and theologians, do not know it. The second resurrection belongs to the faithful men and women of old before Christ. Theirs is described as a "better resurrection" because they would be raised to see the world and all the civilizations before the battle of the Lord would destroy them". People in this class include Noah, Abraham, Abel, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, John the Baptist, the other prophets, and women like Sarah, Rebecca, Deborah, Ruth, Naomi, Hannah, etc. The last resurrection is called the general resurrection, and it belongs to the generality of mankind, "during which all the remaining good people as well as bad ones will find their feet on earth again" to be rewarded according to their works. The G.K.S. thinks that people ought not to doubt the reality of resurrection because:

It was from the dust of the ground God made man, and if man turns to dust again there is no reason why it should be considered an impossibility for God to bring him back to life.

Concerning the manner of the resurrection, the G.K.S. raised the questions which Saint Paul asked in his time and answered it to clear doubts. "But some men will say, 'how are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?' (1st Corinthians 15:35). The G.K.S., using Paul's illustrative answer says that the seed one plants cannot grow into a plant until it dies first. For what one sows is just a dry little seed, for example, corn, but God gives it a body and it grows fresh, and "so also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is

raised in incorruption". (verse 42) I think Christians should have the hope of resurrection because "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (verse 19).

The Ordinances

Here we look at baptism, ordination, the Lord's supper, and marriage.

(i) Baptism

Baptism has been defined as "the rite whereby a person is made a member of the church, "and the word comes from the Greek "baptizo, to dip, that is, to dip or immerse in water. It is an important sacrament of initiation into the Church, and it has been so from apostolic times. The G.K.S. believes itself to be a Christian Church and as a Roman Catholic priest puts it, "all Christian Churches practice baptism." The G.K.S. is not left out here. It is important in the G.K.S. because "anyone who accepts to follow Christ is required as of faith to be baptized." Thus it is seen as,

an outward expression of one's conversion and vow or agreement to serve God by doing His will through Jesus Christ, by the power of God, all the days of one's life until death but with the hope of resurrection.

Baptism is not believed by the G.K.S. as a sacrament that cleanses the baptized from original sin (Adam's sin) because if "Cleansing from sin were the purpose of baptism, Jesus Christ, who had no sin, would not have been baptized." The view is expressed that the blood of Jesus rather than baptism takes away the sins of men. 1st John 1:7 is cited to say this. It reads in part, "... and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

As far as the G.K.S. is concerned, baptism must be done by complete immersion in water and never by sprinkling of water. Every Christian who has been baptized otherwise is informed that "if you were baptized by pouring or sprinkling of water, your baptism is certainly null and void." It is contended that all the instances known in the Bible, such as that of Christ (Matthew 3:16-17) and the eunuch of Ethiopia (Acts 8:26-40), were by immersion. There was never an occasion "anyone for any reason was baptized by sprinkling or pouring of water. But while the original mode of baptism was probably immersion," and this best symbolized the dying and rising again with Christ," there seems to be no precise information about the rite of baptism as it was done in New Testament times. A special Committee set up to examine baptism noted this impression. The G.K.S. holds that John the Baptist was baptized at Aenon "because there was much water there." It does not appear that by this a law was being enacted that baptism must take place where there was much water. One writer feels strongly that much depends upon the climate. I think any form of baptism anywhere could serve the purpose of becoming a follower of Christ, provided there is enough water for immersion.

The G.K.S. looks upon the baptism of infants as a sin. Only adults, it is emphasized, must be baptized. It is noted further that "there is no single instance of a child that was baptized. Even Jesus Christ himself received baptism when he was about the age of thirty." Infants must not be baptized because "a person to be baptized must repent of his sins and believe and accept Jesus Christ as of faith before he is baptized. Philip's answer to the request of the eunuch of Ethiopia, thus "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest," is used as an example of adult baptism. In short, the eunuch confessed Jesus, something an infant cannot do. Infants cannot accept responsibilities imposed by baptism.

Like the Baptist Church, the G.K.S. believes in the believer's baptism. H.W. Turner has noted too that rejection of infant baptism is common in Aladura and prophet-healing independent churches. We may look briefly at this issue before we move on. Those who reject infant baptism think that there is a strong case against it. But their main, or perhaps only, evidence is that the Bible did not make references to the baptism of infants. But "this notion is no proof that the practice was unknown." The New Testament speaks of the practice of baptizing whole households into the Christian Church. A writer wondered whether there were no children in those households. Though the households mentioned did not specify children, it was most unusual if children were not in those households.

Since the G.K.S. believes that it is the only true Church in Nigeria, re-baptism of the baptized converts of other church denominations is a necessity. Like the Donatists in the fourth century A.D. in Carthage, the G.K.S. insists on re-baptism because those who performed the rite in the former Churches were no servants of God or doing God's will. But above all, their baptism took place in a false Church. A false Church is where God's attention is absent, and there are so many in the world. The process of baptism in the G.K.S. does not differ considerably from some of the other Churches, but while many Christian Churches can afford to baptize always, the G.K.S. can stay for a few years without baptizing a single soul. It is said that it requires some time on the part of a prospective candidate to prove his maturity in Christ. The G.K.S. process rules out immediate baptism, but it could be shown that in every case recounted in the New Testament, repentant sinners were baptized immediately. Paul, for example, baptized the Philipian prison warder and those in his house at the same hour of the night (Act 16:33). There was neither a catechumenate class nor agents to watch characters of would-be candidates.

However, when the G.K.S. candidate goes through the main process of good character and the show of faith, questions about the G.K.S. teachings are then asked to assess the candidate on spiritual knowledge. His acceptance to baptism may not necessarily depend upon his answers since he is seen to be mature. But poor answers can delay baptism. Whenever baptism is to take place, it must be by immersion in a river, usually conducted by a minister, sometimes during some of the festivals like the Feast of Tabernacles. No significance is attached to the condition of the river, whether flowing or static, but the area must be very clean or made clean by them. The formulae in use is "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son through the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit is the force or power of God and not seen as a person. This is different from the Trinitarian formulae and also of the Bible as contained in Matthew 28:19.

On the whole, there seems to be no generally accepted theological form of baptism. While controversy continues to determine perhaps how it should be done, I am inclined to think along with S. Winward, who says that "the mode has importance because of what it signifies, but what really matters is who is baptized, not how the rite is administered." It seems reasonable in the way Allan Richardson puts it that "the important thing is what God does, not what we do (the faith that brought us to baptism is God's gift), whether we are infants or adults."

(xi) Ordination to the G.K.S. Ministry.

Ordination has been defined as "the act of conferring holy orders and so admitting a candidate into the ministry of the Church. It has been the custom in the Church of Christ from the earliest time that certain believers should be set apart in the Church for special ministries of oversight, edification, and service. As with other Church ordinances, ordination has been variously understood by Christians. Two main positions are held. To one,

ordination is a sacrament whereby something, usually the Holy Spirit or Grace, is conveyed to the ordained by God. To the other, ordination is not a sacrament but "primarily an act of authorization." This position would think that the Holy Spirit has been given to the Church and therefore to all Christians, and so the Holy Spirit is not bestowed on separate occasions. The second position, namely of authorization, applies to the G.K.S. It is believed that the Holy Spirit, known simply as the Spirit of God, must have been evident in the one to be ordained into the ministry through the ordinand's works. A person's ordination is his acceptance and open declaration and vow to devote all his life to the service of God and his adoption by the elder ministers who present him to the congregation of ministers with prayer. Thereafter, circular letters are sent to all branches of the Church announcing the new intake. In G.K.S., the word minister applies strictly to those who labour in word and doctrine. They are sent to represent the Church on various occasions and to preach the gospel of Christ in both Church assemblies and public concourses. In general or loose sense, however, a minister is anyone who serves in the Lord's ministry, irrespective of sex, education, or previous vocation.

The ceremony of formerly commissioning or charging ministers to their life-long work is ordination. There is usually an elder or superior and the ordinand. Relevant Bible passages are cited in the ordination charge.

Any G.K.S. member seeking to join the ministry must apply for admission in writing to the G.K.S. ministry. His application is considered for a fairly long time. In the past, the candidates were considered quickly, but when some left allegedly because of their inability to bear the sacrifices, the regulations were tightened. Some of the ministers I met spoke of their applications, which were not considered after two, five, six years or more. Some applicants (eight in 1979) were living in the G.K.S. ministry to work while their applications were under consideration. Those outside are monitored by the Administrative Committees of their branches on behalf of the ministry.

In 1978, the G.K.S. Vice-President, Benjamin O. Tietie, was ordained by the laying on of hands by the President of the society. The laying of hands, which is quite unusual in the history of the Society, was simply to invoke God's blessing, protection, and guidance upon him. It was not for the more generally accepted belief of asking God to give the Holy Spirit.

(xii) The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is not observed in the G.K.S. But apart from the need to understand why the Supper is neglected, many Christian Churches in Nigeria have been criticized in public by the G.K.S. for observing it. The Lord's Supper has been described as "the great occasion when we should remember God's goodness to us and renew fellowship with Him."

Before the G.K.S. view, we may note that there are controversies over the Lord's Supper among Christians. Catholics, for instance, would say that in the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist, "Christ is truly and substantially present in the Eucharist, body and soul, humanity and divinity." The G.K.S. would see it as cannibalism, "to eat the flesh of a man literally..." Or as Cairns put it, some people would question how Christ's body would be chewed with teeth." Like Cairns, the G.K.S. regards the eating and drinking as symbolic, meaning the presence of the Lord during the Supper. The G.K.S.

Believes in the institution of the Lord's Supper in the place of the Passover during which Jesus Christ offered bread and wine to his apostles alone and left instruction that it should be done in remembrance of him till his return.

The G.K.S. believes that the Lord Jesus Christ has come and sees no reason for celebrating this Supper. The Society noted that

there is a point which we have always called people's attention to but which many, too, have lost sight of, and that is the fact that the Lord's Supper was not instituted to be celebrated for eternity but for a limited period of time... Saint Paul said, 'as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.'

(xiii) Marriage

Marriage, which is the union between a man and a woman as husband and wife, is accorded a very important place in the G.K.S. It is seen as "institution by God Almighty not only for the accomplishment of His purposes but also for the benefit of men and women." The reason is that the woman is junior in the union, and that is why the G.K.S. is against the idea of equal rights for both man and his wife or wives. The custom is not found in any Nigerian community, though women may tend to be richer or influential in some. But the G.K.S., citing American society as an example where laws and customs have tended to greater and greater equality, noted:

There was never a time God, who instituted marriage, indicated that man and woman were equal partners. When Adam and Eve sinned, God, in passing His sentence, told the woman: I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule life over thee. (Genesis 3:16).

Any form of marriage is acceptable, and there is not any one described as better since any objectionable act can be set aside. Traditional marriage is acceptable, provided it is devoid of unchristian rites. Every other kind of formality is allowed, including meeting the bride price. Court marriage is also good. But the G.K.S. has its requirements in marriage and is always insisted upon by members. This insistence is mainly on raising objection to some traditional rites deemed "pagan" or idolatrous when marriage is conducted outside the G.K.S. In the G.K.S., the process of giving out a daughter to a member for marriage is quite extensive. All marriage proposals are brought to the Marriage Committee of the branch (all G.K.S. branches have this committee as the Administrative Committee serves this purpose). When the Committee is satisfied with any proposal, it is then recommended to the Marriage Council based in the G.K.S. Headquarters, Warri. The Marriage Council constituted by the G.K.S. Executive Board would approve or disapprove the marriage through the Marriage Committee that made the recommendation. The good news of the approval is announced in the branch where the applicants are. There used to be great rejoicing by way of applauding the approval and congratulating the partners. A warning is given by the Committee to the brother and the sister while they are in courtship not to have sex until the Marriage Council has approved the marriage and made same known to the couple through the Local Administrative Committee.

The arrival of a wife to her matrimonial home may be marked with great joy and feasting, depending on the choice of the couple. Eating, drinking, and dancing are common features. Usually, it is the members of the Church that are mainly invited by the newlyweds, and in fact, the G.K.S. does not object to the use of any music group of the Church playing at the occasion.

On occasion of marriage, the duties of the woman and the man are spelt out. It is an exhortation all the way to the woman to help her husband, do things, to give him comfort and

pleasure. She should show interest in her housework and should be humble, sober, discreet, and chaste. Paul is usually quoted addressing women:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church... so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Ephesians 5:22-24

On the part of the man or husband, "marriage entails a lot of responsibilities." Husbands are required to love their wives; they should look after them and nourish them in order to make them happy and appear decent, for the woman is the glory of the man. It is a serious offence in the G.K.S. for a man to beat or maltreat his wife. Such could lead to his suspension from the Church. Any serious misdemeanor on the part of the wife that the husband cannot handle must be taken to the Committee for the elders to deal with as necessary. Both the man and the wife are warned not to have any love connection with any other person. Any breach of the warnings will lead to disciplinary measures such as rebuke, interdiction from certain duties, suspension from the fold, and so on, after judgement in the religious court of the Church. Church must "guide, advise, and charge the contracting partners as regards the solemnity and sanctity of marriage... so that God may bless the marriage."

Marriageable girls and women are not allowed in the G.K.S. to marry non-members. But if a non-member male signifies his intention to become a G.K.S. member, he could be free to marry a spinster or woman in the Society. A male member has no restriction since he has the rule over his wife to bring her to join the G.K.S. Preferably, male members are asked or rather advised to marry G.K.S. girls. However, some men are known to have married some G.K.S. girls without becoming members, and some men are in the G.K.S. drawn in by their marriages. Marriage is, however, an important thing in the G.K.S., and their arrangement from the beginning to the end seems to have gone down well with the members.

Polygamy

Polygamy is allowed and practiced in the G.K.S. The G.K.S. says it did not borrow this practice from the traditional religion. Gideon Urhobo was initially opposed to polygamy as a form of marriage, but when he began to study the Bible prayerfully, he discovered that polygamy was not a sin. He did not preach it as a gospel of encouragement but saw no reason to keep mute as Christians described it as a sin, nor was he willing to dissuade people from practicing it. Urhobo's second wife, Jemima, Otomewo's second wife, Ruth, and Tietie's third wife, Jubilee, were said to be gifts to these leaders. If the G.K.S. is to be believed, then the leaders must be praised for self-restriction in not accepting such many gifts, which were readily available in several branches of the G.K.S. Polygamy was one of the major doctrinal questions that led many Jehovah's Witnesses to join Urhobo and leave the Watchtower in 1934. It was also one of the major factors that led the Mission Church converts to join the G.K.S. presumably not to practice it but to show that they were misled by the Mission Churches.

The place of polygamy in the Church of Christ has received tremendous attention among Christian Churches, and it has also become a major problem. We do not intend to discuss the problem at length. A great deal has been written on polygamy or monogamy. Clearly, the G.K.S. does not see polygamy as a problem because "it is not a sin". In fact, when some prominent churchmen, sociologists, and theologians submitted a report to the 1958 Lambeth Conference stating, among other things, that there were "no easy answers" to the problem of polygamy, the G.K.S. commented:

Yes, no easy answers because God did not legislate against polygamy hence he did not give his spirit to direct them to find answers to what is not a problem.

The teaching is strong in the G.K.S. that the Bible justifies belief in polygamy. We shall examine with comments, four principal Bible passages used by the G.K.S. to uphold polygamy. First, a common quotation by the protagonists of monogamy is Genesis 2:24, to wit, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh." The phrase "one flesh" appears to some Christians as made up of only one man and one woman. The G.K.S. says that the passage must be interpreted symbolically. "They shall be one flesh" is then interpreted to mean a strong tie or bond between people, the closest relationship over which must not be broken unless it becomes unavoidable. The G.K.S. says that two women or more could be married to a man at the same time, and each of the wives is one flesh with the husband. It is never "between the husband on the one part and two or three or more wives, collectively, on the second part at a time." In a somewhat similar interpretation, Robert Holst thinks that two becoming one flesh is no reason why one man and several wives would not be one flesh." The phrase "one flesh," which Holst also relates to Matthew 19:3-9, "indicates the absolute indissolubility of marriage—not that it is of necessity monogamous." For more support, the G.K.S. says that Genesis 2:24 is not enacting a divine law of monogamy. No law is implied if it were so.

Under no circumstances must God allow Gideon the Midianite to have... three score and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives, Judges 8:30; nor told King David of Israel that he gave Saul's wives to him and would have given him more if they were not enough, 2nd Samuel 12:8; nor condoned King Solomon for so long to marry up to seven hundred wives, 1st Kings 11:1–8, only to be angry when Solomon's heart was turned to idolatry.

And it is unlikely that the writer of Genesis was implying a departure from the polygamous, which was one of the marriage trends of the people. That apart, it seems inevitable to ask questions such as why was God not angry with nor rebuked the polygamists in those days? It is known that God reacted against King David for adultery and murder (2nd Samuel 12:9–14), King Saul for disobedience (1st Samuel 15:22–35), and Ahab for the murder of Naboth (1st Kings 21:10). The G.K.S. would even think that God regulated polygamy when he used Moses to say,

If a man has two wives, one beloved and the other hated, and they have had children by him... and he meaneth to divide his substance... he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the first born... for this is the first of his children. (Deuteronomy 21:15-17).

Second, the G.K.S. says that the New Testament did not condemn any form of marriage. Matthew 19:4, where Christ was actually quoting Genesis 2:24, is said to be a discussion about divorce. Perhaps, as J.L. McKenzie said, "the teaching of Jesus on marriage is limited to its affirmations of its indissolubility." It is not likely too that Christ was discussing any form of marriage, for, as Holst would suggest, "Jesus is questioned concerning divorce and not concerning polygamy." A writer seems to suggest that monogamy did not replace polygamy before the era of Christ, and it appears to me, as it may be shown shortly, that polygamy continued up to Paul. However, Christ ended his speech by saying, "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

Third, those who hold to monogamy find support in 1st Corinthians 7:1-2, where Paul says, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." The statement "his own wife" has been in common use by the Nigerian Jehovah's Witnesses in support of monogamy. They say the Bible did not say "his own wives," but wife. The G.K.S. would say to such argument that,

It will not be reasonable to say let every man have his own wives because it is not a rule, and cannot be possible, that every man can afford to have more than one wife'.

Moreover, the G.K.S. says that the Corinthian passage in question is a simple advice because in verse 6 of this chapter, Paul, who made the statement, said, "But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." Perhaps, as Hillman says, "the use of the singular in discussing the husband-wife relationship" was the "normal biblical way of talking about marriage..."

And fourth, 1st Timothy 3:1-2, is used to project monogamy as a law. It says, "This is a true saying: if a man desires the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach." The G.K.S. dismisses the use of this passage to support monogamy with two remarks. First, "if it were a question of must for a bishop to be the husband of one wife, St. Paul, who was bishop himself (no reference) should have also married." Second, that Paul's advice to Timothy,

is a clear indication that the early Christians practiced polygamy. For if the general practice among the Christians at that time was that of monogamy, it would have been unnecessary for the apostle to advise that only those desiring to be bishops or deacons (verse 12) should be the husband of one wife.

The G.K.S. thinks that monogamy, as a form of marriage, is a state law in European countries and that many Europeans and Americans do not even consider the Bible as the source. It is simply a state law. It may be mentioned that the Mormons who were practicing polygamy in America were forced to adopt monogamy by the state.

The G.K.S. seems to have good reasons for approving polygamy for its members. But there is a warning from the Church which seems to be a tacit movement towards monogamy.

We are not by this sermon (Does God Condemn Polygamy?) encouraging people to rush into polygamous life without counting the cost. It called for... a good economic standing to be a successful polygamist. These days in which the cost of living is very high... it will be unwise to marry so many women.

We may observe that though to most Nigerians, the G.K.S. is known for polygamy, polygamists are said to be very few. Polygamy can be found mainly in the village branches. Of 51 G.K.S. ministers, only 3—including the President and the Vice-President (As of when writing this)—are polygamists. They seem to have been forced into it.

Generally, polygamy is on the decline in Africa. This trend is certainly not as a result of preaching from anyone; rather, economic and sometimes social reasons are compelling people to adopt monogamy. In any case, I think the opinion of the G.K.S., namely, that polygamy is not a sin to those who could desire it, should deserve some respect.

The G.K.S. and the Watchtower: Areas of Agreement and Disagreement

Having discussed some of the G.K.S. beliefs and doctrines, we can now look at some of the similarities and dissimilarities between the G.K.S. and the Watchtower. Some of these have received passing remarks in the foregoing pages as necessary parts of our history and part reasons for expansion. Similar remarks will be found in the pages below, which deal with the various activities of the G.K.S. to account for some of the practices of the G.K.S. Here, much more particular attention is paid to them.

Gideon Urhobo claimed that he parted with the Watchtower as a result of doctrinal differences. He enumerated a good number of them, and these have remained the major differences. The G.K.S., in a recent publication, noted that "The gulf between the two organizations, which is extremely wide, springs mainly from issues of doctrines and religious practices." The gulf, however, does not seem to be so wide as the G.K.S. would want people to believe. Some of the differences are of recent additions such as blood transfusion, flag salute, national anthem, attitude to politics as well as to the world, etc.

Doctrinally, the G.K.S. and the Watchtower agree on many teachings, among which are the following, though 'negligible' differences may still be found. (a) Jehovah, though it is not in doubt that the G.K.S. lays special emphasis on the personality of Jehovah than it is found in Watchtower teachings. (b) Jesus Christ and his works with particular reference to his "divine" resurrection. (c) Holy Spirit, but while the Watchtower would limit the work of the Holy Spirit to the Watchtower Organization, the G.K.S. sees the Holy Spirit active in various places. (d) Baptism, though this is done more frequently in the Watchtower than in the G.K.S. (e) resurrection and judgement, (f) Hell, (g) the Trinity, and the various interpretations of the prophetic books of the Bible. (h) While the Watchtower believes salvation belongs only to them... the G.K.S. believes that salvation cannot be limited to a single organization universally. (i) They both reject Christian feasts like Christmas and Easter. But while the G.K.S. celebrates Feast of Tabernacles, the Watchtower does not.

Now the major differences

(a) Method of Preaching

We have noted the Watchtower method of preaching. If we may recall, theirs is mainly preaching from house to house, which they describe as apostolic fashion or Christ's original method. By preaching from house to house, the G.K.S. considered the Witnesses as "victims of misconception" because "Christ never instituted such a method, neither by command nor by example." The manner of Christ's preaching is that "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, while the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing" (John 18:20). While the Watchtower claims that Christ visited houses to preach, the G.K.S. says Christ only visited houses where he had friends like Lazarus or was invited, like to the house of Simon, a Pharisee. Concerning Act 20:20, which seems to imply that Paul taught from house to house, and the most cited by the Watchtower as authority, the G.K.S. says the people Paul visited and taught were "the elders of the Ephesian Church, and not just anyone." (Acts 20:17-20). Christ is also quoted saying, "Go not from house to house" (Luke 10:7). 153 Thus, in Nigeria today, the Watchtower are known by their method of house-to-house preaching, while the G.K.S. are known by their open-air preaching.

(b) Women preaching

In the Watchtower, women preach along with men because the opinion is that God ordained women to preach the gospel. Thus, men and women and even children are found parading the streets and moving from house to house. But it is not in doubt in Nigeria that many doors

have been shut against them. The view of the G.K.S. is that "God never ordains women to be preachers or teachers." To support this view, the G.K.S. says as follows: (but see below for G.K.S. women's role.)

There was no woman among the prophets of old who were ordained by God. Among the twelve apostles, there was no woman, neither was there any among the 70 disciples sent out by Christ to preach. (Matthew 10:1-6; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 10:1-12).

The G.K.S. seems to know what prompted God not to ordain women. It says, "to send women to go about preaching from house to house is to expose them to temptations." This is noted with disregard to the fact that men can also be tempted to fall like Adam.

(c) Preaching, everyones work?

The Watchtower believes that preaching the gospel is a must, for, as a recent Watchtower book puts it, "they must be loyal spokesmen or proclaimers of God's Kingdom," or, as a writer puts it, they "must be preachers in the world for salvation." In the G.K.S., all believers are not preachers. The Bible, it is said, did not say that everyone must preach. The reason is that "people are gifted in diverse ways, and so all cannot be preachers or teachers." Paul is quoted by the G.K.S. saying in part that "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers... Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers..." (1st Corinthians 12:28-31). This quotation suggests to the G.K.S. that all cannot be preachers. They are "other good works people can do in order to be saved."

(d) Date Setting

The Watchtower are well known to be date setters, and this has been shown at some points in this work. For example, 1914 was set for the coming not only of the Kingdom but also of Armageddon to destroy all non-Jehovah's Witnesses from the surface of the earth. 1925 was one date when Abraham and others were expected in America, and 1975 was picked again as the end of the world. But as it may be obvious from Watchtower publications, they seemed not to have emphasised 1975 so strongly as it probably appeared to the G.K.S. In any case, the Witnesses in Nigeria even before the 1970s paraded the streets with 1975 as the end of the world. The G.K.S. has described the Watchtower as "notorious date-setters" because 1914, 1925, etc. had failed to bring in Armageddon. The G.K.S. says as follows:

The exercise of setting dates for the Battle of Armageddon or final end of this world has done the Watchtower no credit. Rather, it has but revealed the true character of the Organization as one that is given to presumptuousness and falsehood... When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor came to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken but the prophet had spoken it presumptuously, It was evident in some towns and villages in 1975 that while the Witnesses were threatening people with "imminent Armageddon," the G.K.S. was preaching against the idea.

(e) Marriage

Both societies say marriage is honourable. But the Watchtower describes polygamous form of marriage as unacceptable to "persons who want to become subjects of God's government." The G.K.S. considers polygamy as a blessing.

(f) Blood Transfusion, politics and attitude to the World

We have discussed Watchtower attitude to the above, and below we shall look at the view of the G.K.S. on politics and attitude to the world. We may in this simply remark that the G.K.S. sees nothing wrong in blood transfusion. The G.K.S. does not see any reason why God will kill the person from whose blood channel blood was taken and transfused into the blood channel of another, nor the person who received the blood. The medical science of transfusing blood is believed to be a blessing for which people should thank God.

(g) The Lord's Supper

The G.K.S. does not observe it because it is believed Christ has come the second time and it was meant for the apostles' or anointed Christians class. The Watchtower says that the Lord's Supper, or "Lord's evening meal, is not to continue endlessly..." for "by this observance, the true Christians would proclaim the Lord's death only until he arrives." For they believe that Christ "is returned and is in company with his disciples." The Witnesses also claim to see "as competent and reliable evidence establishing the fact that Christ Jesus came to his temple in the spring of the year 1918." It is not then clear, even in oral evidence with the leaders in Lagos, why it has continued.

Thus far, we have discussed some G.K.S. beliefs and teachings and noted areas of agreement and disagreement between the Watchtower and the G.K.S. Clearly, the G.K.S. is not unlike the Watchtower, who have sought out their own researched interpretations to the various teachings of the Churches though these are said to be according to the scriptures. But it must be remarked that whether their interpretations are objective or subjective or far beyond the imagination of theologians, they seem to outstrip the Christian Churches in the use of the Bible. There are always "evidences" to prove their cases. Their interpretations are scriptural and rational. And of course, rationalism with the Bible as the basis and not in place of the Bible, can be scriptural.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Introduction

G.K.S. members believe that whatever they do as a Christian Organisation is sanctioned by the Bible or could be justified from it. In some of the activities to be described, selected cultures of the people are used, but there is a limit to what they select because "there can be no harmony between it (Christianity) and any culture or tradition that is based on idolatry or superstition." The claim is still made that the Holy Bible is the basis for their social aspects of life. For example, G.K.S. members play any type of music with traditional or Western musical instruments and dance on several occasions because the Bible says the name of the Lord should be praised in the dance. Musical instruments such as trumpet, harp, timbrel, stringed instruments, organs, loud cymbals, etc. are named in Psalm 149 and 150. The G.K.S. had been opposed to using instruments like drums, beaded calabashes, bells, etc. by many Mission Churches. Traditional dances like Udje and Ema among the Urhobo are used. These are mainly used in traditional worship. What the G.K.S. members say they are doing is to take the traditional instruments, for God created them and not the devil, compose godly songs, play, and dance to the glory of God Almighty.

G.K.S. Festivals

There are two annual festivals in the G.K.S., the Feast of Tabernacles and the Freedom Day. World-wide festivals of Christendom like Christmas, New Year, Easter, and Good Friday are not celebrated. A great deal of history, past and present, is usually cited to support their view that these "Christian" festivals are of "pagan" origins. I do not intend to go into those arguments justifying or unjustifying the appellation, pagan. I will only say that the G.K.S. does not observe the festivals of Christendom. But it has adopted others believed to be supported or justified by the Holy Bible. The mode of celebration of these festivals is discussed below.

(a) The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles is an important feast of the G.K.S. To many non-G.K.S. people, the feast is known as "G.K.S. Christmas," especially as it is often celebrated the last week before Christmas. As Turner says, the G.K.S. has taken up this Jewish feast and interpreted it in the light of the New Testament. Like what many Nigerians would think, Turner says that the Feast of Tabernacles has been intended to eliminate Christmas. And of course, one of the gospels of the feast is that God did not ordain Christmas for his worshippers to observe, but the Feast of Tabernacles was ordained by Him.

The Feast of Tabernacles is said to be one of the most important festivals that God ordained for His true worshippers "in this age of international distress and perplexity," but regrettably is the "one most of those who profess to be Christians treat with utmost neglect." The feast, as it is known generally, was one of three annual festivals (the others are the feast of the Passover and the feast of weeks), which God instituted in the days of the prophet Moses as the Israelites journeyed from Egypt to Canaan (Deuteronomy 16:16). The feast used to take place on the 15th day of the 7th month of the Jewish year, and it lasted 8 days. (Leviticus 23:33-43).

One of the important things in the feast was the thanks offering, which, according to the law, was made as an act of gratitude to God for delivering the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. One other thing in the feast was the reading of the law of God to the hearing of the children of Israel. At a time the Jews could not celebrate the feast because they were in Babylonian captivity, but when they resettled in Canaan, they began to celebrate it again. Even then, why should Christians be involved in the celebration of the feast, which seems to belong only to the Jews of old? To such a question the G.K.S. would say that,

Jesus Christ, the Founder of Christianity took active part in the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles in his days on earth. When the festival was half over, Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach the people the doctrines of God... In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink... (John 7:1-17 and verses 37 and 38). 5

The G.K.S. believes that Christ's participation in the feast is significant and should be a matter of great interest to any Christian. It is puzzling to the G.K.S. that such an important festival "is completely left out in the Church calendar of Feasts," and for this reason "Christendom has gone astray". And that it would amount to unfaithfulness if Christians should refuse to celebrate the feast when Christ took part in it."

Two more reasons are given why Christians should celebrate the feast. First, G.K.S. members regard themselves as spiritual Jews. In fact, this question as to whether they are

Jews has been an unflinching question from those who probe the G.K.S. on why they should bother about the feast. To such a question, the G.K.S. would say,

What many people do not know is the fact that there are spiritual Jews as there are natural Jews. The natural Jews are those who are Abraham's children in the flesh... the spiritual Jews are those who became the children of Abraham by faith notwithstanding their place of birth or origin.

It may be noted, however, that some of the natural Jews, today are not celebrating it. Secondly, the G.K.S. says that,

Although the precedent set by Jesus Christ is enough to guide us Christians, there is a definite prophetic instruction to the effect that the worshippers of God in these last days in which we live should celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. As it is written, 'And it shall come to pass that everyone that is left of all the nations...shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

The sentence "it shall come to pass" is interpreted to denote a prediction or a prophecy concerning a future event. The prophecy is meant for the last day to which our present era is said to belong. (See Isaiah 2:2, Micah 4:1, 2 Timothy 3:1, and Hebrews 1:2, all cited by the G.K.S. to prove this.) The G.K.S. began to celebrate the feast in 1935 and has continued since then. Up to 1954, it was celebrated for three days, and after that date, seven days. Between 1954 and 1964, the feast was celebrated twice a year. It was rotated between the big branches like Lagos, Port Harcourt, Sapele, Aba, Kano, etc. and the Headquarters, Warri. While, for example, it took place first in October in Lagos, it would move to Warri in December for the final phase for that year. From 1964, this two-fold celebration stopped giving way to once a year.

The feast, as we have mentioned, normally begins about the second week of every December and would finish the last Sunday before Christmas. (One of the claims of the G.K.S. is that it has killed the spirit of Christmas in many Nigerian cities. And there can be no doubt that Christian activities have waned, and if we can believe, the G.K.S. has contributed to that decline). From one Sunday to the other, several activities are performed, such as public preaching in different parts of the town or city.

The host station or branch, assisted by nearby branches, is to begin the feast from the first Sunday up to the Thursday of that week. Then, as from Thursday, they would be joined by delegates who begin to arrive from all the branches of the Church including delegates from overseas. Each year, the number of celebrants is increased. In the 1974 feast in which I took part when I elected to write an essay on the G.K.S. for my B.A., there were about 15,000 G.K.S. celebrants who assembled at Warri. I may point out that the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, Benin, in a news item at 7.00 p.m. on 23/12/74, put the number of G.K.S. celebrants at 22,000. The figure was clearly exaggerated, and the G.K.S. agrees, but it was noted that it was a problem to know who was who in such a crowd into which many Warri people joined.

A rough estimate of the number of celebrants in the 1979 feast, which I now want to describe, could be about 20,000. Some of the celebrants who arrived by air, chartered buses, boats, and private cars, lodged themselves in hotels. Over 500 lodged in hotels. (As an oil city in Nigeria with many foreign visitors, some of whom this writer has met in Aberdeen, Warri has more than 20 good hotels.) Some lodged with friends and relatives in

the town. The bulk of the rest, thousands, were lodged in hired accommodation. Usually, some secondary school boarding houses and classrooms, teacher-training college boarding houses and classrooms, and sometimes primary schools were taken over by the G.K.S. to supplement some makeshift accommodation. Every delegate, except those in hotels and those who stayed with friends, etc., must come with sleeping materials like a bedsheet, blanket, or mat.

Feeding arrangement is always easy. About two months before December, all members would have made financial donations, and all money is sent to the headquarters by November. In 1979, about sixty thousand naira (N60,000) was collected for feeding. It is said that more than half of this money came from the big ones who lodged in hotels even though they were not included in the feeding. There is a common cooking and serving. From the "kitchen," food is carried to several points in vehicles and handed over to leaders of the several branches to ensure that all the delegates are fed. Feeding was done thrice, but much twice a day because of the steadily increasing number of delegates and to ensure their full involvement in the spiritual activities like going to hear lectures. In the feast, several cultural displays are seen: Urhobo, Isoko, Ijaw, Itshekiri, Igbo, Yoruba, Efik, Kalabari, Ika, Ukwani, etc. Native dances are performed with music and songs composed according to the Bible. Some of these have waxed records for commercial sale. There used to be competition among the groups, and for a record time, the Ukoko Ejiro-Oghene Choral Group from Sapele, led by Moses O. Ofemu, had almost an uninterrupted first place from 1959 to 1976. In later years, the Aladja Choral Group seemed to be leading, but mention must be made of the G.K.S. Lagos, Emoghene Orchestra, G.K.S. Port Harcourt Boma Nume Orchestra, and Aba Kingdomites Orchestra that are fully western in terms of the use of keyboards, guitars, trumpets, and so on.

Mention must be made of the role of women in the feast. For some years now (but see the next chapter), they have set up many projects to help in the feast. They have a common cloth trade, local soap making, confectionaries, etc. to raise money. The gains from these are supplemented by a national collection by all the women to do what is called Kroghwa, meaning "carrying the loads or gifts to the ministry." Different items of food and materials are bought and carried on the morning of Saturday to the ministry. From the money collected, they have bought for the church in the following order: a Deluxe Toyota Corona, a Peugeot Car 505 Saloon, a Volvo 244 GL, a Toyota Coaster bus designated "G.K.S. Women Fellowship," and in 1981 a Mercedes 230 Saloon Benz. It seems the next thing they may attempt, and in fact it was mentioned to me but strictly secret, may be a private helicopter for the President, but I think this is an expensive joke.

On the last Sunday, like the first, a procession is led around some major streets in the town. The procession with three in a row was about a mile long. A good number of traffic policemen were hired by the G.K.S. for crowd and traffic control. In between the procession, various choral groups were placed to play, and the celebrants danced and danced and danced. I counted some 23 such groups in 1979 and about 126 cars, pickups, vans, etc. following the procession from behind—all the cars were said to belong to members. In the evening of the last Sunday, an address was given by the President, telegrams and cablegrams containing good-will messages to the feast celebrants were read. After this, members were called to give thanks-offering to God for keeping them from the previous year to the forthcoming year. Members could donate anything. I saw for example, a car donated by one member, electric plants, grass-cutting machines (lawn mowers), etc. A lot of money is realized from the thanks-offering and most members, especially those promoted at work

gave much. All the branches must vote and give a joint purse to the ministry branch after the other.

The Feast of Tabernacles has so far been celebrated in Lagos, Warri, Sapele, Benin, Aba, Port Harcourt, Kano and would in the future move into other branches as soon as enough members are in them. In any case, the G.K.S. has not succeeded in making Christmas obnoxious in spite of their call on Nigerians to give it up and embrace the Feast of Tabernacles. It is however, clear that Nigerians have stopped or are less active in Christmas celebration.

(b) Freedom Day

Another occasion celebrated by the G.K.S. once every year, is the Freedom Day. It began in 1951, and the date was October 1st, and this date was to be followed in subsequent years. As Turner noted, "Urhobo instituted a Freedom Day on October 1st before independence or freedom were popular words in Nigeria." (One may guess that Nigerian Independence day on October 1st had been influenced by the G.K.S. date.) The G.K.S. believes that Jesus Christ was born in October, about the year B.C. 2, and Christ's birth marked a turning point in the history of the human race.

of The G.K.S. believes in freedom, especially personal freedom such as freedom to practice any religion, politics, etc., but the best freedom known to the G.K.S. is spiritual freedom. This freedom came through the birth of Christ and has brought hope of deliverance from sin and its consequences, including death. And so Freedom Day is a day the G.K.S. remembers the birth of Christ. A better day (in October) for Christians to observe as Christmas instead of December 25th. Thus the G.K.S. has been challenging Christians to prove how the birth of Christ could be December and not October.

Freedom Day is usually an occasion for sober reflections "on the goodness of God for sending Jesus Christ to this profane world for the emancipation of his lost sheep." It is also an occasion for G.K.S. people to examine themselves to see whether they are living a thankful life to God for his goodness towards mankind.

From 1951 and up to 1964, it was celebrated on the 1st of October. After that date, it began to be celebrated on the 1st Sunday of October. In 1972, all Sundays began to be used according to convenience in all the branches. It is celebrated mainly in all the big branches of the G.K.S. The smaller branches come to join the bigger ones. Using all Sundays is said to be proper because the day, month, or year of Christ's birth is not stated in the Bible, but certainly it was in October. This date, or precisely, October, is said to be supported by the Bible and history. For example, the G.K.S. would argue that December was a cold wintry time in Palestine while October was a normal warm season for shepherds to watch over their flocks in Palestine. The Bible says that shepherds were in the field when Jesus was born. In 1979, I took part in the Freedom Day commemoration of the birth of Christ. 28 branches gathered at Warri for the occasion. Divine services were held from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Earlier in the morning, about 5.30 a.m., the G.K.S. choir had gone out in a bus through many streets singing theocratic songs and announcing the celebration to take place at 4 p.m. This is done in all the main centres. The service time was set at 4 p.m. so that their invitations could be honoured by other Christians and non-Christians.

There used to be a lot to eat and drink on that day before and after the service. Members and their friends move from one home to the other, eating and drinking. There is not much difference from what they were doing when they celebrated Christmas. A main difference, however, is that care is taken so that no one is intoxicated with alcohol. Some well-to-do members used to invite some of the choral groups to play in their residence and this channel

was also used to preach the G.K.S. gospel to those non-G.K.S. people who had gathered to listen. It would be mentioned that the choral groups also featured during divine service. Like in the Feast of Tabernacles, thanks-offerings are given by members to God for the use of the ministry.

(c) Burial of the Dead

The dead are well buried in the G.K.S., and the bereaved are taken care of financially, materially, or materially or which ever is necessary. There are no elaborate ceremonies in regard to burial (but see Appendix D). There are, however, some pre-burial preparations, such as dressing up the corpse, ensuring that a good coffin is secured, etc. At the burial, care is taken to ensure that no idolatrous ceremony by non-G.K.S. relatives, contrary to the faith of the deceased, is performed.

For the Christian burial, the G.K.S. has advised all the members to make a will authorizing the G.K.S. to bury them when they die. But if a member failed to make a will, he will still be buried accordingly. However, the corpse of a dead member can be released to relatives if they pressed so hard for it. In time past, the G.K.S. had entered into prolonged arguments with relatives of deceased members, and it is to avoid such that wills were necessarily advised to be made. The G.K.S. is particularly concerned that on no ground must pagan rituals be performed upon a body that had lived and served God in all its sojourn here on earth.

Some dead members are known to have been refused burial by the G.K.S. The G.K.S. Organisation Instruction, article 8, page 8, says that,

Excommunicated or suspended members and unfaithful and lawless members will not be buried by the Society when they die. Also, if any member commits suicide or is executed by the Government for committing murder, he will not be buried by the Society. (Galatians 5:19–21, 1 John:15)

It is thus clear that qualification for G.K.S. burial depends upon the type of relationship existing between the member and the G.K.S.

Concerning interment, the members of the G.K.S. as well as relatives of the deceased accompany the coffin, usually from the hospital mortuary in funeral procession to the cemetery. It is the instruction of the Church that,

Every member should, in the event of the death of a faithful member, make it a duty to turn up and be punctual at his burial. Numbers 23:10; Job 27:5-6; Psalm 48:14; Romans 14:7-8; and Revelation 14:13.16

The members' respect for this order has given vent to the general opinion that G.K.S. burials are usually crowded with members. If, for example, a Benin member died in Warri and willed that he should be buried in his home town, several buses are hired to take members from Warri, Sapele, and some other places to the place. No matter what the status of the member, even if he is the poorest but faithful, he is well buried by the G.K.S. During the procession, songs that have bearing with death and resurrection, the vanity of man, and his only hope, which is the Kingdom of God, are sung. Below is a common song from the G.K.S. Hymnbook, number 152;

1. *God made man from the dust, And gave him breathe of life, And man became a living soul A wonderful creatures.*
2. *Brethren, all living souls Are indeed mortal souls, And none can deliver himself From the hands of the grave.*
3. *For the wages of sin Is death and vanity, Eternal life is gift of God, Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.*
4. *The nobles and the Kings Princes and princesses Shall have their portion in the grave With the poor and oppressed.*
5. *On resurrection Day, All the dead shall arise, Unjust for judgement, Just for Life, Saith Jehovah of hosts.*

The G.K.S. does not allow a corpse to be brought into the G.K.S. service halls. This practice, which is common in some churches, is said to be unnecessary because it serves no useful purpose. Bringing it or not has nothing to do with the rewards of God and that apart, dead bodies are not supposed to be brought to the sanctuary or temple.

The cost of burying a faithful but poor member is said to be borne by the Society. If the deceased leaves a family behind, the Society ensures that they are taken care of, especially when a member willed that the Society should look after his family. In most cases, the children continue their education under the sponsorship of the Society. The widows are maintained financially when necessary. But the widow is free to marry whomsoever she likes, but preferably in the faith. However, except a definite will is left behind by the deceased, the G.K.S. would not oppose the family system whereby widows are inherited by family members. There are widows living in Salem City or in their homes who have refused to be inherited by family non-G.K.S. men, and such ones are not forced by the G.K.S. against their beliefs. Certainly, some widows have been married in the G.K.S., and it accounts for some members who are polygamous.

We may point out that many of the widows who decide not to marry non-members or have given up the idea of remarrying are not permanently under the care of the G.K.S. unless they are so old and have no children to provide for their needs. It is the duty of the G.K.S. Women Fellowship to ensure they are settled in lucrative trades or anything else to meet their needs. Concerning property left behind by the deceased, the G.K.S. says only property willed by the deceased to the G.K.S. is claimed. In most cases, this is simply put in the care of the Church for proper or effective administration to benefit the family left behind. In the case of a house, for example, the rents are collected by the G.K.S. and passed over enbloc to the family. If it is a trading business, for example, the G.K.S. says, this is run to help the family. The Church may not benefit directly from any property left behind. It is, however, clear that burial in the G.K.S. is taken seriously and those left behind by the deceased are not left uncared for.

(d) Taboos

Taboos, as seen by the G.K.S., are those things the Church forbids its members to do. They are regarded as very important, and any breach of a taboo can earn a member suspension from the Society. The same respect, though there may be some exceptions, are accorded them as the commandments of God. Ordinarily, in terms of food, nothing is forbidden as long as that thing is eatable. What is not eaten is merely disliked. It is common among many Nigerian tribes to forbid certain attitudes or foods on the instruction of clan gods or, in some cases, ancestors. As we noted in Chapter 1, Christianity has, however, liberated many people from these superstitious beliefs, etc. A G.K.S. Isoko man can be seen eating snails and cocoyam, which in his traditional community may not even be touched with hands.

G.K.S. members must not smoke nor get drunk with wine. While no restriction is placed on the drinking of wine since the Bible says one can take a little wine for his stomach sake, any member found misbehaving as a result of alcohol is treated like a drunkard. And because drunkards will not inherit God's Kingdom, such a member can be suspended if he does not show any repentant attitude. Suspension is a dread to the G.K.S. member because he is shut out of help, legal or medical, financial or material, and also denied a Christian burial when he is under suspension.

Cigarettes or tobacco must not be smoked, piped, or snuffed, nor even encouraged to entertain visitors. Most G.K.S. members do not go to bars or hotels for social enjoyment, for, as it is said, inhaling the smoke is tantamount to smoking it. Nonetheless, there are some G.K.S. people who can put up with such smokes and work in hotels and cinema houses. Such ones claim not to smoke.

G.K.S. members are forbidden to dance with other men's wives or daughters. Whoever among them wants to dance in the bar or hotel must do so only with his own wife. Preferably, members are advised, if they see any reason, to dance with their wives in their own homes, not in the public houses. Dancing with other women may expose the G.K.S. man to temptation such as fornication or adultery.

Item 9 of the G.K.S. Organisation Instruction stipulates that,

No member should engage in gambling of any kind, like begatalle, lucky dip, cards, draughts or horse races for the purpose of getting more money, lottery, football pools, sweepstakes, or looking for any ungodly, quick, and uncertain riches.

The G.K.S. does not believe that members obey these instructions one hundred percent. If anyone is however reported to have gambled, he is suspended immediately, and contributions from such source will not be accepted because such money was not being rich towards God.

The females are warned to keep off any manner of dress that can expose the private parts of their bodies to lustful men. Such dresses, like mini-skirts, topless dresses, or any short gowns that make bending down a problem, are taboos. Along with such warnings goes that which says that they should not appear in men's clothing, such as wearing trousers, nor paint their lips, eye-brows, and finger-nails. As the President said, some of what we have mentioned concerning women are not by themselves bad, but prostitutes have monopolised them. By this, a situation is created whereby married women or self-respecting girls can not only not be separated but can also be labelled as harlots. To avoid such mistakes, such as result in the molestation of "clean" women by ungodly men, G.K.S. decided to make it taboo for their women folk to appear sexy-looking. G.K.S. women must make sure that their breasts are completely hidden to achieve this; they must be selective about the type of blouses they wear.

The male members are not free to appear in baggy trousers or some of the modern-day trousers that give a wrong impression of one's personality. The reason is because such trousers make them look like ruffians and uncomely in appearance. They may not even go bare-bodied, that is, with shorts or trousers alone; at least a singlet must be worn if one is coming outdoors.

Other taboos are doctrinal. No member is allowed to wear black dresses for mourning the dead. This instruction affects the Itshekiri traditional law and custom; it has been a sort of problem to some Itshekiri members of the G.K.S., who, no matter their status in life, are compelled to wear black clothes or mainly black coloured clothes to mourn their dead.

Among the Itshekiri, anyone could be suspected of being responsible for the death of a relative if he failed to appear in black. At least this situation, namely, appearing in black, must be evident for three months. This custom has not been successfully defeated by the G.K.S. While the Itshekiri person may be very faithful, he must also appear innocent before his traditional society. The G.K.S. does not, however, appear to be strict in enforcing this doctrine. Though the members of the Society can weep naturally for the dead, they are not expected to go to the extent of doing like non-G.K.S. members who may not only perform "pagan" rites but disfigure themselves.

No G.K.S. man or woman must practice birth control. It is considered an act of murder to do so, and any found practicing it can be suspended indefinitely. The G.K.S. says;

No Christian who has a clear understanding of the scriptures coupled with faith in God will lend aid to the campaign for birth control. All reasons given in favour of it are motivated by carnal and materialistic consideration. The employment of any method purposely to prevent conception runs counter to the purpose of God in regard to the divine mandate, and it is a sin pure and simple.

Every G.K.S. man must be circumcised and no G.K.S. woman must be circumcised. God is said to have instituted circumcision as a token of his covenant with the Jewish nation. God is quoted saying, "Every man child among you shall be circumcised." No such provision was made for the woman, but as time went on, some nations not only borrowed circumcision but also went as far as to circumcise their women. The G.K.S. follows this Jewish tradition to the core and believes that,

the circumcision of women is dangerous and very unscriptural. As a result of it some people had untimely lost their daughters or had them deformed, for life. It is an unnecessary exercise which medical experts have advised against... The argument of some that circumcision is a custom of the people does not justify the practice. The law of God transcends all man-made customs or traditions.

The G.K.S. is well known, at least among the Urhobo and Isoko where clitoridectomy is highly regarded, to have consistently waged a verbal war against the practice. It is not in doubt that several Urhobo and Isoko have refused to join the G.K.S. for opposing it. Even some Urhobo and Isoko G.K.S. members have not given up the belief. They fear that if they give up the belief, their communities will reject them. It seems, however, that G.K.S. main opposition to this practice is based on medical grounds, because no definite portion in scripture says women must not be circumcised. But as there are no laws prohibiting smoking, which is dangerous to the body, so is circumcision, and it amounts to interfering with nature or borrowing heathen customs.

Not to create a gulf between the G.K.S. and the traditional society where they live, a G.K.S. member marrying from a non-G.K.S. family may pay a lump sum of money to the mother-in-law in lieu of practical circumcision. This system has worked as far as this writer knows. The girls seem to like it too; it may take a long time to change this attitude. So far, we have looked at some of the taboos of the G.K.S., and what seems obvious is that the members are sincere about them.

(e) Mode of Worship

Worship in the G.K.S. is a solemn and dignified occasion. It is very much similar to the system in Mission Churches. Attendance at worship hours is a regular feature and, in fact, a duty which every member must perform. Article 1 of the G.K.S. Organisation Instruction says that attendance is not only necessary in worship hours but also necessary in public preachings and other assemblies of the Society. If a member is not seen in the service for two Sundays and no report came to the minister, other members are asked to visit him. Service meetings are held principally twice a week. The first, and known as worship, pure and simple, is Sunday 9-11 a.m. The second known generally as Bible Study meeting, is Wednesday, 4-5.30 p.m.(now it's 4pm-5pm) for women and 6-7.30 p.m.(now 5pm-6pm) for men. In the study meeting, members who previously had given their names to discourse a subject or doctrine of the Church are given ten minutes each to present the discourse. At the end of it, corrections are given where the member went wrong or deviated from the established teachings of the G.K.S. Every study meeting is presided over by either a minister of the Church or a committee member (an elder). While the study day must be Wednesday (not for any specific reason), the periods of study are not uniform in all the branches. Local conditions must be followed to fix the times.

Sunday worship is usually done in a service hall just as on Wednesday, but where a branch has no hall, any hired place can be used. Many of the branches have, however, got their own halls. In the service hall, Warri, one can find a general pattern of arrangement in all G.K.S. service halls or hired places. There is an elevated place at one end of the hall, which is the stage. Here, the ministers, or in some branches, the committee (local elders), are to have their seats. On the stage is a large table to serve the chairman, the secretary, and an adviser to the chairman. About a yard and a half behind the chairman are seated the rest of the Administrative Committee members, and about a yard from the stage in front of him is the pulpit. In the pulpit, the main sermon of the assembly is given, and that is only when someone else apart from the chairman is to deliver the sermon.

Now to the service itself. By 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, all the choristers must have been seated. No G.K.S. choir had special uniform for worship at the inception of the G.K.S. But over the years, some branch choirs now have uniform dresses. But choristers can wear anything. Like all G.K.S. women, the female choristers must cover their heads with hats or scarves, while the males generally must not cover their heads. Beginning from 8:30 a.m., the choristers begin singing. This continues until 9:00 a.m. when the minister calls for an opening hymn. As in most Christian Churches, the main songs for the service are written out on small wooden boards, which are hung on both sides of the hall for members to see. After the opening song, the Lord's prayer or any other prayer is said, and members are asked to have their seats. An opening remark is given by the minister, usually an exhortation drawn from some passages of the Bible or a comment on some current happenings in the G.K.S. or in Nigeria. His exhortation is then followed by the main sermon of the service. Two sermons may be given in one service, and some other things like reading circular letters may be done. In between them, songs are rendered as intervals. After the business of the day, announcements are made by the Secretary. Announcements would include any good or bad news in the branch or the Society as a whole. The name of any member who travelled out of town is announced to save members worrying about his absence. We may mention an aspect of some Sunday worship which has to do with rites of infancy. What is regarded as rites of infancy in the G.K.S. is simply this. When a sister gives birth to a child, she is confined for some three months. On the day she resumes service with the child, a thanks-offering is made to God. It is during the announcement that she is called upon to thank God

for his goodness and blessing. One of the committee sisters (every G.K.S. branch has both brother's and sister's committee members) takes the child, and with the mother flanked by other sisters, marches to the offertory box or reception with an envelope containing money and drops it. As soon as this has taken place, virtually all sisters and brothers would queue up to make thanks-offering to God for increasing the church numerically. This demonstration is an important source of finance for the Church. The next item is general offertory. When the closing hymn is announced and the organ has given the green light, members, brothers first, move in an ordered line from the front bench to the last, followed by the sisters and lastly by children. Those who have no money to offer simply remain in their positions. Last of all, the meeting is declared closed with the Lord's prayer, or a prayer said by the officiant.

The G.K.S. has a hymnbook—the Theocratic Songs of Praise (TSP)—made up of 192 songs and 8 chants. The tunes, except very few, are the popular Mission Church tunes but worded according to the beliefs of the Society. Some words may be retained if these are in harmony with the G.K.S. Bible understanding. Over the years, many songs have been composed and have not been compiled. The former Choirmaster General, Minister Jonathan Esimagbele, now ably replaced by his son Tuoyo Esimagbele, composed many songs awaiting inclusion in future edition of the hymnbook. Mention may be made of the Lagos branch Choirmaster, O. Olushina, who, in spite of his duty as one of the Directors of an International Bank, United Bank for Africa, has composed what may amount to another hymnbook. Mention can be made of G. T. Sobraisipiri of the G.K.S. Port Harcourt, who had composed a great deal of songs. Other hymns are coming up through the G.K.S. Youth Choir based at Warri and other branches of the G.K.S. Some of the original hymns and songs of the Church have been waxed in long play records and cassettes.

Preaching and Publications

In a preface to the Constitution of the G.K.S., it is stated that God commanded the founder of the Society

to go and preach the truth or good news of His Established Kingdom which is symbolically called the Mountain into which all lovers of truth and righteousness must flee for safety and protection before the world's greatest tribulation or vengeance of God Almighty begins.

The proclamation of this good news should take place in any corner of the street, road, or place free of charge. The purpose is to enlighten and educate the public that God's Kingdom is already set up for people to join and work out their salvation. The Kingdom they preach is not fully set up now but that it has come like a mustard seed. And while the mustard seed (God's Kingdom) is growing to become a mighty tree (full establishment of the Kingdom), the good tidings of God's government..., should be proclaimed throughout the world, not only to bear witness but also to convert people to God. Thus the system of preaching is to come to the open air, denounce falsehood, preach the "truth," and ask people to leave "false" churches to join the true church, the G.K.S.

In so far as this obligation is concerned, the G.K.S. seems to be up to the task. The Church has become popular with the Nigerian public so much that, as we mentioned, Nigerians are yet to decide between the G.K.S. and the Watchtower, who is really preaching the Kingdom gospel. The G.K.S. is bound to be popular with its aim of denouncing the doctrines of the churches, especially in public. In recent years, it has gained access to about a dozen television stations in Nigeria.

We may briefly describe G.K.S. preparation for a public preaching. The G.K.S. can preach on any day of the week and only in the evening. If a public preaching is to take place on Sunday evening, several ministers and members will go out in the early hours (5.30 a.m.) to make announcements throughout the town. Almost every G.K.S. branch has some battery-powered megaphones for this purpose. In time past, locally made megaphones were used. Even now, branches like Lagos and Aba or Warri with vans for this purpose do not require many members to go out. All those going out have one and only one simple message.

Good morning to all persons of goodwill in this quarter. This is God's Kingdom Society, inviting you to a free Bible lecture, which will be delivered this evening at x. The time is 6 p.m. prompt. The subject of the lecture will be x. All your questions will be answered from the Bible by x. of the Church. You are invited to attend. Good morning.

Many of the announcers go on bicycles or motor cycles. The above message is given every two or three poles as they move along the streets. The whole town is shared among them to ensure as much ground is covered as possible. At about 7.30 a.m., the announcers are expected to congregate at the minister's residence to hand over the megaphones. Preparation of the spot begins at about 2 p.m. Several hundred chairs and benches are carried down and arranged. A stage is prepared and a platform for the lecturer. Special arrangements are made for the choir, choral groups, and for those who want to sit among the spectators. The G.K.S. electricians are to electrify the spot and buntings of the Church tied to several poles in and around the spot. Several microphones are fixed. The G.K.S. can preach anywhere because the Church has several electric plants to supply lights and operate the microphones. One of the attractions to the spot is the role of the choral groups who begin to play at 5. p.m. to attract people.

Publications

Item 3 of the Constitution, page 8, states that,

It shall be necessary for the Society to circulate tracts and lessons to members in distant places and to man in general in order to eliminate the evil forces of ignorance which infest the gospel of Jesus Christ and for this purpose therefore, the Society shall print and publish its lessons in such forms and ways as it may deem expedient.

It was in pursuance of this provision that the G.K.S. bought and installed a printing press in Salem-City in 1960. So far the press, which is one of the biggest in Warri (as of when writing this) and engaged in commercial printing, has turned out several publications for the G.K.S. These are leaflets, pamphlets, and booklets. The press is still growing. In 1979, the God's Kingdom Advocate was being printed and at the rate of 95,000 copies every fortnight. The advocate is a biweekly doctrinal, news, and reports publication. Its circulation is wide and free to the public. There is hardly any civil service office block that the "Advocate" has not reached. It is the duty of ministers, members, and friends to take them to these offices. In 1975, as far as this writer knows, hundreds of copies were allocated to the University of Ibadan campus alone, distributed by Joel Olusola. It is quite clear that the combined use of the press, television, publications, oral preachings, etc. by the G.K.S. seems to be fulfilling what may be said to be its *raison d'être*. Millions of Nigerians have either come into contact with the G.K.S. preaching personally or have heard them through the television.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

STRUCTURE AND RELATIONSHIP

Under this heading, by structure we mean the Constitution and Administration of the G.K.S. This is examined in one section. By "Relationship", we mean the internal and external association, and this is examined in the other section.

SECTION ONE

Constitution and Administration

In the early days, what was described as a small form of administration was headed by Urhobo as leader and Edet as general secretary. No other office existed.

When the Church started to expand outside its base in Lagos, it became necessary to have a firmer organization. In other words, institutionalization became inevitable if rules and regulations were to be issued. By 1945, when Otomewo joined Urhobo and Edet, and 1946, by other two members as ministers (J.V. Eferoghene and E.E. Oghoghome), a committee of ministers designated as "executive committee was set up. Urhobo was the Life President, Otomewo - Secretary, Edet - Treasurer, Oghoghome-Financial Secretary and Eferoghene-Spiritual Adviser to the Society.

It is said that the Committee functioned very well so that by 1948 the first Constitution of the Society was drafted by the G.K.S. Executive Committee. This Constitution was, however, amended in February 1951, revised in June 1951, and revised and ratified in September 1954. The following extracts from the Constitution show the aims and objectives of the G.K.S.

(a) To declare God's Kingdom of Righteousness and peace on earth and to express this doctrine in every conceivable way and form within the bounds of law, order and human decency, and to do so at anytime, or place, to the best of our knowledge and understanding of Biblical interpretation (what the Bible says) and symbolism.

(b) To vindicate, admonish, preach and impart to mankind irrespective of colour, creed and caste, the wholesome idea of service, fear, adoration and reverence to God Almighty, the Maker of Man, the Author of Life and Destiny, and the Great Ruler and Architect of the Universe, and for this purpose always to organise meetings and gatherings in any corner of the street, road, house or premises in any township, village or locality without harm, violence or damage to any person or property, and without infringement of any laws or regulation of constituted authority.

(c) To excite the interest of Africans and all people of the earth to (in) the study of the Holy Bible, the Christian Ethics and Theology, and to promote all means and measures conducive to the propagation of this knowledge for the eventual peace and realisation of harmony and tranquility among all people in the human race in accordance with scriptural ideology, and

(d) To formulate plans and schemes capable of giving effect to the objects of the God's Kingdom Society, and by dint of experiment and experience to arouse the interest of mankind towards the ultimate attainment of God's Kingdom of Righteousness on Earth.

When the G.K.S. Constitution was drafted in 1948, it was immediately registered and was signed by the Governor of Nigeria, Sir John Macpherson. It contains seventeen major items

showing how the G.K.S. should be governed by the appointments of various officers. Since 1954 (till the time of writing this), however, the constitution has not been reviewed. Plans were said to be on to hold a Ministers conference to amend certain provisions in it.

The Constitution provides for a strong central organization. There are the offices of the President, Vice-President, General Secretary, Private Secretary to the President, Publicity Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Trustees, and Auditor. The holders of these offices are to be devoted ministers. They are, however, to be more concerned with the preaching of the gospel than with these offices.

We can now look at the duties of these offices while bearing in mind the preeminence of the gospel.

The President

He is believed to be appointed under a divine direction, and of course, every office in the G.K.S. is deemed to be of divine direction through the nomination of holder. The President is to preside over the entire church. His duties as stipulated in the Constitution shall be to conduct the general management and supervision of all other officers and works connected with the affairs of the Society. He shall be responsible to the Church in all matters affecting the existence and welfare with the advice of the officers of the Society. Urhobo's successor was E.T. Otomewo (1922-1996). His activities, as may appear to a visitor to Salem-City, reflected the business-like spirit that is typical of one who understands his mission.

The Vice-President

He shall act in place of the President in the absence of the latter and to transact all managerial business with the advice of other officers. Benjamin O. Tietie was Vice-President from April 15, 1979, to November 1990. He was also the General Manager of the G.K.S. Press, Warri, and the Television Service Minister of the G.K.S. He was assisted in the television broadcast by Ministers Godwin Ifeacho, George Ejebonu, and Emmanuel Adedokun (Yoruba interpreter). Benjamin Tietie was assisted in the G.K.S. Press by Minister E.A. Adedokun, a long-time printer cum proofreader of the Daily Times Press, Lagos.

The General Secretary

He shall conduct all correspondence of the Society and shall take accurate account of all business transactions and minutes of all executive meetings and assemblies of ministers. The last holder of this office (as of when writing this) was Samuel E. Lessor between 1951 and 1972, March 9, when he died. Since then, till 1990, the office of General Secretary was run by Tietie. But after Tietie's appointment as Vice President in 1978, he began to share the office with the help of Senior and Executive Minister, J.T. Okome. From my discussion with him in London early in 1979, Okome seemed qualified for the office of the General Secretary. But no member seemed to want Okome to be tied down with such a job, for he was said to be one of the powerful public preachers of the G.K.S. He was in more demand by various G.K.S. branches for public preaching than any other. Minister Okome, a playwright, has authored widely circulated religious books in the G.K.S.

The Treasurer

He shall be responsible to the President for the custody of all funds, if any, and shall keep in his possession all funds derived from charity of adherents and well-wishers. The holder of this office since 1948 has been E.E. Oghoghome. He died in February 1982. He was later replaced with Ministers Enejeta Oddo and John Ikoba, respectively.

The Financial Secretary

He shall receive all monies and/or funds available for the month. He will also acknowledge receipts of such monies and keep records of the same before handing over the total sum to the Treasurer for safekeeping. J.T. Okome has been holding this office (as of when writing this) for many years now, but in recent past, several ministers have shared this office with him. This is so because he travels too often. In a reorganization exercise in 1998, Femi Akinwale, a minister studying Accounting at Lagos State University, was appointed to this office.

The Publicity Secretary

He shall see to the publicity of the Society's advertisements, press releases, and announcements of activities in the print and electronic media, putting out notices, programmes and handbills in order to rouse the interest and to focus the minds of the public on the mission of the Society. B.O. Tietie held this office effectively between 1956 and 1978. In June 1978, the G.K.S. graduated one of its junior ministers, George Ejobonu, in journalism at the Nigerian Institute of Journalism, Lagos. Within a few months, Ejobonu was made the G.K.S. Press Secretary to tour with the President and Tietie as they sometimes addressed the press. The Choirmaster-General of the G.K.S. Jonathan Ariogboritse Esimagbele became the Publicity Secretary from 1980-1991.5bum da ton of bib

The Private Secretary

He is to be the President's Secretary. He is to treat all private correspondence addressed to the President, arrange or prepare programmes for interviews, and take minutes or notes of all happenings in any station he goes with the President. This post was held for many years by B.O. Tietie. In 1970, it was taken over by Eric Okoh-Onyeagbazi, said to be one-time secretary to the general manager of a foreign concern in Kano. He presently holds admirably the office of Secretary to the Executive Board. Later, David Amanoritsewo, a minister and lawyer by training, became Otomewo's private secretary.

The Auditor

He shall take a periodical account of all funds and expenses and make an annual report to the President. For many years, this post was held by J.A. Kuye-Obafemi, who died in 1976. No appointment has been made to that post, but non-devoted members who are trained auditors are said to be invited when necessary to look at the finances on behalf of the Church.

The Trustees

They are appointed in a general meeting of the Society and may hold office for life. They are to number four, one of whom must be the President. They were, however, three in 1979: E.I. Udoji and B.O. Edet, and of course the President, E.T. Otomewo.

We have seen with little comment what the G.K.S. Constitution provides for the running of the G.K.S. It is also clear that no office is held for life, though some occupants remained long in one post or died while holding it.

The G.K.S. claims that there has never been any incidence of rivalry in the administrative setup. The only executive member who left the ministry, Elijah Chukudi (he was with B.O. Edet, advisers to the G.K.S.), did so not so much for struggle for leadership as for dissatisfaction.

All the offices enumerated above are based in Warri, but there is local administration in every branch of the G.K.S. run by a committee made up of mature members (men only). They are to see to the collection of funds for local use and on behalf of the ministry, to perform judicial duties as stipulated in the Constitution of the G.K.S. They also conduct church services. But any major decisions on any issue within the branch must be communicated to the headquarters before they are put into action. But see below for other roles of the committee.

There are women's central as well as local committee who, in all respects, concern themselves with women's affairs. The central committee coordinated the works of the local committees. They have the power, for example, to call a sister to attention if any misconduct is noticed. By that, they help the administration to maintain sanity. We shall see below more of the works of the women. no extern bas

Ministerial Order

Devoted workers of the G.K.S. are known simply as ministers, and every minister belongs to a class, and to every class is assigned a duty. The G.K.S., while claiming to follow the examples of Christ and his early apostles, have found it not necessary to use the offices known to the Christians of the first century A.D. Thus none of their ministers is formerly addressed as bishop, apostle, priest, prophet, evangelist, deacon, or catechist as found in mainline Christianity. But G.K.S. ministers have duties corresponding to much of these offices of the Christian Church. In the G.K.S., everyone ministers unto the Lord. But the devoted ministers are those who have surrendered all worldly things and devoted their lives to follow Christ, and thus minister more. By their devotion, they claim to follow the example of the twelve apostles of Christ, who gave themselves wholly to the work of God. And as the apostles depended on Christians for all their material needs, so also the G.K.S. ministers upon the members for their upkeep. But the G.K.S. has, however, engaged in profitable business to get, as it is claimed, more money for material needs to speed up the propagation of the gospel. (See below for G.K.S. source of finance.)

The ministers of the G.K.S. numbering 51 (as of 1979) with a good number of other workers fully devoted but not addressed yet as ministers," exclusive of wives and children, are classified to create room for struggle to aspire higher in the ministry. It is not, however, easy to move from one stage to another. Some ministers (and it does not bother them) have remained junior ministers since 1980. Their primary concern is that their very best services are offered to the Church.

The classes or categories are the President, Executive Ministers, Senior Ministers, Intermediate Ministers, Junior Ministers, and Branch Committees.

It should be noted that women in the G.K.S. are not to lead in any way except in those aspects which limit them to women folk in providing some material needs of the Society and advising themselves on how to behave at home. (See below for the role of the G.K.S. women).

Apart from the ministers, the generality of G.K.S. members are divided but mainly into two classes, the recognised and general members. It has been a struggle for members to move from one stage to the other because the higher one goes in faith and work, the greater the opportunity to be known and helped, if possible. For example, a recognised member who requires a loan for some urgent thing will be considered quicker by the Society than a general member. This is normal in all societies.

Having named the classes, we now see what duties are assigned to them or what is required from the members in the different categories. We have seen the duty of the presidents who is at the apex of the G.K.S. hierarchy.

The Executive Committee is described as a "divine executive board" in the Constitution, and it is the duty of this board to solve all problems relating to the society and to exact all rules and orders in the interest of goodwill and tranquility. But the fruit of their deliberation shall be subject to the approval of the President. It is the duty of the executive to preside over cases of higher importance and to review decisions of branch committees. For example, a member may not be suspended by any branch committee for any misconduct without the approval of the Executive. But sometimes the committee may suspend and only inform the Executive in cases like fornication, adultery, or idol worship.

The Senior Ministers are empowered to speak on behalf of the Church at any place and time and can, in most cases, preach publicly and answer questions of any kind scripturally. They may take decisions on behalf of the G.K.S.; they constitute a class from which the Executive Committee is drawn. A minister of lower status can be delegated with the privileges and functions of a Senior or Executive minister if the situation arises.

The Intermediate Ministers play similar roles as the Seniors, except that they are not specifically empowered to take decisions on behalf of the Society. They are however, allowed in emergency cases to speak and act on behalf of the Society. A good number of the public preachers of the G.K.S. can be found among them. Rather than to the Senior Ministers, decisions of the Executive Committee are passed to any Intermediate Minister for execution. He may delegate it to the Junior Ministers, but he is to give account to the Executive.

The Junior Ministers are said to be very fast in learning the scriptures and have sometimes been mandated to preach publicly and answer questions from the public. But each time he preaches, there must be a Senior Minister around to assist him to answer difficult questions from the public. It is said that some of the Junior Ministers have learned a great deal to be able to preach anywhere without the help of a Senior Minister. It should be noted that being Junior is not being less knowledgeable, for some of the Junior have been Ministers for 20 years and devoted to the study of the scriptures.

The Branch Committee is the administrative and judicial group in the local branches. Every G.K.S. branch has this group. The Committee is empowered to take decisions that will promote the spread of the gospel in its locality but is sometimes advised to seek audience with the headquarters. The Committee can raise funds for the same purpose. The most important duty of this body is to promote brotherly love by settling misunderstandings between members, husbands and wives, etc. Under the Committee are three local committees: the Welfare Committee, Women Fellowship, and Youth Fellowship Committees. These must pass their decisions to the Administrative Committee before action is taken on any major issue. In G.K.S. branches, the Administrative Committee serves as the Marriage Committee. It handles all matters about marriage and is accountable to the Marriage Council at the Headquarters.

Before we deal with the members outside in our classification, we may note how the ministers study to increase their knowledge of the Bible.

Studying or reading the Bible is a must, and along with it, they mainly study the Society's publications and other Church's doctrinal books and publications. By this method, the ministers understand G.K.S. beliefs more and then have first-hand knowledge of the doctrines of other churches and how to condemn any teaching that is believed to be wrong. There are other methods, but three of them may be mentioned. First, there is the G.K.S. Ministers annual conference, which takes weeks to complete. In this conference, all G.K.S. teachings are re-examined. The Senior Ministers and even the President explain in detail all the teachings while others jot down points or tape them. Opposing opinions about their doctrines are raised, and counter Bible citations are produced by those who know just in case such opinions are encountered in their public preachings. Second, there are groups studying on their own, and they meet once or twice a week. They search mainly for additional support for their teachings, and third, there is a mass meeting of the ministers in which a minister is asked to lecture others, after which he is critically examined by them. Various questions that could come from observers, detractors, and critics are asked. This meeting is not as frequent as the second but not less than twice every month. It is mainly for those who are aspiring to preach in public. All the above methods explained why a G.K.S. Minister gives or rains down Bible citations almost to every question he is asked by his audience.

The members outside the Ministry are known in two groups: the recognised and the general members.

The Recognised Member is one whose faith has been tested and found steady by means of works he has done. He is able, with the knowledge he is presumed to have, to withstand the temptations of the devil if he wishes. He is no longer expected to chew meat but to crack bones; that is, he could be severely rebuked and may not take offence or revolt. He is expected to act mature in all things. Certain projects calling for money urgently may be brought to his attention, and if he has the money, it could be obtained from him. The recognised members in all branches have monthly meetings where an opportunity is given to any who is prepared to discuss the beliefs of the Society. They have monthly contributions, the purpose of which is to help the branch meet the financial requirements of any development or programmes.

The General Member is the one who is new to the faith of the G.K.S., and much attention is not paid to his raw attitude or misconduct, though he must be exhorted to show himself as a true believer. Being general does not always mean that such a member is new to the faith of G.K.S. Some general members have been in the G.K.S. for over 20 years and may even remain for a longer period except he is seen to be faithful, regular at services, and contributes financially to the Church. Again, if he is faithful, regular, and contributes faithfully but has no good conduct, he may remain a general member. It seems, however, that the general member struggles to be recognized by trying his best to please the Church. Like the recognized, the general members have their monthly meeting for the same purpose, and also contributions are made to help the branch. By far the general members are more than the recognized.

The Role of Women in the G.K.S.

One of the theological questions that have engaged the attention of some Christians and eminent theologians in present times has been that of the role of women in the church. The question has not been what women are in the church but whether they should be ordained

into the priesthood, which for about twenty centuries seems to have been the role of men only. Some churches and theologians think women can be ordained, while others have objected to it. i

The G.K.S. says that women are not to be ordained into the ministry. But that women have their place in the works of Christ. In the booklet, *The Place of Women in the Church*, the G.K.S. mentions that God made the woman to be subordinate to man. And since God has ordained it so, it would be wrong for the woman to claim to be or do what God has never intended for her, such as preaching the gospel.

A woman, by reason of her faith, knowledge and good understanding, can rise to a place of honour in the church, but there are offices and privileges which God never assigns to women.

Concerning preaching the gospel, the G.K.S. says at length:

It is contrary to the Christian rule for a woman to teach and lead men. St. Paul stated, (1 Timothy 2:11- 15), 'Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not (allow) a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man but to be in silence... 'Women are not permitted by God to make speeches in the congregation or assembly of the Lord's people.

Even if they have doubts on any issue, the law stops them from asking questions in the Church. It is written, 'Let your women keep silence in the Churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience...And if they will learn anything, let-them ask their husbands at home for it is a shame for women to speak in the Church. '(1 Cor. 14:14-35)

G.K.S. women can preach, but this is only among themselves or to their younger children. Such preachings or properly exhortations are based on how they should hold fast to the faith, minister with their material substances to the Ministry, honour and adore their husbands, and keep themselves holy and chaste. They also study the Bible and teachings of the G.K.S., which they must also confess among themselves. Thus, there are women group meetings for such studies and discussions. They execute various projects and charity works. It is believed that if they can do all the above and much more, they shall be saved. The G.K.S. quoted Paul saying that women shall be saved "in childbearing if they continue in faith and charity and in holiness with sobriety." (1 Timothy 2:15) 13

In the G.K.S., women even, as Yeboa Korie noted in his Eden Revival Church, Ghana, are born to serve. Women are more in the G.K.S. than men, and this seems to be the general picture in most churches everywhere. G.K.S. women are said to be heavy traders, and they help one another to progress in trade so that everyone can meet any levy to do or buy something for the use of the church. As a result of their efforts, several cars, as we mentioned in the last chapter, were bought for the President and for the church. In addition to this contribution, some of them have engaged in farming to meet the food requirements of the ministry. They plant crops like yam, cassava, pepper, okro, maize, etc. in the branches where land can be purchased. After harvests, these items are sent to the ministry or possibly sold, and money is sent to the ministry to use for what was needed. All works of women in the G.K.S. are coordinated by a Central Women Committee based in Warri. The Secretary of this Committee has been Adetola Obafemi since 1954. Members include Dorah Otomewo, Ebun Obaruku, Jemima Obafemi, Ruth Uwaifo, and Anna Rapkeromu (1979). It is their duty to see that the women serve and provide the material needs of the ministry because in the

days of Christ, women like Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna did so (Luke 8:1-3). 17 Apart from providing the material needs,

The place of women in God's Organization (G.K.S.) is that of obedience to God and the Lord Christ, and of subjection to their husbands at home and the elders of the Church who direct them religiously in all godliness.

Source of Finance

The average Nigerian who knows something about the G.K.S. may think that the G.K.S. is rich in money and material. It is not really easy, for example, to maintain a programme every week on five television stations: Lagos, Ibadan, Benin, Port Harcourt, and Aba, with more to be opened as soon as possible. The rate at which the members donate towards the upliftment of the Society is wonderful. For example, the members donated N276,283.91k in 1980 alone, of which N80,000 was allocated to Radio/Television religious broadcasts. 19 For 1981/82 a sum of N345,000 is to be raised and probably like other times, this target may be exceeded. The G.K.S. does not receive any financial help from any other source than within itself. The G.K.S., in an attempt to inform the public who may perhaps have expressed some opinion about the source of G.K.S. finance, published in the newspapers that,

The G.K.S. derives her funds mainly from tithes (one tenth of one's income) and offerings, as well as donations by members and well-wishers in accordance with the scriptures.

Concerning donations, we may mention that of Brothers Humphry Idisi and E.C. Ogidi of Port Harcourt for sinking a borehole in Salem-City at a cost of over N35,000, which they donated to the ministry in 1980. Apart from the above sources of income, the G.K.S. has gone into business, and the reasons for doing so include that of imitating other churches, but most importantly, for the absence of opposition from the scriptures. Concerning business, the G.K.S. noted thus:

The running of business enterprises by God's Kingdom Society for religious and charitable purposes is neither beyond the scope of her spiritual privilege nor a contravention of any Christian principle.

It is said that some people—non-G.K.S. members and some G.K.S. members—were not happy when the Society began to do business. These people felt that business was taking the place of preaching. The Society, however, told me that the businesses were run mainly by non-devoted members and non-G.K.S. employed on paid salary. But ministers are usually at the head of any undertaking to see it running well and lucratively. In an attempt to give more reasons for going into business or attempt to calm down the offended, the G.K.S. wrote:

In the G.K.S. there is the ministry made up of responsible and devout men and women with their children who have devoted their lives wholly to selfless service of the Lord and humanity. They must not only be provided with equipment which the modern-day life demands for the propagation of the gospel but must also be cared for. And in this time that the cost of living is soaring daily, what it means to maintain over 200 souls wholly devoted to God's service can better be implied than described.

Again, because the G.K.S. believes in putting the tenets of Christianity into practice, money is needed for the care of the needy.

And so the care of widows who are widows indeed, and orphans, as well as the sick and the poor or needy has always kept the organization involved in heavy expenditures.

It is said and even with evidences that G.K.S. students have no fear in taking admissions into the University because they are sure of getting their first-year financial requirements from the Church and may not pay back. This provision is tentative while the students seek a loan from the Federal or State or a bursary from the latter.

To meet all these requirements, the G.K.S. decided on economic projects with a view to also providing employment opportunities to members and non-members alike. The G.K.S. Press has been thrown open to the general public and jobs are accepted, but these jobs must

be devoid of spiritual involvement: things such as football pool coupons, invitation cards to ball-dances or juju festivals, tobacco and cigarette advertisements, and even Christmas greeting cards and so on are not accepted for printing.

The G.K.S. Press used to be one of the busiest in Warri, serving various companies, peoples and institutions.

Other enterprises being run by the G.K.S., all based in Warri, 1979, are Charity Poultry, Charity Institute of Dressmaking and Embroidery, Charity Soap Works, and G.K.S.

Bookshop. These are on small scales. The Charity Poultry produces hundreds of eggs daily that are used in the ministry, and are sold to members at cheaper prices than elsewhere.

Most of the eggs and chickens sold to the public go to the expatriates, especially those in the oil industry. They have contracted the G.K.S. purely for regular and unfailing supply. Some members of the public are, however, unhappy by the G.K.S. readiness to sell more eggs to expatriates who are supposed to buy at higher rates outside. There seems to be no discrimination against any buyer, but it seems to the G.K.S. that some customers other than the expatriates are reselling their eggs at higher rates to others, a thing the G.K.S. sees as exploitation. The poultry is intended to serve consumers only.

The Charity Institute of Dressmaking and Embroidery serves two purposes. First, it turns out dressmakers from different parts of Nigeria. It is fairly large with several sewing machines.

Any person can be admitted, but certainly G.K.S. female members are more favourably considered. Second, and the object of its foundation, is that of serving the needs of the ministry and some of the members in their clothing needs.

Charity Soap Works is another enterprise with the provision of soap for the ministry and the public. The soap is mainly for dishwashing and seems to be very popular wherever it is sold. The last is the G.K.S.

Bookshop. What prompted this bookshop in the first instance was the procuring of books at lower rates for schoolchildren in the ministry. With so many children in the primary and secondary schools, etc., the buying of books was becoming a drain on the finances of the ministry. For instance, in 1978 there were 71 secondary school children under the care of the G.K.S. alone. These include children of ministers, some poor members, and orphans. The Bookshop is expanding, and outsiders have been buying books for their children. Books in the shop are said to be slightly cheaper than elsewhere in Warri, but distance can discourage people from coming from far places for the cost of transport.

It is clear that with so much money coming in from the various economic sections, the items which thousands have been said to pay faithfully, donations, etc. the G.K.S. can be said to

be rich. But care is needed if business will not play down the preaching of the gospel of the Society.

SECTION TWO

Relationships

We now want to see how G.K.S. members live or act towards one another and how they act and behave towards those who differ in faith from them as well as towards other institutions, religions, and sects.

Internal Relationships

What may be obvious to an outsider who lives with the G.K.S. members for a while, is that the G.K.S. is like a family. Blood relationship seems not as strong as their Christian bond. It appears that a Yoruba member gives more recognition to an Igbo member than to a person of his family. There is willingness to help one another in any way possible, and there are groups formed to ensure members are given this help. The G.K.S. believes in what it sees as practical religion. And because religion without morality or charity is vain, the G.K.S. issued the following instructions to all members:

Every member should report his condition when ill or in trouble to the Station Minister or Local Chairman or Study Leader or any of the official elders of the Church in order that he may be admonished and helped by prayers; and also to determine any other help to be given to him if the situation so demands. And any member who fails to report has himself to blame...

We look at the ministry first before the members outside.³⁰ In the G.K.S. headquarters, the Apostolic pattern of living is being followed. There is a common meal, a source of clothing, and any care one can think of as necessary for all the over 200 inhabitants of Salem-City. The ministers are not paid any salary but a meagre sum, or what the G.K.S. called pocket allowance. This is allowed to the Ministers and their families. The Senior Minister and a good number of the Intermediate live in flats in Salem-City while more flats were being constructed (1979).

There is love among the Salemites as they are known generally to the members. Marriage is multi-tribal for one can see Calabar married to Yoruba, Urhobo to Kalabari, Igbo to Agbor, Itshekiri to Urhobo etc. There seems to be what may be called one another's keeper. Misunderstanding, which is unavoidable in a community of people, is quickly checked and cordiality re-established.

Concerning the members outside, we may describe only two Committees set up to look after themselves. The first is the Welfare Committee, and is found in all G.K.S. branches. In the bigger branches, it is made up of men mostly in the medical, legal and administrative professions of the world. In the smaller branches, especially in the villages, some members with certain abilities such as knowledge of medicine (native) are members. Generally, there are, where available, some of their traders technicians and car owners. Like in all G.K.S. Committees, there is no limit to the number of members to make up the Committee. There is however, no Committee that has exceeded ten, or less than five.

The duty of the Welfare Committee is to cater mostly for the poor, needy and helpless ones among the members. Members claim to have received free medical service in the clinics

(private) of their doctor members. Lawyers are said to have offered free legal aid to members who could not afford the fees. And if a case involves a rich member, there is a special fee to be charged by the lawyer member and is usually lower than normal. Car owners in the Committee are to make their vehicles ready or available for any emergency or for any other purpose. The Committee must arrange visits, provide home help, and prepare food. A hospitalized member with wife and children may be given a sister to help the wife to attend to the member. Hospital bills are mostly paid by the Committee if the member cannot pay. Even if the member could pay, the G.K.S. still shows great financial commitment. The traders, technicians, etc. have their parts to play to ensure the needy is provided for to ameliorate conditions.

For the services of the Committee, there is in every G.K.S. branch what is called "local fund." In some branches, the charge on every brother every month is 50k and sister, 30k. Some members, especially the rich, are not in this arrangement because anyone can pay what he or she likes into the fund. Some members are known to have donated huge amounts of money for the year. Individuals are known to have provided all or paid for all the medicines in the first aid box of the Committee. In Nigeria, not every sickness is taken to the doctor. Some people, over the years, have acquired knowledge of what drug may be used for this or that sickness. In short, the Welfare Committee, as its name implies, is to look after the welfare of the members in all things possible, and funds do not cease to flow into their accounts.

The other Committee, though known as fellowship, is made up of selected members who formed themselves into a group for the purpose of helping the Church and members financially. Officially, they are known as the "League of Freedomites" and operate only in five of the G.K.S. branches: Lagos, Warri, Benin Sapele, and Port Harcourt. The total number of them was 39 in 1979, but in this year of publication it is over 60. The members are some of the known rich or well-to-do members. The fellowship was formed because it is more blessed to give than to receive. The main biblical basis is Proverbs 11:25, to wit, "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. That is, if one is kind to others, especially those of the same faith and aspiration, God himself will be kind to him or increase him more and more. Every member is expected to pay a monthly contribution to the purse. How much a member should pay varies from branch to branch, but the least is N100 a month, and the highest is N200. Apart from this contribution, a vote can be taken anytime to bring in extra money for their accounts.

Some of their main concerns are that anytime a donation is required in the Society, they must swell the amount by giving so much. In one donation I witnessed at Warri, four of their members donated a total of N15,000 plus. In Lagos, one gave as much as N6,000. One other of their main concerns is that wherever the President and his entourage travel, they must be well accommodated, and that means in a first-class hotel. But popularly, the League is known for the salaries, which they pay to older members every month. Such old members are mainly some of the early converts or foundation members who laboured with Urhobo and have not enough to keep life going. The League members are known also to have sent substantial donations to smaller branches engaged in the building of their service halls and sometimes minister's residential houses. It is necessary to point out that every group operated independently of the rest. Plans were on to begin a national meeting of the Leagues to discuss matters of interest to the Society, themselves, and perhaps to explore other avenues to do more charitable works. They are known to have built residential quarters for ministers. The League's involvement in Church and charity is enormously large, and too large for a comprehensive inclusion in this book. Some pioneers of the League would

include F.M.O. Osifo, P. E. Okotie, Stephen Egberedu, Johnson Sakutu, T. E. Isang, and J. B. Ojeh.

External Relationships

The G.K.S. and Other Churches

Here, by other churches, I am referring to churches like the Roman Catholic, Anglican (C.M.S.), Methodist, Baptist, Jehovah's Witnesses, Independent Churches in Africa, etc. As far as it could be shown, the G.K.S. accepted the presence of other churches, but while there seems to be no strain at a personal level, the G.K.S. is militant and aggressive towards the teachings and beliefs of other churches. In their Sermon, Why does the G.K.S. always attack the Roman Catholics? It is made clear that the G.K.S. would not allow any church teachings that appeared to be wrong to go unchallenged. The members of other churches are said to be respected, but it is the duty of the G.K.S., as Gideon's vision of 1933 made clear, that false doctrines must be exposed. This attitude would explain why G.K.S. sermons are all written in a defensive way against the teachings of other churches.

The G.K.S. may claim a cordial relationship at a personal level, but there seems to be some tensions with the Witnesses. The Jehovah's Witness man is a withdrawn man in the community in an attempt to keep himself unspotted from the world. While the same thing may be said of the G.K.S. person in terms of belief, he mixes freely with members of other churches. The reason for this is given by the G.K.S. I quote at length here:

The G.K.S. believes in peaceful coexistence of all religious bodies—true or false—until God, in His own time and according to His purpose, will put an end to all iniquities and falsehoods. Jesus Christ said, let both (wheat and tares or G.K.S. and other churches in Nigeria) grow together until the harvest (day of judgement). I will say to the reapers (angels), gather ye together first the tares (the wicked-children of the evil one, Satan) and tie them in bundles to burn them (kill) but gather the wheat (the righteous-children of God) into my barn (God's Organization) Matthew 13:30, 37-43.

Though it is coexistence at all levels with other Churches.

the policy of the G.K.S. is that of non-compromise with falsehood or evil; that is, she does not believe in compromising the right doctrines of Jesus Christ with unbiblical pharisaical doctrines of nominal Christianity. Paul stated that there is no communion between truth and error... On this scriptural ground the G.K.S. does not practice interfaith or interdenominationalism which she believes is nothing but religious hypocrisy and a union of contraries.

The members of the prophetic churches, like the Aladura groups, are certainly not so much liked despite the claim to peaceful coexistence. It is the belief of the G.K.S. that the devil is working in these churches, and it is not the Holy Spirit of God that is used. They are the prophets and teachers whom Christ said would do or show great wonders such as healing the sick, giving sight to the blind and speech to the dumb, etc. Such wonders could be capable of deceiving the elect of God unless care is taken to ensure what spirit is working. And that (this is generally believed by most Nigerians of other churches) the Aladura, or spirit group of churches, have bartered the preaching of the gospel with prayer and healing. By this barter, they have disobeyed Christ, who says that the gospel must be preached.

Relationship with the Secular Society

The G.K.S. says it is not living in a world of its own; as such, it has many things in common with the general public. The Church claims to be living a Christian life within the community where evils of all kinds are committed with no regard to sanity. Clearly, some members of the public do not like the G.K.S. members who appear to them as proud, always claiming to be the only true Church. It seems there is no end to such claims by G.K.S. people. There are people who admire the G.K.S. relationship with the community, especially its work of charity though this is mainly within itself.

Unlike the Watchtower people, the G.K.S. members are prepared to contribute cash and kind to community projects such as building a town hall or to the development of schools, but never to the building of juju shrines or clearing a path to it. G.K.S. people, like the Watchtower, do not take part in traditional festivals since festivals in most African societies are linked with ancestors or a god or divinity. The Society has, however, as we have mentioned elsewhere, found it not unscriptural to borrow and reword the music and dance of these festivals.

The G.K.S. and the Traditional Religion

As it could be gathered from the G.K.S., no attempt had been made to battle by way of preaching specifically against the African Traditional Religious belief. It seems Gideon's vision did not mention it. However, the G.K.S. does not see everything in the traditional religion, especially the medical aspect of it, as wrong. But on the whole, it is the worship of idols or divinities like Ogun, Yemoja, Orisanla of the Yoruba, Olokun, Osanowa, Osanoha of the Edo and Ekwensi, and Ala of the Igbo people. God is against the worship of these divinities; thus, the adherents of the traditional religion are regarded by the G.K.S. as enemies of Christianity.

In spite of what the religion is to the G.K.S., there is recognition of the works of some traditionalists who specialise in medicine. But the G.K.S. person will not accept medicine taken from juju shrines or prepared with the offering of animals. Medicine prepared from herbs is taken provided no invocation is involved. As much as possible, members are encouraged to go to the hospital when ill or to go to any member with the knowledge of medicine. No member is allowed to go to any traditional religionist for the purpose of ascertaining the future. No member dreads the gods of the people, nor must anyone engage in the destruction of the emblems of the religion. The believers in the religion are to be told of the "nothingness" of the religion. No attempt is made, however, to make the traditional religionist feel he is a nuisance or neglected. They are in fact to be befriended and preached to so as to convert them.

The G.K.S. believes in the reality of witchcraft in the community but does not bother itself to seek means of catching or detecting them. It is said that the Christian is not advised to engage in such unprofitable exercise. Christians are to preach against the practice, and those in it may choose to repent or keep on perpetrating their nefarious deeds for their own destruction by God. 36 Because the Bible speaks about Witchcraft, the G.K.S. sees no reason why some people should doubt the existence of Witchcraft in the world. The G.K.S. will not mix too freely with anyone who confessed to be a witch or wizard. There are confessed witches or wizards in many African Societies, and there may be some confessed ones in the G.K.S. who are believed to have given up the practice.

We will mention at this point that, as much as can be known at this stage of our study, the G.K.S. appears not to have borrowed anything from the traditional religion or much of the culture of the people. What appears to be an exception is the traditional dance and music

which are associated with some ancestors or divinities. The G.K.S. claims to have its faith in polygamy, circumcision, and baptism, for example, from the Bible and not because they are practiced in the religion or culture of the people.

Relationship with Government and Political Participation

Today, it is not possible to live in Africa, particularly Nigeria, and be indifferent to political questions. Even the most backward tribes are affected by common development plans, and leaders are confronted with problems of social change. Everyone is touched by the whole process of government, and it is at this point that the church and state must be related at whatever level a given situation may be. The area of relation may be small or large, but it always exists. There are, however, some religious bodies that are apolitical; for example, the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Concerning relationship with the government, the G.K.S. notes extensively thus:

The G.K.S. firmly believes that human government, imperfect though they are, are allowed by God to rule over the affairs of men until God's Kingdom which men of goodwill everywhere including Kings, Queens, heads of state, governors, prime ministers as well as the masses have been praying for, will take over the control of the whole world as purposed by God Almighty.

As a result of this understanding the G.K.S.

encourages her adherents to be loyal and law abiding citizens and to contribute towards government development and other healthy projects and so forth, provided nothing inconsistent with the principle of Christianity is done. She believes in the payment of tax without which no government can meet the social and other good demands of the nation. For this reason she does not only urge her members through announcements in church assemblies to pay tax every year but has on several occasions given financial help to some and even to non-members to pay.

The G.K.S. says that it contributed towards rehabilitation and reconciliation activities spearheaded by the Federal Military Government of Nigeria during the civil war, 1967-1970. It has also used resolutions and pronouncements of her conferences and other religious assemblies to call on the nation's rulers to rule in the fear of God.

The G.K.S. has not been known to constitute any danger to the government or to peace generally, except that of 1935, to which we referred in Chapter 5. It has rather appeared to have helped the government in all ways possible. Its role in politics in terms of intervention has been discussed in three chapters of this book.

The G.K.S., as a body, does not indulge in politics. The Society is only concerned or interested in advising the rulers in the fear of God. The Society says, in one of its widely circulated leaflets titled "Nigeria's Reversion to Civil Rule: A Warning to the Nations," that The God's Kingdom Society is not associated with any political party. Her stand is that of encouraging what is good and condemning evil in any form in accordance with the scriptures... Nigeria needs a President who truly fears God and who is genuinely determined to promote righteousness, peace, and unity for the prosperity and stability of the country... Let the electorate go and vote on election days for God-fearing candidates of merit, integrity, and good character without selling their conscience and voting cards for the sake of filthy lucre', corrupt, or dishonest gain.

This is what the G.K.S. can do for the ruler and the ruled, namely, to warn them to have God in mind in all they do.

But members are free to take part in politics and to join any political party of their choice if they wish to. The members can vote and be voted for, but the society will not cease to advise such members to do righteousness if they have their chances of ruling over people. Members are, however, hardly interested in becoming full-fledged politicians. It is said that some G.K.S. members in some local councils have played their parts to encourage more of them.

APPENDIX A

SHORT NOTES ON TWO KEY INFORMANTS

Augustine Ukoli

Augustine Ukoli was the elder brother of Gideon Urhobo. He was born about 1898, the first child of Ukoli, and he attended the C.M.S. School, Warri. He became a Roman Catholic as soon as that Church reappeared again in Warri in 1913. In 1915, he was a Catechist in the Church and worked in that capacity until his retirement in 1965. He was responsible for Gideon's education, and they both stayed together in the family compound from 1903 to 1933.

About 81 years old when I interviewed in 1979, Augustine was able to remember much of the early life of Gideon both in the family and in the Roman Catholic Church. Those events he could not remember were sufficiently filled in by Benjamin. We may mention that Augustine troubled Gideon greatly for opposing the Catholic Church.

Benjamin Urhobo

Benjamin Urhobo was the son of Ukoli by one of Ukoli's three wives. Born about 1905, Benjamin had little school education, and according to him, the reason for this little education was his father's inability to pay his school fees. He and Gideon stayed in the family compound till 1933, when Gideon left Warri for Lagos. In 1940, Benjamin went to Yorubaland to farm and trade, but between 1933 and 1940, he said he was Gideon's main informant about the religious situation in Warri.

In 1950, Benjamin returned to Warri and joined Gideon's G.K.S. He thus became the first and only person, if he is to be believed, from Ukoli's family to join Gideon's Church. Like Gideon, Benjamin decided to bear Urhobo, the name of their great, great grandfather. Like Augustine, Benjamin appeared to have followed very keenly the life of Gideon.

APPENDIX B

EIGHTEEN YEARS KINGDOM SERVICE (AUTOBIOGRAPHY)

**BY GIDEON M. URHOB, FIRST PRESIDENT OF GOD'S KINGDOM SOCIETY
(1903-1952)**

EIGHTEEN YEARS KINGDOM SERVICE

MY CALLING

I was in the Government Service Warri, as a Third Class Postal Clerk and Telegraphist in June 1930, when after three and half years diligent and prayerful studies of the Holy Bible, Jesus Christ revealed himself to me and commanded me to go and preach the "EVERLASTING GOSPEL" or the "GOSPEL OF PEACE" to all nations and kings as the only remedy for all the human sufferings and woes, and to expose all the false doctrines which Satan had used to deceive the whole world and to keep the people in ignorance of GOD'S ESTABLISHED KINGDOM or GOVERNMENT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS and PEACE.

I GLADLY LEFT THE Government Service in February 1933 and fully devoted all my life to the Kingdom service of the Lord.

Before this time I was a staunch member of the Roman Catholic Church, baptised but not confirmed, and I was totally ignorant of the Holy Scriptures.

MY PERSECUTIONS BEGAN

Immediately after I had left the Government service, all my relatives and friends forsook me. Some said I was a devil, that I was mad and that I shall soon lick the dust. My former wife who had four children for me, left me and was married in one of the Protestant Churches to one Itshekiri Urhobo young man by name S. O. Temietan, a Government Science teacher.

Worst of all some young men whom I got interested in the Bible and with whom I always ate together when I was in the Government service namely (Clifford O. Omoneukanrin, Macaulay J. Orode and Gabriel O. Agbenoma) suddenly turned against me and began to persecute and oppose me after I had left the Government service.

SAPELE ROMAN CHURCH

Owing to much oppositions at Warri I had to move to Sapele to continue the Kingdom work there. Here I was reported to one Mr. C. C. Legg, the Assistant District Officer by one Father Shine, a Roman Priest, that I was insulting the Roman Church in my public lectures. The A.D.O. without allowing me to defend myself sentenced me to two pounds fine or two weeks I.H.L. I was detained in the cell overnight and taken to the prison until three days after before I was released after the fine had been paid.

Four days after my release, Father Shine met me on the way to the Post Office and sent his dog after me. The dog bit and tore my clothes to pieces. It was a big struggle between me and the huge dog. The dog died two days after.

After reporting this matter to the A.D.O. Mr. C. C. Legg he told his messenger to push me out of the office. The messenger held my neck and did as he was commanded.

Mr. C. C. Legg was retrenched from the service in the same year 1933, and Father Shine was seen last in Nigeria after the destruction of the Roman Catholic Church building at Sapele by thunder in 1937.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES CAME IN

In October 1934 I was instructed by the Lord to go to Lagos and stay. I founded the GOD'S KINGDOM SOCIETY (GKS) according to the Lord's instructions.

In 1935 a very long report was sent to J. F. Rutherford, the late President of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society (WTBTS) in America by C. O. Omoneukanrin through W. R. Brown that I always insulted the late President and all "JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES" and prevented the people of West Africa from buying their religious books, when infact, I only corrected their wrong teachings about "Armageddon", "Jehovah's Organisation", "Selection and Ordination of the 144,000 chosen and Anointed Christians", "Leadership", Memorial Supper" and "Marriage"

ACCUSED, STONED AND ASSAULTED

As a result of the false and malicious report sent to America, several letters were stereotyped and distributed in the name of late J. F. Rutherford, to all "JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES" in Nigeria, warning them to have no dealing with me and calling me a devil, Judas and a thief. A part of this report appeared on page 60 of the 1935 Year Book of the "JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES" and in the issue of the West African Pilot of July 15, 1938. And because of this false report, I was subjected to many indescribable punishments. I was abused, stoned, assaulted and beaten several times by these religious fanatics who called themselves "JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES" and who are not but are synagogues of Satan. (Rev. 2:9, 10).

ARRESTED AND IMPRISONED

In 1935, I was arrested and kept in the cell overnight at the Oke Suna Police Station, Lagos, and fined £4:10/- for preaching the Gospel without police permit. This amount was oversubscribed by the members of GKS who were present in the court. And after my petition to the then Governor of Nigeria, late Sir Bernard Bourdillon, I was allowed to carry on my God-given work without interference from the police.

W.R. BROWN AGAIN

In 1939, when W.R. Brown saw that many young men had joined the GKS and the Lord was blessing His Kingdom work, he became jealous and took action against me in the Saint Anna court No. 1 Lagos, claiming from me the sum of £25 being the balance of the cost of religious books supplied to me for sale in 1931, and which I gave out on credit and was unable to collect, owing to the warning letters distributed to the people that I was no more a "JEHOVAH'S WITNESS" and that no one should give me a penny for the books given out by me.

Mr. O. Jibowu (now Justice Jibowu) who was then the Magistrate at Saint Anna Court No. 1, dismissed the case. But two weeks later, W.R. Brown took another fresh action and I was

asked to pay the whole debt with three guineas cost, which I agreed to pay by monthly installments of one pound. But Brown refused and cast me into thirty days debtors prison.

After my release from prison, I published an open letter to the late President of the Watchtower Society as a reply to Brown's false reports against me. For this he took another action against me in the court for libel, claiming £100 for himself and his wife, and I was asked to pay £34:6/- as damages and costs by Magistrate C.W. Reece (now Justice Reece) at the Ebute Metta Police Court.

Being unable to pay seven pounds monthly installments, as ordered by the Court, I was again sent to twenty-one days imprisonment with hard labour, upon Brown's motion for contempt of court.

After serving this term, Brown sent me a letter through his Solicitor Mr. I O. AJose (now dead) threatening to send me back to prison if I refused to pay all what I owed to Brown, and that I would die in prison. It was at this time that the members of GKS contributed and paid the whole debt which amounted to £122.9.

WARRI JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

When I returned to my home town Agbassa (Agbarha) Warri, in 1940 during the World War II, I was beaten and flogged with canes by the so- called "JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES' headed by C.O. Omoneukanrin the local representative of the WTBTS when W.R. Brown came to give a lecture at Warri. WADA WOW Any time I appeared in the streets of Warri these 'COUNTERFEIT WITNESSES' would shout my name, calling me a devil, Judas, man of sin and many other evil names in the Bible. When I saw that my life was in danger I went back to Lagos.

In March, 1942 I came back again to Warri with my family of nine to live in my late father's house at Agbassa (Agbarha) Village, to hide myself a while until the war was over. Here again I was strongly opposed and persecuted by my two brothers, particularly the eldest one by name Augustine A. Ukoli the Catechist of the Roman Catholic Church, Warri, who told me to quit our father's house. As I refused to quit, he came one day to fight me in the presence of his eldest son, and tore all my clothes to pieces until I had to run away from him and hid myself. When I saw that the hatred of my two brothers was developing to that of Esau and Jacob, I moved to Onitsha with my family where I lived peacefully for seven months before I went to Port Harcourt to continue the Kingdom work of the Lord after organising a small branch of the GKS at Onitsha. asalli vin of two two of brand of older ag

PORT HARCOURT EPISODE

In November, 1947, I was arrested by Mr. Melville Roberts, Sub- Inspector of Police, Port Harcourt, kept in the cell and refused bail until the following morning before I was charged and brought before Magistrate F.O. Lucas to be punished for an alleged "preventing the cause of justice" which charge was later withdrawn for want of evidence, and was set free.

On Sunday, March 28, 1948 at about 11.30 in the morning over fifty members of the so-called "JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES" (COUNTERFEIT) came to attack me in my home at 98, Aggrey Road, Port Harcourt, and willfully damaged my doors, windows, chairs, a large mirror and photographs by throwing stones, bricks and missiles into my house, in an attempt

to kill me. By the grace of God I was unhurt with my children whom I hid under the bed and chairs. But by the miracle of Jehovah, these counterfeit witnesses, fought and wounded themselves, until the police came and arrested six of them, (M. M. Yellowe, Bassey, Uzome Uwumune, Nwachuku (Ibo) and E. Moniro (Urhobo) and took them to the General Hospital for treatment, before they were taken to the Police Station and charged for "Assault and willful damage."

Later on, when they were brought to the court, two of them, M.M. Yellowe and A. F. Nwachuku their local leaders were fined £5:5 each or one month I.H.L. and were made to sign bond on behalf of all the "COUNTERFEIT WITNESSES" in Nigeria to keep the peace for five years.

Mrs. W.R. BROWN ALSO

In August 1948, I was summoned by Mrs. W.R. Brown to appear before Magistrate Desalu (now Justice Desalu) at the Botanical Garden NO.1 Court, Ebute Metta, to be examined as regards the payment of £31:3s damage and costs awarded her in the Lagos famous libel case of 1939 in which I was asked to pay the total damage and cost of £84:6s to Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Brown, which I had already paid over four years past. Because I was unable to attend the court owing to my illness at Warri, the Magistrate gave judgement in my absence that I should pay the whole amount with two guineas costs at the end of that month (November, 1948)

When I came to Lagos, I filed a motion so as to be allowed to produce all the receipts for the payments. In spite of all my Solicitor's pleadings, the Magistrate refused to grant my request and commanded that I should pay the whole amount into the court at once which I did. Thus I was compelled to pay £33.5s debt which I never owed to Mrs. Brown.

In spite of all these persecutions, and prosecutions, the Lord continued to bless me and God's Kingdom Society continues to grow from strength to strength until the foundation was laid on December 17, 1950.

By God's grace, the BETHEL HOME of the God's Kingdom Society has been built at the SALEM CITY, Mile 2, Warri-Sapele Road, P. O. Box 90, Warri. Here is the Headquarters of the Society where all the Kingdom servants with their family (46 in all) now reside to praise JEHOVAH the true Almighty God of the whole universe and which serves as the training ground for all the Kingdom ministers.

Where is W.R. Brown today? Thank God he has gone forever with shame, never to return to our blessed Nigeria. (Obad.10; Jer, 20: 10, 11).

"I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." Psalm 37:35.

Brother G. M. URHOB0,
Salem City, P. O. Box 90,
Warri

APPENDIX C

TELEVISION EVANGELISM IN GOD'S KINGDOM SOCIETY

"And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the World as a witness to all nations and then shall the end come. Matthew 24:14 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." Romans 10:15

It was not until 1978 that the God's Kingdom Society was able to adopt preaching on Television to propagate the gospel. Prior to this time, GKS Ministers disseminated the word of God through public lectures, street-to-street announcements with megaphones and later, car with sound equipment, quarter-to-quarter preachings, divine services and Bible study meetings in GKS service halls, doctrinal assemblies, special annual convocations such as Freedom Day Services, Feast of Tabernacles, handouts, pamphlets, and newspaper releases. The effectiveness of these methods depended largely on the availability of funds and manpower, or human resources. If the GKS will fulfil to the letter her mission of propagating the good news about the everlasting and perfect Kingdom of God to the world, but especially in this part of the globe, then additional and more effective means of reaching out to the sheep of God must be used. The Television has been a most effective means of transmitting information to the populace.

In 1978, the GKS joined the few Churches in Nigeria who used the Television to advance the Christian religion. Transmitting inspiring and edifying Bible messages beyond the cathedral to the public has been most beneficial. The God's Kingdom Society has a great number of admirers or mobilized adherents who relish in the music and messages from the Church. A growing healthy pride is felt among members who share their ministers with the public. Members of GKS were pleased to notice that a more respectable image of the Church had emerged in the public eye. Even many sceptics and detractors who would not wish to go near a GKS place of worship or a lecture spot were made to change their opinions from what they had wrongly considered to be a tribal sect or a society not to be reckoned with to a Church with dynamic Bible teaching and preaching whose Ministers could keep even an infidel glued to his television set throughout a one-hour religious programme. The GKS Television programme is called Watch and Pray - a suitable title taken from the words of Jesus Christ in Luke 21:34-36. The success of the GKS Television Ministry within the span of 22 years is underscored by the quality of its Bible messages meticulous attention to timing, absence of religious commercialism, less emphasis on denominational traditions, originality in worship, and exegetical expositions of Bible texts, to mention but a few.

The GKS President -Late Brother Ebenezer Otomewo started the GKS TV outreach in 1978 on the then Midwest Television, Benin City. He was assisted by the GKS Publicity Secretary (Brother Otomewo's former private secretary), Brother Benjamin Tietie, who later became the GKS Vice President from December 1978 to November 1990. GKS members from Warri, Sapele, Aladja, Effurun, and Jesse joined those in Benin City for the recording of Television Service programmes held in the Television Studio every week. It involved frequent travels, huge financial expenses and much physical labour in those days to produce these programmes. Three big buses were purchased to be conveying members to Benin for TV service recordings. On Brother Ebenezer Otomewo's departure to the United Kingdom in the summer of 1978, Brother Benjamin Tietie became the Television Service Minister of GKS. The 30-minute programme became a one-hour programme. Brother Tietie worked very hard. Like the president, he displayed profound mastery of the Bible subjects he preached. By the 1980s, the programme had extended to NTA Enugu, NTA Aba, NTA Port Harcourt, and NTA Ibadan. Viewers of Watch and Pray fondly called Brother Tietie "GO ON", as he used to say to his Bible readers while preaching. Many converts joined the Church. When the President returned from England in October 1978, he allowed Brother Tietie to continue as the Television Service Minister.

While Brother Tietie won the admiration of many TV viewers, he stated on different occasions that Brother E.T. Otomewo was his teacher and mentor who has contributed to his success as a Christian Minister by God's grace. Various choral groups were used on the Television Service programmes such as Suile Aghogho Choral Group of GKS Warri, led by the late Brother Theophilus Abido; and the Chidi-Ebere Choral Group of Salem City, Warri, led by Brother Igbozurike Atumuto. Other groups were Edo Choral Group of GKS Warri, Isoko Choral Group of GKS Warri, and Aladja Choral Group of GKS Aladja. These groups performed in turns during intervals while the GKS Choir, Warri, conducted by the late Minister, Jonathan Esimagbele, and the Salem City Youth Choir, Warri, led by a one-time Minister, Brother Albert Urhobo, were more regular on the stand.

In or about 1982, the GKS purchased her first set of recording equipment, which included cameras, video monitors, editing machines, powerful microphones, studio lights, and so on. Professionals were invited to conduct all recordings in Salem City Warri. The "Watch and Pray" crew was led by one Abraham Okpalefe, a Benin-based engineer who had trained in England as a specialist in production of TV programmes. From 1978 till 1989, when Watch and Pray came to a halt, only Brother Tietie featured as the GKS Television Service Minister. In all, he preached over 200 sermons, with occasional appearances by Ministers Godwin Ifeacho and George Ejebonu. Ministers Emmanuel Adedokun, Late Isaac Olukowade, and Joel Olusola interpreted in Yoruba the sermons that were aired on NTA Ibadan.

Unfortunately, in the twilight of the crisis that engulfed the Church in 1989 and 1990, which culminated in the exit of Brother Tietie and a few others from the GKS precisely in November 1990, the GKS Television programme fell into abeyance.

In 1992, the Watch and Pray programme was revived and sustained with remarkable success, by God's grace.

In retrospect, some of the moving sermons preached on Watch and Pray were:

No.	Sermon (year)	duration	Preacher
1.	Who is God? (1978)	30 mins	Bro. E.T. Otomewo
2.	God's Kingdom (1978)	30 mins	Bro. E.T. Otomewo
3.	What and where is heaven?(1978)	30 mins	Bro. E.T. Otomewo
4.	Can Christians judge one another? (1978)	30 mins	Bro. E.T. Otomewo
5.	Beware of what you sow in life (1978)	30 mins	Bro. E.T. Otomewo
6.	The Visions of God (1980)	1 hr	Bro. B. O. Tietie
7.	Did the Black Race descend from Esau? (1982)	1 hr	Bro. B. O. Tietie
8.	Do all Churches worship one God? (1983)	1 hr	Bro. B. O. Tietie
9.	Envy Not Sinners, Why?	1 hr	Bro. B. O. Tietie
10.	The Last Day (1982)	1 hr	Bro. G. Ifeacho
11.	The Voice of Conscience (1988)	1 hr	Bro. George Ejebonu

The GKS President, Brother E.T. Otomewo, appointed two Ministers, Brothers Gamaliel Eghagha and Enejeta Oddo, to resume the Television Service Programme of the Church in 1992. More sophisticated equipment for TV recording was purchased by the Church from the United Kingdom. A recording studio was opened in Salem City, Warri, manned by a young, talented Minister-Brother Joshua Ikoba, who had received his training at a private broadcasting firm in Lagos. Within six years of its return on Delta Television, Warri, Watch, and Pray extended to NTA Port Harcourt, NTA Makurdi, NTA Akure, OGTV Abeokuta, NTA Aba, NTA Benin City, and NTA channels 7 and 10 Lagos. In 1996, a UK-based Television station aired two Watch and Pray sermons: 'The Wrath of Man' by Minister Enejeta Oddo and "The Existence of God" by Minister Gamaliel Eghagha. Watch and Pray featured on a 30-minute slot on the Cross River F.M Radio for some time. The programme attracted

countless new converts to the Church in Nigeria. In extent of coverage, the programmes transmitted by the nine broadcasting stations were received across thirty-five states while transmissions on NTA channel 10 were received across parts of Africa, Europe and America via satellite. Another interesting aspect of the programme is the quality of music. Apart from its thought-provoking messages, Watch and Pray was spiced with classical pieces by great music masters, African choral pieces and Church hymns well backed with an imposing array of musical instruments like the pipe organ, trumpets, clarinet, drums, saxophones, flutes, guitars, cymbals and so on. The edition included computer graphics and illustrative pictures done with almost perfect finish. osa sd Si

On February 11 1998, GKS lost one of her TV Service Ministers, Brother Enejeta Oddo, in a tragic car crash, which occurred on the Ilesa - Ado Ekiti Road. (May God bless the memory of Late Minister Oddo). The American-trained Accountant had resigned from his prestigious job with the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH) Benin City to join the Lord's Ministry in December 1983. Brother Oddo has been replaced with another seasoned and eloquent gospeller, Minister Ekundayo Adedokun. The present level of Watch and Pray is good, by God's grace. Editing is done with the meticulousness and industry of film producers. GKS is determined to sustain the Television Service Programme because of its effective outreach. The sponsorship depends largely on funds available. As at February 1999, over 500 transmissions of Watch and Pray Sermons had been beamed across Nigeria and beyond. Among the topics preached are:

1. Is Jesus Christ the Almighty God?(1992) by G. Eghagha.
2. Contentment (1994) by E. Oddo.
3. The Restoration of All Things (1993) by G. Eghagha.
4. It pays to be humble (1995) by E. Oddo.
5. The Holy Bible (1994) by G. Eghagha.
6. Are there few that will be saved? By E.Oddo.
7. Evolution or Creation, which? (Recorded in London 1996) by G. Eghagha.
8. What happens to man after death? (1997) by E. Oddo.

GKS has emerged on the internet in transmitting the gospel message across the globe. The enviable success which has crowned the Television evangelism by God's Kingdom Society is the Lord's doing. To God Almighty be the glory through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

APPENDIX D

GUIDELINES FOR BURIALS IN GKS

When Death Occurs: When a member has been certified dead, the limbs should be properly arranged: the legs should be brought together and the arms put parallel with the body, which should be made to lie face up. The mouth should be closed, and the eyes too should be closed by gently pressing the eyelids together. All these should be done before rigor mortis sets in, that is, before the body becomes stiff.

Before Jacob, that is, Israel, died, God showed to him in a vision that his son Joseph "shall put his hand upon thine eyes," that is, cover his eyes at his death. Genesis 46:1-7. Compare Genesis 50:1-13.

Preservation: If need be, a good and reliable means should be used to preserve the body from going bad before burial. The corpse can be put in a reliable mortuary or it can be embalmed. It is advisable to both embalm and preserve it in the mortuary. Preserving the corpse in the mortuary or by embalment or both enables necessary burial arrangements to be made without the fear of the body going bad. It is not a sin. Jacob, or Israel, was embalmed when he died in Egypt. Genesis 50:1-13. There is nothing wrong if the body can be buried on the same day that death occurs.

Washing and Dressing the Corpse: The body should be properly washed and decently dressed for burial. Lazarus and our Lord Christ Jesus were dressed before burial (John 11:39–44; 19:38–40) Dorcas or Tabitha was washed when she died. Acts 9:36-40.

Funeral Procession: There may be a funeral procession and a motorcade to the final resting place of the dead as the situation allows. Chariots, horses, and many people accompanied the body of Jacob from Egypt to his burial place in the land of Canaan. Genesis 50:1-14. Compare 2 Samuel 3:31,32 (Abner); Luke 7:11-15 (widow's son at Nain).

Burial Crowd: In the "Organisation Instructions of God's Kingdom Society" (Rule 8), we stated: "Every member should, in the event of the death of a faithful member, make it a point of duty to turn up and be punctual at his burial...."

It is obvious from the above that we encourage as many as possible to be present at the burial of a faithful member. But this does not mean that members must come from every branch of the Church to attend the burial of a member wherever death occurs. The burial is principally the business of the branch where the death occurred. But any member from another branch who is disposed to attend is not prevented from attending.

A large crowd went to bury Jacob.(Genesis 50:1-14). But neither Sarah's nor Abraham's nor yet Christ's burial attracted a large crowd—Genesis 23:1-4,15-20; 5:7-10; Matthew 27:50-61; John 19:30, 38-48. So whether there is a large crowd or not, the burial can still take place. Discretion and the surrounding circumstances should be factors to be put into consideration.

Moving of Corpses from Mortuary to Final Resting Place: Usually the corpse is taken from the mortuary for the burial ceremony on the day of burial. If however, circumstances dictate otherwise, it can be allowed by the Church (GKS), that is, the corpse can be removed from the mortuary before the day of interment, provided there are no pagan or unchristian ceremonies or rituals by non-members around the corpse.

Singing, Drumming, and Dancing: There can be singing, drumming, and dancing, depending on the circumstances and the dictates of Scriptural common sense or discretion. Singing, drumming, and dancing be engaged in during the burial of an aged member who had led a spiritually upright and fulfilled life before his death. The Bible says: "A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth. Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof..."Eccl. 7:1,8

Such acts should be done in praise of God, who had enabled the deceased to live up to such a grand old age and to hold on faithfully to the way of truth to His glory. The songs should be spiritual: to reflect on the vanity of man, the consequences of sin, the hope of the resurrection of the dead, and to give courage or fortitude to the living in spite of the tribulations by the devil. Scripture says, "If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he" Eccl. 6:3.

But it is not expedient to drum and dance during the burial of a young person who had not attained or gotten near the Biblical life span of "three score and ten" (70) years. (Psalm 90:10). But sober spiritual songs can be rendered on such an occasion. There should be vast differences between a burial and a feast; and there is time for everything. Eccl. 3:1-2; Lev. 23: 34,40; Deuteronomy 16:13-14; Rom. 12:15, etc

Scripture says a good man "will guide his affairs with discretion" (Psalm 112:5). And again, it says that something might be lawful but not expedient. 1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23.

Entertainment (Eating and Drinking): It is not wrong to serve food and drinks to sympathisers. Some of them may have come from distant places. Even those who came from nearby places may become hungry after staying for some time. But such eating and drinking should be moderate. The occasion should not deteriorate into surfeiting and drunkenness, which Jesus Christ warned against. (Luke 21:34-36) Meals

should be served ONLY after interment, and the rules of hygiene should be properly observed during the occasion.

Funeral Oration: An oration, preferably written, except circumstances dictate otherwise, should be delivered by the officiant, that is, the person conducting the burial. But he can delegate the reading of the oration to somebody else, if he likes. It should be brief but sound in both spiritual and literary contents. The oration may be preceded, if need be, by the reading of tributes by individuals, groups, or branches, as the case may be.

Non-Member Participation: The participation of non-members in the burial ceremonies will be subject to the discretion of the officiant and/or elders present. Non-members may be allowed to read tributes or play other roles in the funeral, provided there is no sin or commitment in it.

The Officiant: An officiating Minister of God's Kingdom Society can conduct burials. But in the absence of a minister, an Elder (Brother) among the laity can also conduct burials.

Mourning: It is not bad to mourn for the dead. King Solomon stated: "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart." (Eccl. 7:2) Emotions or deep feelings can even make one cry. "Jesus wept" when Lazarus died. (John 11:35) And it is on record that people wept when Dorcas died (Acts 9:36–42). But our mourning or grief should be spiritual. It should not be inconsolable like that of unbelievers who do not have the hope of the resurrection. 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14, 18.

Bathing Ourselves and Washing Our Clothes: We are not under the Levitical or Mosaic laws, which rendered one ceremonially unclean for some days after having contact with a corpse, grave, or the bones of a dead man. (Numbers 19:11-16; 9:6-12; Haggai 2:11-12; Colossians 2:14; Galatians 2:16 etc) Nevertheless, we advise that members should bathe themselves after attending burials and wash the clothes they wore to burials, as we should "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:2).

Condolence Visits: Condolence visits to the bereaved family by members of the Church is highly encouraged. Members should visit the bereaved family individually and in groups to console them and to exhort them and other sympathisers present by expounding the word of God to enlighten, edify, and comfort them.

Thus, members should be making condolence visits to a bereaved family before and after the burial for support, fellowship, and admonitions. When Lazarus died in those days, many of the Jews, including Jesus Christ, went to comfort Mary and Martha. John 11:50,19-20,30-32. The Bible enjoins us to "Rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep" (Romans 12:15). See also 1 Corinthians 12:26 James 1:27, etc

Condolence Assembly: This is an assembly of members, usually in large numbers, especially in the event of the burial, to exhort a bereaved family. It was sometimes called "GKS wake-keeping" by some observers. The GKS Ministers Conference of 1998 has re-examined this practice and noted that it is fraught with abuses and disadvantages. In some Churches as well as in certain communities in the Eastern and Delta States, wake-keeping, whether social or the so-called Christian wake-keeping, has been banned. To ensure uniformity in our practices in the GKS, the Church of God (1 Corinthians 1-10), Condolence Assembly has been abolished in the GKS. Condolence Assembly is not a law of God in the Bible. No man has power to abolish God's law. But an ordinance or law made by man is subject to change.

Unscriptural Rites: We do not have anything to do with any unscriptural rites, some of which are performed by some nominal Christian groups and others by non-Christians. This is because the Bible does not support such rites. The rites include wake-keeping, serving or worshipping the 'spirit of the corpse', cooking for the corpse, shaving or cutting one's hair or body for the dead, cremation burning of the corpse, carrying the corpse into the Church house or Cathedral, mass-prayer for the repose of the soul of the dead, blessing the grave, yearly memorial service, second burial, and so on. Jeremiah 10:2; Deuteronomy 14:1; Leviticus 19:27, 28; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10, etc.

We warn members not to partake in such ceremonies. Scripture says, "we should come out from among them and be separate and that we should not touch the unclean thing." 2 Corinthians 6: 14-18.

General Admonition: We believe that the following general admonitions will be of benefit to the Church as a whole and to individual members if they are adhered to.

(i). Will: In many cases, there have been conflicts of interests between the Church and the families of her dead members regarding burial rites. Some families want the Church to blend their unchristian rites with those of the Church. The Church has never yielded. It is either we bury according to our faith or we don't bury at all.

It is very sad, to say the least, for a member to be buried contrary to his cherished faith.

One sure way to avoid such an unwelcome situation is for members to make their own will, properly prepared by a lawyer if possible, and state therewith how and by whom they wish to be buried.

In addition, members should keep their relatives very well informed about the Church and make their stand very clear to them that it is the church that should bury them, should they die.

Members of God's Kingdom Society have relatives who are not members of the church.

Some are close relations. The God's Kingdom Society has never at any time disturbed the burial of such relations when they die. We appreciate that the dead should be buried according to his/ her cherished faith. It is unfair and even mischievous to bury a person with rites that are contrary to his/her faith.

Yet some families of our members disturb us when we want to bury our beloved departed brothers or sisters in Christ. Those who disturb us are uncharitable, and they are unknowingly inviting the judgment of God to themselves. May God grant them repentance by his grace.

If we do to them what they are doing to us, they will not like it. Why then do they do it to us?

It is unfair. Jesus Christ said one should do to others what one would want them to do to one. In other words, one should not do to others what one does not want them to do to one. He stated: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." (Luke 6:31)

(ii). Place of Burial: It is principally the duty of the deceased to make known in his lifetime where he would wish to be buried. It could be in the town where he lived before his death, or he may wish his remains to be carried to his home town. There is no sin in either case. But where he did not indicate this in his will or express it orally but firmly, the decision may devolve on his family or the Church.

(iii). Burial Expenses: Under normal circumstances, every adult should make enough provisions for his funeral. This should be provided for in his will. But this can still be provided for if he dies intestate, i.e., without making a will.

But where the individual is a pauper and is unable to make provisions for his burial, his family will have to bear the burden. The church can help if the family too is poor. Members should understand that it is not the duty of the church to bear the financial burden in the event of the death of a member. Our duty is principally to conduct the funeral. It is when the deceased is a pauper and is rejected by his family that the church helps with the burial expenses. All burials conducted by the church may not be exactly the same considering the

circumstances of the age and status of the deceased and the financial standing of the bereaved family. In all things, there should be moderation.

(iv). Widows: Members should stand firm to defend the widows of the Church who maintain their faith against being maltreated or forced to perform any rites contrary to the scriptures. The same applies to their children. God Almighty is very much against maltreating a widow. He declared, "Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." Exodus 22:22-24. See also Deuteronomy 10:17, 18; 1 Timothy 5:16; Jude 3; Isaiah 1:17, etc.

(v). The Unfaithful: Any person who calls himself a member of God's Kingdom Society but who is unfaithful will not be buried by the church when he or she dies. This is the standing rule. As it is written: ...Excommunicated or suspended members and UNFAITHFUL and lawless members will not be buried by the Society when they die. Also, if any member commits suicide or is executed by the government for committing murder, he will not be buried by the Society. Galatians 5:19-21; 1 John 3:15.

"...In Romans 14:7-9, it is written: "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die we are the Lords. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living."

It is clear here that persons who "die unto the Lord" are those who serve the Lord in His true Church Organisation and are active until death. It is such faithful members who are given a glorious Christian burial in the GKS," vide the Organisation Instruction of God's Kingdom Society (Rule 8)

In conclusion, we wish to state that according to the Bible, we serve God through Jesus Christ in truth in order to live, not to die. John 11:25, 26; 8:31; etc.

But if the Lord wills and any of us fall asleep, the sleep of death, we should die "The death of the righteous" with the hope of the resurrection of the just to be rewarded with everlasting life in God's glorious, perfect kingdom here on earth. John 11:11-14; Numbers 23:10; Luke 14:14; John 5:28, 29; Acts 2:15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14, 18; etc.

We hope the faithful will keep to the above burial rules and admonitions contained herein for their own good.

Blessed are those who believe and obey the truth. Revelations 1:3, 7; 1 Peter 2:13, etc. bdo le fuifita ei od sud vision2 mob May the grace, peace, and love of God Almighty through Jesus Christ, our saviour, be multiplied unto you. Amen.

APPENDIX E

GOD'S KINGDOM SOCIETY MARRIAGE RULE

Marriage-Committee:

The Administrative Committee of each branch serves as the Marriage Committee. All marriage proposals should be brought formally to the Marriage Committee for consideration. The Marriage Committee will in turn make recommendations to the Marriage Council, made up of the Executive Board of GKS in Salem City, Warri, for final approval.

Courtship and Parents Roles:

Any brother who wishes to marry should approach the Marriage Committee in his branch to indicate his intention and to get advice and guidance from the Lord. Thereafter, he should

look for a wife, and on finding one, he should return to inform the Marriage Committee. The suitor will be advised to get the consent of the spinster's parents or guardians. On getting their consent, the suitor and the spinster will appear before the Marriage Committee for interview, admonitions, and counselling. The Marriage Committee will invite the spinster's parents or guardians to be satisfied that the marriage proposal has their full support. At this stage, the suitor will fill out a marriage questionnaire to be attached to the Marriage Committee's letter of recommendation and dispatched to the Marriage Council in the GKS Headquarters. The marriage questionnaire is not to be taken home by the suitor. A faithful or God-fearing brother will not have sex with a spinster before approaching her parents to seek their consent and when the marriage has not been approved. It is a sin. And no faithful spinster with knowledge and understanding of the law of God will accede to a sexual relationship with her suitor without the approval of her parents and the Marriage Council of the marriage proposal. A spinster who allows herself to be defiled by indulging in premarital sex with her suitor is guilty of fornication and disrespect for her parents, whose prerogative it is to give her out in marriage. (1 Thess. 4:3-5; Lev. 19:3; Gen. 24; etc.) Thus, a suitor-brother is required to show or give full respect to the parents or guardians of his would-be wife. In order to avoid ungodly rivalry or competition and lawless sexual intercourse before marriage, two or more brothers should not propose marriage to a sister at the same time. Some who do not fear God may attempt to discredit other suitors by misrepresentations and giving of expensive presents to the sister to win her love or even take her to bed. This is ungodly and should not be allowed in God's Organisation. During courtship, the brother and the sister should observe and understand each other and maintain love and chastity in the Lord. The duration of courtship varies from one case to another according to circumstances. Courtship lasts from when both parents and the Administrative Committee gave their consent to the marriage proposal until final approval is given by the Marriage Council. Before the Marriage Committee approves a marriage proposal and makes recommendations to the Marriage Council, it must be satisfied that:

- (i) The brother and sister are of marriageable age. of heavba od lliw
- (ii) Both parties have the fear of God and they love themselves and are willing to be married for life as husband and wife in the Church of God.
- (iii) They are not close blood relations (Lev. 18:9).
- (iv) They have performed blood tests to ensure that they are a compatible pair.
- (v) The contracting parties have an appreciable degree of faith and understanding, which must be seen in their conduct and works as evidence.

Marriage Outside the Fold Not Encouraged

We encourage members to marry within the fold. If a brother does not see any girl he likes in his branch, he should make an effort to go to other branches to look for one with the godly advice, guidance, or help of members. If he does not succeed, then he is free to make his choice from outside the fold, but he must consult the Marriage Committee for advice and direction in the Lord. He must be sure that the girl he wishes to marry is of good character and MUST accept the Christian Faith of GKS and be attending services and other assemblies of the church before the marriage proposal is recommended for approval. No spinster in GKS should marry a non-member of GKS as her husband, as such marriages are fraught with grave disadvantages and spiritual dangers. If, however, a spinster sees no brother of her choice or no brother approaches her for marriage, then she should be allowed to marry a man who is not a member of GKS, but on the ground that the man accepts the GKS faith. This must be impressed on the suitor before he is brought to the marriage committee by the sister. The suitor will declare his acceptance of the faith before the marriage will be allowed or approved. The sister must avoid sexual dealing with the man before the approval of the marriage. When she goes to bed with the man before bringing him to the marriage committee, it is fornication. God and godly parents want youths to keep themselves chaste until they marry in honour. Any non-GKS suitor who declines the

invitation of the Marriage Committee to declare his acceptance of the GKS faith may be rejected by the spinster-sister. His refusal to appear before the elders is a clear proof of his insincerity and disregard for the GKS faith. Why should he fail to appear before the Marriage Committee if he truly loves the sister? Do suitors not appear in registries or before their would-be inlaws when summoned in respect of their marriages?

To marry an unbeliever is dangerous. The party who is a believer faces the risk of apostatizing or compromising his/her faith. Marriage with unbelievers is forbidden in the Holy Bible. (Duet. 7:3, 4; 2 Cor. 6:14–18; 1 Cor. 7:39). It landed King Solomon in trouble (Neh. 13:23–27). See also Ezra 10:13,14). We do not allow interfaith in any shape or form. - Amos 3: 1 Thess. 5:22.

If a member, after sufficient admonitions or advice, insists on marrying a non-member, then the church will not be involved in the marriage. As for brothers and sisters who are married to non-members, they should remain with them if such partners do not oppose the GKS faith and are treating them kindly. It is the duty of any member married to an unbeliever to make the other party understand the GKS faith through his or her good character. Such partners should be invited from time to time to assemblies of the church. Those of them who are the sheep of God can be thus converted by Him into his Church, where they will be saved if they hold fast to the faith till the end. As it is written: "To the others I say (I, myself, not the Lord): If a Christian man has a wife who is an unbeliever and she agrees to go on living with him, he must not divorce her. And if a Christian woman is married to a man who is an unbeliever, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made acceptable to God by being united to his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made acceptable to God by being united to her Christian husband. If this were not so, their children would be pagan children, but as it is, they are acceptable to God. However, if the one who is not a believer wishes to leave the Christian partner, let it be so. In such cases, the Christian partner, whether husband or wife, is free to act. God has called you to live in peace. How can you be sure, Christian wife, that you will not save your husband? or how can you be sure, Christian husband that you will not save your wife?" doob of sottimo

"In the same way you wives must submit yourselves to your husbands, so that if some of them do not believe God's word, they will be won over to believe by your conduct. It will not be necessary for you to say a word, because they will see how pure and reverent your conduct is." -1 Cor. 7:12-16; 1 Peter 3:1,2, Today's English Version.

Godly Advice

(a) Brothers and sisters in search of partners or who are proposing marriage must pray fervently to God for guidance and the right choice. A good wife or a good husband is a gift from God. (Prov. 18:22, 19:14; James 1:17; etc.) Marriage with the wrong partner, especially when the unbeliever refuses to become a believer, ends with regret and vexation of spirit. Prov. 20:17; 14:12.

(b) Members should not marry for carnal reasons like wealth, education, social status, beauty, or ethnic background. These are secondary. The primary or important thing is good character, adorned with faith, knowledge, fear of God, and so on.

(c) Partners should encourage their children to be God-fearing, chaste, and to marry in the fold. They should maintain a good relationship with them, giving them constant admonitions. But they should not be forced into marriage with someone they do not love. Also, parents, relatives, or in-laws should not interfere unnecessarily in the marriages of their children.

(d) Brothers who marry should pay the stipulated dowry and bride price vocal according to native law and custom after getting approval for their marriages.

(e) Brothers and sisters who are already married should continue to love themselves and care for each other in the Lord Prov. 5:15-21; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Peter 3:1-8; Eph. 5:22-28; 1 Cor. 7:3; etc.

(f) During marriage arrangements and occasions, members should avoid such things as the pouring of libations in honour of the dead or ancestors, bachelor's eve; kissing and use of wedding rings during Church should not be used during receptions. Bachelor's Eve is

prohibited. Also, the use of wedding rings should not be part of the marriage ceremony, as practiced by certain Churches.

Contracting a Marriage

After approval has been given to a marriage by the Marriage Council through the Marriage Committee, it is then the couples can formally contract the marriage by either native law and custom of wedding in the Church, if they wish. In whatever form the couple chooses to celebrate their marriage, there should not be anything indecent or sinful. The wedding date should not be too long after approval has been given to the marriage. If before the wedding the bride becomes pregnant, then she must not come before the alter for solemnization of the marriage. We encourage those who want to and or have their marriages solemnized to restrain themselves or keep themselves chaste till wedding day.

In wedding invitation cards and programmes it should be written that the brother weds the sister and not vice versa. In other words, we can say, for example, "Peter weds Mary"; NOT "Mary weds Peter." The couple and their train are required to be punctual to the marriage service.

Marriage in registries by GKS members is not encouraged. If a couple decides on their own to go and contract their marriage in the registry, they should be told the implications. If trouble later erupts in the marriage, the couple, NOT the Church will bear it.

Divorce

The Marriage Committee, under the direction of the Marriage Council, handles all matters about divorce. God hates divorce or putting away of wives. (Malachi 2:15-16) It should be understood that no brother has the right to divorce his wife, neither does any sister have the right to divorce her husband except on the grounds of adultery—spiritual or literal—as expressly stated by Jesus Christ in Matthew 5:31, 32; 19:9, or some other reasons which must be scripturally cogent. Thus, only the Marriage Council grants divorce, but on Biblical grounds.

It is hoped that members will keep their marriage bond inviolate, knowing fully well that "Marriage is honourable in all and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers, God will judge." Hebrews 13:4.

Warning

Some brothers keep concubines or lovers besides their lawfully married wives. Some of them neglect their families and become spiritually delinquent. Any member who indulges in this practice is guilty of adultery and unfaithfulness and should repent thoroughly in order to get God's forgiveness. We also warn against the practice of trial marriage, that is, two unmarried persons living together like husband and wife and without any reference to the Marriage Committee. Most people who practice it claim that it enables couples to know if they are compatible, but the truth is that they are living in sin. What the Holy Bible enjoins is outright marriage, NOT trial marriage. (Hebrews 13:4). Trial marriages often break up, causing feelings of guilt, emotional pains, stress, disappointments, reproach, possible spreading of venereal disease, vexation of spirit, and so on. Moreover, the persons involved may adopt new partners for another trial marriage, and the lawless trend continues. Members found guilty of any of these lawless or immoral acts will be judged and disciplined according to the Bible.

Polygamy

The Holy Bible clearly teaches that Christians can be polygamists. But we wish to warn members not to plunge into polygamous lives without sober reasoning. Any brother who rushes into polygamy without considering his spiritual, financial, and physical abilities and thereby gives cause for people because of his miserable, wretched, and disgraceful way of life to reproach God and his church will be judged and disciplined. Neh. 5:9; Rom. 2:23-24; 13:3; etc.

Those who are already polygamists should be God-fearing and should not give cause for God and His church to be reproached by unbelievers. May God Almighty, through Jesus Christ, continue to protect and bless you. Amen.

APPENDIX F

VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL OF BROTHER B. O. TIETIE (FORMER VICE-PRESIDENT OF GKS) AND OTHERS FROM THE LORD'S MINISTRY—A REPORT BY PRESIDENT E.T.OTOMEWO (1990).

I hereby inform you with deep spiritual regret and responsibility that on November 26, 1990, Brothers B. O. Tietie, Vice-President of God's Kingdom Society from 1978 to November 26, 1990; E. I. Udoji, Senior and Executive Minister of God's Kingdom Society; and Roland Ogene, junior minister of God's Kingdom Society, voluntarily withdrew their services from the Lord's Ministry of God's Kingdom Society. This letter is intended to put the records straight and to arm you with knowledge that you will be able to defend the faith when the need arises. (Jude 31; Philippians 1:27) Most of you, if not all of you are aware of the crisis in the Lord's Ministry involving Brother B. O. Tietie. The troubles started in 1986, and they were in connection with the Port Harcourt branch of the Church, where the suspended Brother Albert Urhobo, his son-in-law, was the station minister.

In 1986, reports reached me that Brother Albert Urhobo's spiritual standard as a station minister had deteriorated. And this was manifested by his extravagant lifestyle, love for materialism, and lack of spiritual mindedness. This included the way he procured a 505-peugeot-saloon car when he already had a 504-peugeot-saloon car which was apparently new. In fairness to Brother Albert Urhobo, before he procured the 505 peugeot car, he sought my permission. But after the procurement of this car, members in Port Harcourt started grumbling that the method of procuring this car was not spiritual. I investigated the matter then and found that some of the allegations against the minister were true. During the Ministers Conference of June 1986, I ordered that the car be sold, and Brother Albert transferred from Port Harcourt. In that conference, Brother B. O. Tietie was uncharacteristically silent about Brother Albert's issue, acting as if he was not concerned. After the conference, three intermediate ministers went to Brother Tietie to correct him for not showing enough interest when Brother Albert's issue was raised. Brother Tietie justified himself.

While I was in Lagos in November 1986, I wrote to Brother Albert to get ready to leave Port Harcourt. But within a few days a delegation of five brothers and two sisters came to me from Port Harcourt to plead with me to leave Brother Albert because he (Albert) was a good minister who was administering the branch well and who was winning souls for the Lord. I allowed Brother Albert to stay on.

In the 1986 Feast of Tabernacles, the 505-saloon car which I had ordered to be sold in June of that year was driven in Salem City by Brother B.O. Tietie. That act of Brother B. O. Tietie angered some of the ministers who felt that Brother Tietie had the habit of working contrary to my instructions, and that was not good for the church. We all in the Ministry tolerated Brother Tietie and Brother Albert Urhobo.

By 1987 the reports of dissatisfaction about the state of affairs in Port Harcourt continued to pour into the headquarters. Ministers and members alike continued to mount pressure on me to remove Brother Albert from Port Harcourt. On the contrary, Brother Albert and the then Vice President, Brother B. O. Tietie, kept giving beautiful stories about the growth of the church at Port Harcourt. As the situation was, Brother Tietie was the Vice President. After me, he was the next Executive Minister, and the burden of administering the church lay principally on our shoulders. Because of my ill health for many years now, Brother B.O. Tietie became the active partner of the two of us, although I retained the control and supervision over him, being my deputy. I had no cause to disbelieve Brother Tietie, so I relied very much on his advice and acted accordingly.

The adverse reports about Port Harcourt continued, but the good reports came immediately to counter the bad reports. Faced with this situation, I committed the Port Harcourt situation to God to make manifest in His time. In 1988, Port Harcourt boiled again. A brother who was dissatisfied with the judgement of the Port Harcourt administrative committee appealed to me for a review of the matter. I decided to send Brother J. T. Okome and M. O. Iwoh to Port Harcourt as Judges of the Religious Court from Salem City, headquarters, to hear the appeal in November 1988. But I noticed some lack of cooperation from the then station minister, Brother Albert. For this reason, the departure of the two ministers was delayed until March 1989. When the Port Harcourt members heard that the two judges were encountering some problems in leaving Salem City, the members on their own therefore held a meeting to launch a fund for the upkeep of the ministers in and to provide a private accommodation for the two ministers independent of the then station minister, Brother Albert Urhobo. Barely a week after Brothers Okome and Iwoh left for Port Harcourt. Brother Albert Urhobo rushed down to Salem City to report that Brother Okome and Iwoh were causing confusion in Port Harcourt. I also received messages from some members requesting that Brother Okome and Iwoh be withdrawn because of their highhandedness, wickedness, and victimization of some members there. Time and space will not allow me to go into details in the charges against Brother Okome and Iwoh.

It was at this stage that Brother B. O. Tietie advised me to convene a Ministers convocation whereby things would be put right. I heeded his advice and gave him permission to go ahead. At this stage, I was heavily weighed down by my ill-health. Before the convocation, Brother Okome and Iwoh were recalled from Port Harcourt and tried for about one week, and the result of the trial was brought before all the ministers. This convocation took place in April 1988. As my ill-health was weighing heavily on me, I gave Brother B. O. Tietie the power to preside over the convocation. But ministers of the convocation complained about the handling of the convocation by Brother B. O. Tietie. It was then I had to pull myself from my sick bed to attend the convocation and allay the fears of the ministers who felt that the correction given to Brother Okome and M.O. Iwoh was too much for the errors made and that the aim of Brother B. O. Tietie and Albert Urhobo was to prevent Brothers Okome and Iwoh from returning to Port Harcourt. I also told them that if somebody did anything wrong, he should be corrected in the spirit of Christ. And the Brothers Okome and Iwoh would return to Port Harcourt if they saw their fault. And since they had seen their fault, there was no reason why they should be prevented from returning to Port Harcourt. This was the last time I attended any meeting in either of our service halls in Salem City. My ill-health has not permitted me to do so till today.

This matter was discussed in the Executive forum, where it was suggested that Brother B. O. Tietie should go to Port Harcourt to put things right after what Brothers Okome and Iwoh had done there. Brother Okome objected to Brother B. O. Tietie's going to Port Harcourt because he (Okome) knew the situation in Port Harcourt better than Brother Tietie. In the circumstances, I overruled Brother J. T. Okome and allowed Brother Tietie to go to Port Harcourt.

I noticed that when the news of what happened in the Ministers April 1989 convocation filtered to Port Harcourt, the overwhelming majority of the members there were angered. And they bombarded me with protests, delegations, requests, demands, and petitions against their station minister and requested for the return of Brother Okome and Iwoh. When Brother B. O. Tietie got to Port Harcourt, he was confronted openly and in a very humiliating way by the members in two separate meetings over which he presided. Never before had a minister of God's Kingdom Society experienced such a degree of confrontation from members. It was then I discovered that Brother B. O. Tietie did not tell me the whole truth of his mission. Then also I discovered that my leaning to Brother B. O. Tietie's views instead of Okome's advice was wrong. When these facts became clear to me, I wrote a letter dated June 10, 1989, titled "GOD'S WAYS ARE NOT THE WAYS OF MAN," to the church at Port Harcourt to apologise for the indiscretion of sending Brother B. O. Tietie to Port Harcourt, and I had to withdraw Brother Albert from Port Harcourt. I further gave Brother Okome and Iwoh further authority to continue with their judgement work.

When Brother B. O. Tietie returned from his mission to Port Harcourt, he gave the account of his mission to the ministers, whereupon the ministers appealed to me to give them the opportunity to address Brother B. O. Tietie on that mission. I allowed them to do so. In these meetings, which were held on May 18, 19, and 20, 1989, the ministers, among other things, blamed Brother B. O. Tietie in:

1. That he was partial to Brother Albert Urhobo and his partiality in making him (Tietie) not see clearly to discipline him (Albert) when he went wrong;
2. That he got himself unduly involved in the Port Harcourt crises, which had brought disgrace to him and the Lord's Ministry. That his going to Port Harcourt was wrong.
3. That he found it very difficult to take correction and that this was evidence of pride, which could lead to his fall.
4. That in matters affecting his family, he was often unduly weak or lax.
5. That in a community like Salem City, this weakness could cause division and sectionalism.

Many other points were raised. Then they prayed for him (Tietie) that God should guide him. Brother B. O. Tietie's answer was that he was going to give answers to all the points raised by the ministers. That event passed.

Brother Albert Urhobo eventually returned to Salem City. In August 1989, the ministers' conference was summoned. The conference sat on 18, 19, 24, 25, 26, and 27, of August 1989. Among other things, the issue of Port Harcourt was raised, and Brothers Okome and Iwoh delivered the judgement on Albert Urhobo to the Ministers Conference. So many charges were brought against Brother Albert Urhobo by the Port Harcourt members. The charges Brother Urhobo admitted and for which he was found guilty were over 20. Some of these charges are as follows:

1. Not keeping records of the church's accounts in Port Harcourt between 1982 and May 1989;
2. **(a)** Worldliness and Carnality: He often liked to attend worldly functions contrary to the code of conduct of ministers of the gospel. For instance, he was a special guest of the Bendel Day Extravaganza in Port Harcourt, where Humphrey Idisi and his wife were in the organising committee, which featured masquerade dancing, charmers dancing on broken bottles, gambling, etc. These are so contrary to our laws and traditions based on the Holy Bible, and it was not expedient for a minister to be a special guest when these things are practiced—Psalm 1:1; 26:4,5; Romans 5:5-8; Titus 2:11-14; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17.
(b) Attendance at FM Gala Night to witness a beauty contest: The minister denied attending but admitted allowing his wife to go to watch the beauty contest. But the report said the minister was spotted at the Beauty Contest. He was found guilty for allowing his wife to attend to look at half-naked girls. She had nothing to gain from looking at half-naked women except the gratification of the lusts of the eyes. - 1 John 2:16, 17; Romans 13:13, 14; 1:32.
3. He was found guilty for often not being at home to attend to the members of Port Harcourt. Rather, he was reportedly often in the company of Humphrey Idisi. Members saw him mostly when he came to officiate on Sundays and Wednesdays.
4. He was found to be poor at citing Biblical quotations. This was often a source of embarrassment to members at service meetings and during public lectures.
5. There were also accusations of presumptuousness, abuse of power, lack of God's Kingdom interest, disobedience, indiscretion, and an undue propensity for publicity on the radio and television.
6. He was found to be guilty of courting the friendship of some lay members by giving them expensive gifts, whereas he was not a salary earner but a minister of the gospel who should live the type of life of the early apostles. Thus he failed to follow the Biblical principle of sowing spiritual things to the laity and letting the laity sow material things to the ministry. (1 Corinthians 9:11) Rather, he sowed material things

to some lay members. NB: I am not by this saying that when a member is in need, a minister cannot give him or her gifts. The situation must call for it. In this case, Brother Urhobo, among other accusations under this charge, bought a ram for Humphrey Idisi to court his favour. Humphrey Idisi was not in financial need.

7. He pronounced curses on members who were opposed to him. It was reported that in a recognised members meeting he said, "Woe betide all of you who want me to leave Port Harcourt," contrary to Romans 12:14. When that meeting was about to close, a brother told him to withdraw the curse or he should not lead them in prayer.

These were some of the charges he admitted. There were other, more serious ones, which he or his wife did not admit. On such ones he was given benefit of doubt. Brother Albert knelt down and pleaded for sympathy and forgiveness.

In the light of the foregoing, ministers generally felt that Brother Albert Urhobo had fallen below the standard required of a minister and that his recall from Port Harcourt was justified. It was at this stage that the ministers turned to Brother Tietie and told him that the support he had been giving to Brother Albert was wrong and that it had given cause for the Ministry to be reproached. Brother Tietie refused to own his fault for backing Brother Albert and for failing to reprove Brother Albert for his misdemeanor while he was station minister at Port Harcourt. Because the ministers were firm in demanding that Brother Tietie should own up his faults and make an apology in connection with the ugly situation at Port Harcourt where, as the ministers put it, he did not represent the true situation to me (President), the conference became rowdy and tempers were high. At this stage, I intervened to adjourn the conference. This was on August 28, 1989.

During the adjournment of the conference, the following transpired:

- (1) The conferment of chieftaincy title on Brother Humphrey Idisi.
- (2) 1989 Freedom Day Celebrations.
- (3) The death of Minister J. A. Esimagbele and
- (4) The week-long ceremony in dedication of Humphrey Idisi's country home.

It was discovered that Brother B. O. Tietie knew of the conferment of chieftaincy title on Humphrey Idisi, and Brother Tietie did not stop him (Idisi), despite the fact that a member who took such a title in time past was suspended as he acted contrary to the GKS faith. We do not know of any chieftaincy title that is devoid of paganism.

Brother Tietie went behind my back to approve the "opening/dedication of Idisi's country home with a week-long ceremony involving the church without seeking my approval or even informing me. Rather, suddenly, one of my aides brought an invitation card to me, which had some grave spiritual involvement with traditional un-Christian dances and dusk to dawn events, all to continue for one week and to be crowned by thanksgiving service in our service hall at Sapele. Brother Tietie was a guest of honour in this function. All these were stated in the invitation card sent to me.

As the President of GKS, my responsibility is to Jehovah the Almighty God through Jesus Christ to lead their flock aright by his grace. If I do it unfaithfully and with levity, God will punish me. I therefore wasted no time at all in ordering that the GKS would not be involved in the "opening/dedication" of Idisi's country home because it was not done according to the GKS faith and tradition based on the Holy Bible.

The 1989 Feast of Tabernacles was cancelled and the adjourned ministers' conference reconvened. Before the conference adjourned in August 1989, Brother Okome and Iwogh appealed to me to allow them to release to the ministers the detailed report of their findings at Port Harcourt. I allowed them. When the conference reconvened on December 8, 1989, they read the report, and in it they accused Brother B. O. Tietie of failing to take correction and the following:

1. That Brother Tietie failed to take initiative to check the Port Harcourt crisis.

2. That Brother Tietie openly identified with Brother Albert Urhobo even when Albert was found to be wrong, thereby shielding him (Urhobo).
3. That Brother Tietie supported things carnal and worldly.
4. That Brother Tietie supported Bro. Albert Urhobo rather than the course of righteousness at Port Harcourt.
5. That Brother Tietie had vested interest in Port Harcourt.
6. That Brother Tietie strengthened the hand of the ungodly.
7. That Brother Tietie had failed in his duty to assist me properly, especially in view of my poor health.

I want to make one thing very clear. Nowhere in the proceedings of the ministers' conference of December 1989 was the question of the removal of Brother Tietie as Vice President raised. The ministers only wanted to point out his (Brother Tietie's) faults to him. And it was, with this mind, I approached the judgement.

The general practice is that when a minister is undergoing judgement he steps down from officiating or he is interdicted from official duties. Some of the ministers approached me, calling for the interdiction of Brother Tietie. I refused, for I was not spiritually moved that he should be interdicted.

If, because Brother Tietie was not interdicted in December 1989, he felt that he was innocent of all the charges against him, then he made a very serious error.

Most members of the Ministry knew that all was not well with Brother Tietie, despite the picture he was giving to the laity.

Ministers reported to me several times that Brother Tietie did not conduct himself as a minister awaiting judgement. My reply to them was that they should let everyone be directed by his heart or conscience, (1 John 3:20, 21) In short, between January and June 1990, Brother Tietie behaved as if nothing was wrong with him spiritually.

In May 1990, a young Salemite, Osondu Ugoji, was brutalised by armed men alleged to have come from the Nigerian Navy on suspicion of stealing. Brother Tietie was aware of this. This act was carried out with the aid of Brother Albert Urhobo, Roland Ogene, and Matthew Urhobo—all of Salem City. Today Osondu Ugoji's ear-drum is damaged and he is consequently still being treated by an E.N.T. specialist.

This matter increased the tension in the Ministry, and there was a feeling of insecurity among some ministers in Salem City. It was God who ameliorated the situation, for it could have been worse.

Brother Okome, who was on tour, returned and heard Brother Tietie giving an account of how the matter had purportedly been settled. Brother Okome raised objections as to how the matter was settled and drew Brother Tietie's attention to his involvement in the matter. Brother Tietie, however, abruptly closed the prayer meeting for other reasons. Shortly after this meeting, reports came that some of Brother Tietie's children wanted to beat up Brother Okome. I had to instruct 3 ministers to escort Brother Okome to his house. Even with the presence of these ministers, some of the children of Brother Tietie poured abuses on Brother Okome.

A few days later, the sisters in Warri (Laity) demonstrated against the ugly situation in the Lord's Ministry. Their placards carried the following wordings:

1. "How dare any of you having grievance against another Christian go before unbelievers for settlement and not before the church? 1 Cor. 6:1."
2. "The Wisdom from above is peaceable, full of mercy without partiality and hypocrisy. James 3:17"
3. "Away with injustice! Judge the people with just judgment. Deut. 1:16,17; 16:18-20."
4. "Be not wise in your conceit; recompense to no man evil for evil. Rom. 12:17; Luke 10:27."
5. "Love works no ill to his neighbour" Rom. 13:10, Luke 10:27.
6. "Urhobo, Ibo, Edo, Yoruba, Itsekiri, Efik, Ijaw, we are all one in Christ Jesus."
7. "Salem City is the talk of the town, enough of the talk of the heathen." Neh. 5:9; Rom. 2:24."
8. "The Battle against unrighteousness continues."

9. "Revive thy work O Lord!" Hab. 3:2.
10. "We protest against Jungle Justice."
11. "Judge Righteous judgement." John 7:24 mmo lo
12. "God save our beloved President."

The following Sunday, July 17, 1990, a majority of GKS Ministers in Salem City also demonstrated against the leadership of Brother B.O.Tietie.

In the Ministers allegations against Brother Tietie, they stated that it was after the women's demonstration against him (Vice President then) that they felt that Brother Tietie was no longer spiritually fit to officiate. It could now be seen from what was written in the placards of the sisters that their demonstration was not to persuade me to decide the outstanding matter in the Ministry, as Brother Tietie alleged in the defence to the Ministers' charges read to the church on July 8, 1990, but their demonstration was to show a dislike for the Osondu episode, which was more in line with the reasons given by the protesting ministers for demonstrating. The placards of the protesting Ministers on June 17, 1990 read as follows:

1. "Vee Pee, We no longer support you."
2. "Preaching with Angels' voice without charity is vain."
3. "Enough of hypocrisy, craftiness and self-justification."
4. "We want a sincere and God-fearing leader, not a dictator."
5. "The Altar is polluted."
6. "We are mourning."
7. "God preserve our beloved President."

Brother Tietie's nonchalant attitude towards matters spiritual and his inability to take correction led to the ministers' demonstration in which a vote of no confidence was cast on him. And with this "Vote of no confidence," they levelled charges against him, which they argued disqualified him as a Bishop and therefore from being Vice President of God's Kingdom Society. The accusations are as follows:

1. That Brother Tietie is not blameless; He appropriated blocks and bags of cement belonging to the Laity.
2. That Brother Tietie is covetous. He appropriated a brother's asbestos roofing sheets.
3. That Brother Tietie cannot rule his house well—His children lack discipline.
4. That Brother Tietie is double-tongued.
5. That Brother Tietie is not spiritually grave and vigilant—his wife wore trousers in Salem City, contrary to the GKS rule on morals based on the scriptures.
6. That Brother Tietie's role in the conferment of chieftaincy title on Humphrey Idisi was spiritually disappointing. It shows spiritual deviation. And that Brother Tietie was silent about Idisi's rejoinder to the GKS pamphlet on chieftaincy title. The rejoinder is an opposition to the GKS faith.
7. That Brother Tietie's role in Idisi's opening/dedication of his (Idisi) country house was spiritually committing. (For Brother Tietie negotiated the programme without informing me.
8. That Brother Tietie's involvement in the brutalization of Osondu Ugoji by men alleged to have come from the Nigerian Navy was a spiritual deviation.
9. That Brother Tietie failed to respond appropriately to the sisters' demonstration on June 13, 1990. After the demonstration, Brother Tietie acted as if nothing had happened.

Brother Tietie's defence which I caused to be read to the members on July 8, 1990, was spiritually worthless. Although he tried by fair speech to deceive the simple, the faithless, and the young in Bible knowledge, the evidence did not favour Brother Tietie.

I am yet to release the detailed judgement to the Ministers Conference. God willing, I shall make it available to you, the non-members of the Ministry.

In my interim verdict, I pointed out areas where Brother Tietie went astray spiritually, namely:

1. Arrogating the growth of the church to himself.

2. Arrogating the return of some of St Urhobo's children back to the GKS fold to himself; and
3. Giving the impression that ordination is equivalent to anointing, so that no man could remove him from office.

These observations above were enough to discipline Brother Tietie because they are presumptuous sins. But until Brother Tietie left the Ministry, he did not deem it necessary to retract these spiritually committing statements.

It is pertinent to note that in all the errors pointed out by the Ministers against Brother Tietie in May, August, and December, 1989, and June 1990, he has not made a clear admission of guilt in even ONE of them.

When Brother Tietie did not agree that he was wrong and the Ministers refused to worship under his leadership because they said Brother Tietie's officiation was not acceptable unto God, it became a spiritual matter for God to decide. I therefore gave Brother Tietie the opportunity to officiate among those who still saw him as just. I also gave the protesting ministers the opportunity to officiate among those who support them. It was Brother Tietie who wrote to me offering to step down from officiation and accepting to worship with the other ministers. The other ministers, on their part, in a letter, agreed that they would worship in a service where Brother Tietie was present, provided he did not officiate. But Brother Tietie agreed to worship in the service when the other ministers would officiate. While this stepping down from officiation of Brother Tietie seemed admirable on the outside, Brother Tietie never attended the minister's prayer meetings held in Salem City twice daily until he left the Ministry. That was for a period of more than five months. In short, his offer to step down from officiating was not done out of a clear conscience. He was hypocritical.

The period after the interim verdict saw intense activities by Brother Tietie among lay members canvassing for support as if the lay members could restore him to his former status. This period also saw the publication of open letters by some members expressing their support for Brother Tietie. These letters in support of Brother Tietie all have the following spiritual defects:

1. When a mortal has matter that has been committed to the Almighty God, another mortal man cannot intercede for that man. Only Jesus Christ has the power and privilege to do so. (1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1,2; etc) These letters tend to put across a case for Brother Tietie before me. This was very wrong since I had told the members that I had committed the matter to God. There was nothing I as a man could do. In this regard, some of these members showed ignorance of the Bible.
2. These letters showed a lack of understanding and wrong interpretations of Bible texts. It is the Lord's Ministry that is the custodian of the knowledge of God, despite what some of you among the laity may think yourselves. As it is written: "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts." Malachai 2:7; Compare Deuteronomy 17:8-13; Jer. 3:15; etc.
3. They were all biased because none of these letters in support of Brother Tietie admitted or conceded one point against Brother Tietie. They all saw the ministers and myself (president) as sinners and Brother Tietie as the saint in Salem City, whom one of the writers says was not guilty.
4. Some of these letters were products of conspiracy.

At this stage, flatterers flocked to Brother Tietie, telling him things he wanted to hear. This made him drift farther away from reality. This period also saw the beginning of the exodus of Ministers from Salem City (like what happened in 1959-60).

First, Brother Y. E. G. Ako, Barrister at Law, deserted the Lord's Ministry. He has been suspended from the Church. His case is not yet over. Earlier, Brother Abayomi Olukowade and his wife Ruth left the Ministry voluntarily; they have been dismissed from the Ministry. Brother Albert Urhobo, who was station Minister in Port Harcourt, never really readjusted to ministerial life after his return from Port Harcourt. He and his family voluntarily packed out of Salem City. He was accordingly dismissed and expelled from the Lord's Ministry and

suspended indefinitely from the Church. This order also applies to his wife and was communicated to them in my reply to his letter. Brother Matthew Urhobo (not a minister) younger brother of Brother Albert Urhobo also withdrew from our press where he worked, and conducted a life of drifting from one town to the other in Bendel and Rivers States. When he was asked to explain his conduct in abandoning his post at the press and drifting from town to town, he could not give any reasonable explanation. He was accordingly expelled from Salem City and suspended indefinitely from the Church. (Matthew is back to the Ministry).

All those who have left the Lord's Ministry are supporters of Brother Tietie.

As I was directed by God, I announced that the Freedom Day Celebrations would take place this year. It was this announcement that escalated the crisis, not only in the Ministry but in the whole church. The disgruntled ones amongst us did not want the Freedom Day Celebrations to take place. But I would rather obey or please God than man. Some of the supporters of Brother Tietie opposed strongly the Freedom Day Celebrations.

Sapele and DSC Orhuvworun and Aladja Branches:

The Administrative committees of these three branches were the only Administrative Committees who openly confronted and opposed the Ministry, despite my warnings that laymembers should be careful, bridle their tongues, and pray always about the current problems in the Church. The Sapele Administrative Committee had earlier blamed their Minister for not revealing what went on in the Ministers' conference to them. When the ministers demonstrated on June 17, 1990, the Sapele Administrative Committee told their minister not to preside over their meetings any more, even though their minister did not take part in the ministers' demonstration. When the station minister of Sapele reported to me, I wrote to the Sapele committee to inquire whether what was reported was true. They confirmed it in their letter to me. I temporarily reassigned their minister to officiate in other branches (not because they were right but because I believe in doing things in God's time.) Many members in Sapele protested that the Administrative Committee's views were peculiar to its members and not the views of the vast majority of the Church at Sapele. After about five weeks, I started sending other ministers to officiate at Sapele. Some weeks later the Sapele Committee wrote to me that they would not give their station's funds any more to their station minister, who, though not officiating at Sapele, was still resident at Sapele. Along with that, the Administrative Committee of DSC Orhuvhorun came with an undated and unsigned note stating that no minister be sent to them any more. It was revealed that the Sapele Administrative Committee was in contact with the DSC Administrative Committee. It was also revealed that the action by these two committees was designed by supporters of Brother Tietie to put pressure on me to decide the conflict in Brother Tietie's favour.

On October 16, 1990, I invited the Sapele and DSC Administrative committees with their Warri counterpart and some prominent members of the Church in Warri as witnesses. I caused my judgement on the action of the two Administrative Committees, which were evidenced by my letter and their letters to me to be read. In it, I pointed out to them the offence they had committed, namely the sin of presumptuousness. I pointed out that the Administrative Committees in any branch of the Church were representatives of the Ministry. They cannot exercise powers which were not delegated to them. Furthermore, the delegates can never be superior to the delegating authority, and the delegate cannot exercise himself to the detriment of the delegating authority. The action of Sapele and DSC committees was stubbornness and rebellion, and this rebellion was not just against me the president but against Christ and Jehovah the Almighty God. The two committees were consequently dissolved and their members suspended from the Church. Information later reached me that some members are saying that the committee members were not judged or given any opportunity to be heard. But the truth is that they were given an opportunity to be heard in writing. The communication between me and them is documented.

Details of their actions, communication, and judgement, which spanned over 3 months, shall be made available to the non-members of the Ministry, God willing.

Freedom Day Celebration

The suspended Administrative Committee members and some hired thugs went to disturb the Sapele Freedom Day Celebration so that the Freedom Day did not hold in Sapele. It was clear that the suspended Sapele Administrative Committee members were disrupting the Freedom Day in support of or in sympathy with Brother B. O. Tietie.

While we were still discussing the Sapele Freedom Day disturbance, rumours came that the Warri Freedom Day Celebration would also be disturbed so that it would not hold. We did not take the rumour seriously. But as a precaution, we requested the police to beef-up our security system. On the 26th of October 1990, it was reported that Brother Tietie was ill and that he had been hospitalized. (We felt it because that was the first time, as my memory can carry me, that Brother Tietie was admitted to the hospital since he came to the Ministry in 1950.)

At about 9.00 a.m. on Freedom Day, October 28, 1990, an hour to the start of the Freedom Day Celebration, the D.P.O. of Warri came to Salem City to say that following a petition by some members of GKS threatening civil disturbance in Salem City, he had come to stop the Freedom Day Celebration from holding because he did not want a situation where he would use tear gas in Salem City. The ministers with whom he discussed the matter persuaded him to allow the celebration to go on, and by God's grace he did allow. One of the ministers went to the police station to read the petition against the God's Kingdom Society by the dissident members.

During the opening speech of the Freedom Day service in Warri, three brothers who are supporters of Brother Tietie attempted to abort the service by interrupting the officiating minister, Brother G. O. Ifeacho. They were gently escorted out of the cathedral by our youths and overpowered. At the same time, there were outside some hired thugs who had come from Sapele. These tried to cause confusion by carrying chairs to attack members outside and to harm people. Again, they were overpowered by the youths. The members who attempted the disruption were sent out of Salem City. The thugs who were captured were 3 in number, and because of our tight security, the majority of them could not gain access into Salem City by God's grace. God helped us marvellously, and we are grateful to Him.

The Warri Freedom Day celebration went on thereafter peacefully by God's grace. The thugs were handed over to the police and were charged to court. Two so-called brothers who are supporters of Brother Tietie went to bail them.

The three thugs who were arrested jumped bail. And the two members who bailed them were put in police detention. The two members were subsequently charged to court and they were both fined jointly for the escape of the accused persons.

If Brother Tietie and his supporters say that the ministers' peaceful demonstration was ungodly, was the act of organising violent disruption of Freedom Day service with threat to life and property that is righteous? Members, at this stage, I have to state with regret that some members who claim to be prominent in the Church in some of our big stations were reported to be aware of this plot to disrupt the Freedom Day service in Warri and cause damage to the property of the church in Salem City but kept quiet about it. May God have mercy on all those who knew of this plot to disrupt the Warri Freedom Day and kept quiet. Salem City does not belong to me but to God Almighty.

For decades we had been worshipping at the Aladja-home town of Brother Tietie at the family house of Brother B. O. Tietie. On November 4, 1990, the minister who went to officiate there was turned back. Later, the God's Kingdom Society was ejected from the said premises. However, the faithful members in Aladja have secured another place where we now worship by God's grace.

With all these developments and tension in the Church, I deemed it timely to reconvene the Ministers Conference. I announced the reconvening of the ministers' conference for November 24, 1990. By this time the conflict in the Ministry which had not been clear to many members, became clear to them, especially with the upheavals in Warri, Sapele, D.S.C. Orhuwhorun, and Aladja branches. Solidarity messages to me started pouring in from individual members, groups, and branches of the Society. First of these were the Itsekiri

members of GKS, Warri, then the entire members of GKS Obiaruku branch; the entire members of GKS Warri branch led by their Administrative Committee, Women Fellowship Committee, Youth Fellowship, Zonal Leaders, all of Warri; Representatives of all branches in Imo and Anambra states usually designated as Zone "C" of the Feast Tabernacles; Onitsha; Youths Fellowship Owerri; and the entire Igbo members of GKS. I was touched when all these branches and groups sent representatives to Salem City to see me and encourage me in the Lord. Some of them gave the Church cash gifts; others gave me cash gifts to defray my medical expenses. Even as I am writing this letter, requests for solidarity visits are still pouring in from places like Port Harcourt, Sapele (from the faithful members who are in majority there), Effurun, the North, League of Freedomites-Warri chapter, and the GKS Women Fellowship nation-wide, all asking for the opportunity to read their own solidarity declarations and resolutions. I salute them all May God bless all of you members of goodwill. For the past one month, the programme of the Sunday service in Warri has been overcrowded. This is the Lord's doing, but marvelous in the people's eyes.

On Sunday, November 24, 1990, the Ministers Conference opened amidst very heavy security. We had to tighten security because of rumours that some of Brother Tietie's supporters would disrupt the conference. I wrote to Brother Tietie informing him of these rumours. We could not afford to take any chances after our experience in Salem City on October 28, 1990. We hired the services of armed policemen to guard Salem City. And the members of all the Warri Committees, supported by the Women Fellowship Committee, and recognised sisters came to watch over Salem City in the Lord while the ministers were engaged in the conference.

The chairman of the conference, Minister G. O. Ifeacho, informed me that Brother Tietie did not attend the opening session. I delayed the conference in order to know from Brother Tietie why he was absent from the conference. He gave his reasons, and I wrote him, telling him that the reasons were not spiritual.

On Sunday, the 25th of November 1990, a letter dated 23rd November 1990 was handed over to me. It was the letter of Brother Tietie informing me of his withdrawal from the Lord's Ministry of GKS.

Brother E. I. Udoji, senior and executive minister, and Roland Ogene, junior minister, also signed the withdrawal letter. I shall send a reply to them later on, giving full answers to the misinformation written in it. Brother Tietie withdrew from the Ministry before he could hear the judgement of his pending matters, which was to be read to him in the conference, which he refused to attend.

At 11.40 p.m. on Monday, November 26, 1990, Brothers Tietie, Udoji Ogene, and all their wives, children, and dependents left Salem City for an undisclosed destination.

It is important to note that no order or restriction was placed on Brother Tietie by me or any other minister. Brother Tietie voluntarily withdrew from officiating in July 1990. On Sunday, November 18, 1990, at about 8.45 a.m., Brother Tietie sent a message to me that he would not attend the Sunday service meeting of that day because of the embarrassment he thought he would get from some members. On November 24, 1990, he voluntarily withdrew from the ministers conference. And finally, on November 25, 1990, he again voluntarily withdrew from the Lord's ministry of the GKS. This is the history of the spiritual decline of Brother B. O. Tietie. It is a story of one who refused to take correction.

Brother B. O. Tietie's withdrawal from the Lord's Ministry at a time when "the devil as a roaring Lion" (1 Peter 5:8) is out to scatter the Church of God shows the type of minister he was. On this point, the statement of our Lord Jesus Christ is clear. As it is written, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep." John 10:11-13.

Finally, as a result of the withdrawal of Brothers B. O. Tietie, E. I. Udoji and R. E. Ogene from the Lord's Ministry of God's Kingdom Society, whose withdrawal is unscriptural, they are hereby **DISMISSED** from the Lord's Ministry and **EXCOMMUNICATED** from the church. No faithful member should fraternise with them. As it is written: "Now we command you,

brethren in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." -2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 15,.

Members are hereby advised to beware of the propaganda of Brother Tietie and his agents who go about deceiving the hearts of the simple with fair speeches. The Bible says:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly: and by good words and fair speeches the hearts of the simple." - Romans 16:17,18.

I have taken pains to give the details of the withdrawal episode of Brother Tietie in order to reveal the truth and expose the work of mischief-makers.

May the Almighty God help Brother Tietie and his associates and those supporting them blindly to see their faults and repent. May God, in His infinite mercy, protect and bless them with their families. Amen. Finally, I thank the Almighty God immensely for helping and using me to compile this report by His grace for posterity to read.

May the Almighty God be with us His sheep everywhere always. Amen.

The reader needs to be informed that when B.O. Tietie left the GKS, he formed his own Church with some members of the GKS who believe in his thinking. He called his Church, God's Kingdom Mission (G.K.M.) and then stunned the world with the claim that Saint G.M.Urhobo was the founder of G.K.M. But GKS members across the country and abroad described the claim as bogus. Some GKS members wondered how those intelligent GKS people who followed him agreed to accept such a claim. According to the GKS, the facts on ground, as meticulously put by the President, have nowhere to indict the GKS, and so why should Saint Urhobo abandon his Church? Is he to begin a new mission with Tietie or what? Besides, those who went with Tietie were classified into three or more distinct groups, all socially, casually, and not religiously oriented—a situation not reasonable. Some members of the GKS in Sapele went more on the father-in-law bill rather than wrongs, if any, by the President, or President's dealings with Sapele Committee. It seems also that some GKS members at Aladja and DSC went along our son or our own bill rather than what Tietie was said to have done. The other group was said to be a collection of disgruntled few, some of whom were under suspension from the GKS for various godless behaviours. The majority in this group, besides offering the impetus for the simple-hearted Tietie to revolt and hasten his rebellion against Otomewo, a father figure to Tietie. They have to fish from the troubled waters at a time when spiritual soberness and prayers were most needed to stem the breakaway. In any case, falling away from the Church of God is an intermittent occurrence. Could this be one in our living memory? To the GKS people, the Otomewo/Tietie episode was evidence of a cleansing to put away the ungodly from the Church since the scriptures are clear that at some points the angels of God will have to come and gather out of the Kingdom those that cause offences. To the God's Kingdom Mission (G.K.M.), the episode was a purification for Tietie from the "filths" in Salem City; hence, the G.K.M. sang that day that Esu (devil) should give way for the "righteous" Tietie to pass.

But the day was a sad one in the GKS as it testified to the departure of a hardworking and talented man of the scriptures. The GKS has not ceased to pray to God to make a change in Tietie if he is the son of God. There was no G.K.S. person that lamented the exit of Tietie more than President Otomewo himself.