



Growth of Christ army church in ikwerreland, Niger Delta, Nigeria

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Abstract

The wind of revival across the Niger delta region of Nigeria in the second decade of 20th century impacted in diverse ways upon the church and people within and beyond the region. The charismatic figure of the movement was a Kalabari born Garrick Braide who began his ministry under Niger Delta Pastorate. He organized healing crusades, destroyed traditional shrines and publicly attacked medicine men. Many were won to Christ, churches planted in rural areas and new ecclesiastical entities established in communities including Ikwerreland. The movement gave rise to the Christ Army Church, a brand of Pentecostalism. The historical approach was adopted and data collected from primary and secondary sources. It revealed that the church grew to diocesan status in Ikwerreland in 2018 with a native as bishop. The paper concluded that for the sustainability of the church, there should be continual training of clerical and lay personnel for effective evangelization.

Keywords: impact, movement, ikwerreland, evangelism and conversion

1. Introduction

Christianity in the Niger delta that started in 1860s remained a “foreign mission” until the second half of 20th century when it began to wear the garb of its immediate environment. This was as the gospel began to be presented to converts in a liturgy and language of the natives. Charismatic movement, an aspect of Pentecostalism is the worldwide movement in and outside the main stream Christianity that emphasises the belief that Christians by living a life of holiness and prayers in every age may receive the baptism in the Spirit and Charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit as did the first Christians on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Kurian, 2005, p.540) ^[10]. Pentecostalism emphasizes “experience and spirituality” which includes Holy Spirit baptism as an experience different from conversion and evidenced by speaking in tongues or *glossolalia* (Acts 2:1-13), inspiration of the Bible, salvation by conversion and revival, instantaneous sanctification, divine healing, and claim to be restoration Christianity. Like the early church, the meetings of the Pentecostals were characterized by outbursts of ecstatic enthusiasm featuring healing, speaking in tongues, interpretation of prophecies, and all kinds of miracles (Ayegboyin and Ishola, 2013, p.7) ^[11]. Powell (2002, p. 960-1) considered the Pentecostals are the “modern Christians who believe in the possibility of receiving the same experience of the Holy Spirit as the Apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4)”. In addition to classical Pentecostalism, we have neo-Pentecostalism or Charismatic movements which include the Garrick Braide Movement.

In this paper we examined the growth of Christ Army Church (CAC) founded through Garrick Braide Movement (GBM) in the development of Christianity in the Niger delta region of Nigeria. The study provided answer to such questions as what were the antecedents to the founding of Christ Army Church, their teaching methods, relationship with the Niger Delta Pastorate (NDP), response of the British Colonial Administration (BCA), and growth of CAC in Ikwerreland a major upland ethnic nationality of Rivers

State. The historical research method was adopted and information received from primary and secondary sources. The later are evidence from scholarly works and church documents.

Foundation and Methods of Garrick Braide Movement

The life of Garrick Sokari Daketima Marian Braide of Bakana in Kalabari, founder of the 'Prophetic Movement', started from a humble beginning in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. He was born of ‘pagan’ parents in Obonoma about 1882, but grew up in Bakana. Traditionally, he was a fisherman and canoe carver, a trade associated with the ecosystem of the Kalabari- Ijaw people. The level of his illiteracy was such that he could not even speak the Pidgin English. Some strange developments while the mother was pregnant of him as well as during his childhood days pointed to the fact that the finger of Almighty God was upon his life and that he was destined to be used of God for signs and wonders. Braide encountered the Christian faith in about 1886 through the ministry of Niger Delta Pastorate, and was baptized on January 23, 1910 at Saint Andrew’s NDP church Bakana by Rev. Moses Adolphus Kemmer. In 1912, he received the rite of confirmation through the laying on of hands by Bishop James Johnson. Commenting on the development of his faith in Jesus Christ, A. C. Braide one of his earliest biographers wrote;

It was his custom to slip secretly into St. Andrew’s Church on weekdays and here prostrate himself in prayer to Almighty God imploring forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Sometimes it was his custom to ask the pastor [’s] permission to spend the whole night in prayer in the Church with his Bible and prayer book (Tasie, 1978 ^[14], ^[15], p.174, Ayegboyin & Ishola, 2013, p.50) ^[11].

Braide served as a sideman and rose to the status of Pastor’s Warden and licenced lay reader in Saint Andrew’s NDP Church, Bakana, under Rev. M. A. Kemmer. As an enthusiastic evangelist, “he organized crusades and destroyed shrines and publicly attacked traditional priests and medicine men.” In his report, G.O.M. Tasie said;

As Braide carried out his prayer exercises, he also practised healing by prayer; and there is evidence that he was successful in many cases. He began to be more vigorously involved in evangelistic work. In 1912, when he confirmed, he claimed that he had been called by God to be His messenger (1980, p.138- 139).

Narrating his call, A. C. Braide wrote;

As I knelt down with others looking at the Holy Table with the elements laid down on the occasion, but more so as the minister pronounced the words as I was about to receive the elements; 'the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this is in remembrance that Christ died for thee and feed on Him in thy heart with thanksgiving.' A thrill came over me; a bright light flashed over my eyes and as elements entered into my mouth, as it were a still small voice said to me 'Garrick Braide for you Jesus died, for you He gave his body and shed his most precious blood on the cross to wash away your sins. Have you been washed in his precious blood?' In deep and silent tones, I replied: Lord wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. After the communion I knelt down in my pew and pour (sic) out my soul in prayer to God, I could not sleep the whole night; several times I had to get up from my bed and pray; at times I sat down and tears tricked down my eyes as I felt my own unworthiness and God's goodness towards me. At about the still hours of the morning I heard a still small voice saying: Garrick! Garrick! are you prepared to be my servant? Are you ready to witness to mankind the saving truths of the Gospel...my wife who was awake then watching my movements unobserved by me, asked me at daybreak to whom I was speaking before the dawn of day as she saw no one ... we knelt and prayed together" (Tasie, 1978, p.174-175) ^[14, 15].

He adopted simple, direct and practical methods in his teachings which made converts to worship God in their native African way. He focused on organizing gospel crusades from one rural community to another which gave opportunity for many natives to hear the good news for the first time. Converts were made to confess their sins, and surrender their traditional objects of worship which he destroyed publicly. He charged them not to apply any medicine or seek medical help from either African or European doctors, and to abstain from alcoholic beverages, depend absolutely on God, be committed to praying and fasting, praise God in their local languages and strictly observe Sundays as sacred day. The principal tenets of GBM include;

1. Public worship-morning and evening prayers in every town.
2. Confession of sins and undergoing penance.
3. Abolition of intoxicating liquor.
4. Due observance of the Sabbath Day which was almost falling into neglect in some places.
5. Iconoclasm-giving up charms and bad medicines and the destruction of images and idols.
6. Avoidance of litigation which led to restoration of peace and harmony amongst the people.
7. Tolerance of polygamy.
8. viii. Faith healing (Epelle, 1955 ^[7], p. 51; Ayandele, 1970, p. 360) ^[1].

Garrick Braide Movement and Niger Delta Pastorate

The Anglican church-Niger Delta Pastorate initially

welcomed the movement with its religious renewal emphasis. Through it the Delta church grew geometrically between 1912 and 1918 in attendance, membership and finances. The 1916/17 *Proceedings of the C.M.S.* as stated in Tasie maintained thus;

The entire C.M.S. statistics for its African missions in 1916 show that the biggest gain to Christianity was seen in the Niger. Out of a total gain of 11,028 new converts for that year in Sierra Leone, the Niger, Northern Nigeria and including East Africa, over 86 per cent were in the Niger area. The Niger mission recorded 2,916 baptisms more than two-thirds of which were in the Niger Delta (1978, p.183). Commenting about Braide, his gifts and his ministry Rev. M. A. Kemmer said; "There had never been any instance where Garrick consented to pray (for) any sick person in which the prayers failed to be efficacious". Again, that "he would predict the death of someone, and the recovery of another of whom all hope of recovery had been given up by friends and relations and it always happens" (Tasie, 1978, p.175) ^[14, 15]. When Braide declared himself to be Elijah II, he rapidly acquired a remarkable influence in the delta region among Christians and non-Christians alike. It is claimed that the name "Prophet" was first referred to Garrick by one of the NDP clergy, and then followed by the natives.

The leadership of the NDP regarded the proclamation of Garrick to be Prophet Elijah II as inappropriate and offensive. In February 1916, James Johnson- Assistant bishop of the Niger Diocese in-charge of the NDP summoned Garrick to Bonny for a dialogue on the influence and relationship of his movement with the Delta church. Though Garrick honoured the invitation, the result was not rewarding. The Bonny and Bakana chiefs who attended the meeting went on to introduce Garrick as a "Prophet" which did not go down well with the bishop. During the meeting as the bishop himself reported, Garrick "left me in an abrupt, disrespectful and disgraceful manner" (Ayandele, 1970 ^[1], p.361 citing *Synod Report*, 1916, p.84). The followers of Garrick went further to confront James Johnson, insisting that an office of a prophet be created in the church for the sake of Garrick. To them, the words of Garrick superseded the church's creeds and dogma (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 2013, p.52) ^[1]. They regarded him as God's spokesperson whom to disobey was insult to God. He was adored to the extent that his followers wanted to even drink the water he bathed with it.

These actions of Braide and his followers were considered excessive and could not be tolerated by any in the episcopate. Expectedly, the NDP declined from granting Garrick special recognition as a prophet as such does not exist within the Anglican order. The development gave rise to great schism as followers of Braide demonstrated a rejection of the bishop and the Anglican Church. The movement tolerated polygamy and associated with divination. They admitted converts into baptism without undergoing unintelligent catechism courses and recitations. The delta church authorities became suspicious of the movement and vehemently opposed it. The result was a split between GBM and the bishop James Johnson-led NDP. Consequently, Garrick and his team were condemned for heretical teachings, and an official ban was instituted against the movement. The bishop branded it as devilish, and some fanatics of NDP went to the extent of burning down their worship places. The Rev. S. S. Macarthy of Bonny was

suspended for defying the bishop's order by carrying out baptism of 396 adults within two months-November and December 1915, without completing full catechism classes. On the other hand, members of the movement sized properties of the NDP church in their custody especially safe containing money. At Akanu and Ogoni districts church buildings were seized on the claim that the people had built them (Tasie, 1978, p.187) ^[14, 15].

Through the influence of the movement, the NDP experienced drastic reduction of about 50% in their size and number between November 1915 and February 1916 (3 months). It was such that three quarters of the congregation of Saint Stephen's Cathedral Bonny, declared for him. Chiefs and headmen would acknowledge deep obeisance to him as well (Hildebrandt, 1981, p.203). The movement was also seen as a call for re-examination of the activities of the NDP as "Braide achieved in three months what the CMS had not attained in half a century" (Ayandele, 1970, p. 359) ^[1]. It was regarded as a severe judgement on the "inadequacy and ineffectiveness" of the James Jonson' led Anglican brand of Christianity. The response of the chiefs to the movement showed that the way Christianity was presented to the people had little or no relevance to their lives. Bishop James Johnson acknowledged this when he told the Delta church board in February 1916 thus;

The whole affair is a very sad one, and it indicates an awfully defective knowledge, or an entire ignorance of the elementary truths of Christianity in very large numbers of people that are called, or call themselves Christians, and an alarming weakness in the Native Church especially in view of the shortness of time barely three months, within which the movement, with all its serious drawbacks, has acquired control and mastery over a very considerable section of it. It calls for deep humiliation before God on the part of us, the clergy; its teachers, Shepherds and Leaders, and for a thorough overhauling of our work in every one of its departments, and the methods of procedure which we have followed in it, with a view to a considerable amendment (Ayandele, 1970, p. 360) ^[1].

The delta church board while accepting the good effects of the movement deprecated and condemned its evils. Though James Johnson had seen many troubles in his lifetime, in one of his letters he expressed that he had never seen similar trouble in his long experience (Epelle, 1955, p. 53) ^[7].

Garrick Braide Movement and Colonial Authorities

When the situation could not be controlled, Bishop James Johnson decided to appeal to the British Colonial Administration (BCA) for intervention. It will be recalled that in January 1916, Garrick made a statement at Abonnema that "the white man's days were over and that it was up to the native peoples to determine their fate" (Tasie, 1978, p. 188) ^[14, 15]. Some used the statements to consider the movement to be politically and racially motivated. The support of the natives to the movement was also seen as an expression of their grievances against the monopoly of the church services by Sierra Leonians-Saro (Epelle (1955, p. 121) ^[7]. Sir Fredrick Lugard, the Governor, portrayed Braide as a charlatan who claimed to be the second Elijah. He also observed that Braide's;

Religion was not unmixed with political propaganda and Braide declared himself hostile to all exotic influence whether European or native. The drinking of spirit was prohibited probably with object of dealing a blow to

European trade, and there was great hostility to the Delta Mission of the Church Missionary Society (Kalu, 1977, p.96) ^[9].

Ayandele (1970, p. 356) ^[1]. Remarked that Braide was able to achieve what the British investments in men and money, and James Johnson himself could not achieve. So serious was the consequence of the people's abstinence from alcohol that the BCA lost 576,000 pounds in 1916. The decline in alcoholic business due to obedience of the natives to the teachings of Braide against alcoholism, and fear of possible political unrest in the Niger delta area were responsible for the arrest of Braide. The opposition of Braide by James Johnson presented the British officials the moral impetus which made it impossible for a dissentient voice to be raised in Britain against the ruthless suppression of the movement (Ayandele, 1970, p. 362) ^[1]. Percy Amaury Talbot, the Colonial District Officer at Degema in March 1916 arrested him for inciting "a seditious feeling against the government". He was charged with collecting money under false pretences, conducting himself in a manner likely to cause a breach of the peace, and causing damage to idols (Tasie, 1978, p.190) ^[14, 15]. Additional 8 charges were brought against him in November 1916. Furthermore, 84 of his followers were charged with riot, assault, or unlawful assembly. In April 1917, Braide was convicted and sentenced to 6 months imprisonment with hard labour. Later, the Lieutenant-General halved the sentence, and in January 1918, he was released from prison. The influenza epidemic eventually affected Garrick and he died on November 15, 1918. The supporters of the *Saro* leadership claimed that James Johnson had predicted God's wrath on Braide and he eventually died through a stroke of lightning.

Formation of Christ Army Church

Though Garrick had always insisted on his simple mission to serve as a prophet in the Niger Delta church and never to found a different brand of Christianity, after his death; his followers founded the Christ Army Church (CAC) in 1918 which constituted a rival church to the NDP. Some members of the church lay claim that during a prayer meeting of the movement on January 30, 1916 the church was born with the pronouncement of the name 'Christ Army'. Tasie (1978, p.193) ^[14, 15]. upheld that the followers of Braide having failed to persuade the Wesleyan Methodist church to shepherd them and also support them against the N.D.P. decided to constitute themselves into a church which they named the Christ Army. On 6 January [1918], they applied to the World Evangelical Alliance in London for affiliation and support for their spiritual upkeep. Patriarch J. G. Campbell replaced Braide in 1919 as head of the CAC.

However, by 1939 CAC began to decline as a result of poor funding and weak organizational structures. Power tussles amongst the leaders caused division in the church. Through the instrumentality of Simon A. Cooker, one of Braide's chief Lagos supporters, the organization of the church at its earliest stage was established. The church also received strong support in Lagos from Otomba Payne, an African nationalist and editor of the *Lagos Weekly Record*. He devoted the editorial in his first issue in defence of Braide. The subsequent editorial on 14 April, 1917, declared support for "Christian churches organized and manned by African natives" in contrast to "the offshoots of foreign and exotic organization". The reference was due to the role of

the NDP (Onu, 2018 ^[11], cited in LWR, 18 Nov 1916; 10 and 24 Feb, 10 March, and 14 April 1917; Ludwig, "Elijah II," p.311–314).

The church spread in the Niger Delta region down to some parts of Igbo land and opened schools and churches, even in some areas that had no previous contact with Christianity (Chuta, 1986) ^[4]. Many natives were won to the Christian faith and they voluntarily submitted their traditional worship images for destruction in the public. Other denominations felt duty bound to reach out to their members with pastoral interests in their different locations. It gave rise to self-consecrated evangelists as part of its by-product. These evangelists became significant features in the development of Christianity in the Niger delta.

Impact of garrick braide movement (christ army church) in ikwerreland

The geo-political entity called Ikwerre constitutes a major ethnic group in Rivers State of Niger Delta, Nigeria. The name refers to both the people and their language who also refer to themselves as Iwhuruohna (proper natives). They are found in four Local Government Areas of Rivers State, namely; Port Harcourt City, Ikwerre, Obio/Akpor and Emohua. The area is the largest upland community in Rivers State and is made up of several kingdoms, clans, towns and villages constituting a distinct cultural area. Cultural area means a geographical delimitation of an area that possess more or less the same dominant features and significant cultural traits, complex and pattern (Ejizu, 1986, p. xvi) ^[6]. Ikwerreland stretches from Rebisi (Port Harcourt City) through Obio and Akpor in the South East to the International Airport communities of Omagwa, Ipo, Isiokpo, Omademe, Ozuaha and Igwuruta in the East. It extends to Ubima, Omuanwa, Omudioga, Egbeda, Ubimini, Apani and Omerelu in the North-boundary towns between Rivers State and Imo State. It runs through to Elele-Alimini, Rumuekpe, Itu, Akpabu and Rundele in the West and down to Ogbakiri, Emohua and Uvuawhu coastal communities in the South.

Christianization of Ikwerreland was started in 1895. Like most Niger Delta communities, Christianity did not begin in Ikwerreland until the natives took the initiative. These native lay agents (evangelists) were supported by Kalabari Christian traders and evangelists such as Garrick Sokari Braide and other missionaries (Onu, 2018) ^[11]. Ikwerreland which has today become urban areas in varying degree has numberless Christian missions such as Established, Charismatic, Indigenous or African Instituted and Pentecostal as well as various Sects and Movements.

In Ikwerreland, the GBM experienced rejection, assimilation and acceptance. In the first instance, the Movement was rejected in Aluu and Ogbakiri communities. Prior to the planting of Christianity in Aluu in 1916, the GBM had been established at Choba. Aluu chiefs sent spies to find out the operations of the Movement at Choba, especially their non-conforming attitude to traditional practices. Words went back to the chiefs of how shrines, talisman, charms and bangles among others were forcefully taken from converts and destroyed by leaders of the Movement. Again, that even house wives would abandon their matrimonial homes and spend days in prayers with the preachers (Wachukwu, 1991, p.13) ^[17]. Consequently, a rule was passed which restrained women and "feeble minded natives" from going to Choba market, a coastal town about six kilometres from Aluu. The aim was to preserve the

culture of the people. The initial reluctance notwithstanding, the Movement eventually penetrated Aluu. Later they merged with the NDP congregation a common trend in other Ikwerre communities.

Christianity experienced diverse persecutions from the traditional religionists in her formative years in the coastal community of Ogbakiri. The first phase centred on "abomination birth". There were cases where a convert's child cut the upper teeth first and a baby who came out of the mother's womb with the legs first. The most challenging was the delivery of a set of twins. To the later, the traditionalists resolved to drive away all Christian converts out of the community before they pulled down the wrath of the ancestors on them. In their resolve, they ostracized the Christians, confiscated their farmlands and raised a judicial action against them at Buguma in the court of Chief Tom West. The Kalabari Christians had to intervene in the matter. Not satisfied with the new development, the elders planned to abandon the entire town for the Christians. Rather than running away, the youths decided to forcefully eject all Christians from the town to *Ohia Onunu* (Evil forest) where those who died of small pox were abandoned. The plan was for the traditional loyalists to physically kill the converts in the evil forest. Men of valour were selected to implement the decision of *Ohna*.

On a fateful morning, five men of proven deeds forced Enyia Wonjeji, Sampson Orlunwo, Obowu and Wobiri to the death-bound-boat, while others went to lay ambush against the converts. God overtook the situation and Sampson Orlunwo was allowed to paddle the canoe. He quickly directed the canoe to Tombia waterside and immediately raised an alarm, which attracted people, including Kalabari Christians to the scene. The Tombia brethren sent one Isaac, a church teacher and another person to accompany the team to the site. On hearing the siren of the District Officer's boat, the traditionalists jumped into the river and escaped by the skin of their teeth. The matter was reported to the D. O at Degema. When the case finally called for hearing, the community spokesman-Chief Orluikie pretended to be deaf and dumb. Aware of this, the D. O's friend-Oga, was permitted to interrogate the accused. The drama unfolded thus;

Oga: Why did you deny the twins food?

Orluikie: Was I born twins?

Oga: Why did you desire to kill the twins?

Orluikie: Were they born twins?

Chief Orluikie was found guilty and fined five pounds. In his ruling, the D.O charged the traditionalists not to molest the Christians any longer. Again, they should be given land to erect church and school buildings as well as a cemetery to bury their dead (Orlu, 1994, p. 20-23) ^[12, 13].

The rhythmic recitation of the alphabets, IJKL opened another phase of challenge. The four letters sounded to the ears of the natives as *Ayi-jekee-eli* meaning we shall divide or share the land. The community understood that to mean the school was proposing to allocate the entire community land inherited from their forefathers to missionaries, their converts and school pupils. Unwilling to lose control over their inheritance-farmlands, they quickly ordered for the destruction of mission school (Elenwo, 1989, p.23-24) ^[5]. The Christians sent emissaries to Buguma to ascertain true meaning of the controversial alphabets-IJKL. Finally, it was explained and understood that the letters were mere alphabets and had nothing to do with sharing of community

land, and the school was re-opened in 1917.

The aggressive nature of the movement in Ogbakiri was also responsible for its rejection in the community. Garrick Braide was regarded as an attendant of Rev. M. A. Kemmer who ran away from Ogbakiri brethren during their faith trials in the hands of traditional religionists. Braide's ministry was likened to a magic mission. Under the people's eyes Braide's rebuke threw chief Orluike down and he discharged faeces publicly. Again, the movement killed *Odu-je-mba* club (Orlu, 1991) ^[13].

The missionary enterprise of Garrick Braide Movement (GBM) under the NDP that metamorphosed into Christ Army Church (CAC) was started in Ikwerreland in 1912 with the spirit of aggression for souls. Braide personally led the crusade against sickness, unbelief, shrines and talisman to Akpor Kingdom in 1912. The preaching of the gospel and demonstration of the power of God has always produced quick result. The method is radical in nature as it throws challenge to the hearers as well as demands their immediate response. Jesus Christ says, "Then the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled'" (Luke 14:23). The wave from the rivers reached Akpor Kingdom in the second decade of the 20th century. The coastal community of Choba traditionally referred to as Rumuolobo was the first point of call. The arrival of GBM team at Choba witnessed fearful messages, spiritual healing and destruction of traditional religious shrines. It was indeed a crusade against the powers of darkness and those who paid allegiance to them. In Choba, through prayers, mud and *bamaliko* (blessed water), Braide carried out his healing. Objects of traditional worship in *Ojukwu* shrines where burnt and *Owui owumini* (water spirit masquerades) were taken away. In all, their iconoclastic success over local deities and miracles caused religious excitement and influx of people into the church. The success of his evangelistic outreach was the planting of a congregation simply referred to as "Christ Army" (Onu, 2018) ^[11]. Later, the NDP and Roman Catholic congregations entered the community. Worried over the scantiness in membership of the three churches-Christ Army, NDP and Roman Catholic (RCM), the Council of elders- *Ohna* advised that they merge and operate as a single congregation. While the Roman Catholicism continued with their identity, the Christ Army and NDP congregations amalgamated in 1940 and became the present Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Choba.

Among Ikwerre men who were converted at Kalabari and influenced by the GBM included Evangelist Andrew Agor Amadi of Rumuekini. The zeal for the Lord moved him to return home and share the good news with his kith and kin. In 1914, he returned to his home town-Rumuekini, preached the gospel to his people, made some converts and planted a church. The next year, he extended the gospel to Rumuosi. Later, a GBM congregation was started at Rumuekini, and was referred to as 'Christ Army'. In course of his transit from Kalabari, Evangelist Andrew attempted planting the church at the coastal community of Rumuolumeni. Through the efforts of some GBM members, two 'Christ Army' congregations were started at Mgbuodohia and Minikpiti communities of Rumuolumeni. The GBM team also took the gospel to Ovogo in Odegu Kingdom and Omagwa among other communities.

The assimilation of GBM was also noticed in Omagwa accepted where it functioned as a faith-healing movement.

The planting of Christianity in Omagwa in 1914 witnessed establishment of worship centres at Imogu, Okparagwa and Omeketu communities. The Imogu church imbibed the miraculous spirit of GBM more than the other centres, and God was with them. Many miraculous deeds were witnessed in the church. The most striking was a three-year-old girl from Omueketu, who was declared died before taken to the church. After some prayers she was miraculously restored to life. The next was the healing of a young man from Omuewhuo-Okparagwa, whose hope of survival was lost. As a result of these miraculous deeds, healing and wondrous performances, it was strongly believed and confessed among Omagwa people "That God resided in Imogu" (Wotogbe-Weneka ^[19], 2014, p.29). This belief attracted more converts which made the congregations at Okparagwa and Omueketu to abandon their places of worship and joined Imogu church. The effect was such that a Sierra Leonean who was manning the 'Prayer Unit' at Omueketu abandoned the group and withdrew to Port Harcourt. During the amalgamation of churches era in Ikwerreland, the GBM was again integrated into the Anglican family.

Growth of Christ Army Church in Ikwerreland

Prominent among the communities where the movement was accepted included Rumuorlumeni where mission work started as a spiritual healing home. The operations of the movement brought conflict with traditional loyalists-rainmakers, herbalists and diviners who felt the evangelists had come to destroy their traditional healing powers (Wagbara, 1994, p.15). The community also saw the Movement as a one-man project, and so was not fully accepted. However, the church survived along the coastal settlements of Mgbuodohia and Minikpiti. The Mgbuodohia church christened Saint Michael invested in structural growth and personnel development. The national leadership of CAC Nigeria recognized their effort and decided to give impetus to them by upgrading the church to a Cathedral status in 2018.

In 2010, the diocese of Port Harcourt East was created. Seven years later, the joint archdeaconries of Ikwerre met in December 2017 with a resolution to pursue the creation of an autonomous diocese. On June 23, 2018, approval for creation of the new diocese was made at the General Synod Executive meeting held at the Rivers State Ecumenical Centre, Port Harcourt. Mandate for inauguration of the diocese, consecration and enthronement of the pioneer bishop was secured at the General Synod meeting of August 17-18, 2018 held at Rivers State Ecumenical Centre and Delta Hotels, Port Harcourt (*Order of service*, 2018, p.10-11). Consequently, on Sunday October 21, 2018 the Ikwerre Diocese of Christ Army Church Nigeria was inaugurated at St. Michael's Cathedral Mgbuodohia, Rumuorlumeni. The service was officiated by the Archbishop and Synod President of Christ Army Church Nigeria, His Grace Most Rev. A.S. Vurasi, AmP, JP, DSSRS, and assisted by other bishops. It featured consecration and enthronement of Vincent Ogbonna as pioneer bishop, who before his election was an Archdeacon, a retired Michelin staff, director of Chiovins Group of Schools and Rumuorlumeni community leader (*Ikwerre Meka News*, 2018, p. 4). The diocese at inauguration comprised of 3 archdeaconries and 12 church stations as follows;

1. Rumuorlumeni Archdeaconry

1.1 St. Michael's Cathedral Mgbuodohia, Rumuolumeni

- 1.2 St. Paul's church Minikpiti, Rumuolumeni
- 1.3 St. Raphael's church Azumini, Rumuolumeni
2. **Odegu Archdeaconry**
- 2.1 St. Matthew's church Ovogo
- 2.2 All Saints church Rumuodogo
- 2.3 St. Raphael's church Rumuji
- 2.4 St. John's church Ibaa
- 2.5 St. Peter's church Ibaa
3. **Isiokpo/Igwuruta Archdeaconry**
- 3.1 Our Saviour's church Ogbodo-Isiokpo
- 3.2 Our Saviour's church Elibrada Emohua
- 3.3 All Saints church Igwuruta-Ali
- 3.4 Divine Power church Alimini-Isiokpo

The epoch-making gave rise to three major developments. Firstly, it raised the ecclesiastical status of Ikwerreland in Christ Army Church Nigeria to an autonomous diocese. Secondly, it placed the coastal town of Rumuolumeni administrative headquarters of the diocese as a rallying point among Ikwerre Christ Army Churches. Thirdly, it made Vincent Ogbonna, to become the first native bishop of Rumuolumeni in Akpor Kingdom of Ikwerreland.

Conclusion

We have in this study answered the critical research questions on the growth of Christ Army Church that emerged from the Garrick Braide Movement in Ikwerreland. The study revealed that:

1. The church was founded by Garrick Sokari Braide of Kalabari from a humble beginning as a Pentecostal movement in the Niger Delta Pastorate of the Anglican Church.
2. They adopted simple, direct and practical methods in their teachings that made converts to worship God in their native African way.
3. The bishop James Johnson led NDP initially welcomed the movement with its religious renewal emphasis that increased the church in numbers and finances. Later activities especially the demand for an office of a prophet for Braide led to opposition and sanctions. Response of the chiefs indicated that the way Christianity was hitherto presented to the people had little or no relevance to their lives. There was a departure from creedal Christianity and monopoly of Sierra Leonean domination in the services of the church.
4. Other denominations in the Niger delta region saw the need for re-examination of their activities and attitude about indigenization as well as felt duty bond to reach out to their members with pastoral interests in their different locations.
5. The weight of opposition by Bishop James Johnson gave impetus to the British Colonial Administration to suppress the movement through imprisonment of Garrick Braide and key followers.
6. After the death of Braide his followers founded the Christ Army Church (CAC) in 1918 which constituted a rival church to the NDP. The church expanded in the

Niger delta region down to some parts of Igbo land and opened schools and churches in rural communities. Many natives were won to Christianity and self-consecrated evangelists appeared a feature associated with Pentecostalism.

7. The impact of the faith-healing movement in Ikwerreland featured rejection, assimilation and acceptance. The inauguration of Ikwerre Diocese of the Christ Army Church of Nigeria in 2018 and consecration and enthronement of Bishop Vincent Ogbonna at Saint Michael's Cathedral Rumuolumeni climaxed the growth of the church in Ikwerreland.

However, the movement was never endowed with sufficient finances and personnel to maintain effective mission when it appeared (Kalu, 1997, p.97) ^[9]. We therefore recommended that the church should invest in broad-based training of her clerical and lay workers for sustenance and expansion.

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