

The Life of the early Christian
in comparison with the modern Church

BY

Mbachu Agatha (Rev Sir)

A 5 2935 CRS-SOS

John Hassana

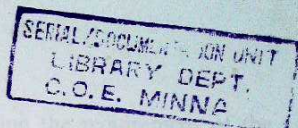
L A 3095 Eng-GHS

Department of Christian Religious Studies
College of Education Minna, Niger State

August, 1999

RS
24

TITLE PAGE



**THE LIFE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN
IN COMPARISON WITH THE MODERN CHURCH**

BY

MBACHU AGATHA (REV SR)

AS 2935

JOHN HASSANA

LA 3095

BEING A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT
OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS STUDIES, COLLEGE OF EDUCATION,
MINNA NIGER STATE

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE NIGERIAN
CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATION.

AUGUST, 1999.

x

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to almighty God. And our parents, brothers and Sisters.

X

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This project is a product of two of us as is mentioned above. We therefore collectively show our great appreciation to the Almighty God who in His infinite mercy has given us the strength and ability to pursue this course of study. We know that without Him, we might not have succeeded at all. To Him be the Glory.

I, Rev. SiS, Delphine (Agatha) Mbachu must sincerely appreciate and thank our congregation especially our mother general and her council my family to the course of my study. I ask God's blessings on them. I also thank our supervisor Pastor Livy Onyenaegecha for his maximum support and contribution to this project.

I Hassana John Joy sincerely appreciate the effort of our supervisor Pastor Livy Onyenaegecha, my entire family and my late daddy Mr. Nathaniel John. I appreciate all of them for their effort during the course of my study. I thank God for blessing our family for their maximum co-operation and support.



ABSTRACT

This work of the comparative study of the early Christians with the Christians of today is borne out of the curiosity to discover why the life of the early Christians are far away different from ours today. It is a common knowledge that most of our Christians today have lost their Christian identity.

There is a lot of criticism about the type of life Christians are living which made some people to ask "where those Christians of the early church exceptional, inimitable being, living lives of perfection have ceased to exist, or is it that we Christians of today with our weakened faith are really "sub normal?"

This project has therefore been able to see that it is better for us to look back in the life of the early church and then turn away from our evil inclination and live as a Christian, people talk of the life of the early church as an ideal life of a Christian.

This project there is written under five distinct heading:

- Chapter One: Deals with the introduction of the project.
- Chapter Two: Deals with the review of the related literature in order to back the necessary claims as may be observed in the process of the work.
- Chapter Three: Attempts what the early church said, when it was purely Jewish church, when the church left Palestine, when the Apostles died and what the church was able to achieve.
- Chapter Four: Handles the church of today and the effect of the church on the people.

CHAPTER ONE

TABLE OF CONTENT	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	
DEDICATION.....	
TABLE OF CONTENT.....	
CHAPTER ONE	
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY.....	
1.2 THE CHURCH.....	4
1.3 THE CHURCH IN PALESTINE.....	5
1.4 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.....	6
1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	6
1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY.....	6
1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	6
CHAPTER TWO	
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	8
CHAPTER THREE	
3.1 WHAT THE EARLY CHURCH SAID WHEN IT WAS PURELY JEWISH CHURCH?.....	13
3.2 WHEN THE CHURCH LEFT PALESTINE.....	14
3.3 WHEN ALL THE APOSTLES DIED.....	
3.4 THE APOSTOLIC FATHER.....	
CHAPTER FOUR	
THE CHURCH TODAY.....	16
CHAPTER FIVE	
5.1 OBSERVATION AND RECOMMENDATION THAT ARE SEEN TO BE NECESSARY FOR THE CHRISTIANS OF TODAY IN THE SOCIETY	
5.2 THE ENVIRONMENT THEY WORK	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS WITH THE CHRISTIANS OF TODAY.

The study is concerned about the life of the early Christians in comparison with the modern Christians. As a student of Christian religious studies, it interests us to know what makes a Christian.

Who is a Christian? According to Long man family Dictionary, a Christian is an adherent of Christianity, a member of a Christian denomination especially by baptism. He/she is a good person regardless of religion.

We also said that a Christian is someone who is upright, just, loving, morally sensitive aware of his responsibilities to society. Many non Christians possess all these qualities, sometimes to a greater degree than we ourselves. Well, then? The uniqueness of Christianity, that which makes it what it really is, is not a complex of principles and values: it is Jesus Christ. The meaning of his life, his death, his resurrection, and his living presence among us by his spirit – these are the essence of Christianity. Now having seen whom a Christian is, let us look at the early Christians community. In its earliest phase, the Christian movement had its centre in Jerusalem, where it took shape not as a new religion but as a sect or grouping within the parent today of Judaism. Presumably they were from the beginning followers of Jesus in the town and villages of Judea and Gentile as well, of these little is known. Indeed our knowledge even of the Jerusalem community is limited and obscured since the Acts of the Apostle our only source of information must be read by the historian

with caution. It embodies early and authentic traditions' but at the same time it is written in the "creative " style normal for Hellenistic histories and handles its materials from the point of view of the second Christian generation, which already tended to see the events of four or five decades before its time as constituting a kind of golden age of the church. What is clear is that the original communities were composed of Palestine Heroes who on the basis of Jesus resurrection proclaimed imminent return as the fulfiller of God's Kingdom-who lived in the anticipation of that event. They called themselves apparently "the poor" or the saints.

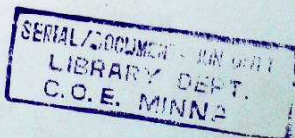
The pattern of their Christian life

The discipline associated with baptism and penance, not to mention the moral demands and ideals upheld by Christians writers from Hermas to Origen and Tertullian, make it plain that the churches of the second and third centuries continued to see themselves as a society somehow "set apart" governed by a spirit other than the spirit that ruled the world at large. One primary evidence of the life of the early Christians was the respect and devotion, which they accorded to martyrdom. They loved themselves to the extend of selling their properties and used the money for the poor ones among them. They have things in common and this made them to lack nothing. They are faithful to the teachings of the apostles, breaking of bread together. They were called "An Apostolic community, "faithful to the teaching of the apostles" A brotherly by community, sustained by frequent contact and frequent meetings; A eucharistic community, celebrating the memorial of the Lord "Until He comes", A prayer community, first in the temple, and then more and more "in their houses".

Such were the dominant traits by which the church was organized at the beginning. The warmth of mutual love was the mark of their credibility. People use to say; "Look, how they love one another!" They were strict by the joy of these Christians, their simplicity of heart, their genuine affection. We can say today that their actions were consistence with teaching; they were crying to live in accordance with a profound, simply logic: if a man does not love the brother we can see, he cannot love God whom he has never seen (1 Jn 4, 20).

The board writing them had nothing to do with temperamental affinity or romantic enthusiasm. The community experienced internal tensions that had to be overcome in the power of the mystery which had done away with differences between master and slave, male and female, Jew and Greek. Nor was this community held together by a common ideology or a detailed code of life. Born of the encounter with someone, it could think of itself only in terms of a faith, that confessed that someone.

The group was Koinonia because first of all, it experienced a living communion with the risen Jesus, and then with one another, proclaiming that Jesus was Lord. It was martyrion because it bore witness to its Lord even to the point of martyrdom. The community was also diakonia because it was based on mutual services, particularly the care of brethren in need. We have only to think how the Christians shared their possessions or Paul's collections for the poor of Jerusalem. In this perspective, all the various ministries, the diakonia were looked upon as service rendered to this community. The first pastoral services had their origin in this early community.



1.2 THE CHURCH: -

What is the church? The church has different meaning to different people. Some see it as a place of worship, others see it mainly as the building that had taken them a lot of time to build. To some, it is their denomination hence they are ready to die in strong defence of their church. We shall make an attempt here to see exactly what the church is when we use it in reference to the Bible teaching. The nelson contemporary English Dictionary sees the church as "the building for Christians public worship or as body of Christians.

It is to be noted that the Greek word which is translated to be church is made up of two words which means "to call out" thus it comes to mean a gathering or assembly of what? It sometimes means even in the New Testament an assembly of towns –people called out in a political meeting (Acts 19:32, 39, 41).

At least one time it refers to the gathering of the Jewish people in their assembly in the wilderness (Acts 7:38) it will also mean a local group of Christians living in a certain place. (1 Cor 1:2 1 Thess 1:1, Rev. 1:11). The New Testament uses the word the church universal to which all believers and only believers belong. This is the same body of Christ. Charles Ryrie (1980) sees the church as assembly. Therefore the church is an assembly of believers in respective of where they are geographically located It is other parts of the world as accounted in the Acts. You will be my witness from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and to the ends of the earth. It is to be noted as an important issue that the church at the early stage was Catholic and Apostle. Having seen the church as the body of Christ, and we are the members of that body we then move to the church in Palestine.

1.3 THE CHURCH IN PALESTINE

From the beginning, the church was just a sizeable community. It lived its life in fellowship, worship, and mutual help, receiving new members daily Acts 2:43-47. Its preaching was simple: repentance from sin, the death and resurrection and baptism (2:29-42). Signs and wonders and the power of the Holy Spirit, resulting in many conversions, even among the priest accomplished this proclamation.

Hellenists and Hebrew Christians: - The steady rapid growth of the church was marred by two sad events in the church. The record of the first is in the Acts 5:1-11, which is above the sin of Ananias and Sapphira; and the second, in chapter 6:1-6, which records the neglect the Hellenist widows suffered from the Hebrew Christians. The former did not affect whole Christians community. But the later gained the attention and concern of the 1st century church. It is important that we know that 'Hebrew' which is only mentioned three times in the New Testament referred to the Jews. And these people, though they were Christians, had high regard for Mosaic Law and they lived according to the tradition of the elders. At the other end, were the Hellenists who were Jews who came out of the Dispersion with its greater acceptance of Greek ideas. The word Hellenists is derived from "Hellas" meaning Greece. This difference between the Palestinian Jews and the Hellenists extended to the church. There was probably an exhibition of social and racial distinctions. And this led to inequality in the daily distribution of food among the Christians, which led to division in the fellowship.

1.4 THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The main objective of this study is to show that the early Christian communities were more dedicated to their religion, more closely to God than today's Christians. They were really a brotherhood community.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

What we should benefit from this study is the authenticity of the early Christian life, their code of conduct which was pummeled, their spirituality and their truthful teachings which was in accordance with their master Jesus Christ. Their faith was superb.

Secondly, this study will enable one to understand that we the modern Christians have a long way to go as we have not allowed the spirit of God to use us and work in us. Our life and Christianity is seen as a social gathering where everyone dresses any how, do anything he/she likes in the name of Christianity. That is to say that this project will help those who read it to know that we are very poor in spirituality, we see our religion as denominational religion and therefore fail to work as Christians.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The study is limited to Acts of the Apostle and what people contributed towards the life of the early Christians and our own Christianity today.

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS:

The church as we have mentioned already is the body of Christ. This body is made up of multitude of believers who have become redeemed irrespective of where they are.

7

It is also to be appreciated that our Lord Jesus Christ started his church which He built on the Twelve Apostles, for He said I will build my church and the gate of hell shall not prevail against it.

He later gave the church the mandate of what they are to do after they have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). They are to be His witnesses. He taught these timid apostles strong doctrine like salvation, holiness, baptism of the Holy Spirit, faith, love prayer, forgiveness and the sole purpose of this is for them to be united.

It is to be noted that the first early church outreach brought many people to the church. The number on the first hot sermon delivered by Peter led 3,000 souls to Christ. (Acts 2:41) Similarly, the second evangelistic outreach led to the salvation of 5,000 souls.

Furthermore, we saw the word Hellenists that was derived from "Hellas" meaning Greece. We saw that the Palestinian Jew and the Hellenists extended to the church, and there was exhibition of social and racial distinction between them.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

DEFINITION OF THE WORD CHRISTIAN

As the name implies, I can say that Christian signifies "Christ like" it means bearing the identity of Christ, and this identity is baptism. Every movement of the Holy Spirit challenges us to question ourselves as to our own co-operation with grace and our own Christian identity. The word Christian therefore can be defined as an adherent of Christianity a member of a Christian denomination, especially by baptism, a good or kind person regardless of religion. This answer is obtained from the Longman family Dictionary.

Bishop G. Huyghe, L' Eglise d' Arras, 1973, says that a normal Christian or a Christian is a changed person, a convert; he has turned away from himself so as to adhere to Jesus of Nazareth, who for his sake, died and rose from the dead. He has made a personal discovery of Jesus, and acknowledged Him as the Christ, the unique son of the Father, the Anointed one of the Holy Spirit. He has found in Jesus the Saviour and Lord of all mankind.

All of Christianity is contained in Acts of the Apostles chapter 2:38 i.e. conversion, baptism, personal surrender to Christ, receiving the Holy Spirit.

The Acts of the Apostles show us a community of Christians, disciples of Jesus, closely bound to one another, sometimes to the point of sharing all they had. The first Christian, those three thousand converts, who on the morning of Pentecost listened to the words of Peter and the Apostles appear in the Acts

as: An Apostolic Community, a brotherly community, A Eucharistic Community and a prayer community.

Acts-1,4-5. While at table with them, he told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. It is, He had said, what you have heard me speak about John baptized with water but not many days from now, you are going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

One can say that the early Christians were the real witnesses to what Jesus Christ said and did. They experienced the ascension of the Lord and the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit was made to them Acts1,6-11.

They went into hiding as Jesus Christ told them. With one heart, all these joined constantly in prayer, together with some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. Acts 1, 12-14.

These early Christians received the Holy Spirit promised them by Christ on Pentecost, which enable them to be strengthened the more and to preach to all nations who listened to them, though many did not believe in what they preached.

Speaking in tongues was very prominent at that time of the descent, that everybody that listened to them understood them in their various languages Acts 2,5-13. The descent of the Holy Spirit was the beginning of the church.

Through a small community, this enables them to remain faithful to the teaching of the Apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. The Apostles worked many signs and miracles. They owned

everything in common. They sold their goods and possessions and distributed the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed Acts 2,44-45 4,32-35.

Each day, with one heart, they regularly went on their temple but met in their houses for breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by every one. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be served. Acts 2, 46-47.

These were curing the sick without charge or taking anything from the people. They were curing in the name of Jesus who sent them to preach Acts 3, 1-10.

They were arrested because of the gospel they were preaching to people but did not make them to fear or stop preaching the good news. Peter spoke boldly to the sanhedrine he divine that they must know, all of you and the and the whole people of Israel, that it is by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, and God raised from the dead, by this name and by no other that this man stands before you cured. Acts 4, 1-10. Their threatening did not stop them from preaching. Acts 4, 18-22. They could not think for any way to punish them since all the people were giving glory to God for what had happened.

Under persecution they were courageous and continued to give glory to God. Acts 4,23-31. There was also in the community of the early Christians what is known as fraud, which Ananias and Sapphira, and they immediately received their reward which was death since they lied to the apostles, Acts. 5,1-11. They were arrested on many occasions. Actss 5, 17-21. They were also summoned before the sanhedrine, Acts5, 22-33.

There was a positive intervention from Gamaliel, which made the apostles to be released and this also gave them the strong will to continue preaching the good news Acts.5, 34-42.

They started the mission going from one place to another and where ever they went the people accepted them. Out of jealousy, many were stoned e.g Stephen. Acts.7, 55-60.

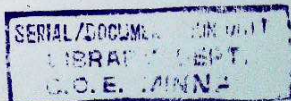
CHAPTER THREE

WHAT THE EARLY CHURCH SAID WHEN IT WAS PURELY JEWISH CHURCH?

The original communities were composed of Palestinian Jews. They called themselves the "poor" or saints and also from an early time "the Ekklessian" i.e. assembly or church. The early community saw itself in virtue of its allegiance to Jesus, as the true "assembly" of Israel, the end - time community which the Lord will recognise when he comes in glory. That they saw themselves simply as Jews, as a renewed Israel is made clear by the fact that they were faithful both in attendance at the temple and in obedience to the law and this bring the case, they lived at peace with the religious authorities in Jerusalem.

This community had its own special institutions, which expressed its particular identity. It practiced baptism, with which the eschatological gift of the Holy spirit was associated. It gathered regularly for prayer, mutual exhortation, and "breaking of bread" in which historians have no doubt rightly seen the origin of the Eucharist as well as a community fellowship - meal. It expressed the faith, which defined its identity in expression like "Jesus is the Messiah" or God raised Jesus from the dead.

So the Palestinian Christianity can be summarized as the church was just a sizable community who lived its life in fellowship, worship and mutual help, receiving new members daily Acts 2, 43-47. Its preaching was repentance from sin, the death and resurrection from the dead and baptism, Acts 2, 29-42.



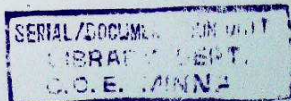
CHAPTER THREE

WHAT THE EARLY CHURCH SAID WHEN IT WAS PURELY JEWISH CHURCH?

The original communities were composed of Palestinian Jews. They called themselves the "poor" or saints and also from an early time "the Ekklessian" i.e. assembly or church. The early community saw itself in virtue of its allegiance to Jesus, as the true "assembly" of Israel, the end - time community which the Lord will recognise when he comes in glory. That they saw themselves simply as Jews, as a renewed Israel is made clear by the fact that they were faithful both in attendance at the temple and in obedience to the law and this brings the case, they lived at peace with the religious authorities in Jerusalem.

This community had its own special institutions, which expressed its particular identity. It practiced baptism, with which the eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit was associated. It gathered regularly for prayer, mutual exhortation, and "breaking of bread" in which historians have no doubt rightly seen the origin of the Eucharist as well as a community fellowship - meal. It expressed the faith, which defined its identity in expression like "Jesus is the Messiah" or God raised Jesus from the dead.

So the Palestinian Christianity can be summarized as the church was just a sizable community who lived its life in fellowship, worship and mutual help, receiving new members daily Acts 2, 43-47. Its preaching was repentance from sin, the death and resurrection from the dead and baptism, Acts 2, 29-42.



3.2 When the church left Palestine, the gospel began to spread. Philip was said to have gone to Samaria and he preached there. Peter and John were in the consequent sent there inspecting the work of Philip. As they were coming back Jerusalem, they preached in many villages along the way. Later Philip was called to Gaza in Southern part of Palestine and there he met an official from the court of the queen of Ethiopia. He was a Jewish proselyte who was converted and baptized through Philip Ministry Acts 8.

Peter went to the coast and preached in Joppa and Caesurae. He learnt the full meaning of the Pentecost event through his visit to these places that the Gentiles too could become Christians Act 10:44-48. This was why he had to baptized cornelius.

It was the church in Jerusalem that seemed to be supervising the preaching of the gospel outside Jerusalem. When the church heard that the gospel had already reached Antioch, Barnabas was sent there. Later on, it had to decide the fate of the Gentiles in the council of Jerusalem Acts 15. Through Philip, Peter, John and others were hardworking in the work of the spread of the gospel, the church did not progress in Palestine. This was properly because the church here became strictly a Hebrew church. Hellenist Christians refused to go back to Jerusalem after the persecution.

The Hebrew character of Jerusalem church became so strong that even Peter on an occasion feared to eat with Gentiles Christians in Antioch when brethren from the church in Jerusalem came to visit there. (Gal.2:11-14).

In A.D, 66, the Christians migrated from Jerusalem to Pella, a Gentile city across the Jordan and they remained there until after the fall of Jerusalem in

A.D. 70. They then lost their identity as true Jews. Boer (1976) states that in A.D. 84, the Jewish leaders in Palestine sent message to the Synagogues every where that the Christians Jews should be ex-communicated from their assemblies. To remain a Jew, one had to reject the Christians faith, consequently, the church that has its root in the Old Testament, whose saviour was a Jew, whose founding apostles were all Jews. Whose holy book Jews, had written, became a fellowship of Gentiles.

3.3 When all the apostles died, the church continued to spread all over the country till it reached us today. There are temporary and permanent offices. Beside the apostle, elders and deacons in the early church, there were also men and some women with special gifts who gave other leadership in the church, such were prophets, teachers, Pastors and evangelist they were generally not associated with a particular church but, like the apostle, were in general service. The Didache helped travelling prophets and teachers. As this died (as with the apostles), they were not replaced. Believers with special gifts came move and more under the authority of the bishop and performed only local service. The office of bishops elder and deacon became permanent; each had its own responsibilities and authority, and together they formed the continuing government of the church.

3.4 The Apostolic Father – At the end of the first century and during the first half of the second century, a significant group of Christians writings appeared in the early church. Their authors are known as the Apostolic Fathers. They were given this name because the church regarded them as disciples of the apostles. The fathers in question, together with the place and date of their writing are clement of Rome A.D 95, Ignatius of Antioch 110-117, Polycarp of Snuyrna 117-118, Barnabas, probably of Alexandria 130, Hermas of Rome 100

and Papias of Hierapolis in Phrygia 140. Including in the writings of these fathers is a handbook of Christian instruction entitled the teaching of the twelve Apostles better known as the Didache or teaching, perhaps written in Syria about A.D. 100.

The letters of Clement and Polycarp are somewhat similar. They were both written to churches in which there was trouble. A group in the Corinthian church had rebelled against the elders and deposed them. Clement wrote from Rome to plead for the restoration of office to the deposed elders, and for unity in the church. In Philippi, there was jealousy and disharmony in the church, and Polycarp wrote from Smyrna to help restore the lost unity.

The central theme of the letter of Ignatius is the unity of the church and the authority of the bishops. Examples of their advice are "pay attention to the bishop and the board of elders and deacon."

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHURCH TODAY: -

We have spent some time reflecting on the early Christians though, we know well enough that the ideal was never fully realized by them. Now we have to take a realistic look at Christianity as lived today, after twenty centuries during which Gospel has been preached. In our prigrimage back to the sources, we saw that the early Christians were converts. So also the modern church of today. We have been worshipping so many gods before the missionaries brought us Christianity. Again as the early Christians churches suffered from the hands of the Jews so do those who brought Christianity to us – suffered some even died as a result of it.

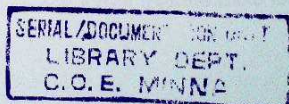
The Gospel among us as in the early church, we see the atmosphere of the gospel. A community where peple listen and are listened to, in our own church today, the opposite is the case. People do not listen to the gospel they are carried away from the things of the world. We see in them the community of truth and love, willingness to duty, but today church is used as forum to fight each other, there is not truth and love. Your friend can bring to your death. The one you trust is the one to sell you. The person who is worshiping with you is the same person who will take you to court. We pray together but our own prayer is periphery. We share the body and blood of Christ together and at the same time receiving judgement on ourselves. Our church of today is full of materialism and dedication in the service of God as found among the early Christian is not there. They lived by example but we today we want to show that we know more than them, which is a sign of pride which led to the destruction of our first parents.

The word of secularization has shaken the trees; some branches that looked green and luxuriant are broken; religious practice is diminishing everywhere, especially among the youth. Everywhere we are confronted with a phenomenon, which is a matter, not only a quantity, but of quality. What then, at the level of a faith as it is actually lived, is the "quality" of Christianity?

A recent study among the Catholics of France revealed some startling facts: of the 95% of the persons who want churches, the great majority never enter them; 80% have their children baptized, but more than half have no knowledge of Jesus Christ; two thirds do not believe in the resurrection.

If we compare the life of the early Christians with that of many today who are Christians in name only, the contrast is strictly. And this poses the most radical problem of all in the renewal of the church. The council was a Pastoral council, that is it aimed at adapting the church both within and without to the needs of the times. It presupposed as a basic hypothesis that the church was made up of authentic Christians or at least, those trying to be so. Now the facts couple us to question the validity of the presupposition. Again when we speak of Christian of whom and of what we are speaking? This is painful question because what we are asking is! Do Christians in general today believe with a personal dedicated and genuine faith?

The idea of breaking of bread from house to house had existed among our people even before the advent of Christianity. Even non-Christians feast in the house of their neighbours. Therefore, it was not a special sign belonging only to the Christians as we read in Acts 2,42-7. It is rather a custom of our people



but when practised by Christians Christianity it can have Christian orientation, but how are we united as Christians?

BUT ANY DIVISION TODAY?

History has it that any other church broke away from the Catholic Church, which Christ founded. He could not have prayed that all might be one and at the same time favour the existence of many Christians groups fighting against each other. There is no doubt that today Christians are divided, though Paul tried to oppose this as we have seen in the Bible.

The Church has also tried to stop any propagation of different doctrines while all profess or belong to Christ.

Some Christians though they accept Jesus as the point of reference refuse to accept the visible head of the Church and this means already another organisational structure. 1st Peter has lost his place for them. Some do not see how God, Jesus and Man should have human mother. Some answer non-denominational Churches as if Christ preached non-denominationally. Some Christians build their Churches only to make money and answer different names. All that is needed is to add different or new adjectives to other existing ones and new Christians emerge.

Even in some of the churches or group of Christians some people can obscurely lose their lives. Some Christians prefer to have no standing edifice saying that whenever two or more people are gathered in Christ's name, he is there. It is enough to mount a microphone somewhere and makes polemic statements against others. Some condemn what they call tradition but at the same time read the Bible from which they quote and forget that the Bible is a

written tradition of an oral message. Many Christians groups do not mind the number of wives some of their members can keep arguing that Christ did not precisely state the number of wives one can cope with. Some Christians do not believe in hell and preach only about heaven and God's mercy for this group, everybody goes to heaven, all their members being the first to be there. For some Christians if you do not belong to their denomination or their special Gnostic group you are an outcast and an infidel and a sinner to be avoided. You cannot be employed unless you belong to their denomination. The political rivalry shows this very openly. Sectionalism helps to destroy Christianity among us Christians of today.

Many Christians are too conscious of their place of origin and this guarantees a lot of disunity, crisis and dichotomy. A husband and a wife may belong to different denominations and may find it almost impossible to harmonize their activities for the good of their home. Hence even among Christians, some discourage a mixed marriage between people of different religious groups. Many Christians of today claim many visions given to them in a private revelation a knowledge, which can also be called a type of Gnosticism or the result of it.

There is no end to this type of story. By this we do not mean to say that our Christians of today have no peace at all or have interaction among themselves.

The Christians love is also shown among many Christian groups. There is also some solidarity manifested by Christians especially in the Northern Nigeria, when the Moslem confronted many of the Christians whose churches were burnt. There was no question of denominations here. An author describing how people reacted when survival was the issue said in an article: "the

Christians in the world, said: "as with the wagon train, when survival was the first priority there was little time for internal strife and division; when the threat from the outside lessened, relationship, sometimes leading to conflicts of personality and power struggles, took the centre stage. In other words, our Christians of today often forget what is more important, the living of the Gospel unity even if it is not a unisim, and emphasizing their differences.

This dissipates energy. A group of Indians missionaries in India speaking against Christian division said: "we believe that the challenge of the present hour... calls us to mourn our Past divisions and turn to our Lord Jesus Christ to seek in Him, the unity of the body expressed in one visible church.

We can say this, we have the big task of Christianizing the whole world-go make disciples that is Christians of all nations Christ said.

We have been occupied with revising the structure of the church at many levels. This was necessary, and the enterprise is far from completion. However, today the very foundations of the faith are questioned. And yet the church has meaning only in Christ.

Many people's faith is being shaken to its very foundations. They have to discover again the heart of the Christian message. We have "Sacramentalized" on a large scale. We have not sufficiently "evangelized" and the extent of this deficiency can affect a whole continent, but we see the same problem whenever Christians do not live by the logic of their faith. Our left-wing, right-wing controversies pale beside this crisis. We are faced with the challenge of finding again what really makes a Christian. Our task is not to condemn our fellowmen, but without weakenings, to uphold the Christians

deal. We must preach the authentic Gospel in its entirety and reveal to the world the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as well as what God asks of those who bear witness to his name before the world. We must help Christians to become continually more aware of their faith and live it on a more personal level.

Many must be helped to exchange a sociological Christianity for a full and active life of faith. Christianity for a full and active life of faith Christianity which we have inherited, which has its foundation mainly in the family and education must mature into a Christianity of choice, based on a personal decision and embraced with the consciousness. As Tertullian has said; "Fiance, non nascuntur", "Christians become so, they are not born".

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Observation and recommendations that are seen to be necessary for the Christians of today in the society.

It is observed that the life of the early Christians had a lot of significance on the Christian churches. We noticed that the early Christians were converts because none of them was born a Christian. As a result of this point we have seen that with Christ Christianity started and that the early Christian baptism was a condition for being a Christian.

Mode of government:- When the Church began its life in Jerusalem, it was governed by a council of apostles, who guided it in the power and wisdom of the holy spirit. That was the government with which the church was born. There were no elders, no deacons, no bishops, no synods, districts, parishes, boards, councils, assemblies or delegates.

Governmental structure and administrative organization developed when the need for these arose. A good example of this was the appointment of the seven to take care of the need of the Hellenist widows reported in the Acts 6. They were selected by the church, appointed and ordained by the apostles to meet a specific need. This office of elders came into being in the church, which remained until the present day.

We also observed in the early church the tendency of having a leader. When a community is governed by a committee or board of council there is always a tendency for one in the governing group to become the leader. This was especially true in the early church because of its circumstances with respect to administration, persecution and the rise of heresy for administration, there was

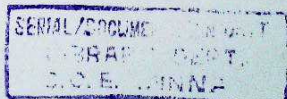
need to centralize the church authority. The growth of the church was rapid in many areas, discipline and teaching needed to be well supervised, there were many poor to care for and there was the for correspondence between the church both near and distance.

It is a common knowledge in the early Christians that most of their social life was based on common sharing of resources together so that none will be in need. We also observed in their religious level their togetherness in prayer despite the fact that they are following Jewish time table of going to the synagogue and the breaking of bread they still confess Jesus Christ as Lord irrespective of their Jewish law. We noticed that the apostles organized themselves and occupy the first place.

They have respect of elders and that was why they placed elders as head in the churches they founded. They looked at themselves as brothers and sisters and they communion together.

The early community was led by the spirit. This was the message Jesus gave them before His ascension so any decision they made is through the Holy Spirit. When Philip met the Ethiopian Eunuch it was the spirit that made him to go. The spirit "set apart for me Paul and Barnabas for the work, which I have called them", the council at Jerusalem is the leading spirit even Peter going to the house of Cornelius was led by the holy spirit. We also observed the early Christians common approach is settling of disputes between Hellenists.

In the social life of the early Christians we noticed that the community is for the Jews. They do not relate to the Gentiles that was why the questioned Peter when he goes to the house of Cornelius. But Peter has to clarify them. To this



we can say that it is bad to segregate because Christ came for everybody. We also observed that the apostles occupy the high post in the hierarchy. That is to say that the followers of Christ should be the head and not the tail.

The environment they worked: - Culturally they were Jews but politically dominated by the Rome. Jews take the followers of Christ as social disturbers that was why they warned them not to speak in the name of Jesus. The Romans wants to establish their faith. The Jews are still expecting their Messiah why at the same time preaching the Missiah. The apostles were persecuted, imprisoned at times but the did not give up. The environment was the type that opposes their teaching.

In conclusion, we can say that the early church showed us the way to life but in our own time the reverse is the case. Before there was only one church but due to division in the church, many churches have sprung up. There is no unit among the Christians. A good number of the leaders of the churches seen not lead by the spirit. Today everyone claim to be lead by the spirit. Some are school drop out with little or no knowledge of what the church is, the continue to miss-teach their unsuspecting followers. Something must be done here, i.e. by the way of improving on the economy of the nation so that most youths could have something to do instead becoming pastors overnight. Those who feel they have the vocation should go to seminary school for more knowledge.

We noticed the orderliness of the early ministers but today we have visible misbehavior of the minister. These may be as a result of how they were brought up. For this reason the Bishops and the proprietors of those parishes or churches should endeavour to give adequate warning and training to those ministers and their fellowship. The church should be united. We think that the

Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) which is an umbrella holding the Christians together should try to teach unity among the various churches in the country.

Church teachings, doctrine and liturgy should have to do with the cultural pattern of the people. Despite all the negative aspect of our today's way of life, the Christians of today have achieved a lot.

The church in Africa and moreso in Nigeria today have experienced a new era of Evangelisation. This is because today, African nations are constantly challenged by new realities of political, economic, social, cultural and religious import. The period of colonialism has given way to an era of independent African nations. With African leaders directing the destinies of their countries and the wind of change blowing from nation to nation. The Christian churches are not unaffected by this change. In order to survive therefore, and to face the challenges facing the church there is the urgent need for her to adopt more suitable strategies for the situation that she finds herself in the church today has engaged herself in proclaiming the good news to every nooks and crannies of the world. In fact, the goal of the church today is to make sure that by the year 2000, the whole world will be more Christian than now. Our church today is trying in the transformation of men through convert both the individual and collective conscience of people, all their activities in which they engage and finally their lives and their environment.

In fact our Christian churches are busy in shaping and building up the faith of their members. There is increase of faith now than before.

Chapter Five:

Treated all the observation and recommendation that are seen to be necessary for the Christians of today in the society.

There is also a list of materials committed while doing this work which ultimately form the bibliography.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Bishop G. Huyghe L' Eglise d' Arras, 1973. No.2.
2. Stephen B. Clark. Building Christian community strategy for Renewing the church (Noter Dame 1972 p10
3. The three most important "summary statements " in the act of the Apostle.these are passage in which st.luke sums up; as it were, whole aspect of them early community's life.
4. History of the early church
5. Rev. father Taddeo Onoyima 1989 The early Christian and us.
6. H.A. Guy. The church in the New Testament London 1969 p.a.
7. R.Bairi-main currents early christian Thoughts, New york 1965 P.9
CFR. Mch. Wilson Comosis in corinter, in Paul and panlinisim. Oxford 6982. Pp 102. 113