

Identification and Redefinition

For so many years the Celestial Church of Christ has always been referred to as “**cele**” or a “*white garment church*” by some many people, and even by some Celestial Church members. These bynames mean certain things to certain people. To some, it is just “cele”, as if it is a religion on its own with no particular reference or adherence to the conventional Christian beliefs or practices. To others, it is a church where people congregate and wear white garments with no shoes on their feet; a place where all they do is just sprinkle water on the members, burn incense and candles, and abide by the old testament teachings. Furthermore, to some people, it is a church where its members shake (in trance) and tremble when the spirit falls upon them, and a place where people may go to consult a prophet for spiritual help or deliverance through river bath and so on.

Based on these definitions, Celestial Church does not mean more than that to a lot of people. Thus, they do not identify with the church when it comes to the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ through evangelism of any kind or a place where a person can be fed by the word of God. Rather, they only see it as a place where you can go for some “spiritual work” or deliverance from the enemy’s spell. And to make matters worse, some folks have concluded that it is an occult gathering and not a church simply because they just do not understand the spiritual dimension of the church. In terms of branding or identification, some people, including some members of CCC, have often times called the church a “spiritual church”. Agreed! But that can also be said of any other church because a church in general is a place for spiritual experience. It is not a social club. And in fact spirituality is relative to a church’s doctrines and what her faith is based upon: Christian spirituality or otherwise.

On the other hand, some churches or denominations are usually labeled as gospel, Pentecostal or evangelical, to name a few. To a layperson or anyone at all, it is easy to identify with such churches with what they are about and who they are. Drawing from some observations, Celestial Church can be considered essentially a Pentecostal church in every sense of the word, but a lot of people do not see it that way. Talk of the power of the Holy Ghost, it is apparent that this power manifests itself strongly in Celestial Church. With different spiritual gifts that are upon the members of the church, it is not a far-fetched categorization that the church is a Pentecostal body. This fact is further revealed in the church’s name Celestial Church “of Christ” because it belongs to Christ and not to any man or

woman. And as Christ Himself promises in the book of John 14: 16 and 26 that, He will send a Comforter in form of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, it is clear that His Holy Spirit is ever-present in Celestial Church. And the gospel of Jesus is preached there too.

In reality, the bynames, white garment church, spiritual church and cele, by which the church is usually described, are true. However, they do not qualify for a perfect and general identification of a church (a church¹), if it were to be viewed as a relevant entity in today's church domain.

One of the reasons for the irrelevant nature of these names is that there are other white garment wearing churches out there. This fact makes it hard to differentiate which is which among them sometimes. Another reason is that, the word "cele" sounds improper and derogatory to the true legitimacy and validity of this great church: Celestial Church of Christ. In reference, most of the hymns sung in the church always spell out the word "celestial", not "cele"; for example, hymn 305, "Children of Holy Celestial", and even the Yoruba version, "Omo 'jo Celestial mimo". Therefore, these monikers² must be debunked for the sake of pure identification and authenticity.

For this new outlook to be achieved, it will only make sense if the church administration can see to it that every parish develops a sort of foundation or orientation class. By so doing every new member and old members who are not well-equipped with valid information about the church can register to take some course(s). And that way some myths and misconceptions that have aroused controversies over the years can be abated. The book of Hosea, 4:6, makes it clear that people can perish for lack of knowledge.

Shalom—Peace.

¹ Wikipedia Encyclopedia: *A Church has two commonly used meanings. Often the word 'Church' is used to describe a place of worship or gathering of religious believers. It is also commonly used to describe the collective people or congregation who meet in a Church building or otherwise to represent the worldwide body of a religious community. Church may refer to: In Christianity: Church (building), building used for religious services and worship. Christian Church, worldwide body of Christians. Church body, Christian religious body (local, national, or worldwide) made up of congregation(s), members, and clergy. Invisible church, the "invisible" body of the elect who according to Christianity are known only to God.*

² Wikipedia Encyclopedia: *A moniker (or monicker) is another term for a nickname, pseudonym, or cognomen. Typically, the title is used as a personal or professional name, instead of the person's given name, for works of art, music, books, or performances.*