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### Understanding the Relevance and Impact of Water Baptism in the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Ilorin Metropolis, Nigeria

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#### Abstract

The inability to resolve the controversy on the relevance of water baptism in Christianity by some church denominations has led to divisions among ministers. This paper examines the relevance and impact of water baptism in Pentecostal church contexts. The scope of the paper is specifically on The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State Nigeria. The study adopted qualitative approach from a historical standpoint to arrive at its findings. In addition, interviews and participant observations were also used to gather data. In the determination of population size, the study adopted the purposive sampling technique of 60 people, making it 10 members from six selected churches within the denomination in Ilorin City. The study found out that water baptism in the New Testament is a significant practice, symbolizing the initiation of believers into the Christian faith. Jesus' baptism by John marked a major transition in Christian practice, emphasizing humility and obedience to God. Early Christian baptism was also influenced by John's practices and symbolizes a spiritual transformation, representing a participant's new life in Christ and their inclusion in the Christian community. Water baptism in The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Ilorin Metropolis, is not only relevance spiritually in the identification of believers with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ but significantly impacted them socially, politically and economically. The study concludes that water baptism, as practiced in RCCG Ilorin metropolis, Nigeria, plays a crucial role in shaping theological beliefs, mission work and congregational unity of members.

**Keywords:** Christianity, Pentecostalism, RCCG, Water Baptism, Ilorin Metropolis

## Introduction

The doctrine of baptism is being taught as part of the Pentecostal tradition and this implies that baptism constitutes an integral part of Pentecostalism. Menzies, a Pentecostal theologian from the Assemblies of God, defines Pentecostalism as a Christian movement that believes in the apostles' experience to provide a 'model' for churches.<sup>1</sup> In Christian churches, baptism is the universal rites of initiation, performed with water, usually in the name of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) or in the name of Christ. According to Felton Carlton, baptism is a rite of purification by water, a ceremony invoking the grace of God to regenerate the person, free him or her from sin, and

make that person a part of the church.<sup>2</sup> The other defining tenet is that baptism is the giving of 'power' for effective witnessing and is confirmed by the physical sign of speaking in tongues.<sup>3</sup>

Notwithstanding the diverse interpretations from biblical times to the present, even within Pentecostalism, there exists what Donald Wheelock has called "different theological colorations" in relation to the doctrine.<sup>4</sup> This means that diverse religious interpretations and dispositions have been advanced in respect of baptism. This plethora of views means that one's definition of baptism will usually be drawn from individual ecclesiological and theological context. For example, while Lewis, has categorized the various

constructs of Spirit baptism as Classical Pentecostal, Charismatic, or Dispensational,<sup>5</sup> Henry Lederle has classified them as integrative, neo-Pentecostal, or sacramental.<sup>6</sup>

Although, substantial convergences on the theology and practice of baptism exist among various Christian traditions, not a single point remains uncontested by one group or another. Koech says that the view of water baptism had become a point of debate and even contention among Christians.<sup>7</sup> While most share substantial agreement on the manner and once-for-all character of baptism, disagreement exists on whether water baptism in certain traditions is truly baptism. Most traditions agree that baptism is administered with water and the words 'I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit', although this does not exclude a variation of words in the Eastern liturgies where the catechumen turns towards the East and the priest says: "The servant of God, is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Also, while many churches like Baptist, Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Cherubim and Seraphim Church, Living Faith Church, Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries and many more agree that immersion in water is the mode that is most expressive of the meaning of baptism, signifying participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, some like Catholics, Methodist, Anglican and so on practise baptism by sparkling and effusion (pouring water so that it flows over the candidate's head). Some are even of the view that Holy Ghost baptism has taken over the place of water baptism and therefore, neither relevant nor has any impact for Christians. For example, Kay

Francis emphasize the activity of the Holy Spirit and reject water baptism.<sup>8</sup> The Salvation Army considers its 'enrolment' or 'swearing-in' procedure for Salvation Army membership as equivalent to water baptism.<sup>9</sup>

However, as Pentecostalism continues to thrive, it brings with it a diverse array of interpretations and practices surrounding baptism, each bearing its own significance and implications. Yet amidst this diversity, a pressing need arises for clarity and understanding. Most crucial questions that this paper intends to answer are: what role does baptism play in the lives of believers, both individually and collectively? How relevant is water baptism in the context of Christian salvation? These questions illuminate the complexity of the issue at hand. Thus, the concept of water baptism in selected Pentecostal churches in Ilorin emerges as a study to examine.

It must be noted that there are over thirty (30) Pentecostal churches in Ilorin metropolis but The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), is chosen as a case study because it is the most popular and larger in Ilorin metropolis, Nigeria and even across the globe.

### Baptism in the New Testament

**John the Baptist:** In the New Testament, the first baptismal experience one will come across is that of John, who was given the appropriate title Baptist (*Baptistes*) or the Baptizer (or *Baptizōn*) meaning the one immersing.<sup>10</sup> John was the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, who were both of the priestly lineage of Aaron and through whom John inherited the right to officiate in the Aaronic priesthood.<sup>11</sup> According to Doctrine and Covenants

84:28, John was ordained to this priesthood by an angel when he was only eight days old. His mission was foretold by prophet Isaiah, Lehi, Malachi, and Gabriel.<sup>12</sup> John (the Baptist) seems to have been aware of these prophecies and sought security, confidence, and strength in them (John 1:23). Jesus who was himself the ultimate beneficiary of John's prophetic work had high compliments for his older cousin. He told a multitude of Jews that John was a burning and a shining light (5:35), and at another time Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11:11).

### **The Baptism of Jesus Christ:**

Matthew's account of the baptism of Jesus is the longest of all four Gospel accounts, comprising all of five verses. It emphasizes John's humble hesitancy to fulfil his sacred mission of baptizing the Son of God: "I have need to be baptized of thee," Matthew records John as saying, "and comest thou to me?" (Matt. 3:14). Jesus responds, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (3:15), and this might be meant to answer more than just John's anxieties.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps Matthew, with his clear understanding of the necessity of baptism, included this interchange between the Baptist and the Christ to answer the questions that some would have concerned a sinless Messiah receiving "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" Jesus was baptized to (1) show mankind that although he was the all-powerful Jehovah in the flesh, he was humble before his Father; (2) witness to or covenant with his Father that he would be obedient; (3) show mankind the strictness, exactness, and discipline required to enter the kingdom of God; and (4) show, as Christ himself taught, that

baptism is necessary for salvation (Jn 3:5). McConkie noted that, to fulfil all righteousness is to perform every ordinance, keep every commandment, and do every act necessary to the attainment of eternal life.<sup>14</sup> If Jesus commanding invitation was to follow him, we should know what he did and how he did it.

Luke's account of Jesus baptism is the shortest among the Synoptic Gospels, only two verses in all. This is a little surprising following Luke's attention to detail leading up to this important event. Although it is short, Luke does preserve important details not found in the other Gospels. For instance, only Luke mentions that the heavens being opened and the Spirit descending were a result of Jesus praying (3:21). Luke's description of the Holy Ghost's appearance at Jesus baptism is also unique. Matthew, Mark, and John each mention the Spirit descending upon Jesus "like a dove" (Matt. 3:16; Mk 1:10; Jn. 1:32), but Luke records that "the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove" The Gospel of John suggests the same idea for the role the Holy Ghost played at the baptism of Jesus. John (the Beloved) records the Baptist as saying: He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which *baptizeth* with the Holy Ghost.<sup>15</sup>

### **Baptism during the Apostles:**

Following the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), Simon Peter stood up to interpret the associated phenomena by announcing that the ecstatic speech that onlookers had witnessed when the Holy Spirit descended upon the assembled, praying Christian community was not the result of drunkenness, but was rather the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel who had

predicted that in the last days God's Spirit would be "poured out upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams"<sup>16</sup>

As Peter made clear in that sermon, the earliest Christians believed that the manifestation of the Spirit at Pentecost, enabling them to fulfil Jesus' commission to be his "witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth," signalled the advent of the messianic age. The appropriate response to such an event, said Peter, is to "repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the Holy Spirit, presumes, as a sign that they, too, have entered the messianic age."<sup>17</sup>

Ferguson submits, in Acts, baptism is associated with the proclamation of the advent of the messianic age, constitutes along with repentance and faith, the appropriate response to the good news that the new age had dawned. Beyond that, however, it is difficult to identify any particular pattern in Acts. For example, at Pentecost the sequence was preaching, conviction, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Spirit. But in Samaria (Acts 8:12) the sequence was preaching faith, baptism, laying on of hands, and the gift of the Spirit. For the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26), the pattern was the reading of the Scriptures, preaching, and baptism, apparently with no laying on of hands and no mention of the coming of the Spirit. With Cornelius (Acts 10:44) the sequence was preaching, the gift of the Spirit, the manifestation of tongues, and baptism. For the disciples of John at Ephesus (Acts 19:1), the sequence was corrective teaching, baptism, laying on of

hands, the gift of the Spirit, tongues, and prophecy. It is fair to say, then, that baptism in Acts is an eschatological act closely associated with preaching, teaching, repentance, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the forgiveness of sins, and functions as a response indicating one's faith and signifying one's acceptance of the gospel.<sup>18</sup>

### **Arguments against Water Baptism by Ministers of Some Pentecostal Churches**

Many modern Pentecostal Ministers have argued that water baptism is not required for salvation in Christianity. For example, Abel Damina, insisted that the practice of water baptism should be discarded because it does not hold any significance. In arguing his position, he referred to John the Baptist who baptized Jesus Christ. According to him, the sole purpose of water Baptism done by John when Jesus was about to begin His ministry, was for John to announce Him to the world through baptism. "John himself said "I indeed baptize you with water but the mightier than I will baptize you with the Holy Ghost".<sup>19</sup>

Davina went further to explain the basic significance of water and the Holy Ghost in baptism, saying Jesus Christ has come to replace water with the Holy Ghost. He asked, "Today, who is baptizing us as Christians? Is it John or Jesus? If it is Jesus, He does not use water, Jesus uses the Holy Ghost. And if it is John, he uses water. Water is symbolic of the spirit." Quoting the book of John 7:38 "When there was no Holy Ghost, they used water but the moment the Holy Ghost came, water expired".<sup>20</sup>

In his teachings, John Farley asserts that the thief on the cross with Jesus was not baptised, and he was saved just on

asking Jesus to remember him in His kingdom (Lk.23:42) To him, all a believer needs to do, to be forgiven of sin and become a Christian is to invite Jesus into his or her hearts. “He supported his submission with Revelation 3:20 “Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him, and he with me.”<sup>21</sup>

In another argument, Arome Osayi teaches that a person is saved the moment he accepts Christ as his personal Saviour, which precedes and therefore excludes water baptism. He gave the example of Paul, the Apostle. Saul was saved before and without baptism while he was on the road to Damascus when Jesus appeared to him.” Also, he referenced 1 Colossians 1:13-17 where Paul thanked God that he did not baptized anyone, for Christ did not send him to do so but to preach the gospel.<sup>22</sup>

Explaining 5 reasons why Christians should not go for water baptism, Andrew Hopper says, “When the Philippians jailer asked what to do to be saved, he was simply told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” To him, this is in line with Romans 10:9-10 which indicate that all one needs to do is believe and confess Jesus.” To him, John said to those that came to him to be baptized “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Matt. 3:11). From this text, Andrew concluded that once the Holy Spirit got into the act of baptism, He put all the water fell out of job.<sup>23</sup>

### **Justification for Water Baptism in RCCG, Ilorin Metropolis, Nigeria**

Ilorin, currently the capital of Kwara State, Nigeria and it form part of the larger Ilorin Emirate system which took root in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The city is situated in the centre of the Emirate in the north central zone of present-day Nigeria. Ilorin was also part of pre-colonial northern Yorùbá land within the Ekun Osi region of the Oyo Empire. Located at latitude 8° 24' North and 8° 36' North and longitude 4° 10' East and 4° 36' East. Ilorin, which occupies an area of c. 100km<sup>2</sup>, is built on low hills in the environmental zone between the deciduous woodland of the south and dry open savannah of the north, towards the River Niger. There are diverse church denominations in Ilorin varying from Mainland, African Indigenous and Pentecostal churches.<sup>24</sup>

The Redeemed Christian Church of God is chosen as a case study in this paper, because it is one of the most popular and larger Pentecostal denomination not just in Ilorin metropolis, but in Nigeria but across the globe.

### **Water Baptism in the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Ilorin Metropolis**

Today, the largest Pentecostal Church on the continent of Africa is the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). Enoch Adejare Adebayo, a former university lecturer who was born in 1942, leads this vast entity. He joined RCCG in 1973 and assumed its leadership in January 1981 following the death of RCCG's founder Josiah Akindayomi and in accordance with the latter's deathbed instructions. Adebayo inherited 40 parishes or branches from his predecessor but has since grown that number into an estimated 15,000 parishes. He thereby transformed the church from a regional Yoruba organization to a genuinely global one. This was achieved through a series of reforms that restructured

the organizational into a modular form that allowed expansion and through the introduction of model parishes that used English rather than Yoruba. Its organizational model divides the globe into regions, provinces, zones, areas, and parishes, in that order. By 2009, the group was operating parishes in 151 countries. In Ilorin metropolis, the regional headquarter is at Sabo Oke and branches of the church has spread to all streets and corners of the town.<sup>25</sup>

According to Nath Adejuwon, baptism by immersion in water is the only acceptable method and practices of RCCG. RCCG has a Baptismal Manual for teaching the new convert before their baptism. The baptism ceremony in RCCG is a solemn event conducted in the presence of many members of the Church. It typically begins with a series of prayers and hymns, invoking the presence of the Holy Spirit and invoking God's grace upon the candidate. The pastor will then bless the baptismal water, consecrating it as a vessel of spiritual transformation. The water baptism will then be done by immersion in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Paul associates water baptism with the gift of the Spirit, and the manifested signs of the Spirit include diverse charismata (1 Cor. 12:8-10) and the excellence of love (1 Cor. 12:31-13:13). Again, Paul declares that believers have been "baptized into Christ"; they have received the Spirit by faith, and the signs of the Spirit include miracles and sanctifying virtues (Gal. 3:2-7, 27; 5:22-23).<sup>26</sup>

Following immersion, Olawale says, the baptized individual is asked to confirm their baptismal vows, publicly professing their faith in the teachings of the Church and their commitment to live in accordance with its moral and ethical principles. This act of confirmation

underscores the person all responsibility and active participation of the believer in their spiritual journey.<sup>27</sup> Through prayers, participation in the sacraments, and continues study of the faith, the baptized individual strives to deepen their relationship with God and to live a life filled with spiritual purpose and meaning.<sup>28</sup>

When asked why the thief on the right hand of Jesus on the cross got saved without been baptized? Stephen Bulugbe responded that prior to Christ's death, there were no Christians (Acts 11:26). For a person to reject water baptism as a prerequisite to salvation on the basis of what the thief did or did not do, is comparable to Abraham seeking salvation by building an ark—because that was what Noah did to please God. It would also be like the rich young ruler (Matt. 19) refusing Christ's directive to sell all his possessions because wealthy King David did not have to sell his possessions in order to please God. Romans 6:3-4 teaches that if we wish to acquire "newness of life," we must be baptized into Christ's death, be buried with Christ in baptism, and then be raised from the dead.<sup>29</sup>

In her own comment, Alice Makanjuola asserts that there was no way for the thief to comply with the New Testament baptism because Christ had not died! Christ had not been buried! Christ had not been raised! In fact, none of God's ordained teachings pertaining to salvation in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10), and in His body the Church (Acts 2:47; Eph. 1:22-23), had been given. The church, which Christ's shed blood to purchase (Acts 20:28), had not been established, and was not set up until weeks later (Acts 2).<sup>30</sup> Christians are not expected to use the thief as an example of salvation. Instead, they must obey from their heart those teachings found in

Romans 6:17 and the form of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection through baptism in Romans 6:3-4. Only then can they be "made free from sin to become the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:18).

Re-acting to the teachings that a person is saved the moment he/she accepts Christ as his/her personal Saviour and therefore, such does not need water baptism, Moses Adebayo argued that in RCCG, there is more to becoming a blood-bought follower of Jesus than verbally "calling on His name" or "inwardly accepting Him as Saviour." She says "before we can even consider ourselves as God's children (Christians), we must show our acceptance of His gift through outward obedience, "He that does the will of My Father".<sup>31</sup> This is why Christians must do everything the Lord has indicated must be done prior to salvation. Jesus is telling Christians that it is possible to make the mistake of claiming they have found the Lord, when they have not done what He plainly told them to do. Jesus said: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (Jh. 3:5). Jesus also stated: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk. 16:16). He asks: "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" (Lk. 6:46). So, water baptism is a requirement for salvation that must be obeyed.

In her contribution, Rachael Olusanya assert, water baptism is a Biblical ordinance instituted by God. It is a spiritual exercise, an act of obedience that follows the inward act of repentance. It is the commandment of Jesus Christ for every believer. According to scripture, it should be done by immersion in water. At

Baptism, we are buried with Christ "Buried with him in baptism wherein also ye are raised with him through faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12). This truth is reiterated in the book of Romans where it says: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).<sup>32</sup>

Bolu affirm that those who have repented of their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior are eligible for water baptism in the Church as supported in Mark 16:16, Acts 8:34-38. Every child of God should be baptized by immersion in water for the following reasons: To fulfill all righteousness – Matthew 3:13-15, to identify with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Romans 6:3-5, to walk in the newness of life as recorded in Romans 6:4, and to put on Christ and His nature, Galatians 3:27.<sup>33</sup>

Reacting to the view that all a Christian needs to do to be forgiven of sin and become a Christian is to invite Jesus into his other hearts and no need for water baptism, Michael Olusanya says, the context of Revelation 3:20 shows that Jesus was seeking re-admission into an apostate church. Does the Bible teach that Christ comes into a person's heart? Yes, but not in the way the religious world suggests. For instance, Ephesians 3:17 states that Christ dwells in the heart through faith. Faith can be acquired only by hearing biblical truth (Rom. 10:17). Thus, Christ enters our lives when we "draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our

bodies washed with pure water baptism” (Heb. 10:22).<sup>34</sup>

Responding to the question of why Saul was saved without baptism while he was on the road to Damascus when Jesus appeared to him.”(Acts 9), James Aboyeji says, Saul was not forgiven on the road to Damascus because he still needed to be told what he “must do” (Acts 9:6). He still lacked “hearing the word of the Lord.” And before Saul could learn of God’s plan that he be the great “apostle of the Gentiles,” he first needed to hear the Gospel expounded and told how to respond to what God offered in Christ. Rather than tell him what he needed to do to be saved, Jesus told him to go into the city, where a preacher (Ananias) would expound to him the necessity of salvation. Saul waited in Damascus for three days without food and drink, and was still blind. Here’s an individual who was still miserable, unhappy, and unsaved, awaiting instructions on how to change his unfortunate status. Acts 9:18 condenses Saul’s response to the preached Word, while Acts 22 elaborates a little further on the significance of Saul’s response. Ananias said, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). If Saul was saved **prior** to baptism, it was wrong for Ananias to say that Saul still had sins that needed to be washed away.<sup>35</sup>

Supporting the submission of Aboyeji above, Silas Babatunde says, in RCCG, we teach that the water does not cleanse the sin-stained soul but Jesus does. If Saul’s penitent faith would not lead him to submit to water immersion, he could not have had his sins washed away by Jesus. Instead, he would have remained in

opposition to Jesus. The scripture never portrays baptism as symbolic of previous sin removal. The only symbolism ever attached to the act of baptism is its likeness to Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5).<sup>36</sup>

### **The Impact of Water Baptism on Members of RCCG Ilorin Metropolis**

In Ilorin metropolis, the impact of water baptism in RCCG is deep and varied, affecting religious, social, cultural, political, and economic aspects of life. For many members, water baptism marks a significant personal change.

Spiritually, Kemi Ajiboye says, water baptism symbolizes leaving an old life behind and starting anew in Christ, representing the cleansing of sins and a new beginning. This often leads to a stronger connection with God and a clearer sense of purpose. Water baptism is also a rite of passage into the Christian community, providing a sense of belonging and support within the church. The public nature of the ceremony allows individuals to openly profess their faith, which can strengthen bonds within the congregation and create a sense of accountability.<sup>37</sup> Water baptism introduces members into the probation of being a Christian in everyday situations. This includes a lifelong process of growing into the fundamentals of faith as well as a lifelong responsibility of acting on the basis of faith.

Socially, Rasheed Ajao, submitted that water baptism has brought changes in some family dynamics. For example, he said his acceptance of Christ and baptism has led to greater acceptance and support from Christian relatives though, met with hostility from non-Christian family members. He said there is a need to be committed to Christ after baptism and this

commitment often requires changes in cultural identity, as converts may adopt new social practices, dietary restrictions, and avoid certain cultural rituals that conflict with their Christian beliefs. While some find ways to blend their cultural heritage with their new faith, others face significant shifts in their identity.<sup>38</sup>

In terms of community relations, Adebayo Ojo asserts that water baptism has led to alter interfaith dynamics. In a multi-religious society like Ilorin, some converts to Christianity have experienced changes in their relationships with friends and neighbours of other faiths, sometimes leading to social inclusion or exclusion based on the predominant religion in their area. In Christian predominant regions, water baptism has enhanced social cohesion, while in predominantly Muslim regions; it has led to isolation or persecution.<sup>39</sup>

Politically, Mary Godwin says, Ilorin's constitution guarantees freedom of religion, allowing individuals to be baptized and practice their faith openly. However, the protection of this right varies, especially in regions where Sharia law is influential.<sup>40</sup>

Economically, water baptism has opened up access to church-based support systems, including financial aid, job assistance, and community development programs. Being part of the church community also provides valuable networking opportunities that can lead to employment and business partnerships. Conversely, converts from other religions may lose economic support from their previous religious communities and face economic persecution, such as job discrimination or loss of business due to their new faith.<sup>41</sup>

In RCCG, water baptism is a rite which is conducted in the context of a congregation, whereas Spirit baptism is a personal experience. Water Baptism is thus understood as a step of obedience that gives witness to the grace of God.

## Recommendations

To enhance the effectiveness and unity of Pentecostal churches in Ilorin metropolis and Nigeria as a whole, it is recommended that:

1. There should be a development and implementation of clear, consistent teachings on water baptism or immersion by ministers in the church. This will address doctrinal conflicts and reinforce the significance of water baptism within the faith, ensuring that all members understand its theological and historical importance.
2. By providing comprehensive education through book publications and symposium on water baptism, churches can foster a more unified and cohesive congregation, strengthening their collective mission and identity.

## Conclusion

The study examined the relevance and impact of baptism in the Redeemed Christian Church of God Ilorin metropolis, Nigeria. In exploring historical and contemporary perspectives, the study highlighted varying interpretations of baptism and congregational unity. It addressed the controversy surrounding baptism by examining theological beliefs and RCCG practices.

The study found out that baptism in the New Testament is a significant

practice for Christians, symbolizing the initiation into the faith and the remission of sins. It began with John the Baptist, who introduced a unique baptism focused on repentance and preparing for the coming of Jesus. Early Christian baptism was influenced by John's practices and evolved to symbolize a spiritual transformation, representing a participant's new life in Christ and their inclusion in the Christian community.

The paper concluded that water baptism, as practiced by RCCG in Ilorin metropolis, Nigeria, plays a crucial shaping theological beliefs, and congregational unity. The historical evolution of water baptism and its role is a necessity for clear and consistent teaching so as to address doctrinal conflicts and enable Christians to fully grasp its spiritual relevance and significant.

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