

**THE ROLE OF FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATION IN NATION-BUILDING: A  
CASE STUDY OF CHURCH OF GOD MISSION INTERNATIONAL**

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BENIN CITY**

**MARCH 2025**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND  
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A)  
HONOURS DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES AND DIPLOMACY  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, NIGERIA**

**MARCH, 2025**

## **CERTIFICATION**

I certify that this project work carried out by ASEKHAUNO TREASURE IKHEOSIMHE with matriculation number ART2008987 in the Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City was under my supervision.

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**Date**

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**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

I wholeheartedly dedicate this project, first and foremost, to God Almighty, whose grace, wisdom, and guidance have been my unwavering source of strength throughout this journey.

Additionally, this work is dedicated to all readers who have a deep passion for understanding the role of faith-based organizations in nation-building. May this research inspire knowledge, reflection, and a greater appreciation of their impact in society.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Holy Bible states in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, “In all things, we should give thanks.” With a heart full of gratitude, I give thanks to God Almighty, whose abundant grace, wisdom, and strength have sustained me throughout my academic journey.

Furthermore, Romans 13:7 reminds us to “Give honour to whom honour is due.” Similarly, William Shakespeare once said, “Honour is a debt we owe to those who light the path before us,” while Isaac Newton (paraphrased) remarked, “To honour those who paved the way for us is to recognize that we stand on the shoulders of giants.”

In this light, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to a number of individuals whose invaluable contributions have made this academic journey worthwhile.

First and foremost, my profound appreciation goes to Dr. Daniel Olisa Iweze, my project supervisor, for his patience, dedication, and insightful guidance throughout this research. His constructive criticism and support played a key role in refining the quality of this work, and for that, I am truly grateful.

I also extend my genuine gratitude to the Dean, Faculty of Arts – Prof. Osadolor O. Benson, for his continuous support, encouragement, and wise counsel throughout my time at UNIBEN. His guidance has been deeply valued.

A special acknowledgment goes to Prof. Eddy Erhagbe for his concern and contributions to my project work. To my esteemed lecturers Prof. J. I. Osage, Prof. E. A. Ifidon, Prof. I. A. Uwankocha, Dr. Frank Ikponwonsa, Dr. E. Toby, and Dr. Oriakhi I express my deep appreciation for their mentorship and academic dedication. A heartfelt thank you to Dr. W. E. Orukpe and my respected course advisor, Dr. Charles Osarumwense, for their guidance and academic support. I also appreciate the other faculty and staff members of the department for their positive influence on my educational journey.

I also acknowledge my uncle, Prof. Anthony A. Asekhauno for his presence in my academic journey. Thank you.

My deepest gratitude goes to my wonderful parents, Rev'd and Mrs. Emmanuel Asekhauno, for their love, sacrifices, and unwavering prayers throughout my time at the University of Benin. Their encouragement has been a pillar of strength for me. I am also deeply thankful to my siblings Mr. Evans, Mrs. Nelly, Mr. Cleanse, Mr. Steadfast, Miss Givens, Miss Giveth, and Miss Reigneth for their love, support, and steadfast prayers, which have continually uplifted me throughout my university years.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to Pastor and Pastor Mrs. Aloysius Ainoyomoh for their prayers, encouragement, and continuous support throughout my academic pursuit. I also extend my sincere gratitude to Pastor Emmanuel David for his prayers, encouragement and for being there every step of the way. I also extend my warmest gratitude to Dr. Patrick I. Ehigiator for his prayers and for being a source of encouragement and inspiration along my journey.

I sincerely appreciate Mrs. Ogaga for her unwavering belief in me, for her encouragements, support and coaches, thank you. I also acknowledge dear friends like Rabiati Angela Oguta, Jesse Oghenecaro, and many others whose support and encouragement have meant so much. Thank you for believing in me.

May God bless you all abundantly

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background to the Study**

Nation building is a process of improving the range of opportunities that will enable individual humans and communities to achieve their aspirations and full potential over a sustained period of time while maintaining the resilience of economic, social and environmental systems <sup>1</sup>. <sup>2</sup> identifies some of the development challenges confronting African to include but limited to poor leadership, corruption, insecurity of varied degrees like kidnapping, terrorism, child industry, ritual killing, armed robbery and the most endemic problem which is poverty is also wreaking. Peculiar to Nigeria in the opinion of <sup>3</sup>, the challenges of development are illiteracy, hunger, poor health condition, humiliation, unemployment and expectations of accelerated development seem difficult to realize. Citizens of Nigeria are feeling frustrated, not cared for, basic amenities to keep life going are not seen while corruption and nepotism keep growing in the hands of the political gladiators<sup>4</sup>. In the southern part of Nigeria consisting of the Yoruba, Igbo and other minorities from the Niger Delta region and parts of the middle belt region that falls into the south of Nigeria, Christianity is the predominant religion. Up until the late 1980's most of the Christian religious movements were the orthodox churches such as the Anglican, Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodists among other church movements

that date back to the pre-20th century era <sup>5</sup>. These religious movements in Nigeria were introduced to Africa by missionaries from Europe particularly Ireland, England, Portugal, Italy and America. However, these days the Pentecostal churches are growing in popularity gradually phasing out the ‘old fashioned churches’ and bringing along with them Western world inspired doctrines. These days most Pentecostal churches teach prosperity, earthly success and maximize the use of flamboyant, colourful methods to drive home their points <sup>6</sup>. With the recent development among the Pentecostals in Nigeria, economic and political development is beginning to take a different and positive shape. All the early missionaries mentioned above began their missionary work alongside with medical services, schools, skill acquisition and other poverty alleviation programmes. They started the western education, which has changed the development of Nigeria. Faith-based Organizations are now taking the lead in developmental projects in Nigeria and the numerous churches in Nigeria are seriously competing among themselves <sup>7</sup>.

Furthermore, Pentecostalism and the prosperity gospel to considerable extent, has more positive than negative values for the toiling Nigerian masses. Specifically, many Nigerians have had life - changing opportunities by way of the motivational values and contents of the prosperity gospel <sup>8</sup>. The objectives of this study is to discuss the historical evolution of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria, the factors responsible for the rapid growth of Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria, and the way the Pentecostal Churches have contributed to national development in Nigeria.

The force of Pentecostalism is often felt like a wind within the hallowed temples of opponents. This force is sensitive to the socio-economic and political terrains. This movement is characterized by variety, flexibility, and an expanding continuum of adaptive social inventions traceable in its ministerial formation, liturgy, economic practices, organizations and infrastructure that range from storefronts in poor environments to imposing structures in cities. It is a charismatic protestant Christian movement that emphasizes a personal encounter with Jesus Christ as Saviour and healer, with the potential for converts to be “born again” as Christians. The scripture in Acts 2:1-41 recorded the dramatic experience that is contemplated in the Pentecost event. It is about the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles and the baptism of about 3,000 converts. That periscope, according to <sup>9</sup>, outlines the Pentecost experience of the church of the ages. This, however, includes the strange descent of tongues of fire, on and the utterance in foreign tongues by the apostles, the flight of the spirit of timidity and readiness to preach the gospel. Added to these was the giving of other spiritual gifts which enriched the church with every spiritual blessing from the heavenly places <sup>10</sup>. When the Pentecost day came around, they have all met together, when suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of violet wind, which filled the entire house in which they were sitting and there appeared to them tongues as of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them.

## **Aim and Objective of the Study**

The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of faith based organizations on National building: A case study of church of God Mission International. The specific objectives are to;

- i. examine the extent to which faith based organizations affects national growth and development in Nigeria;
- ii. determine the extent to which faith based organizations influence political system in Nigeria;
- iii. investigate whether faith based organizations are fighting the insecurity of lives and property in Nigeria.

## **Significance of the Study**

This study focuses on the impact of faith based organizations on National building: A case study of Church of God mission International, but also the positive side of it from the religious background. This is because wars which are horribly organized means of settling disputes have been denounced as negative in all its ramifications. However, while this may be partially true, considering the harmful impact and consequences of war on the social, political, psychological and economic fabrics of the society, it is also a fact that several positive consequences often unintended had been brought by wars.

Another significance of this study is that it will bring to the academic attention, the relationship between the growth of faith based churches and the Nigerian growth. This is because this area has not received significant academic attention.

This study also is of importance especially now that Pentecostalism has become a crucial phenomenon exerting a great influence on the religious, social and cultural life of the Igbo to the extent that the social historians cannot ignore it. This is particularly so as the astronomical growth and the proliferation of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria which appear not to have caught the attention of Nigerian social historians. This study will therefore let the people understand the nexus between the social and psychological conditions of the people and that of the soothing messages of the Pentecostals.

### **Scope of the Study**

The scope of this research is limited to the impact of faith based organization in nation building in Nigeria: A case study of Church of God Mission International from September 11, 1938 to March 12, 1998 which was his period of existence.

### **Methodology and Sources**

This study would adopt the historical research method. Historical research is a broad term that covers many methods of gathering information. Historical research studies the meaning of past events in an attempt to interpret the facts and explain the cause of events, and their effect in the present events. The research method adopted is a qualitative analysis of secondary and primary source of data related to the study.

## **Primary Sources**

The primary sources involved the use of oral interview of some key religious leaders, church members, pastors and ordinary people who took part in the nation building.

## **Secondary Sources**

The secondary source of data published and unpublished works comprising articles, edited books, newspapers and online sources. Which were put together to form the literature of the study.

## **Literature Review**

There exist previous works that are related to this study. They provide useful insight to the study and include the following;

Abati, Raji in his book titled, *Politics and the church in Nigeria*; the author examine Pentecostalism, Harvey Cox believes, has uncovered and brought forth a primal spirituality that, though hidden and suppressed at times, always has been there deep inside the human soul. This spirituality has much in common with different folk religions like for example shamanism. This spirituality is more intuitive and immediate than analytic and literal. A fruitful metaphor can be jazz music <sup>16</sup> he further examine that religion plays a dual role in every society. Religion serves as a unifying factor as well as a destabilizing factor of any nation. Thus, within Nigeria's political space, religion has overtime been deployed by the political elites to subvert the will of the governed and the

political process in order to acquire power. At some other time, religion has served as instrument of virtue and a vehicle for national integration and nation building <sup>17</sup>. To this extent, religion is believed to be a double edged sword. This segment therefore will be discussing the dialectics of religion and religiosity; i.e. the combining effects of religion and religiosity; the negative impact of religion and religiosity on Nigeria's body politic. Religiosity occurs mainly through the process of internalization of religious beliefs. In other words, religiosity is the outward manifestations of internalized religious beliefs.

Adamczyk, Freilich, and Kim, in their research; *Religion and Crime: A Systematic Review and Assessment of Next Steps Sociology of Religion*, identifies that Religiosity is the noticeable evidence of imbibed religious beliefs and norms; a process known as religious socialization. According to them, religious socialization is the process through which an individual learns and internalizes religious beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors. This process occurs through interactions with socializing agents, including parents, religious organizations, and peers. They carried out a study to determine the nature of the associations between religious socialization, religiosity, and adolescent sexual initiation and results indicated that as black adolescents received more messages about religious beliefs and practices, their religiosity was greater and, in turn, they were less likely to report sexual initiation.<sup>19</sup> Thus, constant exposure to religious beliefs and precepts has the propensity to influence the behaviour and behavioural pattern of the person so exposed. Also, it has been found that the influence of religiosity on adolescent

sexual health behaviours are inconsistent, indicating that religiosity may protect against, or be a risk factor for, unsafe sexual practices <sup>20</sup>.

Umeanolue, Isaiah in his work, *Religious Influences on Politics in Nigeria: Implications for National Development* states that the phenomenon of religiosity can impact negatively or positively on the society. He maintained that there exists an inverse relationship between religion and crime or vices; and findings indicate that religion decreases propensities for criminal behaviour. In other words, the more religious a society is, the less its tendency towards crime or vices <sup>21</sup>. However, various research findings have indicated the contrary. In Nigeria for example, adherents of various religious sects have been found to be involved in activities inimical to progress and social cohesion. The religious institutions of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria have served as major rallying points for various social and political groups with disparate and sometimes obscure agendas. In fact, the almost ubiquitous use of religious pretexts in Nigeria has at several periods been appropriated by ‘non-conforming’ groups to instigate violence <sup>22</sup>. This development no doubt has portrayed religion as an instrument of disintegration. The above review shows that no study has been devoted to the study of the role of faith-based organization in nation building: a case study of church of God mission international.

## **Chapterization**

This study is divided into five (5) chapters,

### **Chapter One**

#### **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

This chapter introduces the study. It contains the background to the study, aim and objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, research methodology, and literature review.

### **Chapter Two**

#### **FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN NIGERIA**

This chapter examines the concept of faith based organizations in Nigeria, the concept of Pentecostalism, the historical perspective and evolution of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, religiosity and religion dialecticism in Nigeria and factors for the rapid growth of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria.

### **Chapter Three: Biography and Benson Idahosa's Background**

The explore the Conversion and Early Ministry, Birth of Church of God Mission International (CGMi), Benson's Establishment of Idahosa World Outreach – (IWO MEDIA)

### **Chapter Four: Demise and Legacies**

The explore Mrs. Margaret as the Mandatory general officer, Establishment of Benson Idahosa University, Faith Clinic and others.

### **Chapter Five**

#### **CONCLUSION**

This chapter concludes and recommends on the subject under review.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **History of Faith-Based Organizations in Nigeria**

The term Faith-Based Organization as broader term to Religious Organisation does not have a generally accepted description used by government, academia, the media or even the faith-based sectors. The absence of single universally accepted definition of FBOs has not helped conceptual analysis of what FBOs stand for. Many scholars proffer varieties of definitions and typologies. <sup>1</sup> define Faith Based Organizations as non-state actors that have a central religious or faith core to their philosophy, membership, or

programmatic approach, although they are not simply missionaries. On the other hand, <sup>2</sup>viewed Faith-Based Organization as organization that derives inspiration and guidance for its activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within the faith. This definition considers Faith-Based Organizations as the organizations which derive their origin and practice from the teaching of their religion or base on its doctrines and perceptions established by affiliated congregations in their community. <sup>3</sup>defines Faith-Based Organization as: A formal organization whose identity and mission are self-consciously derived from the teachings of one or more religious or spiritual traditions and which operates on a non-profit, independent, voluntary basis to promote and realize collectively articulated ideas about the public good at the national or international level.

This definition provides the most acceptable and reliable statement in this field of study. It shows that the intrinsic value of religious civil society organizations encompasses all the broad areas of development and social functions. Unlike their counterpart secular NGOs, they are often influenced or motivated to perform humanitarian tasks. Thus, FBOs may therefore, be referred to as religion(s)-based organizations, specialized (registered or unregistered) non-profit institutions that have religious character or missions<sup>4</sup>.

The origins of FBOs in Nigeria remain arguable among scholars<sup>5</sup>. However, a historical progression can be drawn. As early as 1842 when Christianity arrived in Nigeria, missionaries were major providers of human development services like education, health care and other social services. In those days, missionaries established mission stations, mission schools, mission hospitals and mission work. In 1916, the Ahmadiyya movement began as a Muslim organization aimed at revising the development efforts, which was perceived as channels of conversion of people from different religions to Islam in northern Nigeria.

Moreover, Qadiriyya and Tijjaniyya movement (Islamic sects) contributed to the political growth and the expansion of economic and commercial activities in Northern Nigeria before the arrival of British colonial masters. <sup>6</sup>Consider Muslim FBOs as the origin of faith-based development activities in Nigeria. However, the discourse becomes more interesting when African Traditional Religion is factored in. This predates Christianity and Islam. It has been the religion of our forebears, the source of their culture and livelihood; what gave them meaning to existence. On the place of African Traditional Religion (ATR) in development communication, Baiyeri (2013) states:

African Traditional rulers and functionaries-built places of worship and enforced doctrines and ritual observances in much the same way ATR legitimizes loyalty to kings and constituted traditional authorities. The Supreme Being and deities were worshipped,

and sacrifices offered to them in the belief that these supernatural beings would give the worshippers wealth, happiness, and protection, which constitute aspects of human development.

Developmental activities were looked upon as a religious obligation that provides social services to the people who have embraced the religion. Whichever side of the argument you take, FBOs started with the coming of religion in Nigeria. And if religion is as old as man, as in the case of ATR, which has been with us, then FBOs have been with us right from the beginning of man, although not in this developed form.

Theoretical perspective prescribes underlying principles behind practice. The underlying principles behind the practice of faith-based social service leave scholars with many debates. However, <sup>8</sup>made a disputable attempt articulated as the Theory of Individual Change thus: In theories of change, faith-based organizations in social services are portrayed as being motivated by a desire to change the lives of the individual clients they serve, and the individuals within those FBOs are viewed as change agents. A second dimension of a theory of faith-based providers in social services delivery is that FBOs do not just provide the single service but instead, place program participants in an on-going social support network that provides role models and assistance, as dictated by the needs of the client.

The implications of the two (2) theories are numerous, namely Faith-based organizations are more holistic in their approach to the individual client and therefore transform clients in ways that secular government and private non-profit agencies do not. In other words, FBOs broaden our ideas of development, in that, the emphasis entails the development of the spirit, soul and physical dimensions of the human person.

Arguably, this is a religious perspective of man, but equally suggest the value added to sustainable development by FBOs. Secondly, FBOs establish relationships with program participants that are more enduring- more personal than the professional relationships that are sought by secular organizations, whether a government or non-profit organization. This is to say, at grass-root level, for instance, FBOs relate with individual clients in such areas as pastoral counselling, home visits during crisis, group prayer meetings which amounts to spiritual and psychological development of the beneficiaries. Thirdly, Faith-Based Organizations tend to be more highly motivated by their faith and spirituality. Whereas, in some cases, secular social service providers may expect all their rewards or remuneration in this world, FBOs are not just motivated by present rewards but eternal rewards that are beyond this terrestrial world. In that case, FBOs persist in social services provision even when there are little or no economic gains. Fourthly FBOs tend to have access to volunteers, many of whom are faith directed. This army of volunteers do not only increase the likelihood that the client can be part of a support network, but also has the benefit of being cost-effective.

This principle explains one of the richest treasures of FBOs in Sustainable development. It equally points to the fact that FBOs should be a very reliable group of development agents in terms of manpower. Lastly, FBOs provide service delivery network that can reach those in need within their own communities. They are trusted local players nested in the fabric of that community. One major added value of FBOs to Sustainable development is the high capacity for ensuring enduring grass-root participation in development networking. This is a rare fit when compared with secular social service providers or government agents.

### **Types of Faith Based Organizations**

Several scholars have developed interesting typologies to distinguish Faith-Based Organizations from their secular counterparts. <sup>9</sup>adopted five typologies for FBOs in Nigeria namely:

- i. Interfaith Organizations:** These are FBOs from various religious traditions that come together to carry out specific programme for the good and welfare of the people. For example, Federation of Muslim Women of Nigeria (FOMWAN) and Justice and Peace Caritas Organization (JDPC) working for gender equality and peace maintenance in Nigeria.

- ii. **Apex Bodies:** This refers to religious affiliated bodies that serve as umbrella to registered ones. Sometimes it serves as political voice for the rest such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Jama'atul Nasrul Islam (JNI).
- iii. **Development Organizations:** These are FBOs that are rooted in development of the people as their goals, such as Joint Youth Islamic Organisation (JYIO) and Foundation for Muslim Welfare (FMW)
- iv. **Socio-political Organizations:** Some FBOs feature in the politics of the country apart from its social responsibility like Jama'atut Tajdidil Islam (JTI)
- v. **Mission Organizations:** Some FBOs are missionary inclined. Beneath whatever activity they carry out, are the idea of mission, some of them includes Muslim Corps Association of Nigeria (MCAN), Sisters Da'awa Group (SDG), Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN). Furthermore, UNICEF (2004) in collaboration with the World Conference of Religions for Peace presented typologies for FBOs which includes:
  - i. **Congregation:** This refers to local group of believers in a mosque or church that meet regularly.
  - ii. **Religious coordinating Body:** This refers to intermediary organizations that Coordinate and support the congregations.
  - iii. **Non-governmental organizations:** This refers to faith-based NGOs that employ staff, have office, and seek external donor to carry out its activities.

**iv. Community-based organizations:** These are local groups that are set up in the community to provide or present the development needs of the community.

### **The Roles of Faith Based Organisation (FBO) in Nigeria**

The roles of FBOs are numerous and are series of development ranging from education, health, economic, political, and social development. <sup>10</sup>claims that Nigeria has benefited from political development as far back as pre-colonial era with the Qaidiriyya movement by Uthman Dan Fodio who laid the foundation for Islamic political and legal system in Northern Nigeria that the British took advantage of. Similarly, Justice Development and Peace commission at the Archdiocese of Onitsha had been involved in the political development of Nigeria by engaging in voter education, election monitoring, electioneering campaign programmes on the radio. Kenekwukwu Micro Finance Bank of Onitsha Catholic Diocese provides soft loans and technical assistance to the people. This is a strong boost to the economic status of the people. FBOs provides platform for jobs and wealth creation, in many ways including cottage industries, farm projects, loans to farmers, small-scale businesses and so forth.

Education is a huge area of involvement for FBOs in Nigeria. Suffice to note that many of our leaders and intellectuals were trained in mission schools. FBOs have been credited with the construction of classroom blocks, community schools, provision of instructional materials, training of teachers and immense contribution to the National

educational curriculum development. Girl-child education is another area many FBOs have and are still investing in. <sup>11</sup>states that, the mission of Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN) is to educate Muslim women and make positive impacts on national issues. Private universities and secondary schools operate as FBOs for example, Covenant University in Ogun state, Catholic University of Nigeria, Bowen University of the Baptist Conference of Nigeria etc

On health care, <sup>12</sup>cited World Health Organization that; “Christian Health Association of Nigeria (CHAN) provides forty per cent of the health care services in rural communities in Nigeria”. This accounts for much that is being done in the rural areas where government presence is not felt. Other social development programmes organized by FBOs includes gender equality, family planning, HIV/AIDS awareness, mobilization, and sensitization for various vaccines in the rural communities. Religious tents, such as the inculcation of high sense of morality, sense of duty, selfless service, public accountability, respect for human lives, love of one’s neighbour, sense of humanity, abhorrence of violence, love for peace, contentment with what one can legitimately have, justice, can be used to foster sustainable political development<sup>13</sup>.

Faith exposes its followers with a mandate to help others. Members of religious groups can perform practical tasks during disaster. They can contribute in persons to help people affected by the disaster, provide shelter, food, water, and information on other

aids<sup>14</sup>. The Islamic teaching on caring for others is a prime example of how a Faith-Based Organization stepped in promoting sustainable development. Islam promotes the concept of zakat (almsgiving), infaq (support), and Sadaqah (charity) as a way of helping poor people and other people in a vulnerable condition. “Love thy neighbour” is a golden rule of all religious traditions and motivates people of faith to care about the condition of others. Justice for the poor and the marginalized people is the main teachings of Jewish holy book. The Bible also mandates assistance to the poor and the vulnerable in the society<sup>15</sup>. In addition, Faith Based Organization can also be associated with several external functions such as access to social resources, opportunity for social involvement, and support to connect with and help others while building identity and positive sense of self. For example, in 2018 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) published a guide “Engaging Faith based and Community Organizations: Planning Considerations for Emergency Managers”, which outlines best practices for engaging faith-based and community organizations in emergency preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery<sup>16</sup>.

### **Some Problems of Faith Based Organizations in Nigeria**

It is essential to identify some challenges that may accrue in the development services of FBOs, especially in countries characterized by religious pluralism like Nigeria. For instance, <sup>17</sup>Thinks that in a religiously diverse society civil unrest may erupt because

of clash amongst different religious sects (intra and inter religious in nature). They further opined that several basic religious beliefs oppose the values and principles of modern capitalism and secular economics.

Tolling their argument, possible negative effects of religion on development include religious restrictions on capital accumulation, profit-making, credit markets and interest. Moreover, they observed that some religions tend to restrict any infiltration of globalization and the principal contents of modernity. <sup>18</sup>noted that these religious groups in extremity tend to criticize the principles of modernity because they propagate secularism which condemns the originality and sacred content of religion. For these groups secularism is neo-imperialists doctrine which has failed to deliver an impact on the suffering masses.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### BIOGRAPHY OF BENSON IDAHOSA

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examines the biography of Benson Idahosa

#### **Benson Idahosa's Birth and Formative years**

He was born on the 11th September, 1938, in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> Benin City was formerly known as the "City of Blood" because of the practice of human sacrifice to heathen gods. He was the fourth of the nine children born to Mr. and Mrs. John Idahosa. He grew up in a mud hut like many Nigerians. There was small prospect for a leader to emerge from this background. His emergence was a proof that God can raise a leader from obscurity.

Benin people are called the 'Binis' or the 'Edos' and were great warriors and predominantly farmers before the colonial era. According to Benson, Benin City was a sanitary eyesore to visitors and decent inhabitants. Every street junction had numerous animal sacrifices, which was reminiscent of the practices of the people before the Benin Kingdom was destroyed by the British. In fact, the British forces which captured and burned the City in 1897 described it as the City of Blood. Many corpses were found on the crucifixion trees and the City was generally a sanitary mess.<sup>3</sup> To Benson, the socio-

spiritual state of Benin City at this time needed divine intervention to change its sanitary conditions, with its dirt from the sacrifices and idolatry. Peter Obadan affirmed that, ‘Benin, the “City of Blood,” was full of occult practices, used in promoting wickedness such as those of the “Ogboni” and the “Owegbe” fraternities. They ruled the City and held everybody hostage to fear and created a myth around the cults.’<sup>4</sup> These cultic groups controlled the activities of the physical and spiritual world; people lived in danger of becoming victims to ritualistic sacrifices to the idol gods. It is in this atmosphere Benson emerged as a leader to challenge these powers.

Benson was a sickly child; his father, a poor farmer, claimed that the child was a curse to his household spitting on the floor (Bini sign for rejection), saying ‘the baby has refused to die, yet he has refused to live therefore should be abandoned in the rubbish heap to die.’<sup>5</sup> By this decision, Benson’s father disowned the child but his mother would not let the child die. A few years later Benson became well and was enrolled in the Anglican Mission School at Ewossa village, near Benin City, thanks to his mother’s vision about his future.<sup>6</sup> that ‘until he was fourteen years old, his education was irregular. He had to satisfy his educational curiosity by sitting close to his uncle’s children to rehearse their lesson with them each day.’<sup>7</sup> At sixteen he returned to his grandparents’ home in Benin City, where he enrolled for two years of boarding school to complete his first leaving school certificate course in three years instead of six. For Benson, despite his quest for educational enlightenment, he was never a Christian and had no experience of

Christianity or how to become a Christian. However, he made the effort to attend Sunday services a few times. As a toddler, he often experienced fainting spells. This re-occurring phenomenon, in the thinking of his father had brought disgrace and dishonour to the family. This forced him to resolve that the infant Idahosa be dumped on a refuse heap just behind their little house and left to his own fate. His father gave a stern warning that he should not be rescued from the garbage but because he was destined for greatness he lived to become one of the kingdom of God's greatest men.

As the years rolled by, the sickly lad noted for fainting spells grew in strength and wisdom. He chose to change. Like the plant Saxifrage, often noted for its rock breaking abilities, Archbishop Idahosa surmounted the many obstacles that lay precariously on the road to success. Benson Idahosa had a penchant for education and a great desire to study. At the age of eight, he was enrolled into primary school<sup>8</sup>. Through thick and thin, he managed to scale through an initial western education in the Salvation Army School, Benin City and the Methodist School, Owo, Ondo State. However, this only whetted his appetite for more knowledge. Accordingly, through a correspondence programme with the London Benneth College, he obtained a Diploma in Business Administration, and a Higher Diploma in Office Management, while he worked in the Bata Shoe Company as a salesman.

As a result of his desire to excel and through hard work, coupled with God's favor upon his life, he soon ascended to a supervisory position at the company. Little did he know that his experience as a supervisor was part of God's way of preparing him for leadership in the ministry. The young Benson Idahosa was ready to be an instrument in God's hand and in 1962, at the relatively young age of 24, he launched into the ministry. He had great zeal for the work of God and his uttermost desire was to carry out the command of the Lord to finish the work which God had assigned to him. Quite a lot can be said about his pastoral life. At the very beginning of his evangelistic crusades, he used his cultural advantage as a Bini to gain access to the surrounding Bini villages. His evangelistic crusades consisted of taking his team to the villages where, with the permission of the heads of the communities, he would preach to the people and pray for the sick. His first crusade was at Ajagbodudu, near Sapele, in 1961. His crusades were followed by signs and wonders<sup>9</sup>.

In 1962 after his first evangelistic crusades, he enrolled as a correspondent student of a Bible College at Illorin. That same year, he held a crusade at Abraka. Over the years, he continued his theological education, and the following is a list of some of his degrees. Papa (as he was popularly called) had a phenomenal popularity predicated on his achievements, and the seeds he has sown in the lives of the hopeless, and those who needed a touch from the Lord Jesus Christ. Little wonder then, that during his ministry he raised many persons from the dead, much to the consternation of many who doubted the

efficacy and power of the word of God. With signs and wonders his popularity spread like wild fire.

Church of God Mission International, as it known today, grew from a very humble beginning in 1962 as a prayer group first named Calvary Fellowship at a shop on Ivbizua Street, off Mission Road. It was officially inaugurated in 1965 by Rev. Edgar Perkins. On October 26th 1968, Rev. Perkins approached the Assemblies of God to release Benson Idahosa, then a Sunday School Superintendent, to oversee the prayer ministry. The fellowship moved to No. 26, Forestry Road, Benin City with Pastor Benson Idahosa fully in-charge. The membership of the fellowship grew numerically. Pastor Benson Idahosa decided to build a church and this began his building ministry. He moved the members to Iyaro Church and on 18th of September, 1974. The church was registered under the Land perpetual succession Acts and Certificate number 1245 was issued. By the time Church of God Mission Iyaro was completed the membership had risen tremendously. The church was declared opened by Papa Gordon Lindsay and Papa Elton.

Church of God Mission's primary ministry was evangelism-Living up to her motto: Evangelism our Supreme Task, the church engaged in street evangelism and open air crusades. Through these activities souls were daily added to the church and everywhere papa went with the gospel churches were planted and solid structures erected. In keeping with his belief of a ministry building that keeps up with the times, and to

accommodate the influx of converts, the Archbishop laid the foundation of another church called Miracle Centre, on airport road, Benin City on Saturday 1st December, 1973 which was dedicated on Sunday 9th November, 1975 by Mrs. Freda Lindsay.

The continued growth of the ministry led to the building of Faith Miracle Centre auditorium, which many refer to as a marvel and was a vision fulfilled. In 1983, in faraway Australia, the Archbishop heard God told him to build Him a building that will bring glory and honour to his name. The auditorium which is believed to seat over twenty thousand people was the first stadium church in Africa. It was dedicated and opened on 2nd November, 1986. Coinciding with the growth of churches in Benin was the planting of branches. Today Church of God Mission International has presence in all parts of Nigeria and the world over.

The ministry has developed infrastructures to strengthen her ability to fulfill her mandate preparing an army to rescue humanity for God. This she had done through the establishment of a viable Bible School – All Nations for Christ Bible Institute, to fulfill the educational need for pastors and contribute to building a vibrant society. The ministry has schools ranging from pre-Nursery (Word of Faith Group of Schools) to the university (Benson Idahosa University) and also functional medical facilities (Faith Mediplex Group of Hospitals) for all people. The ministry is resolved in her quest to produce whole persons in Spirit, soul and body. All these accomplishments could not have happened

without a focused, dynamic and spirit filled leaders by our father, Archbishop B.A. Idahosa. The ministry is still being maintained and enhanced by our go getting Archbishop M. E. Benson-Idahosa.

As a little child, his father ordered his mother to throw him away because of his sickly health. He often fainted and was lifeless for a while. On the night his mother painfully and reluctantly dropped him on the rubbish heap lifeless, she stayed close by and wept bitterly as it rained heavily. All of a sudden there was a thunderous lightening that struck and to her greatest joy, little Benson began to cry: he was alive again! Despite her husband's threat to disown her if she did not throw away this child, she took him with her and pledged to nurse and take care of him. She eventually left her husband house with little Benson, leaving her other children behind and went to her village to live with her parents. There she took care of Benson and nurtured him.

A phenomenal trait as he grew up was his great love and passion for education. It was not too long before he was sent to work on a farm with his father's brother – Uncle Joseph. Though he was not given the chance to go to school, he eagerly sat side by side his cousins while they did their home works and he asked questions and learnt very fast from them. Very soon he was so brilliant that when they had quiz among themselves the other children contested for who will come closest to Benson in their scores. With no shoes of his own he was once promised a singlet by his uncle as an end of year celebration gift if he did his farm work well. Somehow his uncle always had a reason to

not give that singlet to him while he bought suits, shirts and shoes every year for his own children.

Benson was not so worried about not getting a singlet. He was more focused on not missing his time of study with the other children. Benson was very hardworking and diligent. He worked tirelessly and diligently on the farm and at home for his mother or uncle's wives. While living with his grandfather in Benin he began a correspondence course in business and accounting but could not continue for lack of money. Because of this his grandfather took him to a Bata shoe company in Benin to get a job as an assistant store clerk. Getting the job was a miracle. On the job he worked so hard that he was continually being praised and promoted.

While staying with his grandfather in Benin he used to play football with his friends. One day they heard the sound of some Christians in a church close by. They decided to play the football through the church window to hit the pastor from behind. Benson was in charge of kicking the ball in. After several failed attempts they came closer and closer to the building and Benson with a lot of strength kicked the ball so hard that it hit the wall again but this time bounced back very hard at his chest. He was down on the floor and couldn't breathe. His chest was swollen. He was eventually rushed into the church. The pastor of the church – Pastor Okpo prayed for him and he recovered. The swelling on his chest went down.

Benson was so amazed by the power of God that manifested through this pastor. He knew for a certainty that the God that this pastor served was real, unlike the juju that his parents and family believed in and worshipped. Benson had always told his mum that he didn't believe their gods had the power to protect them. Pastor Okpo ministered to him and eventually led him to Christ. When Benson Idahosa became born again he had peace and he was not the same again. He began to attend Pastor Okpo's church where he heard the gospel and began to learn God's ways.

Now that he was born again his passion for knowledge increased. He wanted to know God with all his heart. He also had a very strong desire to spread this good news about the saving power of Jesus Christ. He no longer played football with his friends. He went to church instead. He was the only Bini person in that church as all others were Igbo. His friends used that to discourage him from attending the church but he did not give in. Through him many Binis began to get saved and attend the church. Benson began going on evangelical outreaches with some other believers to nearby villages and towns to preach the gospel. He finally had the opportunity to witness to his mum and after much hesitation she one day accepted Jesus into her heart. He eventually witnessed to his father but his father did not accept Christ. He was the juju priest of the family. Though he saw the changes in Benson's life and felt he had found something real, he hesitated and did not have a chance to become saved. He was captured during the civil war in June 1967. He was searched for but was not found.

As he slept one night he was suddenly awakened by a voice. He sat up and listened as God spoke to him. That night he heard God call him and instruct him to preach the gospel. The Lord also promised to confirm his message with signs following. The next night Benson had a vision where he saw himself standing under a tree. The tree was empty and dried from its roots; it had no leaves. He stood under the tree as instructed by God and the Lord also told him that someone would come and ask him for help.

Shortly, he saw an old woman carrying a heavy load. The Lord instructed him to go and help her. He approached the woman and asked if he could help her. She agreed and told him that she had passed so many people on the way but no one wanted to help her. As he helped her bring her load down to rest under the tree, immediately a fresh green leaf appeared on the tree. He later saw two elderly men coming with heavy loads. Once again he asked if he could help them and they agreed. As they got safely under the tree, two fresh green leaves appeared on the tree's branch. He kept on doing this until there were about a hundred people under the tree. After a while he became exhausted and the Lord instructed him to look among the people with him for young men who would join him to help people take down their loads and burdens. As the young men joined him, more passersby were helped and the tree had become densely covered with leaves.

The Lord then spoke to him that this was what He the Lord will do with his life. As he helped people drop their load at God's feet, God will bring back to life that which

was dead. God also told him that he would stand before great multitudes and declare God's power to heal and perform miracles. After waking up from the vision, Benson continued to go from place to place declaring the saving power of Jesus to all he could reach. More and more people responded to his messages.

Benson later moved to an area in Benin where there was no Full Gospel Church. He was pressed in his heart to look for a place where he could meet and teach converts the Word of God. He found a store on Forestry Road which he rented and began to use for church meetings. He still worked at the Bata shoe company but he saw his responsibility of preaching and teaching as his primary job. The lives of the believers were getting blessed and their numbers increased greatly.

Shortly after Benson's conversion he was introduced to a special young lady called Margaret Izevbigie. She was the only child of her parents and was on holidays from boarding school. Benson preached to her and her friends but they didn't accept Jesus into their lives but made fun of him calling him little pastor. Benson and Margaret became very close as Margaret seemed to like him very much. Benson told Margaret that he was going to be a brother to her and he was going to protect her. Sometime later, Benson visited her house one day and found everybody crying. Her uncle's daughter had just passed on after being very sick. God used Benson to miraculously raise the child back to life. Margaret was touched in her heart and convinced that Benson's God was real. She was sorry for not taking him serious all this while. While in her room that night she

prayed and accepted Jesus into her life. She began attending church services in Pastor Okpo's church by Benson's invitation. Benson later asked Margaret to marry him and Margaret was upset. She felt he had planned it all along. She saw him as a brother and she was afraid of being a pastor's wife. She later agreed and the two of them got married on April 6th, 1969.

Margaret was a very loving wife and she was very worried that her husband was so busy with the ministry that he sometimes could not eat. As she worked with Benson her passion and grace for the ministry grew. She was a great support and blessing to Benson and the ministry. She attended programs and conferences from where God placed great visions and dreams in her heart. After returning from one of such meetings she began the Christian Women Fellowship International. God blessed them with a son and three daughters.

The Lord spoke to Benson one day about a man he had never met call Elton in Ilesha, Nigeria. The Lord told him to go and see this man. At this time Benson's ministry had been increasing and expanding but with great opposition and challenges. He was in need of a counselor and advisor. In obedience to God's voice, Benson went to Ilesha with an elder of his church and miraculously found Brother Elton who was expecting him. Brother Elton was a great source of fatherly encouragement to Benson and the church. They scheduled periodic meetings where Elton came to them in Benin and they would also go to him in Ilesha from time to time.

When Benson informed Elton of the roofing need of their new church building, Elton promised to raise funds for the church by contacting Gordon Lindsay, the head of a missions organization in America that usually assisted churches like Benson's. Gordon Lindsay later visited Nigeria and they both came to Benson's church. During the service they perceived God's leading to ordain Benson fully into the ministry for a great work in Nigeria, so they called him out and they both laid hands on him and ordained him. To Benson this was like the double portion anointing of Elijah's mantle.

The next day Gordon Lindsay invited Benson over to America and offered him a scholarship in the Bible training school of Christ For The Nations. At this time Benson was still a staff of Bata Shoe company and he was granted leave to travel for his training. He told the elders to take care of the church in his absence. Over in America he was well received into the Bible school as he was the first African student to come to the school. Benson became known for his vibrant prayer life. He woke up very early and he interceded greatly for his country and his people. He took his notes and lectures very seriously. He also wrote a lot of letters especially to encourage his wife Margaret who he left in Nigeria. While in the bible school he read a book by T. L. Osborn: "Soul winning: Out where the Sinners Are".

In the book, he saw the statistics of how the population of the world was increasing rapidly but the gospel was not spreading well and fast enough. This message struck his heart greatly. He often fasted and wept over the message of this book. More

than ever before the need to preach the gospel to his people weighed heavily on his heart. It burnt in him like fire in his bones. He could no longer stand being in school while his people were perishing. He explained to 'Dad' Lindsay who perfectly understood him and allowed him return to Nigeria. He received so many gifts as he was leaving that he was asked to pay for extra luggage at the airport. He spoke to the manager of the airport and the extra charge was waved off. He was also exempted from paying the customs charges in Nigeria. On his return, the power of God began to move mightily through him. Right from the airport, as members of the church came to welcome him, people that shook his hands were slain by the power of God right there at the tarmac. This was just the beginning.

Benson's life and ministry was faced with a lot of opposition and criticism. Once when he had to travel out of Benin for a while he put an elder in charge of the church. He was informed later that the elder had been made the head of the church removing him completely. He returned and did not make any trouble. He believed that if his time was over in that church then God had another plan for him. One by one, all those who were part of that conspiracy went down either with sickness, death or loss of their family members. The elder who took his place initially later relocated to another town. God vindicated him. When he began a new building in a bigger land, some elders went and removed the foundation stones claiming his desire to build a 500 person capacity hall was outrageous. They wanted him to build a 50 person capacity hall. When he returned from

the Bible school in America God's power flowed mightily through him and great crowds flooded Benson's church which now had various branches around Benin and Nigeria.

This made many pastors very angry with him and they blamed him for stealing their members. In a meeting that they convened and invited Benson to, they ordered him to return their members to their churches. To this he said he did not need to tell any sheep where to go as all he did was to grow grass and the sheep came. A journalist that was among the pastors threatened to write stories about him that would destroy him and his ministry. He went ahead with those stories but the stories made people come to see if they were true and by the power of God that they saw they were saved and joined the church also. When he was to start airing his programme Redemption Hour on national television the woman in charge at the station said that it would not be aired even over her dead body. Benson told her that she would be alive to see the program on air. Shortly after this encounter she was removed from her position in the station due to fraudulent practices and the new person that took her position permitted the programme to come on air.

When he was to build a branch known as Miracle Centre, at Airport Road Benin, the head of the military hospital that was close by wanted to resist him claiming that the noise from his church would disturb his patients. Benson told him that the noise from the airplanes were far more than what may come from his church and that nothing was going to stop him from building the church. Miracle Centre was the largest branch at that time.

Much later the government wanted to demolish the structure to enable them expand the airport. Benson went on air and declared that no one could destroy what God had built. The government later altered their plan and many other buildings were demolished but Miracle Center was left untouched.

When Benson returned from the Bible School, the testimonies that met his new passion and zeal were outstanding. He organized outreach crusades both within and outside Nigeria. These crusades had great crowds and awesome manifestations of God's power. He used stadiums and venues that had never been used for such programmes and gathered crowds that had never been gathered before. There were healings and miracles that were great and phenomenal. Some people even got healed on their way home after his crusades. He caused a great spiritual revolution in countries like Australia, Zaire, Kenya, Ghana, Togo and Liberia.

Government officials and dignitaries often attended his crusades. He later began a Bible School: All Nations for Christ Bible Institute that attracted students from all over the world to be trained for missions and world evangelism. He began a very successful TV ministry programme called: Redemption Hour and via this medium he reached about 50 million people every week. This was the first of its kind in all of Africa. The zeal and passion grew and spread to millions around the world. He practically reached and touched the world by God's greater power within him.

From the analysis of his life as stated in this book it is evident that Benson Idahosa was a man of great zeal and passion for God and the salvation of souls by the gospel. He was a man of faith. He was a man of prayer. He heard and heeded to God's voice. He was very hard working and his passion for knowledge was outstanding. He was humble and knew when to seek for advice and counsel. He liked to mobilize and work with people because he knew that the work was enormous. He showed great boldness and wisdom in handling criticism and opposition. He was a great father, husband and leader

### **Conversion and Early Ministry**

Benson had earlier attempted to join one of the Benin City Churches like the Salvation Army Mission, rather than worship his family idols. But the messages preached Sunday after Sunday failed to convince him about becoming a Christian<sup>8</sup>. He resorted to playing football in a nearby school with friends.<sup>9</sup> On one such Sunday in 1958, his life took a twist towards God in a mysterious encounter. He was trying to kick a ball through a classroom window; his aim being to hit the Pastor who was preaching there to his few converts. After several attempts at the Pastor, the ball hit the window and bounced back on his own chest and he collapsed and fainted. The Pastor eventually took him into the Church and prayed for him and he revived. After recognizing the miracle, he immediately surrendered his life to the Lord and was converted at the age nineteen.<sup>10</sup> Thus he became the first Bini to be saved into this little gathering of the Assembly of God Church (AOGC).

This experience of the healing power of God which led to his conversion, soon became a propelling force for his faith. <sup>11</sup>observed that as a young convert he quickly became very zealous in winning souls and in conducting outreaches in villages around Benin City. The change was very dramatic and urgent in the way he responded to the leading of God. <sup>12</sup>also observed that he immediately began to preach the Word of God and did it earnestly. The people called him “Little pastor” he began to make a stir with the signs and wonders following his utterances, prayers and supplications.<sup>13</sup>

Under the Assemblies of God Church, the mentoring relationship that existed between him and his pastor was such that it impacted the missional mentoring in Benson’s own later ministry. In mentoring, leadership is a relationship in which one person seeks to influence the thought, behaviour, beliefs or values of another person.<sup>14</sup> Though this mentoring relationship was short-lived, Okpo had a great influence on Benson. Wright observed that leadership is about influence and service.<sup>145</sup> Benson was an ardent student of the Bible and a zealous Christian in his new-found faith in this congregation under the leadership of his Pastor. Garlock stressed that, With Pastor Okpo’s encouragement, he began organizing teams of workers, whose duty was mainly to pray and singing gospel songs to create awareness of Jesus Christ, within the neighbourhood where they intend to evangelise and going into the villages surrounding Benin City to preach the gospel that radically changed the life of his hearers.

He developed so fast in faith by sharing scripture with prospective converts and Christians. Obadan noted that, ‘he soon became a Sunday School teacher in the AOGC in Benin City, where he rose to the rank of a superintendent, as a result of his quest for the knowledge of the Lord.’ Garlock observed that, ‘Where education was concerned, he put all his effort into studying the Bible with Pastor Okpo or reading any book and study aids he can get his hands on.’ In one such teaching he heard about the Holy Ghost baptism and speaking in unknown tongues from Okpo. He demanded to have hands laid on him, and consequently received the blessing of the Spirit’s baptism. He felt submerged in the presence of the Holy Spirit and it was more profound than anything Benson had yet experienced. It was a powerful reinforcement of his Christian faith.

After this Pentecostal experience, Benson served in the Assemblies of God Church in various capacities, such as the evangelism team, Sunday school and prayer fellowship with signs, wonders and miracles.<sup>15</sup> Through the mentoring of Pastor Okpo, he was encouraged to evangelise his own Bini people and won many to Christ. This cream of converts included his wife-to-be, formerly Margret Izevbigie, (now Margret Benson Idahosa) who was initially sceptical about Benson’s “new religion” (faith) but when she saw the miracle of her niece being raised to life from the dead, she was immediately convinced and accepted Jesus as Lord and later became Benson’s wife.

At the age of twenty-one, Benson was offered an opportunity to work at the Bata shoe company Nigeria, as a store assistant, in order to earn some wages to support himself. This new job did not affect his love and commitment towards his Church and God, rather it enhanced his faith so much that he gave twenty per cent of his monthly earnings to the Church, kept a small amount for personal effects and saved the rest. He asked village chiefs for permission to preach to their subjects about the saving power of Jesus Christ. In these outreaches, he prayed for the sick and several miracles were recorded and many became attracted to his meetings, as they witnessed God's power of healing.

Earlier in 1962, a prayer and Bible study group was formed and named Calvary Fellowship at a shop in Ivbizua Street, behind Barclay's bank on Mission Road, Benin City, under Rev Edgar Perkins and Pastor Okotie as Pastors in Charge. The Fellowship was officially inaugurated in 1965. Later Edgar Perkins approached the leaders of AGOC to release Benson Idahosa to help this group with their work, in what he regarded as a "Macedonian call for help." Benson Idahosa was immediately deployed to this fellowship as the new leader and pastor: a golden opportunity to showcase his leadership gift, as Benson realized.

### **Establishment of the Church of God Mission International (CGMi)**

Before the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970, Benson Idahosa was already in charge of this Calvary Fellowship; he began to experience a tremendous response in this prayer and Bible study group. He had a night vision where a voice spoke to him clearly, “I have called you that you might take the gospel around the world in my name,” the voice said in a strong, assuring tone. “Preach the gospel, and I will confirm my Word with signs following.” Garlock emphasized Benson’s account of the scene as follow, ‘The room seemed charged with the presence of God as he fell to his knees beside the bed.’ In response he prayed, “Lord whatever you say do, I am going to do.”<sup>17</sup> He prayed through the night, renewing his own vows to God and interceded for his people who had a deep need to hear the message of salvation.<sup>18</sup> With many other visions and dreams following and his Pastor providing guidance and direction about the plan of God for his life, he set out to search for a new location and got a small storehouse on 26th Forestry Road, Benin City, which he paid for with his own money. He moved the little prayer and Bible study group to this new location.<sup>19</sup>

As more people began to attend Benson Idahosa’s meetings at the little storehouse fellowship, he was compelled to seek for an alternative location. He began to pray concerning a new location for the overflowing fellowship and was directed in a night dream, as he put it:

I had a dream, and in this dream, I saw a side street branching off a main road at the Iyaro district of Benin City, behind the former science faculty of University of Benin. Trooping

out of this street towards the main road was a large crowd of people. They seemed to be happy people. Then I woke up, and as I was puzzling over the dream I had, the Lord spoke very clearly to me. He said, “In that place is some vacant land which I have kept for myself to begin a work for my glory.”<sup>20</sup>



Source: Picture showing the Church of God Mission taken by the researcher

To Benson Idahosa, the dream was wonderful, but the voice that spoke to him after the dream was more incredible: to hear God giving audible direction to a vacant piece of land along the University of Benin area in the Iyaro district of the City. This he found out to be true, as he claimed, and was the only land in that vicinity at the time. He also found out the owner and negotiated with him a price of four hundred pounds, payable within a month.<sup>157</sup> After appealing to his congregation to contribute towards its purchase, plus his personal savings the land was paid for within a month in April 1970.<sup>21</sup> Thus the plan to start a Church was concluded and they immediately started building. This Church was later known as the “Mother Church” after completion. According to the CGMi revised constitution, ‘What is now called Church of God Mission International was officially established on the 26th October, 1968 at No 26 Forestry Road, Benin City.

Later, Benson decided to register the Church under the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). With a vision to reach about sixty nations of the world and hold six crusades yearly, it became obvious to add the word “International” to the originally proposed Church of God Mission. The ministry was incorporated on the 18th day of September, 1974. S. G. Elton, who by this time had become his mentor and spiritual guide, helped to select the first Board of Trustees (Elders). The Trustee Membership comprised three individuals namely, Benson A. Idahosa, as Chairman, Akinjobi O. and Ekubor R. A. (deceased) as members.<sup>23</sup> The church was registered under the Land Perpetual Succession Act and Certificate No 1245 was issued, with ownership rights

vested in the members. However, a series of changes occurred over time in respect of the Board of Trustee membership.

Pastor Okpo until this time had great influence on Benson's work. Garlock observed that, 'He (Benson) was not keen about the exclusivism that exists in his relationship with the AGO C. He decided to be an independent denomination with every right, but needed a spiritual overseer.' Benson Idahosa claimed to have been directed by God to go to Sydney Granville Elton, who later became instrumental in Benson Idahosa's breakthrough in Ministry. Benson Idahosa's exploration into the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ began with his connection to this missionary. Elton, a Welsh Pentecostal missionary, came to Nigeria in 1954 as a missionary of the Apostolic Church but separated from it when he joined the Latter Rain Movement. Ogbu Kalu observed that, 'Elton lived as an apostle who discerned the new Christian temper of the nation and chose to rear those young firebrands.'<sup>25</sup> He was among the stream of missionaries who came to help in the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) revival of the 1930s to the 1960s, but later became a strong resource person who mentored the spiritually thirsty Nigerian Christian converts by teaching them how to carry out the work of God and minister in the power of the Holy Spirit. Elton's contact with the United States led to the invitation from leading American evangelists visiting Nigeria to hold evangelistic crusades in the 1950s and 1960s.

His adopted home at Ileshia, Osun State, Nigeria, attracted many who needed spiritual direction and guidance as emerging Pentecostal leaders, like Benson Idahosa.

After Elton heard Benson Idahosa's request for spiritual guidance, he gave his consent and offered to put him in touch with Gordon and Freda Lindsay in America.<sup>26</sup> Therefore to prove the veracity of what they witnessed, Lindsay offered him a scholarship, to study at the "Christ for the Nations Institute (CFNI)" in Dallas, USA. Elton was used to obtain help from this American preacher to roof Benson's building which was officially dedicated by Elton and Lindsay on March 21st 1971. Benson Idahosa was also officially ordained into ministry as a "Reverend" the same day under the prophetic words of Elton to Lindsay, saying that, "I believe this man is going to be a key man in the work of God in Nigeria, I think we ought to ordain him into the ministry" Lindsay affirmed instantly that, 'I think God has raised him up to do a mighty work in this country.' These two men were used prophetically to forecast the future of Benson Idahosa and the work he was to do in Nigerian Pentecostalism and African Christianity in general.

In order to established God's total control over Benin City and its environs, he attempted to introduce crusades and to hold open-air meetings, which were ideas he derived from some tracts and Faith Digest magazines he read from the numerous publications of T. L Osborn, and from personal letters of encouragement from Osborn to Idahosa 1961/62.<sup>28</sup> Uzamere says 'Crusades were rare in Benin in Christian circles in the 1960s. The older Churches were a cloistered group of people feeling quite "superior" to

their heathen brothers and sisters. Benson Idahosa's style was the opposite in this regard. He had come to release the captives and direct them towards God with whom he encouraged a personal relationship. Not long after, his Church meetings began to witness increase in growth numerically. His fame soared and a Church was born.<sup>29</sup> From this report it will be observed that Idahosa adopted approaches not very common among the existing Churches within his vicinity, thereby creating room for the emergence and growth of the CGMi. These included prayer, and aggressive evangelism with the Holy Spirit's power to perform miracles, his motto was "Evangelism is our Supreme Task,"<sup>30</sup> making soul-winning his chief concern. He worked towards it and pointed people to God, concerned about their opportunity for a divine relationship. This mission to change Benin City, spelt out by Benson Idahosa was the beginning of his missional evangelistic ministry leadership.

Apart from the cultic powers that challenged Benson's missional leadership and ministry, he also boldly challenged anything that was inimical to the gospel within the Benin vicinity. Obadan noted that, 'Benson was opposed to the customs and traditions that compel everybody to shave off their hair for the death of the "Oba of Benin" (the traditional Monarch).'<sup>31</sup> According to Vincent Iyawe he confronted the unproductive and unscriptural cultures of traditional institutions (such as earlier described at the beginning of this narrative). This caused provocation from these institutions to try to stop Benson in many ways. For instance, robbers were hired to kill him, ritual sacrifices and coffins were

placed at his door signifying his death or destruction by the Bini gods, but this never happened. The government of the day later intervened with a decree for all secret cult activities to cease in the country and that all government officials involved should either withdraw or resign their appointment. Benson Idahosa's ministry counteracting these powerful occult kingdoms established him and his Church as a new means of protection for many within the Benin area, so they sought solace under the God Benson preached about.

According to Matthew Ojo, upon his return from States in 1972, he took up the practice of Church-planting, and within a short time had planted satellite Churches around Benin City. Elton, his mentor was particularly keen on Church-planting as a means of expanding his own work and influence in Nigeria, and he found Benson Idahosa a good disciple.<sup>180</sup> Benson's Church-planting skills were motivated by Elton and his training at Dallas. Ojo noted that, 'The crusades and Church-planting concept launched Idahosa into the limelight as an energetic itinerant Pentecostal minister in the country. He soon became a favourite preacher in many Pentecostal activities.'<sup>32</sup> The growth experienced in Benin City led Benson to relocate for the third time from the "Miracle Centre" on airport road in 1986. After completing the third building at Faith Way, G.R.A, known as the "Faith Arena Church" in Benin City, it became the new headquarters of the CGMi. The current leadership renamed it "Global Headquarters." Thus CGMi gained popularity across the nation. Garlock observed that,

Benson who came literally from the oblivion of a garbage heap to a position of leadership now head over more than three hundred churches by the end of 1975. He was now director of a Bible school, pastor of the largest Pentecostal Church in Benin City perhaps in all of Africa and speaker for one of the most popular TV programmes in the nation.<sup>33</sup>

With such unprecedented growth and expansion within the country, Benson expanded his TV programme beyond Benin City to Warri, Lagos, Ibadan and even a few nearby countries began to be reached by either radio or television such as Ghana, Togo, Dahomey (now Benin Republic), and Cameroon. An increasing number of crusades were conducted in various parts of Nigeria, more congregations of CGMi Churches continued to proliferate and Benson's mentor, Elton, was fully involved with Benson in the crusade programmes, in a way similar to the Biblical type of relationship between Barnabas and Paul or Paul and Silas (Acts 13-14 and 16).

### **Establishment of Idahosa World Outreach – (IWO MEDIA)**

While Benson was in US, he read a book written by T. L. Osborn on world evangelisation in contrast to world population growth rate. The book statistically concluded that 'If more labourers do not volunteer for greater soul winning, we shall lose the world and our liberty to evangelize.'<sup>34</sup> The understanding gained from his studies provoked his desire to return to his country. The book became the motivating source for

Benson Idahosa's global soul-winning burden for more missionary evangelistic crusade meetings in order to draw many into God's kingdom from the lost world. On his return from the USA, Benson Idahosa still had this burden to win more souls for the kingdom. He consulted his mentor, Elton, and his Church elders about his intention to hold the first City-wide crusade using the Benin City stadium, also known as "Ogbe Stadium" for five days – February 25th-29th, 1972. A series of other crusades soon followed, which included T. L. Osborn's "miracle crusade" at Idia College playing field in 1974, where great miracles of healing and thousands professing Christ as their Saviour were recorded, so the Church grew with over 700 attending.<sup>35</sup>

The success of the T. L. Osborn's crusade this according to Ogbu opened the door to Benson's Television programme popularly known as "Redemption Hour," Gaiya argued that Benson Idahosa was the first to begin televangelism; Obadan also noted that he was the first to put the Bible on television in Nigeria. Although Kalu argued that, 'The electronic Church era that began in the 1950s with Billy Graham, Rex Humbard and Oral Roberts' television broadcast, spilled over to Nigeria through Jim and Timmy Bakker's Praise the Lord Club (PTL) through the ministry of Benson Idahosa.' The television ministry led Benson to set up an organisation for that purpose, the Idahosa World Outreach (IWO).

Apart from the television and radio programmes that created awareness of Benson's evangelistic ministry, he took the crusade missions to other African nations in

order to ignite the Holy Spirit's fire, burning in Nigeria, in them. With his missional statement: "Evangelism our supreme task," he pushed the frontiers of his crusades to Accra, Kumasi and Tema, in Ghana, where crusades were held in 1977. The effect of these crusades attracted many young Ghanaians to Benin City, where they were trained as Church leaders through scholarships from Benson; details will be discussed in section three under training institutions in CGMi.

Benson's evangelistic crusading was not limited to Africa alone. He went into East Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and the USA, which became his second country after Nigeria. These nations' crusade tours fulfilled the vision he had from God at the earlier stage of his ministry: "I have called you that you might take the gospel around the world in my name." Benson claimed to have followed God in obedience to the letter and God confirmed his predicted word about his ministry.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DEMISE AND LEGACIES**

#### **ARCHBISHOP MARGARET BENSON-IDAHOSSA AS THE MANDATORY GENERAL OFFICER**

Benson Idahosa's ministry spanned over three decades and impacted millions of lives across Africa and beyond. He founded the Church of God Mission International, which grew to become one of the largest Pentecostal churches in Africa. The church has many branches across Nigeria and has spread to other countries such as Ghana, Togo, and Liberia. Apart from his pastoral work, Idahosa was also a renowned teacher and author. He founded the Benson Idahosa University, which is one of the leading Christian universities in Nigeria. He wrote several books, including "Faith for Prosperity," "Count Your Blessings," and "Breaking the Spirit of Poverty<sup>1</sup>."

Idahosa's legacy is not just limited to his ministry and education but also to his humanitarian work. He was a strong advocate for social justice, and he fought against poverty and oppression. He established several outreach programs, including a school for the deaf, a rehabilitation center for drug addicts, and a center for the physically challenged. Benson Idahosa was a trailblazer and a pioneer of African Christianity. He challenged the traditional African beliefs and practices that were contrary to the Gospel

of Jesus Christ. He was instrumental in the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa and played a significant role in breaking down the barriers of colonialism and racism<sup>2</sup>.

Idahosa's message of faith, prosperity, and social justice resonated with many Africans, who saw him as a beacon of hope. He inspired many young African pastors and evangelists, who have continued to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ across the continent. His legacy lives on, and his impact on African Christianity continues to be felt. He continues to speak loudly even in death. What many do not know is that he actually described in vivid terms how he was to depart when his time was over and that was exactly what happened on the day he died at the ripe young age of 59 years and 6 months. Leke Beecroft brings together the description by Idahosa in one of his sermons<sup>3</sup> “Benefit of Death” of his death with the day he actually died as documented in The Week magazine editions of 17 and 30 March 1998 for the first time ever in his forthcoming book, as yet another evidence that as controversial as he might have seemed, truly, Idahosa was a man of God. “I will go when my work is finished; therefore when I am gone nobody should be double-minded concerning the will of God for my death. I am going to go by the will of God, not the will of witches or wizards. No man can kill me. Many have tried to hurt me spiritually and physically to no avail<sup>4</sup>.

God has not given the key of the vault in which he has hidden me to any man or devil. He did not invest so much in me only to hand me over to the devil to fulfil his dark and unholy idiosyncracies. I am indestructible by the grace of God, so are you if you

know my Jesus. You know, here in Edo land, I do not know about you and where you come from, but here in Edo land, where I am from, when a man dies, the wife is always accused of having killed him.

I share a beautiful life with my wife Margaret, at least as beautiful as my human nature and God's grace in my life can make it. She is not dreaming of killing me-she is the flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones, the wife of my youth and the mother of my lovely four children. No, when I go it will be by the will and call of God. You may ask if I am preparing to die<sup>5</sup>. Not at all. I hope to live for at least one hundred and twenty years. I look forward to when I will hobble into the church with my walking stick and sit back on my big chair to listen and watch my children in the ministry show forth the stuff which God has invested in them through the ministry of God committed to me. But, and this is the big But... if the Lord calls me before then, if He calls me NOW, I am ready to answer "Here I am O Lord" with joy and expectation because death is gain. Yes, yes! Ha, I see heaven open and the voice that I hear says "Come up hither!" My going will be a Glorious one, I will NOT be sick and be taken from one hospital to the other. Like Elijah, whew! I will be gone before you can say Jack Robinson<sup>6</sup>.

No. Nobody will mourn me with regret because of a prolonged illness. Nobody will have the pleasure of sympathising with me because of long suffering; that is one of the gifts which I do not have: the gift of Lo-o-ong suffering! When my day comes, I may be sitting with people in the Church and will go when I hear the call like Rev. Gordon

Lindsay did. It is a glorious way to depart. I MAY BE WITH PEOPLE AT HOME AND WHILE WE ARE TALKING, I WILL BE GONE JUST LIKE THAT. That will be a precious death". On Thursday, the 12th March, 1998, Idahosa started the day as busy as always. In his office he asked for a cup of tea which he did not drink up. He told one of his staff members; "I am going home". This was not strange. But when he repeated it unnecessarily, there was a reason to suspect the unusual but no notice was taken of it. Later that afternoon, at lunch with his guests, he spoke about heaven. He asked them whether they believed it was possible for one to walk to heaven like Elijah did? He said he would prefer to be translated like Enoch and Elijah<sup>7</sup>.

He told them he had a heavenly drink in his cup. He took the "pure heaven" juice on the table and drank from it, making a humorous statement about going to heaven. The drink tasted like heaven's drink he told his guests. His high sense of humour was on parade.

On that day he had received "members of an educational foundation team from the U.S.-based Oral Roberts University" at the Christian Faith University after ministering in church. He excused himself to go to Miracle Centre, his Church office and prayed with different segments of people at the Church Office and including the Bible School students before he went back to meet his guests at home. It was a busy period at the headquarters of CGMII, the Archbishop had just returned from one of his many tours, this time from the UK. Members of the Oral Robert University Educational Fellowship

(OREF) were at the headquarters of Word of Faith Group of Schools for the yearly OREF program. They were led by Professor Don Petri, a friend of the Benson Idaho University and a Professor of Christian Education at the Oral Robert University. Both he and all the American participants at the conference were guests at the Archbishop's home. It was an early afternoon and Idaho and his guests were at the table. A characteristic humour of the Archbishop eliciting laughter and chatter punched with the lunch. It was a sumptuous meal and both local and international guests were satisfied. Then a fruit juice was passed around in packets of which were printed the brand name<sup>8</sup> "pure heaven".

The caption started another round of conversation. It was about heaven. Then suddenly, there was a hush as the archbishop broke into the good natured conversation and asked. "how many of you are ready to go to heaven right now? You see he continued; "all Christians talk about heaven and its beauty and desirability but not one is prepared to go there straight away". I have news for you. I am prepared to go to heaven right now, anyone going with me? Everyone was silent. The mood of the diners changed and went to their rooms. The Archbishop called for Professor Don Petri to join him in one of the mainly sitting rooms in the new Benson Idaho University. He indicated those aspects of the master plan he had implemented and requested the professor to continue from where he was ending<sup>9</sup>. Yet Professor Don Petri did not understand the meaning of the Archbishop's words. The Archbishop was the symbol of the university. It could not have entered the mind of anybody that he would be translated a few minutes after.

Shortly after he had spoken instructing a deaconess on what the guests should eat for dinner, he began to repeat the words ‘Thank you Jesus’ then suddenly threw his head back on the easy chair and gave up the ghost. Professor Don Petri did not immediately understand until he saw the body slumping off the chair then Don Petri rushed at him calling for help and laying him on the rug. He tried all the resuscitation techniques that he knew but to no avail, they called for help from the Faith MediPlex but the doctors testified that from the moment he hissed that sigh of relief, he had clearly departed. His going was an air of finality which the doctors knew but could not admit. He was not sick. He never had high blood pressure. He was never down. Even the doctors were surprised that he died because he was not sick at all<sup>10</sup>”.

### **Archbishop Margaret Benson-Idahosa**

Margaret Idahosa (born 29 July 1943) is a Nigerian preacher, author and the Archbishop of the Church of God Mission International. She is the first African female Archbishop. She is the wife of the late Archbishop Benson Idahosa. She is the Chancellor of Benson Idahosa University. She was conferred with the Officer of the Order of Niger (OON) by the federal government of Nigeria in 2008. Margret Idahosa was born on 29 July 1943 to a royal family in Benin Kingdom of Edo State, Nigeria. She obtained a Diploma in Home Economics from Leeds Polytechnic in the United Kingdom. She obtained a master's degree in Divinity from Friends International Christian University. She also has Masters of Education degree which she acquired from Oral Roberts

University, Oklahoma, USA. She was inducted into the ministry on 24 May 1983, and became a bishop on 5 April 1998. She was married to the late Archbishop Benson Idahosa, the founder of the Church of God Mission International. She is the author of *The Womb of harvest*, *Tearing the veil*, *The Female minister*, and *Expansion without Limit*. Idahosa is the first Nigerian woman to be ordained as archbishop and the first female chancellor of a university in Africa (Benson Idahosa University).<sup>11</sup> She became an archbishop in November 2009. Archbishop Margaret Benson-Idahosa was born into the Royal lineage of the Benin Kingdom. She was ordained into the ministry on the 24th of May, 1983 and consecrated Bishop on the 5th of April, 1998. This position makes her the first female Pentecostal Bishop of a ministry of this magnitude in Africa, she was consecrated as Archbishop in November, 2009.

Together with her husband, she has preached the gospel of Jesus Christ in more than 140 nations covering all major continents of the world. She is not just a female preacher; she is a father and mother to many spiritual children all over the world. Her vision and mission is to "reach the *unreached*" irrespective of whether they are in the desert or riverine creeks. Since her consecration as Bishop, she has frequently travelled to America, Europe and parts of Africa and in communities far-flung from major towns and cities preaching, teaching and healing the sick<sup>12</sup>.

Archbishop Margaret Benson-Idahosa's love for children and the strong belief that they be trained and raised properly led to the establishment of the Word of Faith Group of

Schools, which now has more than one hundred (100) branches all over Nigeria. She also has to her credit an Orphanage for abandoned babies. The women's arm of the ministry, which goes by the name Christian Women Fellowship International (CWFI) is a non-denominational body founded by Archbishop Idahosa, to teach the woman how to discover their true potential, to be a good mother, wife and an instrument for end-time evangelism<sup>13</sup>. Members of this body can be found in the Americas, Europe, Africa and Nigeria. In line with this is the building of a multipurpose facility called the Restoration Centre with a capacity to seat more than 10,000 women. This centre will serve as conference venue, office space, a skill acquisition centre and a place to rehabilitate destitute young women. Thousands have been delivered from the bondage of evil tradition, spiritually and have been economically empowered. A recent addition to the Restoration Centre is a Mobile Medical Clinic which offers free medical services to rural dwellers<sup>14</sup>.

### **Establishment of Benson Idahosa University**

Benson Idahosa University (BIU) is a private, Christian university in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. Previously named Christian Faith University (CFU), it was renamed in honor of Archbishop Benson Idahosa, a Charismatic Pentecostal minister from Benin City, Nigeria, and reflects his evangelical beliefs. He was the first president of the university. The current president of Benson Idahosa University, Rt. Rev. (Dr.) Faith

Emmanuel Benson Idahosa, son of Benson Idahosa, is the Bishop of CGMi Faith Arena and Co-ordinator, Next Generation Leadership of the Church of God Mission<sup>15</sup>.

Bensin Idahisa University is accredited by Nigeria's higher education accreditation body, the National Universities Commission (NUC). Benson Idahosa University has maintained an enviable record in sports. BIU has maintained the best performance by any private university in Nigeria in all editions of Nigerian Private Universities Games, Nigerian Universities Games and West African Universities Games. At the dedication of the multi-purpose main auditorium, the founder, Archbishop Benson Andrew Idahosa, said "in 1978, God told me I was going to build a university to the glory of his majesty... only God could have done that, as building a university in Nigeria then was the preserve of Federal and State Governments in Nigeria."

The university commenced its academic programmes as Christian Faith University-Institute of Continuous Learning in 1993 at the Ugbor Campus. Successful candidates were admitted into two faculties—Basic Sciences and Management Sciences. National diploma degrees were awarded to students on completion of a two-year programme in affiliation with University of Benin, Benin City and Edo State University, Ekpoma (now Ambrose Alli University, Edo State)<sup>16</sup>.



Source: Pictures showing the Benson Idahosa University taken by the researcher

The head of management was referred to as the rector. The rector was Prof. Uche Gbenedio. With support from Mike Okagbare, the registrar, and Mr. Adams, the bursar. Candidates were admitted into programmes in Computer Science, Computer Technology, Agriculture, Accounting, Economics and Political Science. The university was later named "Benson Idahosa University" in 1998. In the 1999/2000 academic session, BIU had three faculties Faculty of Basic and Applied Sciences, Faculty of Social and Management Sciences and Faculty of Arts and Education. The university received the required license to operate as a private university in Nigeria from the National Universities Commission in February 2002. The university's fourth faculty is the Faculty of Law, which currently has provisional accreditation from the Council of Legal Education<sup>17</sup>.

In August 2015, BIU opened its second campus, popularly known as Legacy Campus, Okha, with the movement of Faculty of Agriculture and Agricultural Technologies in August 2015, and commencement of Faculty of Engineering in September 2015. Prof. Ben Anyata became the First Dean, Faculty of Engineering in February 2015. In May 2018, Prof. Sam Guobadia, the acting Vice Chancellor, announced the commencement of a new faculty, the Faculty of Basic Medical and Health Sciences, which is proposed to house the department of Medical Lab Sciences and Nursing.

## **Faith Clinic**

Benson believed that through faith anything was possible, therefore whatever happened in the Bible could happen again<sup>19</sup>. These are the facts upon which he based his faith prosperity teachings. He asserts that, ‘...each life changing decision must be based on faith in God...through faith we know God worked out a better purpose for us.’ Brouwer and Gilford noted that, ‘Idahosa claimed that his faith had brought him so many clothes he did not know he had them; a car that even Nigeria’s President Babangida could not match. He usually gives his listeners hope that God can also bless them too.’

Benson was known among many scholars as a preacher whose theology focused on the doctrine of faith, prosperity and deliverance. Kalu Ogbu stressed that, ‘Benson brought theological education that sponsored a large group of African students who spread the faith and deliverance theology throughout the continent.’ Benson described faith as trusting God to bring you to life’s highest point<sup>20</sup>. He added also that, faith is the active force which draws the line between success and failure. As he expands on this subject of faith, he noted, as Kenyon asserts that, ‘what you have under-developed in you has no value,’ so faith that changes destiny must be developed to its full potential. The hallmark of his leadership authority was the “faith message” he proclaimed throughout Nigeria and around the globe. In his testimonies, as he highlighted in one of his books:

By faith, I have preached to more white people than any black man ever born. By faith, I have preached to more black people than any white preacher has done in my

generation. By faith, I had asked for and obtained bank loans to execute projects for God's Church – I had collected the money before obtaining the necessary forms to fill to make request for the loan! By faith, I once decreed the postponement of a court ruling, by asking God to keep the Judge away from court, and God honoured his Word from my mouth.

The dynamics of faith power applied by Idahosa in his ministry work were a strong indication of the leadership authority he demonstrated in his career as a Pentecostal preacher. Faith propelled his evangelistic crusades and Church planting ministries for CGMi and trained emerging leaders for nations across the globe and he won countless hundreds of thousands to the Kingdom of God. He believed that faith gives you the authority to speak for God and situations around you. Thousands of testimonies are written in them to confirm the call of God on him and his message of faith.





Source: Pictures of the faith clinic taken by the researcher

## ENDNOTES

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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

This research has shed light on salient issues for analysing the relevance of Faith-Based Organization in nation building. Religion is a source of motivation that spurs its adherents to give generously to the poor and strive in their actions to eradicate inequalities. For many communities their religious believes go a long way to their world view, which invariably influences their notions on how the world should be, which

consequently affect their concepts of development. FBOs appear to have advantages over comparable secular institutions in helping individuals overcome difficult circumstances like imprisonment and drug abuse. FBOs provide an anchor giving meaning to various forms of human experiences, life, and actions.

FBOs contribute to sustainable development through the nurturing of human conscience for honesty, transparency, and the common good. Faith Based Organizations have the capacity to promote a more holistic perspective of development that acknowledges the spiritual and material input in human development. Despite the challenges inhibiting the contribution of FBOs towards development, it remains an important agent for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Benson Idahosa as a charismatic leader founded a movement, graced with the gifts of the Spirit. Signs, wonders and miracles characterised his ministry, and attracted followers around him, resulting in CGMi. He had a missional focus on evangelistic activities for soul-winning through crusades and a Church-planting concept which drove his passion. The outcome was massive growth and expansion which led to the proliferation of local churches within Nigeria and beyond. CGMi developed its theology and doctrines based on the charismatic gifts of the Spirit. Partly, this was the result of Benson's initial relationship with the Assemblies of God Church (AOGC), where his conversion occurred: he was later influenced by the Word of Faith Movement (WOFM). His leadership practice was based on mentoring and discipleship as the means of

imparting grace for ministry to his followers. Benson was equally connected with the International Communion of Charismatic Churches (ICCC), who had dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. Through this influence he caught the vision of ecclesiastical leadership. CGMi as a movement, decided to adopt episcopal leadership with its titles, but Benson claimed that while adopting the titles, ‘nothing else has changed but titles.’ He understood institutional hierarchy as a non-essential (but necessary) element for organising the movement. However, the imposition of structures in the movement changed the way leadership was understood and operated, resulting in what Weber refers to as ‘routinization of charisma.’ This marked a new phase for the movement’s leadership, which now entered into a dialectic tension in its transition, thus beginning the journey towards a settled institutional church.

This study has revealed that he established the church of God mission international and has branches across many Cities and states in Nigeria. One of his major legacies is the establishment of Benson Idahosa University, Faith Clinic etc

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Rev. Emmanuel Asekhaumo	66 years	Pastor	Church Auditorium	10 <sup>th</sup> March, 2025
Pastor Aloysius Ainoyomoh	56 years	Pastor	Church Auditorium	10 <sup>th</sup> March, 2025
Owarieta Oghene Tehiri Sylvester	25 years	Student	BIU Campus	10 <sup>th</sup> March, 2025
Rev. Victor Osarumwense Orumwense	59 years	Pastor	Church Office	10 <sup>th</sup> March, 2025
Rev Tari Hudson Ekiyor	50 years	Acting Administrative officer	Church Office	10 <sup>th</sup> March, 2025
Elder Anthony. E	61 years	Deacon	Church Auditorium	11 <sup>th</sup> March 2025
Pastor Aghedo A.	59 years	Pastor	Church Auditorium	11 <sup>th</sup> March 2025
Godwin Dan	31 years	Student	BIU Campus	11 <sup>th</sup> March 2025
Blessing Alex	23 years	Student	BIU campus	11 <sup>th</sup> March 2025
Samuel Obasohan	37 years	Church Staff	Church Auditorium	11 <sup>th</sup> March
Tolulope Ajisafe	29 years	Student	BIU campus	11 <sup>th</sup> March 2025
Miss Faith Omosi	42 years	Church Staff	Church Auditorium	11 <sup>th</sup> March 2025
Gloria Orukpe	56 years	Church Elder	Church Auditorium	11 <sup>th</sup> March 2025
Godsfavour Aliu	27 years	Church Member	Church Auditorium	11 <sup>th</sup> March 2025
Salvation Obasuyi	27 years	Church	Church	11 <sup>th</sup> March 2025

		Member	Auditorium	
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