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Josiah Olunowo  
Ositelu

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1890-1966

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This author was privileged to know Primate Oshitelu when as a ten-year-old, my father used to send me to him to ask for spiritual answers and solutions from him. I recall him now as a serene and humble man of God. He was born 15 May 1890, at Ogere, Ijebu Remo Division of present day the Ogun State of Nigeria to the family of Ashaye Ositelu of Lisa Chieftaincy House in Ogere. His mother Ejironke hailed from Owo in Ondo State. He was born of pagan parents but he had a call on the night of 19th May 1925. Then he started to see visions and to hear voices. On August 18, 1925, he heard a voice saying, 'as Elijah and Elisha have been anointed, so thou has been anointed and appointed from above.' He then started to pray and fast for about a year and conducted his first open-air revival on 9th June 1929. A certain Pa Somoye counselled him not to use fetish along with the spirit of God, simply to concentrate on prayer and fasting. He obliged and continued to grow in spirit.

Soon he was using holy names revealed to him, including AOWBI SSALLAL (Healer), and other such names. He was expelled from the Church Missionary Society (later Anglican Church) for his views which were not considered to be orthodox. The elders considered that he was introducing erroneous beliefs, practices and teaching and cautioned him. He was adamant and got a dismissal. As for the names, which appeared strange to the church elders he referred to Ezekiel 33:7- 'So I will make my holy name known in the midst of my people.'

He proceeded to form The Church of the Lord with an inaugural meeting at Ogere, Ijebu Remo, on July 30, 1930. Mass evangelical campaigns followed in the Western region of Nigeria. From 1940, he was ably supported in the work of the Ministry by Apostle Adeleke Adejobi. He despatched Adejobi to Sierra Leone and Oduwole to Liberia. Then the two converged to establish the church in Ghana. In 1964 Apostle Adejobi established the church in London. The Foundation of the first branch of the Church in Sierra Leone was laid 6th April 1947 while that of the Church in

Monrovia Liberia happened on 20th April of the same year; with the assistance of Father Olu Abiola.

The tenets of the Church are as follows; Three hourly prayers day and night; meticulous use of the Book of Psalms; use of holy names; special weekly healing clinics. Worship included a thanksgiving; revelations; Rod of Power; holy rosary; use of candles and incense. Prayer and blessing of water were used to cure ailments and diseases. In character the church was seen to be Pentecostal in power; Biblical in pattern; Evangelical and prophetic in Ministry; and ecumenical in outlook.

A unique and pivotal tradition was the TABBORARH, TABORAH OR TABORA. This was revealed to Oshitelu in a vision. It means mountain of power, victory and blessings which the Holy Spirit will descend upon all to the utmost part of the world. This is a gathering of prayers celebrated annually for 13 days beginning 22nd August. Attendees come in white robes with candles lit.

The special anthem is

'The Mount Tabieorar's Festival has come

Mount Tabieorar is gleeful

The spiritual anniversary has come

Meritorious year has come

All hail the King o Glory Praise to the Lord of Mercy'

Succession could take one or two approaches. One for the Primate to proclaim a successor or the Archbishops who are called Prelates are summoned from all over the world to Mount Tabieorar to pray and fast for seven days. No names are put forward. The prayer point is 'God tells us who should be the next Primate.' Church tradition has it that the World Council of Churches gave the church the rare honour of inviting the Church to become a member in 1975. Primate Oshitelu was called up by the Lord 12th July 1966.

Celestial Church of Christ at 70

September 1947-September 2017

Sup. Evang. Banji Oyelakin