

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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

It is not an assumption that many indigenous languages are facing the challenge of relevance in the contemporary global missionary and religious expressions. The Igbo language, for instance is seemingly on the brinks, inspite of the early efforts made by the Anglican (CMS) missionary agents, to translate the Bible for effective communication and expansion of the Gospel among the Igbo people. Unfortunately, many people still celebrate and promote the foreign languages over the indigenous languages, perhaps, as a mark of eliticism. This study evaluates the interplay of Igbo Bible translation with the cultural consciousness of the people. The first chapter introduces the problem and purpose of the study with emphasis on its scope and methodology, which unveils its significance for Igbo identity.

The second chapter employs the qualitative analysis of related literatures, using the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, and the empirical studies to establish the gap that this research fills. The third chapter examines the locale of the research and its enccouter with the Christian missionary activities, while chapter four, which is the body of the study surveys the historical efforts to translate the Bible, especially by the Anglicans, particularly in Igboland. The last two chapters provide the platform for reinterpreting the impacts of Bible translation on the Igbo socio-cultural realities, and the contributions of this study to knowledge, especially for effective Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland.

Evidently, the awareness that language barrier was to pose a major challenge to the planting and expansion of Christianity in the African soil, necessitated the inclusion of,

and in fact the pioneering efforts of the ex-slaves and the natives in the early Anglican (CMS) missionary activities, particularly in Igboland. Since the Bible which is the major instrument of communicating the new religious faith and advancing the expected religious concepts and civilization was originally not documented in languages and forms familiar to the people, the need for translating and transcribing the gospel message into understandable forms through the process of education became obvious for the Anglican missionaries.

It is therefore proper to advance that the course and activities of Anglican missionary expansion, and western colonization, which eventually became a major challenge to the African cultural definition, would have been practically impossible if effective communication were not achieved by breaking the barrier and building the bridge between the language of the missionaries and that of the people. It will be recalled that Christianity, which came to Africa on the wings of western civilization was also inextricably linked with western commerce. The spread of Christianity was therefore a phase of western expansion (Adiele, 1996).

On the note of this relationship between Christianization and Colonization, Anyadele (1966) observes that “as far as the Nigerian peoples were concerned, the administrator and the European missionaries were birds of the same feather and they saw them really flocking together” (p. xvii). Kalu (2003) explicates this further when he said that, “from the start, therefore, evangelical spirituality and manifest biblical obligation to mission were joined to using commerce and civilization as agencies for mission” (p. 55). Indeed, the missionaries were the pathfinders of the European influence. They share most things in common with the colonial masters, including their ideologies and policies.

Among the African communities that received the hard-cracking effect of the language gap between the missionaries and the indigenous recipients were the Igbo of Nigeria. In any case, the 1857 Niger Mission was headed by a non-Igbo speaking Missionary, Samuel Ajai

Crowther, and attention and prominence have often been given to him, almost to the obscurity of the contributions of his other colleagues. There is therefore a yawning gap for the historical explanation of how the missionaries communicated the content of the gospel, which they presented to the Igbo people, who were their primary recipients. This language challenge and the consequent need for Bible translation, and the extent to which the Anglican mission in Igboland has expanded vis-à-vis the latter is what many historians have not given adequate scholarly attention.

Against this backdrop, it has frequently been held by most African historiography that the early European contact with Africa was primarily commercial until about the middle of the nineteenth century. Anyabuike (1996) holds that why the first move to evangelize West Africa failed was because “the first impulse was not stimulated by genuine divine love for the so called ‘be-nighted’ Africans, but by a deep commercial interest, a gold-seeking enthusiasm” (p. 21). Evidently, it was not until Christianity witnessed the wave of spiritual re-awakening of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century in Europe, and the bubbling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men, that the Church was challenged into missionary action. This generated a kind of evangelicalism that demanded a renewed zeal, revivalism and commitment on the part of the individual Christian and a deep and genuine concern for a personal act of conversion.

However, it is remarkable that significant impacts were made upon the socio-cultural lives and the nationalistic consciousness of the people resulting from the expansionistic drives of Anglican missionary activities in various parts of the African societies especially in Igboland. Adiele (1996) therefore maintains that “the evangelization of the Eastern States of Nigeria is not an isolated event but very much linked with the 18<sup>th</sup> Century enlightenment and ideological changes that swept through Europe and America” (p.11). One of the significant products of the period was the avowed criticisms and revolutions against slave trade by the humanitarians and Christians of Europe. Okeke (2006) views that one of “the powers behind this

attempt, was the forceful, persuasive, and persistent argument of Thomas Fowell Buxton, a great British humanitarian” (p.4). Buxton believed that a new approach to the anti-slavery campaign must be sought. His strategy was pragmatic and devised to involve the British Government, the humanitarians, interested business and missionary societies in a cooperative endeavour to stop the slave trade. Hence, the effect of the eventual abolition of the obnoxious slave trade became the springboard upon which missionary activities into the African soil was launched.

However, it had hitherto been thought that the task of “civilizing” Africa was one that would be accomplished by the white man. On the contrary, to achieve a meaningful missionary expansionistic programme, Henry Venn, the then Honorary Secretary of the Church Missionary Society (C. M. S.) from 1841-1872, had advanced the policy of self-governing, self-supporting and self-extending Church. Nmah (2010) corroborates this view, observing that this concept has “indeed improved the situation of the indigenous Churches that transcended the indigenous Churches and gave rise to the economic and political nationalism” (p.486). This concept particularly promoted among the C. M. S. concurs with the missionary consciousness that Africa must be regenerated by the Africans. One major tool to accomplish this must be the understanding and the effective communication of the religious and moral message of the Bible through the medium of the peoples’ language. Hence, the role of Bible translation for Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland becomes significant.

Meanwhile, the story of the expansion of the Anglican missionary work especially among the Igbo of Nigeria would however, be incomplete if the prominent roles of the Igbo ex-slaves and indigenous converts, particularly in the work of interpreting and translating the Bible and other missionary documents, were not given its proper place in Christian historiography. Ajayi (1965) puts it this way:

The planting of Christianity in Igboland could have been too difficult without the presence of the Igbo ex-slaves. The warm reception given to Taylor at Onitsha was because of his Igbo origin. Many of his countrymen surged around him and expressed their delight that he had come back home again. In their language, they said: *Omma ma ngi abia, otuto dora Tsuku* (it is good you came, thanks be to God). (p. 43).

Nothing could better explain the excitement and reception, which the communication of a message receives than the intelligibility of the information contained in the language of its expression. Language and its effective communication has always been an indispensable tool for transferring and inculcating the concepts of various and different knowledge from one person to the other, especially people from different ethnic groupings. For instance, Okadiadi (2008) observed that:

Language is the most effective instrument used by man as he attempts to interpret the phenomena in his daily activities. It has undeniable importance in human affairs even in prayers. Language is an integral part of the culture of any society. (p. 7).

Since translating the Bible involves a consideration of the relationship between hearing and understanding; reading and writing, believing and the making of a people of faith through the message of the Bible, its role for Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland cannot be under-estimated. It is not to be overstated therefore, that it would be impossible to effectively communicate the Gospel message to any people unless the missionary himself was able, not only to master the local tongue of the people but also to understand their worldview and value system. For instance, J. C. Taylor told his experience and those of his missionary colleagues who landed in Akassa of the Niger Delta in 1862 in a personal letter to Henry Venn on January 4, 1862. They were anxious to preach to the people but were greatly handicapped by the fact that they could not

communicate effectively with the indigenes who understood nothing else apart from Akassa or Ijo Language (Tasie: 1996, 62).

There is also the nationalistic dimension to the Anglican missionary endeavour to present their message through the language of the people and the subsequent efforts to translate the Bible into the native languages. Evidently, J. C Taylor's passion for the development of the Igbo language and his repeated press upon the C. M. S. on the importance of producing literature and teaching material in the vernacular has been criticized in some quarters as 'tribally motivated'. Nevertheless, his contribution is nothing short of early nationalistic and identity consciousness, which came along with the roles of the ex-slaves in Anglican missionary expansion. According to Tasie (1996), Taylor would recommend that, "wherever and whenever possible, an African should be deployed to serve in his native area in order to eliminate unnecessary language, psychological and emotional problems" (p. 64). Their major drive was to have the gospel presented and communicated to the people within their own cultural milieu.

Notably, other mission groups such as the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society, the Foreign Mission Committee of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and the Catholic Society of African Missions (C.S.A.M) also laboured among the Igbo of Nigeria within the period of our historical review. The emergence of indigenous Churches and Pentecostal movements in the Nigerian missionary historiography has had its own socio-cultural and nationalistic impacts on the people, especially the Igbo. Thus, every missionary group was confronted with the need to effectively interpret and to translate their message in the language or perhaps, the dialect of their audience. Nevertheless, the role of Bible translation for the Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland is what constitutes the thrust of this research.

Undoubtedly, some Bible translation agencies have sprung up over the period to resolve this interaction between faith and culture. Such agencies as the Bible Society of Nigeria (BSN),

the Catholic Biblical Apostolate of Nigeria (CBAN) and the Nigerian Bible Translation Trust (NBTT), which have made considerable efforts in translating the Bible from their original languages to the indigenous languages of the Nigerian peoples have not been given adequate attention in scholarly historiography. Although, these agencies may differ in their approach, Nwadior (2014) observes that:

The evangelistic work of the missions at this period may be patchy, but in their linguistic and educational work, in their economic policies, and above all, in their class of western educated elite they were seeking to create, their influence covered the whole country. (p. 6).

This work therefore seeks to set a historical platform to examine the roles, impacts and challenges of language development and Bible translation for effective Anglican missionary expansion among the Igbo people.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

The paucity of emphasis on the role of Bible translation for Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland and the obvious decline in the use of the native resources, especially the peoples' language for religious expression remain a major gap in Igbo missionary history, which calls for scholarly studies. This loophole is the problem, which this research is set to address.

It would be recalled that the original consciousness for missionary expansion as developed by experts, such as Henry Venn, was that the natives would be best fitted for mission among their people. Bowen (1857), for instance, posits this opinion more succinctly as he said:

Our design and hopes in regard to Africa are not simply to bring as many individuals as possible to the knowledge of Christ. We desire to establish the Gospel in the hearts and minds and social life of the people, so that the truth may be among them, without the instrumentality of foreign missionaries. This cannot be done without civilization. To establish the Gospel among any people, they

must have the Bible and therefore must have the art to make them or the money to buy them. They must read the Bible and this implies instruction. (p. 321).

Ironically, the hopes expressed in the statement cited above, seem not to have been achieved for the Anglican missionary labours in Igboland, in spite of the effort of the Igbo Bible translation. The reasons for this challenge may not be far-fetched. The first, according to Green (cited in Adiele, 1981) was that “few if any of these Europeans had adequate linguistic training before coming to the country, or enough time to work at the language after arriving here” (p. 371). Again, the early Anglican missionaries seem not to have understood the fact of the heterogeneity of both dialectical varieties and worldviews among the different ethnic groups, particularly the sub-culture areas of Igboland.

Nigeria is said to have over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups with over five hundred languages and dialectical differences, with each maintaining unique linguistic forms and patterns. Igboland, among whom the Anglican missionaries worked is one of the major ethnic and language groups of Nigeria. It would be proper that effective Anglican missionary activities in Igboland recognizes and treats the language in its status and uniqueness as veritable tools of expansion especially in Bible translation. This is because, until the Gospel as contained in the Bible has been properly translated, communicated to, and received by the people in their own language, it would be wrong to assume that the expected impact has been achieved.

This researcher is therefore disturbed that after more than one and half century of the existence of the Christian missions in Igboland, there is still an overbearing dominance of the native languages by the western culture, especially the English Language. The re-occurring question is whether this malignant threat to the essential Igbo identity is an internal inclination or an external western influence. This is because most of the contemporary religious expressions



are still communicated via the vehicle of the western influence to the utter denigration of the native languages.

Kalu (2003) recapitulates this influence among the Saro people who were constantly called “Black Englishmen” and says that “it may be due to the pattern of socialization in Sierra Leon after the rescue from slavers. The settlers and re-captives internalized the white-man’s image and imitated every aspect to the core” (p.72). This development might really not be less than self-induced neo-colonialism, in which the native values, cultures and identity are endangered. In fact, religious expressions like preaching, prayers, praises and other worship forms not communicated in the foreign language is often seen, even by some natives as ‘uncivilized’. This poses a serious threat not only to the Igbo cultural assertiveness but also to the quest of truly Christianizing Africa and Africanizing Christianity.

Apart from the second-class position unpretentiously apportioned to the native languages, particularly the Igbo language in contemporary religious and missionary activities, there seem to be some ‘unspoken sacredness’ usually attached to the foreign languages even by some natives. In fact, it is said that the foreign missionaries regarded the converts and their subordinate African colleagues as ‘infants’ reclaimed recently from superstition and barbarism. This is manifestly evident, even today, in the unequal influence and widespread use of English Bibles in today’s Igbo missionary contexts. In spite of the marginal efforts and impacts already made by some indigenous Bible translation agencies, available data indicate that the rate of the distribution of the English Bibles in Nigeria, and Igboland in particular is astronomically higher than that of Bibles already translated into the few Nigerian languages.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this research is to examine the historical impacts of Bible translation for Anglican missionary expansion in the Igboland and its contemporary interplay with the

socio-cultural milieu of the people. The achievements already made in this regard could not have been without the efficient use of the language of the people, which forms significant part of their cultural identity and expression. This research is geared towards repositioning the Igbo identity consciousness in global religious activities.

This dissertation is also an attempt to bring to limelight the silent labours of some ex-slaves and indigenous missionaries whose contributions have previously been under-estimated in contemporary historiography. Unfortunately, Hastings (1967) had actually noted that;

It is perhaps a weakness in much missionary literature that the missionary remains the centre of the picture from first to last. This is certain a weakness in most presentation of modern African history in general; they remain account of Europeans in Africans encountering Africa. It has suggested passivity on the part of Africans at this crucial moment of their history, which was not in fact the case. (p. 77).

No wonder, Kalu (2008) decried this dearth in missionary historiography when he observed that, “the African Religious achievement is often dismissed by emphasizing external influences, and the African voice is imaged as an echo lacking the strength of the *arokin* and the *griots*” (p.3). It is said that when a people fail to tell their own story, others would tell their tale of the people from the standpoint of their own bias. Against this backdrop, Achebe (2012) says that:

It is impossible to write anything in Africa without some kind of commitment, some kind of message, some kind of protest. In my definition I am a protest writer, with restraint. Even those early novels that look like very gentle re-creation of the past – what they were saying in effect, was that we had a past. That was a protest, because there were people who thought we didn’t have a past. What I was doing was to say politely that we did – here it is. (p. 58).

Hence, this research would provide a platform for objectively telling our own story, with a view to the reconstruction of history and the redirection of the natives of the contemporary Church on the values and the imports of indigenous languages for missionary expansion. The major exploits and challenges of translating the Bible, and the contributions of some people and translation agencies would suffice for establishing its general impact in Nigeria especially in the Igbo society. In summary, this study seeks:

1. To explore the roles and the historical impacts of Bible translation for Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland.
2. To highlight the contributions of missionary education to the evolution and development of language literacy among the natives especially Igbo language, which in turn, have enhanced the socio-economic and cultural consciousness of the people.
3. To set the silent labors of some individuals especially the ex-slaves and translation agencies, into historical perspectives, which it has hitherto, not adequately received.
4. To examine the factors responsible for the obvious decline in the use of native languages in religious expressions among the contemporary Churches; thereby proffering remedial suggestions to avert colossal loss of Igbo identity in global missionary history.

#### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

The scope of this research is a concern with the historic evolution, development and roles of Bible translation for Anglican missionary expansion in Nigeria, particularly in Igboland. Although the missionaries did not initiate or invent the Igbo language, but the development of the literary forms of the language was actually the product of western missionary education and

civilization. It is an attempt to sketch the contributions of the Anglican mission and translation agencies in Igbo literacy.

The historical period of interest in this study is between 1857 and 1960, marking the time of effective advent and spread of Anglican missionary activities in Igboland, and the independence of the Nigeria society from colonial imperialism. Two major factors are responsible for the choice of the scope of the period of this study. Firstly, the early Igbo encounter with the missionaries could not have been a reality without effective transmission of information, necessitating both interpretation and translation. However, Tasie (1996) noted that the C. M. S was later to describe interpreters aptly “only as crutch which should be dispensed with at the earliest opportunity” (p.62). The second is the obvious contemporary decline in the use of native languages, especially Igbo in missionary and religious activities, in spite of the presumed national independence in 1960. Between these periods were conscious and concerted efforts to develop Igbo literacy resulting in the translation of the Bible. The essence of this range of periodization is for thorough investigation of the nature of communication between the missionaries and the natives; an evaluation would suffice of the present reality relating to the status of the native languages in contradistinction with the foreign ones, especially the English language.

Nevertheless, since specific particularity of this study is focused on its impacts and challenges with regard to missionary expansion in Igboland, Ogbuji (2015) observed that the River Niger divides Igboland into two unequal parts with the greater portion lying in the south-eastern Nigeria. The other smaller portion lies west of the Niger over Delta State. The bulk of Igbo population is within Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Abia and Ebonyi states. However, Leonard (cited in Adiele, 1981) had noted that “missionary visitors of the nineteenth century considered many of the peoples and languages of the lower Cross River as off-shoots of the Igbo peoples

and languages. But earlier, according to Ford and Jones (1950), “this is a misconception which helps to explain the fact that they were in time called *Kwa Iboe*, that is, ‘Ibo’ whose territory is drained by the Kwa River” (p.9). These areas, especially those of the south-eastern Nigeria form the main focus of this study.

While this research is neither an examination of the textual translation of the Bible from the primary languages to Igbo language nor the detailed expansionist account of missions in Igboland, it focuses on the historical imports of Bible translation for Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland. Its cross-cultural evaluation with other ethnic groups and Church denominations in Nigeria is to effectively investigate the general impact it portends on the socio-cultural and economic life of the wholistic identity consciousness of the Nigerian peoples, especially the Igbo.

## **1.5 Significance of Study**

The indispensability of communicating the message of the Bible in and through understandable language for missionary expansion especially among the Igbo of Nigeria is primarily significant. Though the early Anglican missionaries understood the need for the native languages, there is no doubt that they actually presented Christianity to Africa in a European garb or rather as a form of Western civilization. This approach might unconsciously have precluded the possibility that any good could be found among the “dark” peoples of Africa. However, the fact that the origin of Igbo alphabetical lexicology and the development of its written vocabularies was a major contribution of Anglican missionary education is uncontested. The role of Igbo ex-slaves to interpret the message of the Gospel was an early signal to the need and importance of Bible translation, which requires an integrated approach for a modern day Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland.

The significance of this study is deep-rooted in Igbo identity consciousness in the scheme of global missionary historiography. Indeed, among the wrong notions and misconceptions erroneously held by the colonial masters and some missionaries about Africa over the years, was that the languages of the indigenous peoples were ‘barbarous’ and ‘uncivilized’. This eclipsed thought over the African worldview might be responsible for the wider patronage, which the English Bible still enjoys over those translated into native languages after more than one and half a century of the existence of Christianity in Nigeria. The consciousness aroused in this study is a form of renaissance that Africa and African languages, especially the Igbo are good enough for world missionary outreach. These native resources are not in any instance inferior to any foreign instruments of mission.

It is therefore relevant to the Nigerian Church not only in defining herself in the comity of world mission alliances, but also for expanding the frontiers of missionary activities among the indigenous peoples using their own local resources. This research portends not only a religious, but also academic, cultural and social significance. It reinvigorates the nerves of Igbo consciousness and studies, especially now that Igbo language is predictably assuming a lower status in comparison with many other world languages. This is what Bible translation, by the Anglican missionaries originally intended to, and should have achieved through the agency of missionary education.

## **1.6 Methodology**

Ejizu (2013) observes that “the question of methodology is crucial in scholarship as it is in most fields of human endeavour since it is intricately linked with the nature of the end one hopes to achieve” (p.241). Therefore, the method of data collection was through primary and secondary sources. The primary source is mainly interviews, which helped the researcher to generate the opinion of people concerning the subject of this study. The secondary sources of

this study include books, journals and other written materials both published and unpublished, and internet materials, which explored the views and contributions of scholar on this study.

Without distorting any information, the structures of consciousness as experienced from the first person's point of view were analyzed, using qualitative approach to data analysis, in order to give insight to the events of the past, so as to reveal the present realities regarding this study and finally to project into the expected future. This method gave the researcher ample space to examine the relationships between the historical facts, the contexts, the culture and the personality.

In an organized and objective inquiry into the events of the past, the historical and phenomenological methods of data processing involving the religious and socio-cultural perspectives were used to analyze the collected data. This implies that, the historical and religious significance of the Bible, especially its interpretation and translation by the Anglican Church, among the Igbo people in missionary encounter, and its interaction with their language were examined in its historical perspective. Data from Bible translation and distribution agencies particularly among the Protestants and the Roman Catholic groups were of immense help in providing the benchmark for effective and objective analysis of the historical evolution of Bible translation in Nigeria. This historical method, which was descriptively presented, necessarily gave insight into what happened in the past with a view to interpret the present, and to enable us forecast the future.

## **1.7 Definition of Terms**

Some basic terms, which form the title and context of this dissertation, would need to be defined in order to give correct intellectual meaning to the whole idea of the study. Among such terms, include Bible, Translation, Missionary, Expansion, and Culture.

### **1.7.1 Bible**

This is the Book containing the fundamental teachings of the beliefs, values and practices of the Christian faith. The Bible as defined by Hornby (1978) is “the sacred writings of the Jews and the Christian Church” (p.79). Adherents and missionaries of the Christian faith commonly refer to it as “The Holy Bible”. According to Stevenson and Waite (2011), the origin of the term is from the Greek word *Biblios*, which means Book. In other words, it can be said from the Christian viewpoint that the Bible is ‘the Holy Book’. It refers to “the Christian scriptures, consisting of the Old and New Testaments . . . a book regarded as authoritative in particular sphere” (p.130).

Harrison (1988) says that Bible is “a name commonly used to designate the thirty-nine books of the OT and the twenty-seven books of the NT. These sixty-six books constitute a divine library that is nevertheless, in a vital sense, one Book . . . which admirably expresses the unity of the Word of God” (p.169). It is a historical book, which tells the story of God’s interaction and intervention in the affairs of man, especially past events of the Jewish race.

In the contest of this dissertation, the Bible is viewed as the major denominator in missionary expansion since it is the common instrument of evangelization, teaching, and indoctrination, not just for the Anglicans in Igboland, but also for other missionary groups. Though the missionary agencies may have different interpretive approach to the Bible, yet they all had a common challenge of communicating its message, which they thought would bring purer morality and civility to the people, in the language understandable to them.

### **1.7.2 Translation**

Several connotative definitions have been made for the term translation. Nevertheless, in its noun forms, it basically denotes the act or an act of translating in its various senses, including conversion, transference, or movement from one form, place, meaning or status to another,



without necessarily changing its originality. In its ecclesiastical usage, it refers to “the transference of the relics of a saint either from their original place of burial into an altar tomb or shrine or from one shrine to another”. It also means the transference to a different day of a feast when a particular season prohibits its observance, or when feast of higher rank occur on the same day. Further to this usage, translation means the transference of a cleric from one ecclesiastical office to another, especially of a bishop from one diocese to another (Livingstone, 1977: 519-520). It also refers to the process of changing something into a different form, such as translation of theory into practice.

Apart from its other meanings in physics, genetics and medicine, this research views translation contextually as the conversion of a text from one language to another. Stevenson and Waite (2011) say that translation is the action of translating which involves the expression of the sense of words or text in another language. According to Hornby (2010), translation is “the process of changing something that is written or spoken into another language” (p.1573). The essence of language translation is to enhance intelligibility of documents and effective communication between persons of different linguistic backgrounds.

### **1.7.3 Missionary**

The term missionary is derived from the Latin word *mittere* which means “to send.” It is used both as a noun and as an adjective. As a noun, it refers to the person who does the work of mission. Generally speaking, a missionary has often been seen as ‘a person who is sent to a foreign country to teach people about Christianity. According to Kane (1978), it is “reserved for those who have been called by God to a full time ministry and prayer (Acts 6:40, and who have crossed geographical and cultural boundaries (Acts 22:21) to preach the gospel in those areas of the world where Jesus Christ is largely, if not entirely unknown (Romans 15:20)” (p.28-30).

But as an adjective, the term missionary expresses the idea of how the work of mission is done. Omeire (cited in Nwadiolor, 2014) says that missionary is one sent on a specific mission to spread the tenets of his religion. He begins by witnessing to or propagating his belief and convictions. When his mission is achieved, the process of conversion or proselytization, respectively must have taken place, otherwise the mission is futile and the missionary a failure.

The thrust of this research however, is the missionary expansion in Igboland with specific regard to the role of Bible translation in the Anglican (C.M.S.) Church. Since the Bible is the major missionary document, which contains the belief and convictions of the missionary, it suffices that the Anglican missionary activities would lack catechetical content and effective expansion without the message of the Bible.

#### **1.7.4 Expansion**

This is the act or process of spreading, developing or expanding something. For instance, the expansion of metals and plastics in response to heat, can be well understood. Often, it involves the policy of a nation, institution or organization, of expanding its territory or its general influence. This term has come to be used in missionary historiography as the ‘spread’, ‘growth’ and ‘development’ of Christianity in particular cultural setting. It involves general or specific considerations of the patterns of spread of the Gospel message, especially the factors that facilitate, and challenges of missionary expansion. In the context of this study, expansionism involves the methods of Anglican Christian missionary propagation, spread and growth; and the consequent prepotency or influence of its activities through the translation of the Bible in Igbolaond.

#### **1.7.5 Culture**

Various definitions have been made in regards to the term culture. According to Shorter (1978), “Culture is a part of the human person- a person’s way of life or mode of being. Culture

involves what a person thinks is important- his values” (p.21). Nwene-Osuh (1973) defines culture as “an accumulated experience which modifies man in linear progressive and quantitative manner, but with additional qualitative phase of mutation” (p.13). Taylor, (cited in Shorter, 1973), had earlier defined culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (p.6).

Saldanhan (1996) says that “culture arises out of the effort of people to come to terms with their environment, social relations and ultimate question of life. Culture designates the peculiar manner of behaving of a particular community or social group, its typical way of thinking and judging, of feeling and perceiving itself and others . . . its attitude and scale of values” (p.11). Again, culture refers to a collective psychology, usually, what people consider as the best and sum total of thinking, living and expression”. To put it clearer, it can be said that culture refers to the whole range of human activities and identities, including their language, which are learned, and which are transmitted from one generation to another through the process of learning.

Within the context of this study, the cultural identity, which forms the *germane* of our study, is the language of the people. This research therefore examines the extent to which Bible translation into the Igbo language has factored the Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland, and its consequent effect on Igbo socio-cultural milieu.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

To achieve an objective analysis and result-oriented research, deliberate and effective identification, reading and critical evaluation of previous studies and opinions on related subject matter in history and other disciplines was indispensably pursued. This is because, according to Odili (2013), “Research does not have a beginning or an end; researchers build on works that have already been done in order to add to it, thus providing more resources for other researchers to build on” (p.155). This does not however negate the quality of originality expected of any scholarly research in order to provide ample recipes to fill a genuine gap by the present study. This is what this chapter is set to accomplish, using the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical frameworks; and a summary of literature review.

#### **2.1 Conceptual Framework**

A proper understanding of the guiding concepts of a study is a necessity for its object analysis, inferences and conclusions. In this case, a purview of missionary expansion and how it has been affected by Bible translation within the context of Igbo language and culture becomes expedient. Religion and its content do not exist in vacuum; they find expression within specific contexts.

Against this backdrop, belief systems and religious contents have often been expressed in various forms of scriptures, whether they are written or unwritten. These scriptures are essentially significant for the preservation and propagation of the faith, norms and practices of the religion it represents. The need for effective transfer of any religious content therefore becomes paramount as Okoroafor (2010) observes that scripture is “sources accepted as an authority as well as sacred by adherents of a religious body through which the essential qualities of their religion is maintained and passed from generation to generation” (p.31). Aside from the common knowledge that the scriptures are the sacred writings of a religion, it is often referred to

as authoritative, and wields functions of importance for them. This is certainly what the Bible represents for the Christian religion, just as the Quran of Islam, Vedas of Hinduism and other sacred writings of other world religions.

Among the adherents of the Christian faith, the question of the source and authority of the Bible is scarcely speculative. O'Donovan (1996) simply puts it this way; "the Bible was written by men who were recognized as the prophets and apostles of God" (p. 17). On the question of the authority of the Bible, Grudem (1994) cited the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, and said:

We affirm that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God. We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the church, tradition or any other human source. We affirm that the Scriptures are supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of the Scripture. We deny that the Church, creeds, councils or declarations have authority than or equal to the authority of the Bible. (p. 1204).

This concept represents a major view of the Christian missionaries, particularly the Protestants, who see and use the Bible as a major instrument for the propagation of their faith, the proselytization, and civilization of the indigenous peoples especially the Igbo people of the south-eastern Nigeria. It is probable that the concurrence to the divine inspiration of the Bible by these missionaries was to check the priority of personal opinions in matters of doctrine and practice. Hence, Boettner (cited by Harrison, 1985) said that the biblical teaching of inspiration is:

The mother and guardian of all others. . . an unsound view of the inspiration of the Scripture is bound to countenance unsound views, produce distorted teachings or serious gaps in essential doctrinal systematization or offer a temptation to easy subscription to plausible but unsound scientific or philosophic theorizing (p. 620).

Apart from this conceptual view of the Bible, the Christians also believe that all things necessary for salvation and concerning faith and the spiritual life are contained and taught in the Bible, and clear enough for the ordinary believer to understand it. Among the Anglican missionaries, the Bible is a tool for educating and enlightening the people perceived to be uninformed and who have been in darkness. They used it for teaching the morals and ethics of life. This understanding is made clearer in an opinionated report made by a colonialist, Guilbert Thomas Carter in 1892 about the Ijebu people of south-western Nigeria. Ayandele (1966) replicates Cater's opinionated report thus:

I particularly adverted to their folly in refusing to receive missionaries in the country, and though I could not coerce them into adopting such a policy yet I strongly advised them to follow the examples of those who had done so. I bade them compare the position of Lagos with that of their own country, and told them that the result which they could see with their own eyes, had not been achieved by the policy of isolation which they had adopted but by liberal and advanced views, by free trade and by the encouragement of missionaries who established schools and endeavoured to introduce a higher standard of morality and a purer religion than at present existed amongst those Natives which were ignorant of the Bible. (pp. 61-62).

Obviously, one would agree as highlighted by Okoroafor (2010) that: "African Religion does not have written scriptures in the form of the Christian Bible or the Islamic Quran, but they

have unwritten customs and laws known as traditions which form their basic source of authority” (p.32). These unwritten customs, laws and practices are often seen to be in tandem with the biblical ethics and practices of the Christian faith. For instance, in a comparative discourse of the Biblical prophecy and its equivalent in the Igbo religious life, Onunwa (1990) explained that:

The word *Amuma* is clearly indigenous to the people. It has been in use in the traditional society and as part of the traditional religious vocabulary long before the Igbo had any contact with Christianity. Consequently, when the translators of the Bible into Igbo did their work, they did not find it difficult to get an equivalent Igbo meaning, name and idea to Biblical concept of prophecy. (p.63).

Evidently, both the written scriptures of the Christian or the Islamic religions share some basic commonalities of values, ethics and morality with the unwritten codes of the African Traditional religion. In fact, these new religious expressions may have basic and inalienable differences, yet, they have been found to share several similarities of thoughts, patterns and practices, hopes and aspirations of the Igbo religious worldview. However, the intervening concern of this research is the question of the medium of communicating a new religious concept to a people with completely different socio-cultural background and its attendant language gap. Hence, the need for translating the Bible, not only to a comprehensible language, but to the indigenous language of the people becomes obvious.

The concept of ‘translation’ is variously related to the notions of transferring, conveying, or moving from one place to another, of linking one word, phrase, or text to another. These connotations are shared among the words for translation in many modern languages. It may therefore appear justified to postulate the following definitions: Translation is a transfer of the message from one language to another. It involves the process of translating words or text from one language into another. Therefore, to translate in this context essentially conveys the idea of

inter-change between two different languages; the movement of meaning from one language to another without necessarily violating the original and the intended meaning.

Hatim and Munday (2004) believe that in “translation, the target language is the language being translated to; it is the antonym of the source language, which is the language being translated from” (p. xx). In this case, the object of translation is the Bible, which was originally written mainly, in Hebrew and Greek languages, and not available in the native language of the Igbo people among whom the Anglican missionary work is done. Liping (2007) says that “the necessity of translation arises from that gap, especially between two languages belonging to different language families” (p.339). In order to fill this gap, a good translation must therefore, be true and free, faithful and idiomatic, so as to read like an original work. This is to ensure that the original meaning of the message being translated from the first language is communicated within thought-patterns of the targeted audience.

It is a common belief that people think through a language, and very often through their first or native language. Thus, Language is seen as the system of words or signs that people use to express thoughts or feelings to each other which may either be in spoken or written form. It is a system of communication based upon words and the combination of words into sentences. Edward Sapir (1921) says that “language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols (p.138). Udo (2002) agrees with Sapir, that “language is one of the things which are peculiar to man and which in many senses set him apart from the rest of nature. Language marks out a group of users and sets them apart from all other peoples. It is the embodiment of people’s distinctive culture; Language and culture are closely related” (p.17). The distinctiveness of Igbo language and its relevance for missionary expansion through Bible translation is therefore the significant concern of this research.



In this regard, for the Igbo people to believe and to understand the concepts of the Christian faith, it has to be properly communicated to them through the language of their thoughts – their first language. This is because the faculty of reasoning is reflexively expressed, and communicated through the language assumed to be understandable to the people. In view of this, Okonkwo (1978) observes that:

Language (mother tongue) is the key to the heart of a people. If we lose the key, we lose the people. If we treasure the key and keep it safe, it will unlock the door to untold riches, riches which cannot be guessed at from the other side of the door. (p. 102).

Consequently, if you want to win the attention of a person, the most likely tool to achieve this, is the use of his indigenous language. This is why Anigbogu, Mba and Eme (2001) had argued strongly that no other language can crystallize our thought, give concrete meaning to our sensory experiences, express our affective moods and encode our beliefs and philosophies as eloquently as our first language.

In this regard, the importance of language for missionary expansion becomes a crucial reality that even some white missionaries found it an indispensable tool for accomplishing their work. For instance, Henry Venn had earlier advocated that, to build a native pastorate, missionaries were to be students of the language and culture of the people so as to reach the inner recesses of the host communities. Against this backdrop, Ogbuji (2015) argues that:

Language is an important factor in identifying a community characterized by a common culture. If a group of people do not have the ability to use their language, then, it would be largely impossible to transmit their knowledge and experience to the next generation of humans and successive generations would start afresh. (p. 22).

The connection between language and thoughts is not a loose one; language is a product and reflection of the human soul. The importance of language itself as an effective tool for missionary expansion in particular culture areas cannot be over emphasized. In this regard, Udofot (1998) believes that, “the language of a particular society is an integral part of its culture. The lexical distinction drawn by each language will tend to reflect the culturally important features of objects, institutions and activities in which the language operates” (p.152). This essentially forms the irrepressible identity of particular ethnic or culture areas, which gives them unique difference from other co-existing groups in the larger society.

Although it has been noted that learning a new language is often not easy, yet, Dixon (1997) shows that language is normally learnt through a system of symbols which every fluent speaker of any language has thoroughly learnt. Goodchild (2003) cited a letter written by Rev. Henry H. Dobinson in 1895 in which he confessed that learning the language was not easy, but that he was gaining sufficient fluency in Ibo to be able to preach in the language without using an interpreter. Dobinson (cited by Goodchild, 2003) described the difficulties he encountered thus:

We have made a little attempt to learn the language by getting various boys to give us words. But they differ so in their ideas, and one boy will give you a lot of words and sentences, and next day your boy tells you they are ‘impossible ones’. No grammar exists in print, and spelling, of course, being only phonetic, each man spells as he pronounces his words. Ibo is short of words, we are told, and so, like many other languages here, has to make out by having the same word for many things, only distinguished by accentuation, e.g. *Clothes* - *Akwa* and *Bed* – *Akwa*. The difference is this – *Bed* is a high sounding word and *Clothes* is low, so we make many awful blunders at times. (p. 17).

Language is a crucial cultural concept that requires not only dexterity, but also interest and passion. It is a medium by means of which, the feelings, thoughts, and aspirations of people

are communicated to one another. Thus, language is viewed as, a transcultural tool of evangelization. For instance, Dumais (1987) says that:

A Christian speaker imbued with Jewish religious culture endeavours to communicate the faith to auditors belonging to the pagan Greek culture. What has meaning to the speaker within his cultural horizon must now take on new meaning within their own socio-cultural horizon. If one listens to the Athenian discourse with “Greek ear” the whole text makes sense without any need to step outside one’s cultural and religious universe. From the start on his discourse the orator speaks of the ‘cosmos’, a term that is found nowhere in the Old Testament. The presentation of God as a creator of the world was current in the Greek Philosophers. Consequently, the whole development of the missionary discourse could be understood by a Greek without any knowledge of the Old Testament. (p. 17-18).

Obviously, the view of effective communication of the message of the Bible as expressed in the above opinion is more of contextualization than inculturation. However, the effective process of taking a people from their immediate level of perception to another advocated in this discourse is closely related to the concept of translating knowledge, idea or even faith from one language to that which is understandable to the immediate recipients of the said faith. The primary concern of this research therefore, is to realize the people of faith whose conceptual knowledge of religion do depend on a second or borrowed language but on their own native language through the process of Bible translation. Consequently, Onwubiko (1992) says that “the importance of such an inculturated missionary discourse can hardly be over-emphasized in today’s missionary and evangelization project in Africa” (p.20).

Interestingly, recent missionary historiography acknowledges that Africans who had greater facility with the language of the people, and who were better able to withstand the

disease of what came to be called the White Man's Grave, did most pioneering missionary work on the Niger. For example, Taylor made the first translations of the Bible into Igbo, which Archdeacon Dennis who reviewed the situation in 1912 observed a few inadequacies with the earlier translation. Goodchild (2003) acknowledged that "the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and some of St. Paul's Epistles were translated by J. C. Taylor and published by the British and Foreign Bible Society between the years 1860 and 1886" (p.16).

Unfortunately, a major challenge that came with the development Igbo literacy for missionary expansion was the indigenous indifference that greeted the project. It is noted that many of the natives showed more interest in the white man's habits and language. In 1893, Henry Dobinson (cited by Goodchild, 2003) lamented while writing his Annual Letter, that "at Onitsha, no great enthusiasm exists for learning to read in the vernacular, owing to the great zeal for learning English" (p 17). However he was optimistic and looked to the Ibo translations to be of more value and better appreciated as time goes on, and places are opened that are less accessible to English speaking natives. This brings us to the issue of the adventurous nature of the Igbo cosmology, which has often tended to risk the Igbo cultural identity. Against this backdrop, it is probable that the question of the decline in the use of Igbo language in contemporary religious expressions may not really be a factor of external western missionary influence, but an internal cultural identity crisis, which requires further re-examinations.

Kalu (2003) reported J. A. T. Robinson's clear plan for mission and his disappointment with the development in the missionary expansion in Igboland as at 1887. He noted that:

The Bible and other literature should be available in native languages. He was a linguist and observed that mission operation have been carried on at Onitsha for the past 30years but up to the present date no one covert can read or write in his own tongue. Why? Simply, because there are no reading books, or translations of any kind in their tongue. (p. 20).

Whether Robinson's observations were correct representation of the true state of things or a contradiction of Crowther's earlier report is important for historical consideration. Crowther had reported that "things are decidedly improving at Onitsha station; . . . many of our school children can read the New Testament fluently in their mother tongue and join the responses of the Church service with feelings of devotion" (Dike: 1957, 46). Although a feeling of prejudice against native efforts may be perceived from the Robinson's report, since he was deeply engulfed in the crisis that rocked the latter part of Crowther's work in the Niger mission, yet, objective inquiry into the situation is necessary for incisive historiography.

Nonetheless, E. P. H. Hair (1966) disagrees with Robinson by pointing to the earlier efforts in language studies and works of Crowther, J. C. Taylor and J. F. Schon. Reacting to this, Kalu (2003) observed that the effect of inadequate or shortage of literature in the native languages at the time "explains the low standard of Christianity" (p.20). Tasie (1977) puts it clearer when he explained that:

The Saro workers were for the most part uneducated; Crowther's major work was Yoruba; his Igbo prima proved unusable though better than Schon's which are useless; Crowther did not translate the Bible; Taylor translated a few parts in Isuama language but clashed violently with Schon and Crowther and left in 1868. (pp. 61-70).

From the ongoing, it may be correct to assume that Robinson was right in his assessment of the situation on ground regarding Bible translation and the unavailability of other literature in native languages. In view of this, this researcher feels that aside from the flagrant misdemeanour with which some of the missionaries were accused of, the missionary expansion in Igboland would have thrived better if there were an acceptable translation of the Bible and the early converts had been properly catechized or indoctrinated, especially using the native language.

Undoubtedly, among the major reasons for Bible translation is nothing short of deliberate intention to communicate the Christian message to a given people through the vehicle of the language of the said recipients, in order to enable the people understand the salvation-history, not just from the standpoint of the communicator, but basically from their own cultural philosophy. In this regard, the Igbo Bible translation is not a coincidence of history but a conscious effort aimed at properly integrating and indigenizing the gospel message through the process of interactive inculturation. The Igbo language, which became the tool for accomplishing this feat though distinguished by various dialectical differences, would need some standardization, which would be understandable and acceptable.

The imports of effectively communicating the Christian message through widespread means in order to achieve far-reaching impacts, particularly of re-shaping the religious consciousness of the targeted audience, especially in Igboland becomes obvious. Wanger (cited by Kalu, 1995) recognizes the difficulties in cross-cultural missions. However, he expresses dissatisfaction with the missionaries who “play the inside role, that is, “to go native” so as to communicate effectively” (p.24). Nonetheless, the researcher agrees with Madu (2004) that “as long as Christianity is to be preached to other cultures, one cannot dismiss the difficulties, including the language barriers with a wave of hands” (p. 65).

There is hardly anyhow, missionary activities would make the necessary and required impacts without having ‘to go native’. This is what Bodger (cited by Madu, 2004) sees as “indigenization of Christianity” and which Madu views as “traditionalization of Christianity”, while Onwubiko (1992) describes it as “inculturation of Christianity”. Kalu (2008), while espousing this, further explained that, “the valorization of the mode of communicating the gospel created a new culture, values, and meaning system” (p.105). This new way of communicating the gospel, which gives adequate interaction with the language of the people had enormous impacts on doctrine, polity, liturgy and ethics, enhancing deeper understanding of faith in the missionary

enterprise. Although the context of this opinion was predicated upon the import of mass media communication, the researcher believes that the native language of a people creates attractive attention in any forum, (whether in mass media or direct personal contact), for educating, civilizing or proselytizing people into a new faith. One of the tools for achieving this goal is principally through translating the Bible and consciously communicating its message using the language of the people.

It is noteworthy that the concept of Bible translation is in coherence with the James Johnson's idea, when he considered that the white man and his civilization undermined African personality. For instance, Ayandele (1970) noted that:

At a time when extremist anglicized Africans were contending that not only must Africans be ashamed of their past and culture but they must be ashamed of their colour as well, and were encouraging Africans to disown their colour by widespread inter-marriage with the white in a progressive manner, James Johnson, like Edward Blyden, denounced miscegenation. (p. 295).

Any civilization, whether it be social or religious that is intended to rob a people of their culture and colour is capable of denigrating not only the language of such a people, but also their identity. But being emotionally drawn towards African culture in the way Europeans were drawn towards theirs, James Johnson (cited by Ayandele, 1970) would insist that "what Africa wanted was the unadulterated Christianity, the Christianity of the Bible, which would acclimatize in the peculiar environment of the continent and produce a form that would bear the unmistakable imprint of African personality" (p.302). This is the identity consciousness that this research sets out to resonate.

Of course, Weinreich (2003) sees identity as "the totality of one's self-construal, in which how one construes oneself in the present expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future".

Identity is the qualities, beliefs, personality, looks and/or expressions that make a person or group. In this case, it is possible for one to attempt the definitions of aspects of identity such as, ethnic identity. This is defined as that part of the totality of one's self-construal made up of those dimensions that express the continuity between one's construal of past ancestry and one's future aspirations in relation to ethnicity". To a significant degree, 'identity' dictates how one views oneself both as a person and in relation to other people, ideas and nature. Other aspects of identity, such as racial, religious, ethnic, occupational... etc. may also be more or less significant – or significant in some situations but not in others (Weinreich & Saunderson, 2003, pp.26–34).

Jary and Jary (cited by gbuji, 2015) say that “identity is a sense of self that develops as the child differentiates from parents and family and takes a place in the society. It also refers to the sense that some people have of who they are, of what is most important about them” (p. 21). Adnan Abdullah (2013) is of the opinion that “it is through socialization that people acquire their culture, their specific skills and abilities and knowledge of what kind of people they are, consisting of our sense of self, gender, race ethnicity and religion”. He believes that ‘our identity locates us in the social world, thoroughly affecting everything we do, feel, say, and thinks in our lives’. According to Leary and Tangney (2003), the term identity refers to “the capacity for self reflection and the awareness of self” (p. 3). This would necessarily involve the worldview of the people concerned, how they organize themselves and particularly the language of their communication. On this backdrop, the identity in question is the import of native language in Bible translation for Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland.

Notably, scholars of African descent, like Idowu, Ajayi, Kalu, and Madu agree that there can be no better means of evangelizing and achieving deep-rooted Christian faith in Africa than to use the African resources including their cultural diversities prominently expressed in their different languages. Madu (2004) was particularistic of this notion within the Igbo society when he said that, “in African societies, their cosmological bases are religious. Their value-systems



and attitudes are built on this religious superstructure . . . thus; the traditionalization of Christianity is the more viable strategy for ecumenical dialogue” (p.60-61). In this regard, Ugwu (2014) elaborately states that:

The African culture is rich, vivacious, dynamic, and stable to a large extent. The people themselves have an enviable identity made feasible by this cultural heritage such that over several millennia of this continent’s existence it has provided the desired protection, succour and solace to its citizenry. The ecosystem in which these forces interplayed, and interacted symbiotically was conducive, temperate, and auspicious for human existence. (p. 61).

Obviously, the new awareness of black revivalism raging throughout Africa is definitely responsible for the passionate concern of this research. The quest for black resurgence presupposes a pristine African culture, which has been eroded and displaced by Euro-Christian civilization (Madu, 2004). In truth, the brand of Christianity predominant in Nigeria, particularly in Igboland, had given little or no attention to the cultural vitality and identity consciousness of the people. Unfortunately, the picture of Jesus Christ has often been that of an English person speaking in correct English idiom and accent. Idowu (1973) indeed blamed the ex-slaves to a large extent, for being instrumental in promoting among Nigerians the aspiration to be like Europeans in all things; he said:

Apart from preaching the Gospel, they taught their converts or the adherents of the new faith to read and write, employing, of course, the only method known to them – that of Western education (English system mainly). By a certain miscarriage of purpose, however, their effort succeeded not only in enlightening, but also enslaving the mind, inasmuch as it inculcated that the only way to human dignity and full-grown personality was to be in everything like Europeans and to despise their own culture. It was in this way that Christianity arrived in Nigeria

dressed up in European garb. It was immediately associated with civilization in the sense of being well dressed in European fashion, dexterity in European etiquette and manners, and proficiency (or dabbling) in the use of English language with a corresponding disdain for their own culture, a disdain which crystallized into inability to use their own language properly. (pp. 4-5).

To underscore this opinionated mindset of some western missionaries, Iwe (1985) decried that:

Christianity that came to Igboland came with Western personnel, western culture, western philosophy, western ideology, western theology and cultural values such as monogamy, institutional celibacy, and flowing garment reminiscent of the Roman toga or of medieval Europe, western patterns of prayer and incantations, rituals and ceremonial western names and concepts authority. All these have been swallowed and still being swallowed uncritically by the Africans in the name of Christianity and to the detriment or neglect of their culture. (p. 27).

The researcher agrees that this unfortunate state of things could have come by design or by accident, but leaves no blame (as did Idowu) for the ex-slaves, who could have in the first place been brainwashed by their European masters who saw no good in the culture of the people. For instance, Okeke (2006) observes that:

It seems that the decision of the CMS to control its schools and teachers and to make the teaching of vernacular and religion agitated the minds of the colonial authority. In his attempt to give the area a political unity and to secure personnel who would assist him in his political programme, Sir Ralph Moor drafted a different Education code. His administration believed that government support of educational programme conducted through religious operations was not conducive to the political climate they so needed. Thus a Government Education

Code was introduced in September 1903 which made provision for three features contradicting the CMS missionary policy in education: that English must be the only medium of instruction. (p. 8).

Nonetheless, these ex-slaves functionally performed the task of interpreting the message of the Gospel to their people in their own language, and eventually spearheaded the course of Bible translation for the expansion of the mission committed to them. This research views seriously with Idowu (1973) that “the time is now for the Church in Nigeria to look at herself; to examine her own soul” (p.1). This is in view of the decline or even the overt deviation from the original desires of the ex-slaves who wanted the enlightenment of their people through the instrumentality of the Gospel, using their language. Thus, to evaluate the role of Bible translation in the redefinition of Igbo identity in religious expression, and its impact in Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland becomes important.

In this regard, Idowu (1973) insists that:

The matter has now reached a critical stage, however. The Church in Nigeria must not continue in its present state unless she is deliberately courting disaster. Things are changing rapidly around her and she has to take account of the phenomena of change. . . It is time for her to realize that in order to be effective in her life and mission in Nigeria; she must respect, preserve, and dedicate to the glory of God anything that is of value in the culture and institutions of the country. The purpose of Christianity, she must constantly remember, is to fulfill and not to destroy; to make free, and not to enslave. (p. 7).

Bible translation into the Igbo language therefore became one major tool, which the Anglicans (CMS) used to accomplish their aspiration for missionary expansion in Igboland. The language of a people can provide attractive attention of the people to a new faith, as was the case with the Goths when Ulfilas evangelized them. He was born about AD 310 in the Goth country

north of the Danube. Ulfilas learned the Christian faith from the mother, but his upbringing was Gothic. He therefore knew the Gothic people, their language and their custom. Hence, Boer (1976) noted that:

The greatest service of Ulfilas was the translation of the Bible into the Gothic language. Since the Goths had no suitable writing, he invented an alphabet using mainly Greek letters. The Gothic Bible was very influential in the conversion of the Goths. (p. 126).

In this case, the missionary expansionistic thrust among the Igbo land by the Anglican (CMS) missionaries using the language of the people through Bible translation is the focus and concern of this research. This naturally suggests identification by the Anglican mission agency with the natural inclinations of people, which enhances the desire to formulate a Christianity that is African in its expression. Mbefo (1996) was right then to make reference to *Propaganda Fides* missiological document of 1659 which advocates thus, “Make no effort to change their rites, customs and morals unless there is manifest opposition to religion and morality . . . They are to “transcribe” not European customs but the faith. (p. 26).

Further to this, Libermann (cited by Mbefo, 1996) advised that “achieving critical dimension of missionary expansion would require that you make yourselves black with the black in order to form them as they ought to be, not in the European manner” (p.26). Thus, to achieve a truly indigenized Christian mission in Africa, devoid of imperialistic colourations, Msgr. de Marion Bresillac (cited by Sarpong, 1989) suggests, “Do not remain French more than is permissible to be, without hindering us from being perfect missionaries . . . The missionary must not stifle the generous sentiments of patriotism” (p. 26).

Meanwhile, Omenka (1986) is of the view that “missionary work should be pursued with aggressive zeal” (pp.121-137). Incidentally, as noted by Kalu (2003) Robinson observed that “the leaders on the Niger regard themselves in the position of a settled native Pastorate-

aggressive work, such as preaching outdoors in the villages . . . is seldom thought of” (p. 21). But, the essence of mission is to bring the saving-knowledge of Jesus Christ through the message of the Church to the people without necessarily undermining the customs and values of the people’s cultural identity.

The language of transmitting the said message and knowledge of the Gospel is essential to the preservation of the identity consciousness of the people. Over time, Bible translation has not just helped, but has mostly initiated the literary development of many of indigenous language groups. Okeke (2006) had therefore noted that:

The most important outcome of the continuing patriotism among the settled ex-slaves in Sierra Leon was the preservation of the tribal languages. Each tribe endeavoured to hand over its language to a succeeding generation. This language continuity eventually led to S. Koelle’s *Polyglotta Africana* – a collection of vocabularies, phrases, varied geographical and cultural information concerning over 200 African groups in Freetown. (p. 12).

Bible translation, nonetheless, is an activity within the religious domain, yet, it portends quantum nationalistic and cultural consciousness. It deals with the language, proverbs, idiomatic expressions and day-to-day phraseology of the people, which spells the socio-cultural realities of the Igbo people that this research evaluates. In consequence to this concept, Nwene-Osuh (1973) reflects on Kwame Nkuruma’s Pan-Africanism and said that it “is about Africans repossessing themselves culturally and materially” (p.1). If there is any good the translation of the Bible into the Igbo language has done, and can still do, it is the restoration of the ‘Igboness’ of the people, helping them to repossess themselves, especially for the revival of their language which is at the threat of extinction.

It is true that ‘Europeanization’ as observed by Nwene-Osu (1973) has done much havoc to African cultural heritage, especially the indigenous languages of the people, particularly the

Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria, when he said that Africans “are of a race whose culture, wealth, and personality have been taken away. They were all alienated in America, in Nigeria, in Ghana, in Haiti, in Jamaica and other places” (p.3). Nevertheless, there is a growing consciousness among Africans that they are people of one race, of a common historical background, and of a common identity. Incidentally, Ayandele, Ajayi, Kalu, and several other African historiographers have seen the Christian missionaries as ‘birds of the same feather that really flocked together with the colonizers’ in impoverishing the African personhood. Against this backdrop, this research is significantly geared towards the explication of roles the early missionary expansionistic policies played, particularly with regard to the language of the people.

Apart from the translation of the Bible into the language of the people, several other factors have necessarily advanced the course of missionary expansionism in Igboland. One veritable and viable tool that prominently served the purpose of missionary expansion among the various Igbo cultural zones was education. Kalu (2003) was apt in describing the role of education in the process of human emancipation. He said:

Education is perceived broadly as the process of socialization; leading people away from ignorance and into capabilities to cope with changing environment. This may require enculturation into western modes of thought and mores. More importantly, western or missionary education (used interchangeably) constituted an attack on primal worldviews, the milieu in which educational ideology operates. (p. 243).

Equipped with this hindsight, the Anglican missionaries adopted the use of education as the primary tool not only civilizing for, but also of proselytizing the people. To achieve the desired Christianizing of the people, Kalu (2003) noted that “the prevalent ideology included the missionaries as the civilizing agents of the civilizing mission or those to inculcate the restraints of Christianity. So the education of the native was the mode of accomplishing the task” (p. 244).

Achunike (1995) had argued that “religion does not operate in a vacuum. Political, economic, and social factors influence reaction to Christianity . . . the excitement generated by contact with the Bible has produced rapid religious change” (p.25). Unarguably, education has remained the strongest social factor that the missionaries use to achieve their expansionist policies.

Anyika, Adiele, Achunike, Dike, Kalu, Nmah and a host of other Igbo Church historiographers agree that missionary education was the ‘nursery bed’ for inculcating Christian knowledge, transmitting new ideas and proselytizing grounds. Thus, Rev. J. C. Taylor was said to have opened a school at Onitsha a week after his arrival there with twelve children brought to him by their parents and guardian. Evaluating this, Taylor (cited by Dike, 1957) says, “I look upon them as the commencement of our missionary work” (p. 13). Evidently, the mission stations served not just as church, but also as school and catechetical centers. In 1865, Crowther (cited by Dike, 1957) made a general positive remark, but particularly about the education at the Niger mission and said:

Things are decidedly improving at Onitsha station; the Christian Sabbath is becoming generally known . . . the people are more becoming in their habits and manners . . . many of our schoolchildren can read the New Testament fluently in their mother tongue and join the responses of the Church service with feelings of devotion. (p. 46).

Achunike (1995) however notes that “among the Catholics, school was first mentioned in the *Journal of the Mission* on 18<sup>th</sup> October, 1887” (p.49). Thus in a comparative appraisal of their educational policies and that of the Anglicans for missionary expansion, Ozigbo (1988) noted the commendable efforts of the Roman Catholics in educating the masses and forming the youths, but said that:

However highly one might praise the Catholic education work of the prefecture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is poor when compared with the C. M. S. effort there at the

time. A student of C. M. S. missionary is struck by the thoughtful and calculated approach of the C. M. S. to the missionary problems. One may disagree with its policies, but one does not fail to see the principles on which the policies are based. (p.58).

In fairness to true historicity, it should be noted however, that things have greatly changed in this regard. Achunike (1995) noted that “Ozigbo’s citation is a pre-20<sup>th</sup> century material and is now not very relevant since the Catholic Church have developed similar educational principles and has outdone the C. M. S. in establishing schools” (p. 52).

Other factors that facilitated the expansion of mission in Igboland included the military protection provided by the colonial administrators to the missionaries, discovery of coal, construction of the rail lines, the conflict of the new faith with the traditional religious worldview. Referring to the effect of Aro expedition of 1901 for missionary expansion among the Igbo, Ayandele (1979), called it ‘the collapse of ‘pagandom’ in Igboland’. Describing the ‘conquest’ and the subsequent impressive impacts of Christian missionary overtures in Igboland as an ‘epic’, he said that:

With the systematic destruction of the long juju by the British invaders between 1900 and 1902, the Bible rolled through Igboland like a juggernaut; crushing the gods to atoms . . . This picture of the defeat of the gods in Igboland remains substantially authentic, notwithstanding the nostalgic desire . . . for traditional religion in the forties and the continued prevalence of jujuism or instincts for the supernatural or belief in ancestral spirits portrayed in the works of such Igbo novelists as Chinua Achebe and John Munonye. (p. 169).

This picture of ‘defeat’ and ‘coercion’ painted vigorously by Ayandele in the missionary expansion in Igboland had nonetheless, been criticized by Achuike (1995), who avers that it was “making wrong interpretations and sweeping statements against the Igbo” (p.21). It is evident



that most times, people are not truly converted by the principle of violence and coercion. This is why Alcuin (cited by Forster, 1974) said, “What use is baptism without faith. Faith must be voluntary, not forced. How can a man be made to believe what he does not believe. He might be forced into baptism but not into faith” (p. 61). Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the event of the Aro expedition helped in no small measure to open the door to the Igbo hinterland which had been hitherto closed to the missionaries.

The socio-cultural implication of this research is to assert that the relationship between Christianity and culture is therefore inescapable. It has actually been commonly averred that God used the Jewish culture to introduce Christianity. In this regard, it is common for humans to naturally incline to their immediate worldview for expressing both their religious and social convictions. This is why man has often been, not just a response to, but also a product of his environment. So, the cultural identity of a given environment which basically includes their language becomes a vital vehicle for effective missionary activities. To undermine this might produce shallow, dependent and neo-colonialist religious expressions. Chikwe (cited by Onwubiko, 1992) paints the picture well when he says that:

Since God has endowed and beautified the human race with multiplicities of cultures, evangelizers must reckon with this fact. If they attempt to proclaim the message regardless of the cultures of the people, the message will be superficially planted and received and will be faced with the danger of being regarded as foreign. (Foreword 111, n. p).

In view of this, it is to be argued that when God became man, Christ took flesh in particular family, nationality and sanctified them. Walls (1982) supports this view and says that “wherever Christ is taken by men in any time and place he takes that nationality of that society, of that culture and sanctifies it by his presence” (pp. 93-105).

Nevertheless, it is certain that in spite of all other patterns of cultural integrations, the dismantling the language barrier between the missionaries and the evolution of the Union Igbo have greatly factored Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland. Goodchild (2003) reports that in a letter written by Rev. Fred W. Dodds of the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society on 8 November, 1918, he said:

For fully two years, I carried on my inquiries and observations amongst natives, and at last came to the conclusion that in the Union Ibo we have a very serviceable vehicle for conveying our Gospel to the Ibo. . . These are words of a man who has only gradually been won from doubt to enthusiasm. (p. 315).

The foregoing of this conceptual framework is symptomatic. It reveals that the Bible, which is the harbinger and the content of the Christian Gospel message would not be effectively communicated to a people in a strange language, hence, the need for Bible translation for Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland. The message of salvation would rather find better space in the hearts and lives of the people when communicated not just in an understandable language, but when it is translated and transmitted through the native language which is the expression of the people's cultural identity. It is this identification with the 'beingness' and cultural consciousness of the people which plays vital role in integrating a new concept that this research geared explicate in view of Anglican missionary expansion and Bible translation in Igboland.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical framework is basically concerned with ideas and principles on which a subject is based, and which fitly explains the said subject of study. This is why Haralambos and Holborn (2008) define a theory as "a set of ideas which provides an explanation for something" (p.521). Theoretical framework therefore provides reliable and sustainable ground for making

objective research judgment or decision on particular areas of study. Although, Obiefuna (2007) maintains that “most of the theories used in religious studies are borrowed from social science especially sociology” (p.81), the opinion is not exclusive, as theories from other disciplines can help to decipher religious issues. Hence, to explicate Bible translation in view of its relevance for missionary expansion in Igboland, the researcher adopts three theories including; the theory of Inculturation, Venn’s Missionary theory and the Interactionist theory of Language development.

### **2.2.1 The Theory of Inculturation**

The first to be considered in our quest for the cultural identity of Igboland in the Bible translation project for missionary expansion is the theory of Inculturation. According to Crollius and Waliggo (1986):

Inculturation as a term in missionary developments could not have been used earlier than 1962. It was propounded by J. Manson, a Belgian missiologist, in an article entitled *‘L’Eglise Ouverte Sur Le Monde’*- ‘The Church Opened to the World’, in which the expression, *‘unCatholicisme inculturé’* appeared. (p. 3).

Manson proposes that the theory of inculturation is basically and intimately concerned with the dialogue between Christianity and culture through the Church. In this case, it is the interface between missionary enterprise and the language of the people through Bible translation in Igbo cultural milieu.

It may be right to say that the idea and practice of inculturation could have been old in the church, but it is seemingly not an old theory in the missiological developments of the church. This is why Onwubiko (1992) views that “inculturation is a new vision of an old problem, or a new approach to a solution of an old problem, or still a new interpretation of an old solution of the Church and culture encounter” (p.1). To buttress this, McManners (2002) explains that the apostles convened the first council at Jerusalem around AD 50 to decide whether to include

Gentiles and inculcate Gentile cultures. They decided that Gentiles could be accepted as Christians without first converting to Judaism in order to ameliorate the conflict between Jewish Christians and Gentiles, which actually continued until Christianity incorporated the Greco-Roman culture.

According to Onwubiko (1992), “Inculturation as a task of the Church, has indispensable ecclesiological (or rather missiological) implication” (pp.1-2). Unarguably, it portends a dialogue that naturally arises in the interaction between Faith and culture in any missionary expansionist programme. The Igbo cosmology is not spared of this indispensable missiological implication of inculturation, since it is a *culture-centric* socio-religious society. Hence, Shorter (1980) has said that “inculturation is the on-going dialogue between faith and culture or cultures. More fully, it is the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures” (p. 11).

Inculturation is remarkably different from acculturation, which was earlier coined by J. C. Powell in 1880. For, while the latter speaks of the cultural and psychological changes that result from cross-cultural imitations, inculturation is mainly about the relationship and integration resulting from the dialogue between faith and culture. Ogbuji (2015) observes that “acculturation happens when the beliefs and customs of the cultural patterns involved merge almost equally and results in a simple culture through a process of selection and modification. This change often occurs because of political or cultural domination”(p.26). This is not so with inculturation, for, while an entirely new culture is produced in the former. For instance, the ecclesiological definition of inculturation by the First Plenary of the Assembly of the Federation of Asian Catholic Bishops’ Conference in 1974 (cited in Onwubiko, 1992) cited states that “the Local Church is a church incarnated in a people, a church indigenous and inculturated” (p.2).

Achunike (1995) refers to this as “*Culture interactionist*” in which case the specific uniqueness and cultural identities are maintained within the interacting cultures. Hence, the

impression that only Christianity had an impact on Igbo culture as a change agent is not complete. But strictly speaking, Igbo culture also influenced Christianity. Although many Christian denominations had operated in Igboland for more than a century and a half, for the Christian cultures to make the expected impact, it had to adapt and be fitted into the Igbo cosmos. It is evident that before the advent of Christianity the Igbo had religious structures which served the basic functions of explanation, prediction and control of space-time events. The religion of the Igbo man is at the core of his being. Hence, interactionists embrace a monocausal analysis where there exists multi-causations and that they neglect internal sources of change in culture and time (Kalu, 1985: 298).

The language and other cultural values of the people are validly internal sources of change in missionary expansionism. This is why Achunike (1995) had argued that religion does not operate in a vacuum. They are not just in existence, but have become the essential identity of the given cultural patterns of the people, and are necessarily not products of cross-cultural interactions, especially between Christianity and Igbo culture. Therefore, a genuine dialogical interaction would necessarily be required to produce a truly 'indigenized' and 'inculturated' mission. On this note, J. Schon (cited by Basden, 1921) recorded it as his opinion that "on the Niger, there was a wide field open to the Gospel, but not much good could be expected unless the various tribes were addressed each in its own language" (p.287).

Tomko (1986) articulates the definition of inculturation as "the profound insertion of the Gospel in the very heart of the determinate culture, so that the fertile seed of the faith can germinate, develop and fruitify, according to the potentiality and peculiar character of that culture" (p.155). To further elucidate this view, Saldanha (1996) believes that:

Inculturation of the Gospel and evangelization of culture are two complimentary aspects of one mission. Evangelization of culture aims at mentalities, collective

attitudes, and ways of life: it does not suffice merely to work on the individual level: it is also necessary to affect society in its culture. (p. 13).

This research believes that one significant process to accomplish this can be no less than the appropriation of the native languages of cultures in religious expression. Thus this theory has become very essential for missionary activities, and is being vigorously practiced especially among the Roman Catholics. Blomjous (1980) has therefore said that:

The period 1960-1980 can be considered as the main transition period from the traditional mission to the New Mission of the future. It has been characterized as the period of inculturation . . . It seems that we are now living at the peak of this movement, the critical phase which demands from us a real decision for profound and courageous reform. (p. 393).

Against this backdrop, Umeojiakor (1991) cites the Vatican II position on inculturation as a veritable tool for, not only evangelizing the different cultures of the world, but also for implanting the Gospel message among them. Hence:

If the Church is to be in a position to offer all men the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, then it must implant itself among all these groups in the same way that Christ by his incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the men among who he lived. (p. 23).

In 1975, Pope Paul VI affirmed that “inculturation for the Church is a question of “affecting and, as it were, upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, humankind’s criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the word of God and the plan of salvation” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, N.19). Hence, in view of this cogent need for inculturation, Pope John Paul II was cited in the *Catechesi Tradendae*, No. 53 as saying that evangelization has to bring the power of

the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures so that they may bring forth from their own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought.

The essence of inculturation is therefore obvious. Saldanha (1996) is of the view that “through inculturation faith is grasped in a more profound and personal manner by the local people and it can take deeper root among them” (p.14). The implication of inculturation is as of speaking about the Church or the Christian message becoming inserted into a given culture. Crollius and Waliggo (1986) agree that, “considered against its anthropological background, inculturation shows its appropriateness also in the fact that it brings out the relevance of the “evangelization of culture” for all local Churches and for the entire Church” (p. 39).

Rahner (cited by Onwubiko, 1992) insists that “Christianity must inculturate itself if it is now to be, as it has begun to be, genuinely a world Church . . . a certain independence in their respective cultural spheres will make the local Churches inculturated, and no longer a European export” (p. 21). In view of this, every serious evangelizer or missionary is therefore called upon to make the message of Christ at home with the culture of the evangelized and the same time, bring the culture of the people in tune with the gospel message. Against this backdrop, a conscious development of an African Theology will ensue when religion is properly expressed within the realities of African cultural worldview.

Madu (2004) therefore argues strongly that “the task of African theology will be, to translate, interpret, and to clarify the Christ-event to suit the tongue, style and the psyche of the African” (p. 15). This is to fit religion into the framework of the African mind. According to him, ‘the result will be a recasting of the “status-quo ante” to fit into the framework of the African worldview. It is to be reiterated however, that caution must be taken to ensure that the cultures of the people do not over-shadow or overthrow the essence of the gospel. Instead, in the process of dialogue between the Christian and the native cultures, the people’s culture becomes a vehicle of translating the message of the gospel in the context of the people.

In any case, the contextual mindset of the people among whom missionary activity is to be done is crucially related to the success or failure of the mission. Ogbuji (2015) therefore observes that inculturation is the transformation of a culture by faith and the cultural re-expression of faith. It is also the combining of doctrinal orthodoxy with aspects of local customs and traditions, which is a major interest in Igbo Catholicism. This is the essence of inculturation. Against this backdrop, Kalu (2003) observes that:

Certain aspects of the home base are crucial in understanding the activities of a particular mission in the field: doctrine, polity, mode of recruitment, training, funding, articulated goals and strategy. For instance, missionary bodies arising from hierarchical polities defined doctrine and centralized funding would likely attempt to reproduce themselves in polity, doctrine, liturgy, architecture and class-culture. Such a baggage may hinder and reduce the pace to that of tortoise. (pp. 53-54).

Idowu (1973) had earlier approached this theory of inculturation from the point of view of the 'indigenous Church' and argued substantially against the "uncalled-for habit of conducting services in English in places where everybody, can speak and understand the vernacular, and where very few understand English at all or properly. For him, "in such a place, it is unnecessary to use such a foreign language. But the usual excuse is that, 'the people like it!'" (p. 21). In fact, Kalu (1978) referred to the position of some nationalists like Edward Blyden, Holy James Johnson and Mojola Agbebi who "condemned Western ethnocentrism in missions and the tendency to transplant her models of an institutional church which robbed African churches of their freedom and indigenous character" (p.9).

Along this line of thought, Onwubiko (1992) cited the position of the 1977 Synod of Bishops discussion on "*Catechesis E Inculturacion*" in which they argued that "to impose foreign cultural forms on people who have their own culture as the only possible way of



expressing the faith and living it can be an obstacle to Catechesis” (p. 43). Meanwhile, Catechesis is properly viewed as pre-supposing the inculturation of the faith, and also a constant and dynamic instrument of inculturation.

To sum up this concern, Idowu (1973) further queried:

What can be the reason why authorities of the Roman Catholic Confession persist in reciting the liturgy in the ancient language of Rome at worship in Nigeria? These practices, according to him, betray a gross misconception of what Church worship should be or a deliberate device to keep man’s soul in bondage; it certainly shows that in Nigeria, Church worship is largely an imposition of some foreign cultic practices. (p. 22).

In response to this concern however, Ogbonna (1988) says that:

For the past decade, ever since the African Bishops abandoned the concept of missionary adaptation in favour of incarnation at the 1974 Synod, the overriding concern and thrust of the Church in Africa has been inculturation. The pursuit of an authentic inculturation of the gospel is much a characteristic of the Church in Igboland today. There is remarkable breakthrough in the area of liturgy. The mass, for instance, which is the enactment of the sacrifice enjoined by the Gospel, is now being expressed in Igbo language, idioms and proverbs though it is still very much enrobed in western structure. (p.46).

Nevertheless, in the process of inculturation, dialogue, adaptation and the full realization of the cultural identity of the particular cultures involved form the focal objective. This researcher therefore agrees with Ogbuji (2015), that in a true inculturation situation, “there are no winners or losers” (p.46). This is because inculturation implies the presentation of and re-expression of the Gospel in forms and terms proper to a culture. This process means the re-interpretation of both without being unfaithful to either. Anything less is not inculturation. In

other words, it would be syncretism and not a synthesis – the juxtaposition of non-communicating meanings.

In view of this, Cardinal Arinze (cited by Azorji, 1992) says that:

A problem of inculturation is the danger created by the conscious or unconscious effort to give new life to practices or beliefs, which are not reconcilable with Christian faith and morals. There are those who want to justify the use of amulets, the practice of polygamy and the cult of the spirit and ancestors under the label of local culture. (pp. 18-19).

The Church in mission would therefore be immersed with the challenge of discernment as to which cultural values are indispensable for missionary expansion. Cautious and deliberate understanding of inculturation is therefore expedient, as it does not mean merely external adaptation of Christianity to a culture. It is neither forced proselytism nor a question of adulteration of the word of God; rather it is bringing Christ into the very centre of men's life. Okpara (1996) therefore opined that:

The evangelizer has to discern the typical behavior patterns of a milieu, the criteria of judgement, the dominant values and major interests etc. All these elements belonging to what is known as the ethos of a culture can be appreciated, evaluated and given direction in the light of the Gospel message. (p.40).

Precisely, until the liturgy, doctrine, training, and policies of the Churches in Igboland, not just their Bible have been translated to, and properly communicated through the native language of the people, it would not be truly said that the Church in this culture area has been thoroughly inculturated. This research is expectant of a time in history when the humanities including theology, law and the sciences would be taught with the native tongues and languages of the people as is obtained in many places like China, Korea and Germany.

Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland would therefore not have been possible without inculturating the gospel in the context of the people's language through the process of Bible translation. Nonetheless, much remains to be done. Hence, inculturation is a process of becoming; it is a theory of living and a form of manifesting the gospel message within the cultural conventionalities of the people without losing the essence and heart of truth of the Christian message.

### **2.2.2 Venn's Missionary Theory**

Another important theory for the proper understanding and analysis of this research is the Henry Venn's missionary theory of self-extending, self-sustaining and self-governing Church in Africa propounded in 1851. Henry Venn, was the Honorary Secretary of the Church Missionary Society (C. M. S.) from 1841-1872. He had passionately advocated that to build a native pastorate in which missionaries were to be students of the language and culture of the people so as to reach the inner recesses of the host communities and to be handmaids in building a Christian community which will be left to the indigenous people to nurse. In a letter, which he wrote to J. C. Taylor on January 23, 1858, Venn was inquisitive for details about Igboland- the people, crops, proverbs, stories, languages and possibilities for commerce. Perhaps, this inquiry signaled a prophetic preview of Venn's desired native mission in which the language and other worldviews, including the lifestyles of the people would play tangible role in communicating and expressing the gospel message to them.

Henry Venn's commitment and influence in the development of indigenous African Church can well be described as "ingenious". Thus, Okeke (2006) has literally embarked on a graphic eulogy of Henry Venn, referring to him as an 'Archbishop' of the C. M. S. Although Max Warren (1967) had described him as a "great English nationalist, dedicated to the expansion of the English spheres of influence, Knight (cited by Okeke, 2006) says that:

His nationalism was equally large to accommodate nationalistic instincts of other people. Hence, his concept of a native Church. His belief and defense of the native Church gave birth to his notable euthanasia policy. Thus, in as much as he believed that European civilizing agencies would be used to assist spiritual work; this notion was clearly devoid of spiritual imperialism. (p. 19).

This missionary theory has been described as ‘euthanasia policy’ by W. Knight in 1880. He used the term ‘euthanasia’ in reference to the gradual and painless ‘putting to death’ or elimination of Eurocentric imperialism in mission, and the development of native pastorate. Again, Knight (cited by Okeke, 2006) observes that “Venn drew four important documents on the organization of Native Churches; First in 1851; second in July 1861; third in January 1866; fourth On Nationality June 1861” (p. 96). Referring to this theory, Groves (1955) observes that:

The ideal of the euthanasia of the mission set forth by Henry Venn in his first paper on Native Church Organization in 1851- ‘the settlement of a Native church under Native Pastors upon a self-supporting system- had become generally accepted in theory, though in practice reluctance to hand over the rein of control was, not an uncommon experience. (p. 290).

Incidentally, Anyabuikie (1996) had noted that Venn was a “real missionary who believed in the ability of the African to carry out an evangelical programme, and whose ‘feelings for Africa helped to make the missionary expansion in West Africa successful” (p.23). It is evident that in spite of the unfavourable reactions from his fellow European missionaries, Venn demonstrated much faith in the Africans, particularly Crowther, and did so much to develop indigenous African priesthood. Espousing the import of Venn’s missionary policy, Kalu (2003) referred to it as “a blue-print for indigenization by one of the white fathers of the indigenization of the African church” (p.59). Interestingly, Venn had advised missionaries to respect the national habits and conventionalities, thereby warning that:

It is a great mistake for the missionary to assume the position of a native pastor. Many of our old missionaries have fallen into this mistake. They have ministered to a large native congregation for thirty or forty years and acknowledged at last that it was impossible to acquire full confidence of their people, and knowledge of what is passing in their minds, which a native pastor would soon obtain. (p. 58).

According to Nwadiolor (2014) who wrote from a nationalistic point of view:

The intention was the emergence of a national Church; a Church that would give birth to a nation. In this way the Church is from the beginning an indigenous Church . . . in short, in Venn's view the function of a mission was to build up a native Church enjoying self-government, self-supporting and self-extension. So he worked towards developing an indigenous clergy to work under an indigenous bishop. (p. 35).

Perhaps, there would not have been any better description of the impact of this self-expansion, self-sustenance and self-governance in the native Churches proposed by Henry Venn, than as is reflected in the Henry Johnson's tribute at his death in 1873, cited by Dike (1956), when he said:

Mr. Venn was the man who laid his time, his talents and whatever he had of this world's good upon the altar of sacrifice, labored with uncommon energy and zeal, and died thinking and praying for Africa. To him under God, we owe in no small measure the progress which we have made in education on the West Coast of Africa. . . He was a man of true, genuine sympathy. (p. 115).

The implications of this missionary policy as propounded by Henry Venn are obvious. There is hardly any doubt that apart from his European background, Venn had an explicit faith in the equal dignity of all human persons irrespective of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. His role in ensuring that the African natives had a voice in the missionary enterprise among their own

people was uninhibitedly demonstrated in the consecration of the Samuel Ajai Crowther as first African Bishop of the Church Missionary Society in 1864. This certainly would have fulfilled his desire not only to evangelize Africa, but to develop a native pastorate among them, by knowing the ‘people . . . their proverbs, their stories, and their languages’.

The fact that this theory is ingeniously designed to ensuring that the message of the gospel is made the property of the indigenous people among whom it is practiced leaves no space of doubt that Bible translation into Igbo language was a right action in tandem with Henry Venn’s missionary policy of raising a native Church. Evidently, the building of a native or indigenous church, which Henry Venn labored for, or the expansion of Anglican mission in Igboland, could not have been realistic without translating the Bible into the indigenous language of the people. The outstanding challenge is to reassess the extent to which this goal has seemingly been accomplished, in relation to the contemporary socio-cultural realities of Igboland even after the political independence of Nigeria in 1960.

### **2.2.3 The Interactionist theory of Language Development**

Given the focal position, which language and its translation occupy in this research, the third theory adopted for its analysis and proper understanding is the ‘Interactionist theory’ of language development. A Soviet Psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, developed this theory at about 1965. He explains the process of language development by emphasizing the role of social interaction between the developing child and linguistically knowledgeable adults, which are based largely on the socio-cultural theories. According to Vygotsky, social interaction plays an important role in the learning process, thus he proposed the zone of proximal development (ZPD) where learners construct the new language through socially mediated interaction.

It is commonly believed that language is acquired from an interaction of a human’s innate biological capabilities to acquire language with exposure to language in the environment in which the child is developing. According to Rudd and Lambert (2011), “The interaction theory

recognizes that both environmental and biological factors are important in language development” (p.56). Thus, all interactionists believe that language acquisition occurs as a result of the natural interaction between people, especially children and their environment, more specifically, their parents or caregivers. This is also true of the interaction between missionaries and their immediate cultural environments.

Some linguists like B. F. Skinner (1957) who developed the ‘behaviorist’ approach and Naom Chomsky (1965) who propounded the theory of ‘Universal Grammar’ and considered to be the father of modern linguistics have made impactful contributions to the acquisition and development of language. This research however, being a discourse of religion and socio-cultural interaction in Missionary expansion in Igboland views that Vygotsky’s theory of social interactionist approach provides ample recipe for understanding the concepts of this study given the fact that language would be better learnt within an interactive integration with the given social environments. In this regard, Bruner (1983) says that within this theory the language acquisition can easily be realized differently in emphasizing the role of the environment in producing such differences, as is most often the case in child language and not infrequently the case in adult language.

It is obvious, as noted by Chomsky (1965) that no society exists without a language; and no language exists without a society. He believes that language is an instrument of thought. Since humans are born with the predisposition to learn language, learning the language of a given people, especially for effective communication and missionary expansion becomes inevitable. There is no doubt that, “many of the unique details of any specific language structure are heavily influenced by the environment, but according to Chomsky (1965), “The human brain is ready made to quickly acquire language at specific stages in the developmental process” (p.108). No cultural value can survive or knowledge transmitted without a conscious process of preserving the language of the people.

In concrete terms, Chomsky (cited by Bigge and Shermis, 1998) claims that children are born with a hard-wired Language Acquisition Device (LAD) in their brains. They are born with the major principles of language in place, but with many parameters to set (such as whether sentences in the language(s) they are to acquire must have explicit subjects). According to his nativist theory, when the young child is exposed to a language, their LAD makes it possible for them to set the parameters and deduce the grammatical principles, because the principles are innate.

Meanwhile, Lemetyinen (2012) says that Language is a cognition that truly makes us human. So, whereas other species do communicate with an innate ability to produce a limited number of meaningful vocalizations or even with partially learned systems, there is no other species known to date that can express infinite ideas (sentences) with a limited set of symbols (speech sounds and words). Against this backdrop, it is important to state that this theory is a conscious attempt to answer questions about the process of language acquisition, and to account for changes in the child's knowledge with language development, and how the theory can account for the adult's language acquisition.

Lewis (2010) argues however that the interactionist approach to language acquisition is based on culture and environment. Thus, it is not universal in scope. In fact, the theory holds that language is never universal, but always context- and time-bound. On the one hand, this means that language seems to be provincial, but also utilitarian, because it develops in the environment where it is most needed and most likely to be understood. On the other hand, it keeps the level of basic comprehension solely on the level of the initial environment. Transitions to other environments, at least on the surface, seem to be a problem.

Although it has been said that learning a language, particularly a new one is not easy, yet, it is not unfamiliar to assume that children learned their mother tongue by simple imitation,



through listening and repeating what adults said. Hence, Niedzielski & Preston (2003) are of the opinion that in contemporary theories of language acquisition, social interactionists believe in a dynamic system where typically children cue their parents into supplying the appropriate language experience that children require for language advancement. In essence, it turns in supplying of supportive social communicative structure that allows efficient communication despite its background and difficulties.

In this case, a missionary can learn the language of certain culture-areas through passionate interaction with the environment of the people among whom he works. This has often been accomplished by listening and repeating what the people said. Goodchild (2003) had shared the experience of Rev. Henry Dobinson who was an Anglican missionary at Onitsha in this regard, saying that, “we have made little attempt to learn the language by getting various boys to give us words” (p. 17). However, Goodchild (2003) observes that:

The greatest problem with translation was the considerable difference in the Ibo spoken in different areas. There was, of course, no radio or television to encourage standardization, and most people never travelled more than few miles from their home village. . . the language had never been written down. Ibo society flourished without reading and writing. This meant great variation in the words used and in grammatical structure and spelling. A translation that suited one district baffled another. Dobinsons work in Onitsha did not meet the needs of the Ibos living further South. His translation might be described as *Niger* or *Upper Ibo* as opposed to *Delta* or *Lower Ibo* which was regarded as *Isuama Ibo*. (p. 18).

In spite of the wrong notions about the cultures and lifestyles of the people held by many of the European missionaries, they still found interaction with the immediate communities, especially their languages an indispensable tool for trading their commerce, hoisting their

civilization and spreading their Christianity. This is the essence of translating the Bible into Igbo language, which the Anglican missionaries considered to be essential for the expansion of their work.

### **2.3 Empirical Studies**

Empiricism as developed in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries by scholars like John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume, holds that all knowledge comes primarily from sense-experience and evidence. In this research therefore empirical studies would be focused towards a re-examination of existing resource materials on missionary expansion and Bible translation particularly as expressed in the native languages of the people. Although this has continued to generate varied considerations particularly in missionary historiography, the place and role of Bible translation for missionary expansion especially in Igboland has not been given adequate scholarly attention by African historians of missionary interest. This gap is what this research is set to fill.

For instance, Ekechi (1972) focuses his studies on the missionary rivalry between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants in Igboland. He perceptively remarks that:

The coming of the missionaries as we have seen, not only brought significant social and political turbulence. As a result of the series of conflicts between the missionaries and the local people, the general attitude towards the foreigners changed dramatically. (p. 33).

In fact, Kalu (2003) observes that “the turn of the 1970s, Felix Ekechi’s work took the critical highroad; he saw the core conceptual scheme in re-interpreting missionary enterprise in Igboland in the theme of rivalry” (p.18). He further emphasized that missionary expansion in Igboland was mainly due to the series of military expeditions of the colonial government. Perhaps, it did not occur to him that the evangelization of the Christian gospel would have been unrealistic, or remained foreign and seemingly imposed upon the Igboland if the language of the

people was not given adequate consideration in missionary enterprise especially through Bible translation. Although Ekechi made a sketchy discourse on this subject, he however gave a detailed and analytical attention to the rivalry prevalent in the early missionary enterprise in Igboland.

Ironically, the rivalry emphasized by Ekechi, which seemed to carry negative picture did indeed produce some positive effects particularly on the speedy missionary expansion following the scramble for, and the competitive establishment of missions and schools in various communities of Igboland. Thus, the Roman Catholics, who refused to be involved with or limited by the Comity Agreement of 1911, (in which arrangements were made by the Protestant missions for the delimitation of their respective areas of influence), spread like wildfire across and into the various Igbo hinterlands. This ignited competitive spirit, which woke up the Protestant missions who seemed to have been satisfied with their pace of expansion prior to the coming of the Catholics. In fact, Enenmo (cited by Amucheazi, 1986) views that the Catholics concentrated in Igboland because they realized that:

Religion is taken seriously among the Ibos . . . (This) does not appear to be a spontaneous unplanned reaction to a sudden obstruction. It was a calculated carefully planned and lengthily prepared offensive directed by an expert strategist and an overwhelmingly powerful personality. (p. 30).

On the other hand, the depth of scare left on Igbo cosmology by this missionary rivalry, especially its communality would take long time to heal. This comes clearer considering a number of other issues including the question of Igbo orthography controversy, which arose in time, not just between the Protestant and Roman Catholic mission groups but also in the wider colonial education policy. It is evident that even up until the present, the Roman Catholics mainly adopt the *Igbo Onitsha* for most liturgical expression while the Protestants aver more to the use of the *Union Igbo*. Afigbo (1981) refers to this and says that:

Unfortunately, for the Igbo the bitter and senseless rivalry among the churches extended to linguistic question. As a result the R. C. M. at first stuck to the Onitsha dialect with the result that school children as far away from Onitsha as Okigwi and beyond were taught to say '*yiolu ayi ayiyo*', in place of *riora anyi aririo*, only to be laughed at by their non-Catholic brothers. (p. 363).

To elucidate further on this challenge, it is necessary to point out that the controversy over official orthography has continued for a long time. Adiele (1996) observes that:

The battle line was drawn between the Roman Catholic Mission and the Protestants led by the Anglicans. Whereas the Roman Catholic Mission was strongly associated with the Adams-ward otherwise known as the new orthography, the Protestants stuck to the Lepsius or the old orthography with which the Union Igbo Bible – Bible Nso among other literary works were published. (p. 102).

But, apart from the rivalry and military expeditions, Bible translation was evidently, a significant factor in missionary expansion into the very heart and cultures of Igboland. It was deliberately designed to ensure an amalgam of all the leading dialects, a compromise in which every dialect would receive and make concessions. Of course, what Archdeacon Dennis did in the Bible translation project has been described by Wetermann (1929), as “not essentially different from what happened in European languages, when out of a number of dialects, one written language evolved, which bore and bears features of more than one dialect” (pp. 340-341).

Ayandele (1966), on the other hand, had earlier given the impression that “Igboland remained in 1899 a self-reliant, self-contained, incorrigibly insular, independent and blissfully tradition-encrusted people” (p.167). For him, external attempts to evangelize Igboland were effectively neutralized partly by the imperviousness of the Igbo’s cultural milieu to untried aberrating alien influences, which was eventually opened for missionary expansion following the

forceful defeat of the *long juju* in the 1901 Arochukwu expedition. While this is not an entire research on Igbo response to missionary enterprises, it can be argued that Ayandele's position is not a true and complete reflection of the Igbo cultural disposition to the Gospel. Hence, Kalu (cited by Achunike, 1995) says that before the advent of Christianity, "the Igbo had religious structures which served the basic functions of explanation, prediction and control of space-time events" (p.23). Thus, it may even be said that the pronounced Igbo acceptance of Christianity was largely dependent on their rich religious and cultural background which were in terms and to a very large extent, similar to the new faith.

Nevertheless, to further espouse the challenge of communicating the Christian gospel through the language of the people, Idowu (1973) expressed his worry about the European structure of the Church in Nigeria and . . . the distinctive European complexion of its Christianity and illustrated this from his own personal experience thus:

In 1956, I took part as an assistant missionary in Mission to the University College, Ibadan, the chief Missioner, who was an American, used some American based films upon the Gospel narratives to introduce the sub-theme for each evening. The first film startled me; the rest of the films left me disturbed, and then set me thinking deeply. Reason: According to the films, Jesus was speaking American. 'And what was the matter with that?' someone will ask. It is this. I suddenly realized that all along the picture of Jesus, which I had in my mind, was that of an English person speaking in correct English idiom and accent. It did not really occur to me that Jesus Christ was capable of speaking American! This shows that all along I had seen Him only through the eyes of my English educators; and that similarly, a Nigerian whose Christian education had been conducted by an

American or a Swedish missionary, for example would see through the eyes of his educator, an American or Swedish Jesus! (p. 2).

The experience rehearsed above is decisively revealing, as some missionaries did not take into adequate consideration, the cultural values, especially the languages of the immediate communities of their enterprise. Idowu recalled that, “not long ago, it was a thing entirely out of the question for a Nigerian clergyman to be seen dressed in his own national clothes even in his own house; when . . . it was considered sacrilege for an ‘educated’ Christian Nigerian to be seen walking along the street dressed in a Nigerian costume” (p. 5). In fact, Ayandele (1964) has argued along the same line that:

Christianity is intended to be the religion not of one particular race of people only but of the whole world. But in different countries it will wear different types; if it is to become indigenous to every soil. It should have in Europe a European type, in Asia an Asian type, and in Africa an African type – different types of one and the same religion with different formulae of faith and ceremonies of worship. (p. 99).

Although the above emphasis was on the culture and language of the people and not Bible translation, the researcher agrees with Idowu on the need for inculturating the Christian faith, but views his extremity with suspicion as this might as well produce another sectionalized Christian gospel not rooted in but overshadowed by the culture of the given people. He did not explicate the means and process of achieving his desired expectation.

The Christian message is a universal gospel for man’s redemption and can only be effectively communicated and rooted into the culture of the people by missionaries using the immediate language of the people. It is not enough to learn how to speak the language but also to translate the content of the gospel as contained in the Bible into the people’s language. This research is of the view that one major factor for indigenizing Christianity, which Idowu did not

give adequate consideration was the issue of Bible translation, even into his immediate Yoruba language.

Amucheazi (1986) admits that Bible translation was a landmark factor in missionary expansion in Igboland, but he suggested that the details of the impacts of Bible translation be left for Igbo Church historians. On the missionary educational programmes, Amucheazi (1986) points out that:

Right from the beginning, the Protestants were less concerned about teaching English than about education in Nigerian languages. The Presbyterians arrived with a printing press and by 1849 they had produced an Efik Language Dictionary which remains authoritative till today. Crowther, Taylor and Schon on the Niger were engaged in similar exercises with the Igbo language. By 1860's they had produced translations of [parts] of the Bible in Igbo and in 1913 the entire Bible had been translated. (p. 31).

It is to be understood that Amucheazi wrote from his perspective as a political scientist; he analyzed the colonial government's influence on the cultural mentalities of their subjects, which invariably affected the early development of native languages. Inyang (cited by Amucheazi, 1986) reflects the warning issued by the first Inspector of Schools for West Africa, Mr. Sunter who says that "the natives must and will know English in spite of all such well-meaning but diseased notions; it is the language of commerce and only education worth a moment's consideration or attainable" (pp. 279-327). It is then to be said that from the colonial standpoint, the spank on the vernacular imbued adverse and delimitating effect on the development of the native languages, which in turn produced its rippling challenge to the translation of the Bible, especially into Igbo language.

On the contrary, Ayandele (1966) notes that "in the schools there was a mission regulation that children who consistently absented themselves from religious studies and

vernacular education should be dismissed” (pp. 300-301). According to Amucheazi (1986), “This over-emphasis on the vernacular language and religious knowledge was taking place at a time when the government made religion optional in schools and was insisting on the English Language even to the exclusion of the vernacular” (p.31). The scenario here reflects a conflict of cultures, which produced its own consequence, not only on the literary development of the language of the people among whom missionary activity was carried on, but also on their general identity as a people.

Kalu (2003) had made an extensive survey of the process of the Christianization of Igboland. Although he emphasized the patterns of change in modern Igbo historiography, making only a passing reference on Bible translation, he did not give attention to its significance to the development of Igbo literacy or even its prominent contribution to the expansion of Anglican mission or the entire Christianization of Igboland. Kalu reflects the “image of the Igbo as receptive, aggressive and competitive which could always be demonstrated with their attitude towards education” (p. 242). This is not an uncommon trait as one examines the cultural cosmology of the people particularly in relation to missionary enterprise, given the fact that Achebe (2012) had also described the Igbo as an “open society with an adventurous spirit” (pp. 75-76). In this regard, Dennis (cited by Kalu, 2003) notes that:

There is an unusually strong desire here to learn English, and this evening the Chief and a number of his people have been trying hard to persuade me to relax our CMS rule that pupils learn to read the Bible in the vernacular before receiving any instruction in English. (p. 188).

Unfortunately, the attitude of some missionaries in this regard was not encouraging either. To some extent, the study of English language became prominent as a tool for survival in the colonial dispensation and the major reason for patronizing missions. In fact, Kalu (2003) observes that:



The ideology espoused in the home metropolises about creating self-supporting, self-propagating and self-funding, native churches was ignored for the most part. Neither the Anglicans nor Catholics engaged in a concerted effort to build an indigenous clergy. In the Catholic Church, there were many occasions, which betrayed the racism of the Irish. The Roman Catholic priests could not even speak in vernacular and despised the whole endeavour to study the language. The pretext was that the few white personnel were very busy with the vast school system. (p. 208).

The scenario here represents a major challenge to the development Igbo language in religious expression and especially for effective expansion of Anglican missionary activities. The inescapable conclusion therefore is that before the translation, as in many parts of Igboland, missionary expansion was truly the planting of Christianity; the maturation period actually began with the translation of the Bible into the language of the people. Thus the slow pace of Anglican missionary expansion was overtaken by exponential spread of the mission in many parts of Igboland. The reason for this is obvious; a certain predisposition for inclusiveness permits the new religious force to be accepted and yet not assimilated. But the purpose is to be made clear that Bible translation into Igbo language was to help in the coming into being of committed Christians, who would be useful, mature and well-informed; proud of their Christian heritage through their language.

Okeke (2006) deals with the policy and practice of the Anglican mission in Igboland wherein he confidently espoused his interest on the native contribution to missionary expansion in Igboland. He argues that “the Igbo mission was conceived distinctly as a response by C. M. S. to possibilities – both in terms of communication and willingness of the Igbo people at Freetown to take the gospel to their kinsmen” (p15). He dealt with the issue of Bible translation as a consequent product of missionary and colonial education policies with regards to native

languages. According to Okeke (2006), “Undoubtedly, the collection of words, translation and the training of agents to do these enhanced the evangelistic work of the C. M. S.” (p. 34). Although this research shares similar passions, it is to be observed that Okeke did not go further to explain the process by which this translation project was actualized, and the consequent impacts it portend on the religious and socio-cultural life of the people.

But the fact of Bible translation into Igbo language meant an instinctive determination to preserve an aspect of the culture, of which Ayandele (1966) notes that “the reduction of these languages into writing resulted in homogeneity in the tribes concerned” (p. 283). It is important as Okeke (2006), agrees with Ekechi, that:

A cultural preservation without a language will be a task hard to accomplish. The implication of the launching of a linguistic exercise in Igboland is far-reaching. It created the people of the book: mature, useful, informed and committed. The CMS agents introduced the Igbo to alphabets using their language. It opened wider possibilities. A neat fragmentation of translation, then evangelism, and finally formal education. (p. 35).

This researcher agrees with Okeke’s stance that translation, industrial work, organized education and pastoral education were a meaningful quadruple that created the people of the book. Without their language, the continued pride of the Igbo people in the contemporary society would not be guaranteed. Therefore, in order for the missionary to know a people well, and their cherished values, Page (1926) opines that:

A missionary’s attitude toward the language of the people among whom he works is apt to be symptomatic of his attitude towards the people themselves. If one is not prepared to take the trouble to master the languages this surely argues some lack of interest in those who speak it . . . If one really cares for them as much as

one professes one would not grudge the labours involved in mastering the only medium through which one can get into lose talk with them. (pp. 124-133).

Tasie (1969) strongly holds that “language study of a given people goes beyond mere evangelistic conveniences” (p. 400). Language is certainly an identity issue, which the missionary cannot toy with. This is what the reduction of Igbo language and sounds into syllables, words and into literary sentences has achieved. Meanwhile, it is to be underscored that although Igbo is usually classified by linguists, as one language, it has many dialects, some of which are totally so different that the people speaking one are hardly intelligible to those speaking another dialect.

In spite of the impediment of the multiplicity of dialects just as is obtainable in other languages, the Bible translated and written in Igbo language has helped the Igbo people rediscover their identity and cherished values. Further to this, Tasie (1996) examines the place of Igbo Bible Nso and the evolution of the Union Igbo as an attempt to provide a standardized and acceptable Igbo language for missionary expansion in Igboland. It would be recalled that at the Asaba Language Conference of 1905, Thomas Dennis had claimed that he had examined the differences and similarities of the Igbo spoken in the various sub-culture areas and submitted that Owerri-Igbo was as pure as he could find. But, Tasie (1996) observes that:

This had not resolved the basic issue, for in the same breath Dennis also admitted that the Owerri-Igbo, although with resemblance with Bonny-Igbo, was different from Onitsha-Igbo. He argued that the solution would be in creating what he called “Union Igbo” which was to be an amalgam of various Igbo dialects which will meet all the needs of the Igbo speaking tribes. (p. 85).

Being particularly drawn to the challenge of accepting the Union Igbo as veritable for all Igbo speaking areas, Tasie made no significant emphasis on how it affects the contemporary challenge of Igbo identity in the sphere of religious expression. Evidently, Bible translation into

Igbo language provided a unifying ground for a people with common cultural background in responding to the teachings of the faith.

From the foregoing discussion, the relationship between faith, context and culture, particularly the Igbo language for religious expression can be established. Incidentally, Nmah (2012) observes that “one cannot ignore religion if one is to understand man and his place in the universe” (p.166). The religion of a person is practically the identity of such one. Meanwhile, for any religious faith to thrive to becoming the people’s property of faith it must be communicated within the frameworks of the people’s worldview, especially using their language; otherwise the faith would remain foreign to them. This is what Bible translation into the native languages is set to accomplish.

However, without regard to this course of missionary expansionist strategy, Nkwoka (2006) observed and decries that over time, the mission Churches were known to have used government functionaries to oppress and persecute the native agents and the mission churches remained foreign in liturgies, robes and ecclesiastical hierarchies. In the same light, Ekebuisi (2010) observes that:

In as much as with the best intention of evangelism went the notion that Africans needed to be remade, given a new and superior culture and delivered from all that Europeans considered to be the thralldom of their native environment. This resulted in the church not taking account of the traditional belief of the people; little effort was made to understand them and to know their basic hopes and fears and traditional yearnings for God, and in what ways God has met this yearnings.

(p. 68)

Similarly, Nwadiakor and Udezo (2012) reacting to the continued identity crisis which African Christianity is experiencing as a result of the challenge of indigenizing the Christian faith, view that:

When Christianity was extended to Africa and encountered Africa culture, Christianity had got so engrossed with Europe that it tended to perceive non-European people and cultures through the European cultural lens. The expansion of Christianity to Africa (15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century) became, in effect, a projection of Western Christianity. The task now facing African Christians is how to make their local churches truly local while remaining part of, and in communion with the church universal. (pp. 240-241).

Henry Venn's contribution to the development of an African Church and the invaluable efforts of translating the Bible into the native language for effective missionary expansion are significant. Nwadiolor (2014) observes that "they introduced European teachings, institutions and beliefs, but not without participating in transforming some of them to suit African conditions and interests, and concomitantly, easing the adjustment of traditional ways to the new innovation" (p. 44). Anglican Missionary activities would have indeed produced a dysfunctional Christianity in Igboland if efforts were not made to present the message of the gospel to them in the language and codes understandable to them through Bible translation.

Christianity has actually come a long way in Igboland. The extent and impact of education on the cultural mentalities of the people may be rightly described as enormous, as well as ambivalent. For, while the colonial government aimed at developing those who would help them to carry on their political programmes, the missionaries inadvertently produced people who would eventually seek the identity consciousness of their people. Bible translation has therefore become a veritable tool for advancing the course of missionary activities. Okeke (2006) says that by the unanimous agreement to produce a single version of the Igbo Scripture, "the road was mapped for the unity of Igbo people" (p. 37).

In relation to liturgy, which Akinola (2007) describes as "the dramatization of the Bible in worship" (p. iii), the indispensability of effective communication cannot be under-estimated.

Thus, Lloyd (cited by Amusan 1997) says that even “liturgy stands to be described as inaccessible not only when the language is not understood or the language is above the level of the parishioners, but also when lack of cultural values that are relevant to the people can make the liturgy sound not our language” (p.135). In this case, a priority in liturgical renewal will be the presentation of liturgy as an instrument of the gospel through a means of communication understandable to the people for their liberation, healing, reconciliation and justice.

The purpose of translation of the Bible therefore is to create an atmosphere for better understanding and a fuller and more frequent implementation of the content of the Bible. Bible translation should therefore meet the psychological, sociological and spiritual needs of the time and the people in missionary expansion. It will be absurd to use Latin, Greek or even English to communicate the message of the Bible to a typically uninformed or illiterate congregation. However, it is observed that such is the case in many contemporary Igbo mission fields.

A re-occurring decimal to the impact of missionary education and the consequent translation of the Bible, in the Igbo missionary historiography is, ‘how far has this encouraged the use of Igbo language for religious expressions in contemporary missionary and established Church structures in Igboland? It would be recalled that it has not been long ago that pupils and students were cautioned with such words as “speaking of Igbo language is not allowed in this class”. Defaulters were therefore, consequently fined or disciplined for speaking their own native language in their own culture area.

Another considerable question of concern, which has worried some African historiographers such as Kalu (1995), Okeke (2006), Anyabuike (1996) and others is the issue of the unsung contribution of the natives in the scheme of their own development, especially in the Bible translation project. Perhaps, the need to effectively expand mission and reaching the inner recesses of the native communities must have been responsible for the emergence of indigenous

Bible Societies in Nigeria. But, the extent of its impact on missionary expansionism in Igboland is yet, a lingering issue.

To provide a significant panacea to this lingering challenge of truly situating the Gospel message for missionary expansion particularly in Igboland using the language of the people, Udeafor (1994) insists that:

The Church as the embodiment or carrier of this message of salvation, profits from the cultural heritage of the different races for her own enrichment. Faithful to her own tradition and at the same time conscious of her universal mission she can enter into communion with various cultural modes. (p. 53).

## **2.4 Summary of Literature Review**

The concept of translating the Bible using the language of the people for missionary expansion is revealing. Its roles, effects and even challenges have proved to be of immense impact on the development and preservation of the people's cultural identities especially their language. Although foreign influence has often been emphasized in missionary expansion, especially in Igboland, it is evident that the indigenous factors, particularly the cultural heritage of a given people are validly indispensable for planting and nurturing a faith that can truly be said to be deeply rooted in the peoples' consciousness. While it can be said that language is a means of communication, it is more importantly the very essence of expressing the soul, the feelings and the thoughts of a people; it is their identity, and can by no means be ignored in any missionary policy if there is deliberate intent to situate the gospel message context of the people's culture.

In missionary expansion therefore, the incarnation is the theological basis of inculturation. Jesus was born into a culture. He lived that culture and used it to announce His message of salvation. To be specific, Jesus spoke the immediate language of His time and cultural environment. He knew that the transmission of the Gospel depends, to a large extent, on

cultural dynamism which links successive generations with their past through their present to their future. (Onwubiko,1992). This is the interactive dialogue that exists between culture and faith which was valuably explored and employed by Jesus Christ himself.

Kalu (2003) therefore notes that “we are conditioned by particular time and place, by our family and group and society, our culture in fact. God accepts us in Christ with our group relations on us; with that cultural conditioning that makes us feel at home in one part of human society . . . So, when God became man, Christ took flesh in particular family, nationality and sanctified them” (p. 9). In this regard, Walls (1982) adumbrates that “wherever Christ is taken by men in any time and place he takes that nationality, that society, that culture and sanctifies it by his presence” (pp. 93-105). This theological understanding therefore recognizes that the European isolationism or superiority complex over the native cultures and languages was doing more harm than good to missionary expansionism in Igboland.

Against this backdrop, Eliot (1948) had cautioned that “we must not think of our culture as completely unified . . . And the actual religion of non-European people has ever been purely Christian, or purely anything else. There are always bits and traces of more primitive faiths more or less absorbed” (pp.31-32). Hence, until there is a conscious and gradual recognition that the historical self-revelation of God is not exclusive to the European cultures and languages, but can extend and be effectively communicated through native languages, not much would be achieved in the mission fields.

In this regard, Bible translation is one substantial means by which the indigenous peoples can be reassured that Christianity was not foreign or a stranger to them, and that God can hear what they say or say what they hear. It is evident that, “for the purpose of creating self-perpetuating congregation in Igboland, the Christian missions introduced education. The decision was informed by the experiences of the 16<sup>th</sup> century failure to plant Christianity in West Africa. Obviously, the earlier missionary attempt would have succeeded if the missionaries had



promoted education among the local people as it would have enabled them to read the Bible and share the Gospel among themselves when the white men had left. In other words, the basic aim for introducing Western Education was purely for the purposes of evangelism (Adiele, 1996).

The story of Anglican missionary enterprise in Igboland has largely been viewed, and interpreted from diverse perspectives by some Igbo Church historians such as, Dike (1957), Ekechi (1972), Ozigbo (1988), Kalu (2003), Okeke (2006) and others. Some of these scholars had actually laid emphasis on the economic or political impacts, response, rivalry, and the roles of the missionaries in planting and spreading the presence of the Christian religion in Igboland. But, proper scholarly consideration of the roles of Bible translation and the use of native languages of the people for Anglican missionary expansion have received little or virtually no emphasis in most of these discourses. This is the missing link.

In this case, the language of the people provided a pathway on which the Anglican missionary enterprise rode safely into the Igbo hinterland, through Bible translation. There can be no better explanation to this than the ‘unsung’ roles of the ex-slaves like J. C. Taylor, Simon Jonas, and other natives in interpreting and translating the message of the Bible, and the eventual development of Igbo literacy. The contributions of the natives like T. D. Anyaegbunam and G. N. Anyaegbunam, A. C. Onyeabo and others to the Bible translation project under the supervision of Thomas J. Dennis have often, been scarcely represented in many Igbo historiography. The reason for this is obvious. Ogbuji (2015) notes that:

It is believed that history is always written by the victors. These missionaries and colonialists are seen as victors. In contemporary society, not only the victors are believed to write history, but victims have come up to tell their own stories in order to reclaim their history. (p. 54).

Again, it is obvious from the study of the existing body of knowledge in this field that there exists a wide vacuum, yet to be filled, in the impacts of the missionary interplay of Bible translation with the culture of the Igbo people. This study is a conscious attempt to fill up this gap. Apart from recapitulating the immense contribution of Igbo Bible translation for Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland, the obvious decline in the general use of native languages especially Igbo in contemporary religious expression is an issue of critical concern that requires urgent review. The objective, which the subsequent chapters would endeavour to clarify, is the reverberation of the erring Igbo identity consciousness in Anglican missionary enterprise within their own cultural milieu, particularly the development and preservation of the Igbo language, which Igbo Bible translation was intended to accomplish.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **IGBO ETHNOGRAPHY IN PRE-COLONIAL ERA AND MISSIONARY ENCOUNTER**

Before the advent of Christianity and colonial influences, with its attendant western civilization, Igboland had existed as an organized society with structured social systems of patterned political and cultural values. Upon this understanding, Nmah (2012) views that:

the influence of the natives on missionary task, the place of indigenous institutions in the spread of the Christianity which missionary historiographers neglected and which the African historiographers have translated to suggest that Christianity has to be expressed in terms of African religio-cultural milieu devoid of much Gothic influences. (p. 1).

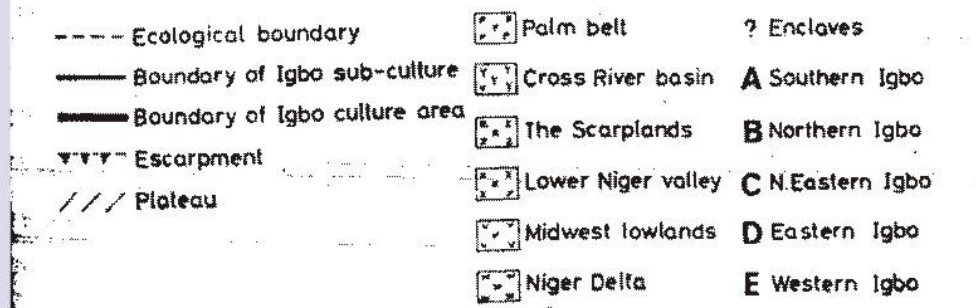
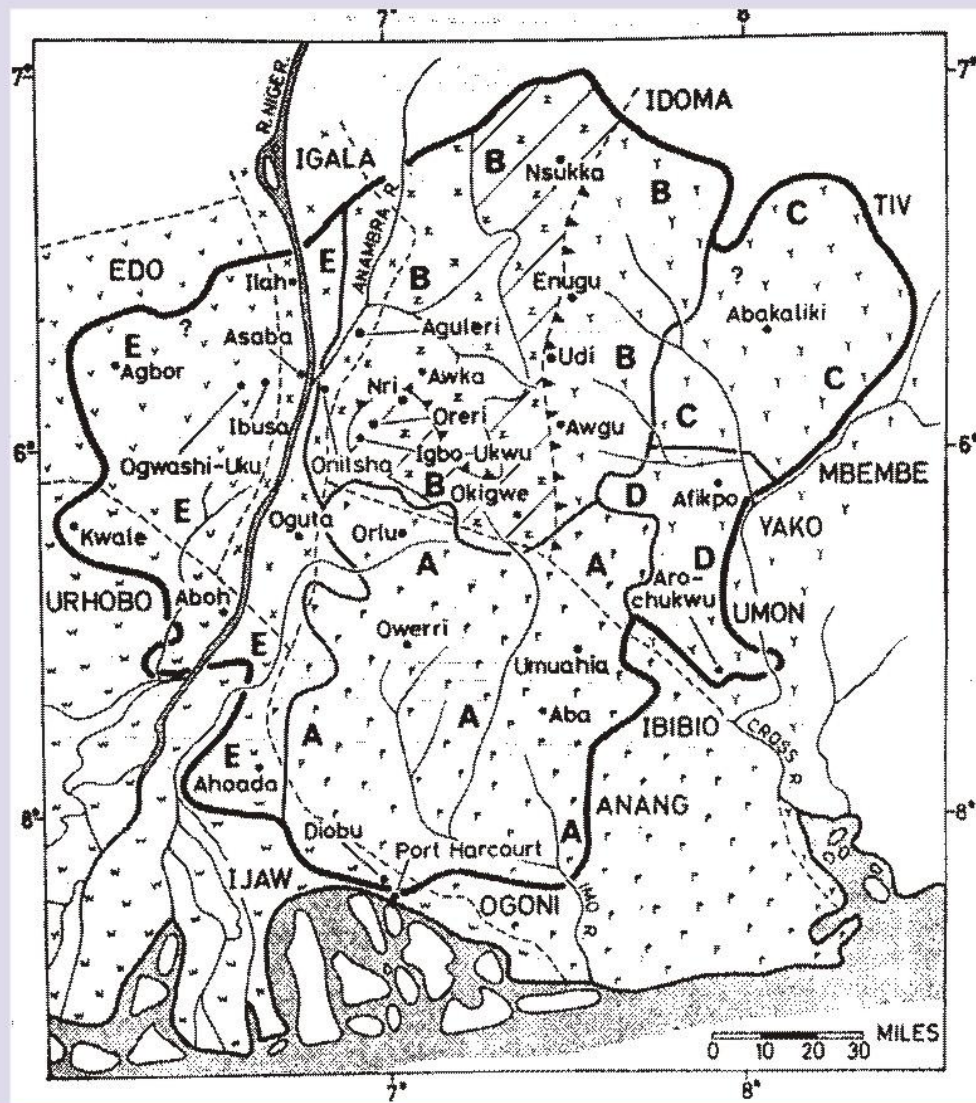
This chapter therefore presents a veritable forum of reconstructing and reinterpreting the history of Christianity, especially the Anglican Church in Igboland in order to highlight the various misconceptions of Igbo historical image painted in missionary historiography.

Though the Igbo society is imbued with diverse dialectical differences, these varieties are essentially the strength of their ethnic homogeneity. Interestingly, Afigbo (1981) observes that:

The Igbo did not come under the umbrella of a single state or evolve state systems of great size; that in spite of this, Igbo society and culture enjoyed a basic uniformity of pattern and of cosmological and social ideas; that the Igbo proved difficult to govern under colonial rule even though they were very receptive to Western education. (p. 1).

For a clearer understanding of the Igbo society, below is the map of the ecology of the Igbo culture area, represented as Map 1:

## THE ECOLOGY OF THE IGBO CULTURE AREA



Adapted from Ogbalu, F. C. and Emenanjo, E. N. (1975), p.2

What presents a speculative aspect of inquiry in this study is the cohesiveness of norms and values of Igbo culture irrespective of obvious and certain differences in social institutions and dialects. On this note, Onunwa (1990) observes that:

A close study of pre-colonial societies as well as current enquiries into vestigial remains of traditional systems of life and religion show some strong cultural elements that held the societies together. Some of those elements were even used as strong weapons of resistance against the imposition of alien rule. (p. 2).

Education, which became the strongest tool of proselytization, and its pattern as was introduced by the missionaries for evangelizing the Igbo society, tended to *Anglicize* ideas and forms of living almost to the submerging of many crucial Igbo identity, particularly their language in socio-religious expressions. In fairness to justice however, it is undeniable that the Anglican missionaries made conscious effort towards the development of the literary form of the spoken Igbo. Nevertheless, the extent of its impact in evolving a truly *Igbonized* Christianity and its challenges in Anglican missionary expansion, especially with regard to Bible translation and contemporary religious expressions constitute major and growing concern for research.

In the context of this study therefore, Igboland is a generic term, which refers not only to a geographical location or entity, but also to the ethnic people who predominantly occupy the said geographical location and the language spoken by the people. It is true that the origin of the term “Igbo” has been mostly speculative, Uchendu (1965) agrees that “the word ‘Igbo’ may be used in three senses to refer to the Igbo territory, to the domestic speakers of the language and the language spoken by them” (p.1). In fact, a recent socio-political expression “Ndigbo” has also developed and is assuming a growing usage in the academics in reference to the ethnic group (Nwala, Aniekwu and Ohiri-Aniche, 2015). So, the interchangeable use of the expressions; Igbo, Igboland and Igbo people in this research will be well understood.

Afigbo (1981) therefore said that the Igbo-speaking peoples of Southern Nigeria are among the most numerous ethnic nationalities in Negro Africa. Regarding the question of ‘who are the Igbo?’, Onwuejeogwu (1975) said that “the Igbo culture area is an area delimitable by an imaginary line . . . in which the people not only speak the various dialects of Igbo language but also share typical and significant common culture traits and patterns, up to or over 50%”. This follows therefore that the Igbo homeland doubtlessly goes beyond the traditional five south-eastern states of Nigeria. Nwaezeigwe (2015) therefore says that:

It is not out of place to note the existence of Igbo traditional towns in such states as Edo, Kogi, Cross River and Akwa Ibom. Although some of these settlements appear to be facing the problem of watered down Igbo identity, much as quite a number of non-Igbo groups today wear the garb of Igbo identity. (p. 129).

This chapter would therefore, of necessity explore the question of Igbo origins, as well as its identity as essential ingredients for missionary expansionism among the people.

The fact of the Igbo energetic dispersion or ‘statelessness’ is what Ogbuji (2015) explained thus: “For a large portion of its history, Igboland did not have a central authority, and within it, many states including the medieval Nri kingdom and the more recent Onitsha and Arochukwu kingdoms existed” (p.13). Though, there exists a wide range of dialectical differences, variable social institutions and practices among the Igbo-speaking peoples, there are also ‘basic uniformity of Igbo culture’.

Describing the nature and character of the Igbo, Ogbuji (2015) further noted that, “Igbo people are one of the Nigeria’s most dispersed peoples, a phenomenon attributed to high degree of empathy, physical adaptability and receptivity to change” (p.10). Their resilience and industry can be traceable to their nature, but their adventurousness has been aptly described by Flint (cited in Afigbo 1981) as their “easy adaptability to and avidity for Western values” (p. 2). Invariably, this might explain the erroneous impression held by Anyadele (1979) that missionary expansion is traced to

“the collapse of pagandom in Igboland, which was so fast and unprecedented that anthropologists began studying the receptivity and entrepreneurial qualities of the Igbo” (p.169). To explicate this encounter with the Christia mission, particularly the expansion of the Anglican mission, this chapter undertakes an analysis of these features of the Igbo society.

### **3.1 A Survey of Igbo Origin, Migrations and Dispersions**

Nwaezeigwe (2015) observes that “the question of Igbo origins has remained not only the most controversial but equally most sensational of the other aspects of Igbo history” (p. 129). The reasons are obvious. While there are diversities of opinions over the issue, quite a number of people have tended to see the issue of Igbo origins through political point of view, especially to assert the superiority of their own interests in the matter. In fact, to elucidate this further, Apeh (2015) quips that:

the claim that Nri is the cradle of the Igbo has been criticized to be a colonial design to make the Igbo amenable to colonial rule. However, the influence of Nri did not metamorphose into establishing a kingdom or an empire out of Igboland; rather the interest was for religious and ritual supremacy of other Igbo groups. Even the Aro ascendancy in Igboland and beyond was for economic gains rather than for political hegemony. (p. 210).

Accordingly, apart from what Afigbo (1981) refers to as “attempting to lick the hot soup of Igbo history gradually from the periphery” (p. ix), the consensus of opinion regarding the Igbo ancestry still remains unresolved. It can be said however, that the attempt to understand the Igbo origin and dispersion started in 1789 with an Igbo ex-slave in London, by name Olaudah Equiano, who was born in a village, which he called Essaka, which probably was Nsukka or Isieke. He was kidnapped and sold into slavery, but being intelligent and tough-minded, he saved up enough money to buy his freedom and to educate himself, taking an active part in the

movement for the abolition of the slave trade. Without exaggeration, Equiano could be called the first Igbo historian and ethnologist (Ogbalu & Emenanjo, 1975).

In any case, it is to be stated that the objective of this study is not to produce a detailed account of how the Igbo evolved from the isolated groups of hunter-gatherers to the sedentary village-group communities with fairly advanced economies revealed in the reports of the early colonial officials and missionaries. Nonetheless, it is the concern of this study to evaluate the cultural influences of, and on Igbo values, and its linguistic uniqueness in Anglican missionary expansion through Bible translation among the people.

Against this backdrop, Armstrong (1964) avers that “a preliminary excursion into the glottochronology of the Kwa language sub-family, of which the Igbo is a member, has yielded the suggestion that most of the member-languages of the sub-family (for instance Igbo, Ijaw, Edo and Idoma) started diverging from the ancestral root between 5,000 and 6,000 years ago” (p.29). But, Afigbo (1981) argues “that the Igbo have lost all memory of their migration into the area they now occupy. . . So completely has this category of tradition been lost that the Nri have substituted for it a myth of having been created where they are now found” (pp. 4-5).

Therefore, any attempt into Igbo history is often laden with varied speculative hypotheses, though it is likely ‘that the Igbo were established in their present habitat about two or three millennia before the Christian era’. However, to reconstruct this historical ambiguity and enhance appreciable reinterpretation of Igbo origins, three theories of “autochthony, Niger-Benue confluence and Jewish thesis” have been proposed (Nwaezeigwe, 2015: 129). These theories have immeasurably helped to assuage some speculative uncertainties surrounding the discourse on Igbo origin, their migrations and dispersions.

First, the autochthony theory tries to explain the Igbo origin in terms of ‘antiquity of settlement’. By this, it is held that, in spite of the loss of memory, most probably arising from



long continuous settlement, the present Igbo homeland is the center of their creation. In view of this, Afigbo (1981) maintains that:

it is now accepted by many scholars that West African societies are more ancient than was once thought and that the general location and alignment of the major linguistic and cultural groups of the region had assumed, for millennia, the forms or patterns in which they were found by the early European visitors. (p.4).

The Niger-Benue theory tries to explain the Igbo origin in terms of ‘language confluents’. It holds that at one point in antiquity a group of people whom, Krause (cited by Westerman and Bryan, 1952) defined as “*Kwa*, were living as one people, speaking one language in the region of the present confluence of Rivers Benue and Niger” (p.76). Greenberg (1964) posits that among *Kwa* group in the present Nigeria include the Igbo, Idoma, Edo, Yoruba, Nupe, Gwari, Egede, and Igbira, among others” (p. 8). It is believed that these ethnic groups dispersed to their present respective locations as migrants from this area of their former confluence. These groups gradually evolved into distinct dialects of *Kwa* language, which eventually developed into different languages, as a result of gap in time and distance. Nevertheless, the continued existence of sameness of some words, both in sound and meanings among the languages are evident. For instance, the word for mouth ‘*onu*’ is same for Edo and ‘*enu*’ in Yoruba; while words like *Okwute* and *Ogede* convey the same sounds and meanings for stone and banana respectively in Igbo and Yoruba.

Hymes (cited by Nwaezigwe, 2015), however argues that “by means of *glotto-chronology* and *lexico-statistics* both historians and linguistic experts are able to determine the approximate age of a given language” (p. 131). Following this process, Greenberg (1959) avers that:

It came to be established that the Igbo and Yoruba separated from each other about six thousand years ago, the Edo from the Igbo about three thousand five

hundred years ago, the Igala from Yoruba about two thousand years ago, and the Itsekiri from Yoruba about a thousand and five hundred years ago. (p. 203).

The Jewish thesis is the third and perhaps most sensational theory in respect of Igbo origin, which holds that the Igbo were part of the lost tribes of Israel. Among the earliest protagonists of view was Oluaduah Equiano, a late 18<sup>th</sup> century ex-slave of Igbo origin. On this note, Fyfe (1972) observes that Equiano believes that the essential similarities of certain elements of Igbo and Jewish cultures speak strongly of the connection and roots of the Igbo with the Jews; of which James Africanus Horton later insisted that “the religion of the Igbo is Judaism although with elements of pagan rites” (p.79). Against this backdrop, Basden (1912) insists that:

The fact that the Igbo are deeply religious, practice circumcision and mummification and have sentence structures commonly found in Hebrew constructions was such that the navigator cannot help being struck with the similitude between them and some of the ideas and practices of the Levitical Code. (pp. 246-247).

To buttress this view, Afigbo (1975) suggests that “the Igbo were a branch of the Hebrew nation, or at least that their culture history could satisfactorily be explained in terms of Jewish impact” (p. 6). The preponderance of this theory captures the imagination of the Igbo. However, Ugwu (2014) says that “it is a general belief among the Igbo of Nigeria that they had their primordial origin from *Nri*, their spiritual and ideological headquarters” (p.18). But Nwaezeigwe (2015) cautions that “it is hazardous to place any one Igbo sub-group on the saddle of this claim . . . Therefore, both the Aro and Umunri should not dissipate their energies in relying on false and untenable claims of either primacy of culture bearers or primordial links with the Jews” (p.137).

Another consideration of strong attraction in this theory is the etymology of the word ‘Igbo’, which Adams (1923) postulates to be “Heebo” being a derivative of the word Hebrew” (p.129). In recent studies, Afigbo (1981) observes that “Igbo scholars have argued that their

ancestors were Jews and that the words *Uburu* (the name of a number of Igbo towns) and *Igbo* were corruptions of the word *Hebrew*” (p.6).

In any case, Nwadike (2012) maintains that:

Outside the claims to Jewish origin there are hundreds and one thousand other claims to other origins as one interview different Igbo communities. . . All these claims ridicule the Igbo nation and show that there is no real coherence to the world from which they came. But the explanation or part of the explanation of this unfortunate situation lies in the Igbo’s refusal to acknowledge one common ancestor. (p. 4).

But Uchendu (1965) avers that:

The archaeological finds at Igboukwu and some other places establish that the belt formed by Awka, Orlu, Okigwe, and Owerri is the original home of the Igbo. The original settlement is known as the core or ‘nuclear’ Igboland. From there started a migration to the south and to the east. (p. 2).

To provide further explications on Igbo origins and migrations, Ilogu (1974) says that,

These various migratory groups arrived at different times only to occupy contiguous geographical units, which today include all of Abakaliki, Onitsha, Enugu, Owerri and Umuahia provinces within the East Central State, some Ikwerre areas of River State and parts of Benin, Warri, and Delta provinces in the Mid-Western Nigeria. (pp. 2-3)

What remains to be explained is the dispersion and cultural differences of the various Igbo societies resulting in what Onwuejeogwu (1975) referred to as “the Igbo culture area”. According to him, “The concept of culture area is an anthropological one based on the empirical observation that at any given period . . . having a geographical delimitation of areas that have the

same dominant and significant culture traits, complexes and patterns” (p.1). As earlier observed, he avers that:

The Igbo culture area is an area delimitable by an imaginary line running outside the settlements of Agbor, Kwale, Obiaruku, Ebu (West Niger Igbo area), Ahoada, Diobu, Umuagbayi (Port Harcourt area), Arochukwu, Afikpo, Ndinioafu, Isiogo (Abakaliki area) and Enugu Ezike (Nsukka area) and Nzam. This imaginary line encloses an area in which the people not only speak the various dialects of Igbo language but also share typical and significant common culture traits and patterns up to or above 50%. . . The people living within the Igbo culture area speak the same Igbo language and so constitute what linguists call a speech community. (pp. 1-3).

In this case, it is worthy of note that, in spite of the obvious sub-cultural differences, the Igbo still see themselves as one people and at the same time are seen by outsiders and other non-Igbo people as a homogenous entity and have never been hitherto identified as different people. The Igbo people share a lot of things in common, especially their cultural outlook and ways of life. Igwe and Obiakor (2015) however argue that “traditional pre-colonial Igbo society was heterogeneous; and virtually each group had its independence without allegiance to others, unlike the case in most parts of Hausa land and Yoruba land during the same period” (p. 71).

Hence, Onunwa (1990) says that “there are five identifiable sub-culture areas within the geographical sub-region where the Igbo live with each group simple or sophisticated, rural or urban, manifesting distinctive characteristics and traits” (p.3). Postulating further on this however, Kalu (2003) agrees with Achunike (1995) and Obi (1985) that “Igboland is divided into eight culture areas, while the large central sector is sub-divided into three sub-culture areas making a total of ten units” (p.10). According to him, these culture areas delimitations and their major landmarks include: Table 1

CULTURE AREA		MAJOR LANDMARKS
1.	Western	Asaba, Ika, Ndokwa
2.	North-Western	North and Southern Niger Flood plain, Onitsha-Idemili, Aguata-Nri-Awka
3.	Northern	Umuneke clan, Umumba-Owa-Olo-Oha, Ojebe-Ogene, Nsukka.
4.	North-Eastern	Nike, Nkanu, Awgu, Achi, Ikwo, Ezikkwo, Ezza
5.	Central I	Oweeri, Mbaitoli Ikeduru, Mbano, Mbaise (pt.),
6.	Central II	Orlu, Isu, Nkwere, Ideato
7.	Central III	Etiti, Isukwuato, Okigwe
8.	South-Western	Mbaise-Okpala, Ohaji, Egbema, Oguta
9.	Southern	Ngwa, Ukwa, Etche, Asa Ikwuano, Bende, Umuahia, Mbaise (pt.),
10.	Eastern	Arochukwu, Ututu, Ihechiowa, Ohafia, Edda,
11.	Cross River	Abriba, Nkporo, Abam, Igbere, Afikpo, Unwana, Okposi

(Adapted from - Kalu (2003) Embattled Gods: Christianization of Igboland, 1841-1991 (p.10).

Onwuejeugwo (1975) however noted that “the concept of Igbo culture area is an anthropological one and not coloured by the most recent political considerations” (p.3). Instead, in these culture areas, ‘typical, significant, and dominant linguistic, social, economic, political, ritual and culture complexes and patterns of have been developed to delineate these Igbo groups.

On the question of certain dialectical differences of these sub-culture areas, it is argued that ‘since all Igbo dialects derive from one proto-Igbo language, they share lots of grammatical, lexical, and phonological in common’. In fact, Armstrong (1967) observes that numerous dialects that are not in many respects mutually meaningful but represent invariably parts of a language can be called one in terms of the expression and understanding of the basic elements of

life” (pp. 1-6). This is why all parts of Igbo would need only an adjustment, and not to learn any part as a new language. Accordingly, Igwe and Obiakor (2015) view that “Generally, being Igbo denotes the ability to speak one of the dialects spoken in the Igbo area . . . and at least being familiar with some aspects of the traditional cultural norms from that part of Igboland” (p. 71).

### **3.1.1 Value Systems in the Igbo worldview**

Cultural values are the normative factors, which are definitive of the socio-religious and even political identities of any given society. They include things and traits that are important to, and mostly treasured by a given people. The Igbo cosmological structures are no exceptions. Although these cultural values are not documented in written forms as is the case with the Bible or the Koran, they are preserved in oral forms and transmitted from one generation to the other. Unfortunately, as observed by Ugwu and Ugwunye (2004) “the early European writers did not leave any stone unturned in their condemnation of Africa and her religious culture” (p.13). So, in an attempt to explicate her religious rationality, Ugwu (2014) argued that:

When we say that Africans (Igbo) are notoriously, incurably and obstinately religious, we mean to say that through all the stages of rites of initiation, through all their daily, weekly and annual activities including rites of breaking early morning kola-nut to invoke and worship God and the gods – earth goddess, sun god, moon god etc, the rites and rituals involved in festivals, divination . . . the African demonstrate a high spiritual and undiluted spiritual inclination. (p.16).

Therefore a reflective analysis of the Igbo religious systems and values show a basic cosmology of people deeply rooted in religion. An outstanding feature of their religious value is its importance as a factor of unity, agent of peace and social co-existence. Reflecting on socio-religious implication of this, Onunwa(1990) observes that unlike “Christianity and Islam that use force and persuasion to win adherents, the Igbo traditional religion refuses to impose itself on

any one. No one is converted to it. No village ever attempted to impose its religion on another” (p. 9). This however does not spell passivity, indolence or inactivity, as the religion dynamically transferred from one generation to another. This is why Leonard (1966) aptly observed that:

They are in the strict and natural sense of the word a truly and deeply religious people, of whom it can be said . . . that they eat religiously, drink religiously, bathe religiously, dress religiously and sin religiously. In a few words, the religion of these people as I have all along endeavoured to point out is their existence and their existence is their religion. (p. 429).

The social value of the religion of the Igbo is not ambiguous. Evidently, the role of religious festivals as an important aspect of their societal life, which worked for unity in the traditional society cannot be over-emphasized. Anene (1966) therefore says that:

No study of the Igbo is intelligible without a clear appreciation of the pervasive reality of the supernatural world. Among the Igbo, the religion, law, justice and politics were inextricably bound up; law and custom were believed to have been handed down from the spirit from time immemorial, from ancestor to ancestor. (pp. 12-13).

To buttress this fact, Onunwa (1990) agrees that

The Igbo who were said to be fragmentary were not only united in their common reverence and dread of the oracles and deities of the people of the different subculture areas, but also some other ethnic groups like the Ijaw were united with them in the acceptance of the appellate role of the priest as custodians of the oracles. (pp. 9-10).

Aside from the religious consciousness of the Igbo, and their ethical and communal values, which are mostly taught and transmitted in oral, informal and traditional forms, within the *Umunna* and *Ikwunne* family microcosm, for greater harmony of the larger Igbo society; it is

the place of the Igbo language as a social factor of unity that conspicuously showcase another cultural value of their homogeneous identity. It is true as observed by Nwadike (2012) that there exist several dialectical differences, “these dialects have a lot of common features in grammar, lexicon, and phonology, yet they differ to some extent in these three aspects, which do not disrupt mutual intelligibility” (p. 9). This is why Onunwa (1990) argues that:

A common language does not in any way suggest a common dialect for all the people in the different subculture areas. The existence of many dialects, which may not appear mutually understandable, is not a peculiarity of the Igbo language but a common feature of most languages spoken in extensive geographical area. For instance, the English Language has its Northern, Scottish, Welsh and Irish accents and dialects. (p. 3).

In fact, Armstrong (1967) identified “numerous languages that are not in many respects mutually meaningful but represent invariably parts of a language which can be called one in terms the expression and understanding of the basic elements of life” (pp. 1-6). On the basis of this, Onwuejiegwo (1975) insists that “since all Igbo dialects derive from one proto-Igbo language, they share lots of grammatical, lexical, and phonological features in common” (p.3). In any case, when Igbo of various dialect clusters live together and have to communicate, the general tendency is for individuals to consciously modify their dialects by speaking something close the Onitsha, probably because of the advantage of initial contact with European commerce and education.

Education was basically informal and in the Igbo local tongue. Nwadike (2012) therefore says that:

they were encouraged to observe, explore and interpret their local environment by knowing the names and species of trees, shrubs, herbs, fruits, (poisonous and non-poisonous ones) and the names of mammals, reptiles, birds and insects as well as



the description of appropriate periods and seasons and forecasting the weather. (p. 12).

Nevertheless, it has been observed that ‘Igbo is a tone language whereby tone marks are used to distinguish meanings and grammatical relationships’. Without the application of tone-marks many words such as *akwa*, *igwe*, *eze* etc, and sentences would become ambiguous. It would therefore present extreme difficulty in missionary expansion and Bible translation, if proper orthography of the Igbo language was not given adequate attention.

### **3.1.2 Achebe’s Reflections on Igbo cosmology and Missionary Encounter**

It is not a repetition of the obvious to state that Chinua Achebe’s cosmological reflections on Igboland, its people and culture, particularly its encounter with colonial influence and the concomitant missionary expansion spell strong and impressionable perceptions on the wholistic worldview of the people. This is not far removed from the resultant effect of Bible translation, not just for the expansion of missionary enterprise among the Igbo, but again for its impact on the redefinition of the identity of the people’s linguistic culture in the context of their religious interaction with Christianity. Of course, it is worthy of note that most of the Achebe’s writings were situated within the African, or rather Igbo cultural milieu. Achebe’s own literary language is standard English blended with Pidgin, Igbo vocabulary, proverbs, images and speech patterns.

Apart from *Things Fall Apart* (1958) of which Achunike (1995) says that Achebe “skillfully told the story of the tragic and sad effect of the African encounter with the European system of government and religion and the unwarranted intrusion of the white man and his culture into Igbo traditional religion and worldview” (p. 17), other works such as *Arrow of God* (1964), and *There was a Country. . .* (2012) provide insightful preview into the world of the Igbo before and at the time of missionary encounter and expansion.

For instance, at the legendary Mbanta village of Umuofia in *Things Fall Apart*, the language of the people became auspicious for the missionaries in communicating their message, as the white man preached to the villagers via an Igbo interpreter about Jesus Christ and the Holy Trinity and then sang a song. They however made some converts and encountered some crisis. Essentially, the language of the people is the vehicle for communicating and transmitting the message of the new religion, which eventually necessitates the translation of the Bible into the language of the people. Although, Igbo communities initially received Christianity because it appeared peaceful and quiet, but, Achunike (1995) observed that “they later found out that it rejected their customs that were not Christian and authentic in outlook . . . The Igbo then did not accept Christianity as a wholesale package” (p. 4).

Achebe (2012) views that “the Igbo culture, being receptive to change, individualistic, highly competitive, gave the Igbo man an unquestioned advantage over his compatriots in securing credentials for advancement in Nigerian colonial society” (p. 74). Though the Igbo have no compelling traditional loyalty beyond their town or village, yet, their collective identity through their language helped tremendously in the expansion of the Christian mission, especially in the Bible translation project. Hence, the place of the Igbo culture in the Nigerian affairs is conspicuous, as they are naturally driven by self-confidence that is engendered by their open society, which Afigbo (1981) had described as their “statelessness” (p.1).

Thus, by the time the Church Missionary Society (C. M. S.) and a number of Roman Catholic and other missionaries entered Igboland, there became an explosion in the numbers of young Igbo people who enrolled in schools. The increase was so exponential in such a short moment that Achebe (2012) noted that “the Igbos absorbed western education as readily as they responded to urbanization” (p.76). In fact, Anber (cited in Achebe, 2012) observes that:

With unparalleled rapidity, the Igbo advanced fastest in the shortest period of time of all Nigeria’s ethnic groups. Like the Jews, to whom they have frequently been

likened, they progressed despite being a minority in the country, filling the ranks of the nation's educated, prosperous upper classes. . . . It was not long before the educational and economic progress of the Igbos led to their becoming the major source of administrators, managers, technicians, and civil servants for the country, occupying senior positions out of proportion to their numbers. (pp. 74-75).

Missionary activities, particularly Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland was however not without its early attendant challenges. Achebe (2012) observed that “a long-standing clash of Western and African civilizations had generated deep conversations and struggles between their respective languages, religions and cultures” (p.4). So, in a contradistinctive analysis, Achebe (2012) says that, “Igbo sayings and proverbs are far more than the doctrinaire, self-righteous strain of the Christian faith he was taught” (p. 12). In any case, Iwe (1985) says that “cultural clash must be understood as the conflict between the Western cultural vessels in which Christianity has been conveyed to Africa and the authentic values and honest institutions of African culture” (p.78).

These conflicts and cohesions notwithstanding, Christianity have come to be a way of life among the Igbo. Achunike (1995) says that “the Christians have grown in number and were now a small community of men, women, and children self-assured and confident” (p.18). But the nagging concern of this research is how far the Igbo language has become a tool of religious expression among the people, especially considering the impact of Bible translation in Anglican missionary expansion.

Achebe (2012) reminiscently recounts his early days of encounter and experiences with Christianity, especially the interactive conflict between the languages of religious communication and cultural cosmology of the Igbo, and says that:

My father also helped conduct Sunday service, translate sermons into Igbo, and arrange the sanctuary and vestry. . . . Eucharist on Sundays often lasted more than

two hours. For those who were not asleep by the end of the proceedings, the fire and brimstone sermons from the pulpit made attendance worthwhile. There was an occasional outburst of uncontrollable laughter when the rector, an Englishman enthusiastically drank all the remaining wine, wiping his mouth with back of his hands. A crowd favorite was the inaccurate translation of Igbo words into English, such as the word *ike*, which is an Igbo word that can mean “strength” or “buttocks” depending on the skill or mischief of the translator. (p. 11).

Evidently, Achebe’s thought and reflections on Igbo cosmology pictorially paints an inseparable tie of relationship between religion, language and culture of the people. Though no specific attention was focused on Bible translation, the value of the people’s cultural identity was strongly emphasized, such that Achebe (2012) says “when I wrote *Things Fall Apart* I began to understand and value my traditional Igbo history even more” (p. 39). In fact, Achebe would best be described as a cultural nationalist with a revolutionary mission to help Igbo society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement. Of course, no Igbo history would be complete without adequate analysis of the impact of Bible translation and consequent missionary expansion especially of the Anglicans in Igboland.

### **3.2 Early Missionary Encounter in Igboland**

Aside from the pioneering efforts in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries by the Roman Catholics to send missionaries to Nigeria at Benin and old Warri, championed by the Portuguese Catholic Christian missionaries, the 1841 Niger Expedition proposed by Thomas Fowell Buxton was the first attempt to introduce socio-cultural and missionary interaction between Europe and Igboland. On the note of the earlier efforts to introduce Christianity in Nigeria, Nwadior (2014) observes that:

Despite the initial good reception, the mission to both Benin and Warri collapsed due partly to inadequacy of the numerical strength of the missionaries and partly to the cold feet, which the traditional rulers and their people developed later. The military and political reasons for which the traditional rulers received the missionaries were no longer coming forth so they lost the patronage of the kings. The unfriendly climate conditions also contributed to the discontinuation of the missionary work. It finally collapsed as there were no natives strong and convinced to carry on, but the sites were identifiable (p.72).

The 1841 Expedition however, marked another major milestone in the African missionary historiography, particularly Igboland. Anyabuike (1996) noted that “the Expedition was an attempt to move to West Africa and create a better alternative to the slave trade. And as a necessary concomitant, Christianity was to be introduced to bring up the moral and spiritual regeneration of the African” (p.22). It seems nevertheless, that the CMS missionaries saw Bible translation as a priority; though it was from the outset fraught with difficulty and controversy, particularly with regard to the multiplicity of dialects in Igboland. It is true that Reverend J. F. Schon, a German missionary and linguist and member of the 1841 expedition, had invested much time and energy into the study of the Igbo language, he was dismayed to discover during expedition that he barely make himself understood to the Igbo speakers he encountered. Schon (cited by Ogharaerumi, 1986) says:

I was not a little mortified today observing that the dialect of the Ibo language, on which I had bestowed much labour in Sierra Leon, differs widely from that spoken and understood in this part of the country. It never escaped my observation that a great diversity of dialects existed, but I must blame myself much for not making stricter enquiries about that which would be most useful for the present occasion. (p. 174).

Nwadike (2008) noted that “it will be remembered Schon collected the greatest number of wordlist in Igbo – 1600 words, which, if they were published, could have been the first Igbo dictionary by 1840” (p.11). However, Rowbory (2009) observes that “because Schon and Crowther had an evangelistic rather than simply a linguistic purpose in learning Igbo, they were eager to translate the Bible and other materials into a version of the language that would be understandable by the largest number of people possible” (p. 3). Although the Expedition failed to realize its objectives, Anagbogu (2000) noted that “it was during that expedition that a lot of lesson was learnt as to the best way to carry on with the work of evangelizing Igboland” (p.2). It would be noted however, that the advice of Schon, and the passionate feelings of Henry Venn, the C.M.S. Honorary Secretary (1841-1872) helped to make the later missionary expansion to West Africa successful. They were both strongly of the opinion that African nationals should be best suited for the job.

For instance, Anagbogu (2000) notes that, “Schon who was a member of the 1841 expedition was emphatic in his opinion that the West African climate and lack of regular communication in the Niger districts would make a mission run by Europeans a physical impossibility” (p.5). He recommended that the Europeanized Africans mainly resident in Sierra Leon should be sent back as missionaries to their own countrymen. In fact, there was a general desire among liberated Africans in Sierra Leon to return to their own countries.

However, no further venture was undertaken until after thirteen years. Kalu (2003) had observed that “MacGregor Laird was enabled by Venn’s lobby to obtain a licence for expedition billed for 1854” (p.81). Although the expedition was also not a success, Adiele (1996) observes that Laird who took active part in the 1854 Niger expedition, and co-sponsored the 1857 expedition, was strongly of the opinion that, “the African must be made an active partner in the work of development, Christianity and civilization” (p. 24).

### **3.2.1 The Anglican (CMS) Missionary Encounter and Expansion in Igboland**

1857 therefore marks the first effective advent of Christian missionary activities in Igboland. This time, the expedition was under William Balfour Baikie, while the Church Missionary Society (CMS) team was to be led by a Yoruba-born ex-slave Reverend Samuel Ajai Crowther assisted by Rev. J. C. Taylor and Catechist Simon Jonas both of whom were of Igbo parental origin. They arrived Onitsha on July 26, 1857 and began missionary activities, having been received by Obi Akazua. The first Christian service was conducted at the Obi's palace on Sunday August, 2 of the same year. Anagbogu (2000) notes that:

From currently available evidence, no sooner had the Onitsha C. M. S. station gone into operation than the news of the work of the missionaries spread far and wide. In the spirit of emulation, competition, and rivalry characteristic of the Igbo, deputations came from Obosi, Ogidi, Nri, Bende and so on. They all wanted mission stations to be opened in their respective towns. (p .3).

It is true as observed by Anagbogu (2000) that, "The evangelization of Igboland by the Europeanized African agents was characterized by slow physical and numerical expansion" (p.4), yet the roles these ex-slaves in the early missionary expansionistic drives among the Igbo people cannot be under-estimated. Ayandele (1970) adumbrates this by citing Canon Warren's observation who says that:

For the first twenty-five years of this missionary impact on Igbo society all the missionaries were themselves Africans, and not a few with an Igbo heritage . . . It was they who laid the foundation of the Christian church in the country. (p. 22).

On the basis of this fact, Dike (1957) recaptures it well as he said that "Reverend J. C. Taylor at the head of the Onitsha station kept himself busy 'preaching, teaching, visiting, building, healing, settling quarrels, studying the language and writing journals'(p.8). This would explain why eight years later, in 1865, Crowther remarked thus:

Things are decidedly improving at Onitsha station; the Christian Sabbath is becoming generally known . . . the people are more becoming in their habits and manners . . . many of our school children can read the New Testament fluently in their mother tongue and join the responses of the Church service with feelings of devotion . . . These are tangible improvements upon the state of the people when we first landed here . . . and met them filthy and rude. (Dike, 1957: 46).

The account of missionary expansion in Igboland between 1857 and 1885, before the coming of the Roman Catholics, especially in the North-Western sub-culture area would be properly described as the Protestant era. However, in spite of the advantage the Church Missionary Society (C. M. S.) enjoyed under the protective eye of the British commercial interest, which competed and warded-off the French Niger Trading Company at the time, the pace of its expansion was considerably slow. Some identifiable factors were responsible for this. Kalu (2003) observes that between “the period 1857-70 dominated by J. C. Taylor’s leadership and 1870-92 under Solomon Perry’s leadership, the calabash of confusion broke on their heads as crisis led to schism and the formation of the Niger Delta Pastorate” (p. 83).

Okeke (2006) emphasizes “the importance of Onitsha as a centre of civilization, commerce and Christianity; arguing that since Onitsha was a growing commercial centre, many traders to Onitsha heard the gospel and carried the message home” (p. 132). The truth nonetheless is that the pace of the expansion of missionary activities was very slow and not encouraging. In 1895, Archdeacon Dennis (cited in Goodchild, 2003) bemoaned the difficulty they had in Onitsha, to have the people to stand and listen to their preaching, as he says that “Preaching sometimes seemed fruitless . . . It is not the strength of the idolatry but the utter indifference of the people to everything except their bodies that troubles me” (p. 31). In this regard, Kalu (2003) notes that “if one considers the geographical extent to which the mission was carried y 1870, it is obvious that it did not go much beyond Onistha” (p. 83). In fact, Anagbogu



(2000) indicates that “a new station was opened at Osomari in 1871, and in 1874, the Asaba station was established. Although Obosi is a town only five kilometers away from Onitsha, the town had to wait until 1882 for the Anglican faith to reach there” (p. 4).

There were also substantial challenges associated with translating the Bible for Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland. Apart from the problem of Igbo autography controversy that militated against the primal development of Igbo phonology and lexicology, the dialectical-centeredness of the various Igbo sub-cultures posed major obstacle to the acceptability of the earlier translations.

These were part of the setbacks encountered in the Anglican missionary thrusts in Igboland. However, missionary expansionism is a concept of conscious, pragmatic and systematic advancement of the ideals of mission, especially Christian mission within a specific cultural context. It is noteworthy that with the formation of the Church Missionary Society in 1799, the Anglican missionary ideology was triggered off. Carey (cited by Kalu, 2003) highlighted the need for cross-cultural mission and insisted that “the Great Commission is obligatory”; eschatological prophecies on the coming of the kingdom of God compel Christians to mission and the move of the Holy Spirit must be followed” (p. 55).

Other factors have been identified as responsible for this sluggish expansion of the CMS mission work in Igboland, including the shortage of manpower, civil unrest in the host communities, and contention against the witchcraft order at Osomari and human sacrifice at Asaba, which Bishop Crowther had described as a barbarous superstition. The moral conduct of some European and African commercial agents, which Okeke (2006) describes as “anything but Christian” (p.132), was quite disturbing that Kalu (2003) cited Crowther as says that:

With the exception of very few . . . the character of the few foreigners in this country is very detrimental for the cause of Christianity; immorality prevails

everywhere, indifference to Christian religion is the example set before the people, infidelity is openly professed. (p. 87).

Another major challenge to the expansion of mission among the people was the difference between J. C Taylor and Crowther's evangelistic ideology which took its own toll on pace of early missionary expansion in Igboland. Kalu (2003) observes specifically that "Taylor was zealous and proposed a policy of rapid extension but Crowther ordered a slower pace based on solid consolidation" (p.83). In any case, it took a long process of *catechumenate* before baptism could be administered to converts. Taylor was said to have withheld baptism until, in his assessment, the person had shown a complete change. And, this took a long time.

However, since the focus of this research is to examine the impact of Bible translation on Anglican missionary expansion, evidenced in the use of the people's language as a tool of religious expression, another measure introduced by the agents, which actually affected the relations between the mission and the Igbo people, was the attempt to force English on Onitsha people. Okeke (2006) states that:

Between the exit of J. C. Taylor towards the end of 1869 and 1872, the Igbo language work was halted. The agents began to use interpreters. What was done brought more prominently the wide difference between Onitsha dialect and Isuama, to which most of the Freetown agents were introduced. (p. 140).

In fact, to emphasize the depressive effect of this decline in the use of native languages by the missionaries at this time, Kalu (2003) mentions after his visit to Onitsha, James Johnson commented thus:

One could not help observing how strong the English element is at Onitsha. The people who know no language but English, it might be delightful to hear parts of the service read in correct style in that language, and hymns sung just as in English Churches; but I hope we shall bear in mind the fact that the Christianity of Onitsha

will grow weak and sickly, and that it will be devoid of all inherent vitality, if English be allowed to supersede the native tongue. (p. 71).

Evidently, this portends grave cultural, social and religious consequences for the young Church and the people. Nonetheless, apart from their disgust for the language of the people, it is known that some of the European missionaries such as Henry Townsend were not favourably disposed to giving blacks any leadership. Kalu (1990) notes that Hinderer, a white missionary, was said to have argued that “black communities were more excited with the presence of white men. For him, ‘Colour was important in conversion” (p. 61-74). In any case, it is true that the CMS had decided to teach the people in vernacular for more effective communication, Solomon Perry was said to have conceded to the preference for English language, arguing that the mixture of races in Onitsha made the use of English necessary in schools. Contrary to this position however, Okeke (2006) views that:

If the society had yielded to the persuasive argument of Solomon Perry, and had sanctioned the preference of the immigrants’ use of English rather than Igbo, Onitsha and its surrounding districts, would have become another Freetown, were indigenous languages were effectively eliminated. (p. 143).

In the midst of these challenges nonetheless, it is to be noted that the Igbo converts eventually took over their Church and began to launch out for evangelical campaigns. For instance, the Onitsha CMS converts enthusiastically undertook a missionary outreach to Ogidi under the leadership of T. Agusiobi in January 1892, following an invitation earlier made in 1891 by Walter Amobi, a Court interpreter. To further buttress these efforts, Kalu (2003) cites that:

By 1899, the outstations started secondary waves of evangelization. Members of St. Andrew’s Obosi sent G. N. Anyaegbulam and some stalwarts to Oba. On their arrival, Chief Obienu hosted them and used his influence to attract an audience.

The response was so good that a certain Isaac Eneke was employed as an instructor. The Obosi Christians paid for Eneke's upkeep. He laboured so strenuously that by 1907 the first site of the Church at Umuogali could no longer accommodate the converts. Eneke acquired a new site at Isu-Oba where St. Paul's (CMS) now stands. By 1913, the Anglicans had two congregations at Oba. (p. 89).

Other places in the North-Western sub-culture like Awka which eventually became the educational training center for CMS did not receive the influence of the mission until 1899 when a team of European missionaries led by Rev. R. S. Smith succeeded in coming into closer contact with Awka people. Anagbogu (2000) reveals that:

In 1903, Smith and his men made another trip to Awka. He acquired a site from Awka people and began to set up a building there. On 11<sup>th</sup> January 1904, Smith moved into the new building. Six trainee evangelists joined him. All of them shared the new abode and hopefully faced the task before them. Thus, St. Paul's College Awka was born, and the institution was the key to the success recorded by the European missionaries in the period 1904-1920, on the account of professional Igbo evangelists produced by the College . . . which acted as a catalyst in the evangelization of Igboland. (p. 8).

Considering the trend of the Anglican (C. M. S) missionary expansion in Igboland, it would be recalled, according to Anyabuikwe (1996) that:

By 1900 the Government required all Christian missions to apply for permission before breaking new grounds in the country. It was in 1908 that the C. M. S. protested to the colonial office about the effect of such restriction on their missionary enterprise. They were given the permission to expand. (p. 27).

Nonetheless, the education received by Igbo agents at the Awka College was of high standard; and this enabled them to play a critical role in the spread of Christianity in Igboland. On this note, the role of the indigenous assistants to Archdeacon T. J. Dennis, especially their contribution towards missionary expansion of the central Igbo sub-culture area of Owerri from 1906 deserves proper historical evaluation. It is nonetheless the evolution of the Union Igbo and the eventual translation of the Bible which spells enormous impact and consolidation for the missionary gains in Igboland that cannot be under-estimated. This will be given a detailed treatment in the next chapter.

In a historical consideration of missionary expansion to the Owerri area, Ekechi (1972) however says that:

The coming of the missionaries to Owerri marked the completion of the project to evangelize the Igbos; for with the completion of the Owerri district there was no more major frontiers to conquer, and missionary activity confined itself to consolidating its position rather than expanding territories. (p. 205).

Nevertheless, this is an inverted representation of the missionary expansion in Igboland as at the time in consideration. Okeke (2006) reacting to this, says that “by the time Owerri was occupied in 1906, there were still many unexplored virgin territories . . . Aguata and Orumba were yet unevangelised. But more significant was that the whole of Enugu and Nsukka zone were not yet evangelized” (p.34). Although in regards to the comity agreement, which came later in 1911, it is evident that Afikpo, Ikwo, Ohafia, Abakaliki, Ngbo, Izhii and parts of Nkanu remained unreached until very much later after the 1960s. These places were later to receive Anglican missionary presence through the recent creation of missionary dioceses.

It is however the failed attempt to evangelize Bende and Arochukwu by the CMS that needs to be discussed here. It will be noted that up till 1903, the Revs. Onyeabo and G. N. Anyaegbunam were the only indigenous Igbo clergymen in the CMS Niger mission, so the desire

of Bishop Tugwell to bring Anglicanism to Cross River Igbo territory, particularly Bende and Arochukwu could not become a reality due to shortage of manpower. But, following a Conference held on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1904, the United Free Church of Scotland gave a free hand to the CMS to open a mission station at Bende since it believed that they were more in a position to do so.

In any case, the Niger Delta Pastorate, which was detailed to carry on the mission was itself beset with difficulties. Anyika and Ekebuisi (2010) therefore observe that:

It was a mission run entirely by African Christians under the leadership of an African Archdeacon Dandeson Crowther. It had perpetual financial difficulties and thus was far from being in a position to expand. . . . Being understaffed and having no missionaries at its disposal, the Pastorate appealed to twelve of its lay agents to carry the good news to these towns. Led by Rev. J. A. Pratt, they set out from Bonny early in November 1904 and arrived Bende after six days journey. But the commencement of Christian work at Bende and Arochukwu by the Niger Delta Pastorate turned out to be a flash in the pan. (pp. 41-42).

By 1909, when Rev. F. W. Dodds established the Primitive Methodist mission at Adadia, he observed that there was only a very little Christian work being carried on, in and around Bende. In fact, Dodds (cited in Anyika and Ekebuisi, 2010) states that:

There was found very feeble little Niger Delta Pastorate school serving a handful of boys who were children of government clerks. The school perished a month or two later, and no sign of its existence remained by the end of the year. (p. 42).

This would explain how Bende was lost by the CMS and eventually became the nursery bed for sustainable Methodist missionary activities in Igboland. Nevertheless, the expansion of the CMS missionary activities to other Igbo sub-culture areas and hinterlands could be said to be symptomatic. Boocock (cited by Anyika and Ekebuisi, 2010) says that “the opening up of Igbo

hinterland was further accelerated by the discovery in 1909 at Udi Hill of rich and huge deposits of bituminous coal by Messrs A. E. Kitson and E. O. Thielle” (p.38). Following this discovery, the Colonial administration saw the urgent need to construct a railway from the sea port (Port Harcourt) to the Coal field. On this premise, Anyika and Ekebuisi (2010) observe that:

Apart from being a major factor in the opening up of Igbo hinterland and in providing a very reliable and quick means of evacuating the coal deposit from the mines to the sea port, the railway offered a rare opportunity which began to engage the attention of the proselytizing agencies already at work in Eastern Nigeria for evangelizing the great unoccupied reaches of the Igbo land. (p. 39).

For instance, an oral report reveals that some students from the Awka College had carried an evangelistic campaign to Umuneke in 1909, and that a Sierra Leonean had started a school among the Owa people around 1914, but substantial evidence of posterity was not documented for both efforts. But a new turn of events unfolded when it was said that Chief Onyeama of Eke sent a delegation to G. T. Basden who took over from R.S. Smith, at Awka in 1914, requesting a teacher, in order to compete with this development and to attract fortune for his own profit and benefits of his people.

The missionary enterprise in the Northern Igbo hinterland would therefore be grossly incomplete without adequate reference to the career of Chief Onyeama, *Okwuruoha Oshie* (the voice and head of the people). He has been variously described as despotic and enigmatic, comparable to King Jaja of Opobo. He was not just wealthy and progressive, but also powerful and determined to harness the powers of the colonial masters. In any case and against his expectations, Isaac Ejindu and not a white missionary was then sent to begin mission at Eke.

Perhaps on this note, a brawl was soon to spark off between Ejindu and Onyeama. An anecdote holds that Chief Onyeama was said to have demanded an equal share of the proceeds

from the education and mission grants, which Ejindu daringly confronted and rejected. But, Kalu (2003) observes that:

Oral tradition, however, differs on the genesis of this mission. Some say that when Ejindu came, Onyeama was very grateful and patronizing. But when the school in his compound was conducted in the vernacular, he knew that he had invited the wrong group. He wanted his own people to learn English and deal with the colonial officers in Enugu. He, therefore, sent Ejindu packing and dispatched messengers to Igbariam to invite the Catholics. (p. 115).

But, on the instance of a letter written on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1916, by E. S. O. Nzecheta and eleven others who were Anglicans in the Colliery, Ejindu now relocated to Ngwo in January 1917. The letter written to Bishop Tugwell, (cited in Kalu, 2003) states that:

We, the Igbo native Christians who have received training at various places under the CMS, wish to lay our case to you. There are now more than a hundred Christian adherents employed in connection with the colliery, railway, prison warders, etc., and we are anxious for a church to be erected on the native settlement and for a Catechist to be sent to conduct services and to look after our spiritual welfare generally. We shall be glad if a piece of land can be set apart for this purpose. We are willing to put up a simple building at our own expense. (pp. 114-115).

Later, Ejindu secured accommodation at Chief Chime's compound, from where church and school were opened simultaneously at Ngwo and Ogbete using the Igbo Reader, *Azu Ndu*. He made further missionary expansions to other neighbouring communities of Nsude, Umuneke group of villages, being patronized by Chief Ijeoma of Umuabi and Chief Eneagu of Obinagu, Chief Chukwuani of Ozala, and later in the year to *Akagbe* (Awkunanaw) following the invitation by the chiefs, Nnaji Nwonu and Agbowo Ebiem. The letter written by the Udi District



Officer in 1917 in this regard is very insightful as he said, “Sir, I have the honour to forward an application from the Superintendent C. M. S. Awka to open a school at Akebbe (Obinagu-Umaa quarter). I have seen the chiefs and there is no objection to the proposal”.

Further to this, the District Officer explained that:

In reply to your memorandum No. O. P143/1917 of the 14<sup>th</sup> Instant, I must explain that when I saw the Chiefs with regards to the R. C. M. application they said they wanted a C. M. S. school. When the C. M. S. application was called up again, Chief Agbowo Ebiem said that he had already commenced to build the school. I think that a school in Akebbe will be a very good thing and if the C. M. S. is established there, there would be adequate supervision as Rev. Ejindu is stationed at Enugu Ngwo.

The CMS missionary expansion in this area was however particularly challenged by the fierce persecution and opposition which Ejindu encountered from Chief Onyeama, that the government officials appeared helpless to assist the Anglicans. In fact, the District officer, Smith was said to conclude that the chief was too useful to the government in the matter of obtaining labour to be treated as he deserves. On this, Omenka (2012) says that in 1930, Fr Davey reported the contest thus:

We have very often to reckon with the Protestant ministers of the Church missionary society. They are not many in number, but they show much zeal and liveliness and make replacements every eighteen months. They have attempted to establish themselves close to us, even at Eke, but the great chief Onyeama turned his back on them, and thank God the government refused them the necessary land. (p. 12).

In any case, the missionary strides of this period, especially by the indigenous elements were confirmed by the feelings of Anagbogu (2000) that:

It is reasonable to think that by 1920, the Igbo agents had taken over the greater burden of missionary work in our area. An indigene in many ways has an edge over an expatriate missionary. The European missionary must first make himself familiar with the language of the indigenous population. (p. 9).

Other details of the missionary expansion among the Igbo in this area are instructive. However, it is to be noted that the emphasis of this research is on the socio-cultural evaluation of Bible translation for Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland. The preference for the white missionaries and their language by Onyeama, and the proclivity for the use of the vernacular, using the Igbo *prima* by Ejindu provide a contradistinctive ground for analyzing the role of language and the eventual translation of the Bible into Igbo language for the effective Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland.

In this regard, the researcher is left with little or no option than to think that Chief Onyeama's action was not necessarily engendered by a genuine motif for enhancing the cultural worldview of the people, but to secure an opportunity for self-aggrandizement. In any case, the inability of the CMS mission to effectively dialogue with other Igbo traditional institutions in many respects, in spite of their inclination towards the use of the indigenous language still leaves a gap for consideration in modern missionary enterprise. However, the eventual translation of the Bible into Igbo language in 1913 was, not accident of history but a deliberate and conscious effort aimed at producing a people of faith whose convictions are rooted on their own cultural worldview and expressions, especially the language of the people.

It would be recalled that before the Igbo Bible translation in 1913, the pace of Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland was generally slow, considering that by the time Owerri was occupied in 1906, there were still many unexplored virgin territories of Igboland such as Aguata and Orumba, which were yet unevangelised. But more significant was that the whole of Enugu and Nsukka, Afikpo, Ikwo, Ohafia, Abakaliki, Ngbo, Izhii and Nkanu remained unreached by

the Anglican Church. Nevertheless, the trend and pace of Anglican missionary expansion evidently assumed a speedier dimension with the instrumentality of the translated Union Igbo Bible, which enhanced acceptability of the gospel as preached in the people's language. Hence, the Anglican mission into the Northern Igbo subculture Enugu, Nsukka, Abakaliki and other areas that were previously unreached by the Anglican Church. Meanwhile, it would be said that the translation of the Bible into Igbo language facilitated the expansion of the Christian gospel to these unreached areas, not only by the Anglican mission, but also by other Protestant mission groups that adopted the Union Igbo Bible.

### **3.3 Other Missionary Agencies in Igboland**

Although the thrust of this research is the role of Bible translation in Anglican missionary expansion, it is to be noted that other missionary agencies also made valuable contributions to the development of Igboland. They also used the Bible as the instrument of communicating the message of the gospel of the Christian faith. Among such missionary groups include the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM), the Primitive Methodist Mission (PPM), the Church of Scotland Mission (Presbyterians) and others. This section briefly evaluated these selected missionary agencies and their impacts on Igboland.

#### **3.3.1 The Roman Catholic Mission (RCM)**

The missionary expansion among the Igbo people nonetheless, took a new dimension when the Roman Catholic missionaries arrived in 1885. Although Fathers Holley and Chausse had passed through Onitsha in 1883 on their way to Lokoja, the actual missionary activities of the Roman Catholics in Igboland began with the arrival of two Reverend Fathers, Lutz and Horne on December 5, 1885. Nnabuike (1983) observed that the reason for the immediate reception of the Catholics in Igboland is obvious, for:

When Catholic missionaries eventually arrived in 1885, they were not beginning to write on a blank slate as far as these places were concerned, the rudiments of the Christian faith. For indeed, Christianity had existed in parts of Eastern Nigeria for almost forty years before. (pp. 32-33).

In view of this, the coming of the Roman Catholics, as earlier noted, brought a whole new sense of missionary expansionism in Igboland. Thus, Omenka (2012) postulates that:

Initially the contest for supremacy was between the United Free Church of Scotland, also known as the Presbyterian Church, which set up a mission in Calabar in 1846, the Anglican Church Missionary Society that finally established a mission in Onitsha and the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) which did not appear on the scene until 1885. This belated entry notwithstanding, the Catholic mission soon scored a phenomenal expansion not only in the Niger territory, but also in the whole of Southern Nigeria. Of the nineteen apostolic Vicariates and Prefectures that has been established along West Africa from Senegambia to Angola by 1901, Nigeria alone possessed three, namely, the Vicariate of Benin with Lagos as headquarters, the Prefecture of the Upper Niger with headquarters at Lokoja, and then at Asaba, and the Prefecture of the Lower Niger based at Onitsha. (p. 2).

As was the case, Achunike (1995) noted that “it did not seem that the Catholic missionaries valued the missionary and pastoral experience of the Protestants before them” (p. 44). Though the presence of Protestants provided underground platform for the reception of Catholicism in Igboland, Ekechi (1972) describes their eventual relationship as that of “missionary enterprise and rivalry in Igboland”, noting that, “Father Lutz adopted the practical expedient of approaching the inhabitants via the charitable provision of medicines and other

material needs” (p.74). To further elucidate this missionary development, especially with regards to the response of the Igbo people, Achunike (1995) says that:

With the coming of the Catholic missionaries the religious scene changed. Changed also was ‘the map’ of Christianity in Igboland. The style with which these missionaries (Catholic and Protestant) preached and executed the apostolate changed or ‘radicalized’ the understanding the Igbo had about Christianity in general. (p. 44).

Since, according to Obi (1980) “The Holy Ghost Fathers . . . Father Joseph Lutz and his band of three, Fr. Joseph Horne and two lay Brothers, Hermas and John Gotto . . . had as their main task the evangelization of the people” (p.23), Onwubiko (1985) noted that:

A first step towards the realization of this primary objective was to win the people’s acceptance of themselves and of Roman Catholicism in an area where the Church Missionary Society had been actively established since 1857. It was indeed a difficult task. To achieve that objective however, Father Lutz adopted the strategy of winning the people to the Catholic faith through charity. (p. 226).

In fact, Kalu (2003) observed that “the Roman Catholics came with a ready-made strategy to use charitable institutions as a means of rooting the mission and countering the Protestants” (p.90). This strategy proved successful as the first step in the breakthrough in evangelization, as it drew so many local people who came to obtain some medical and other helps.

One of the earliest and most prominent of these charitable institutions was the ‘freedom village” This strategy was said to have been borrowed from Cardinal Lavigerie who had successfully employed it in Algiers as a Propaganda Fide. It was mainly made up of re-captured slaves; children entrusted to the care of the missionaries, and abandoned children. Ezeanyino (2012) corroborates this opinion saying that:

It could be said that it was the liberated slaves who first brought Christianity to Nigeria, while the missionaries were responsible to its organization and expansion. Indeed, the majority of the early converts were themselves slaves and the reject of the society. (p. 38).

The freedom villages which was rather referred to as the 'Christian Villages', alongside the education and medical mission approach, used by the Catholics, turned out as the most veritable tools for missionary expansion in Igboland. With regards to the Christian villages, Forristal (1990) further explains that:

The establishment of Christian Villages was a system adopted by French missionaries which were intended to be settlements where new converts could live a full Christian life without interference from their pagan neighbours and build up Christian presence in a country. In Nigeria, these villages had become places where the outcasts of the society were taking refuge. There were former slaves, some of them runaways, others bought by the mission with funds collected in Europe, there were abandoned children and orphans, there were cripples and lepers and homeless old people, there were criminals and murderers, there were all those others who for one reason or another did not fit into the traditional tribal pattern. (p. 46).

It is likely that the most successful of the Christian villages in Igboland was that which was set up in Aguleri in about 1891. Omenka (1989) notes that:

Father Pawlas was, therefore, posted to the Christian village there as a signal of the benefits which the communities could harness. With 270 families in 1897, it had about 240 baptized and 60 Catechumens in 1902. Within two years about 56 more were baptized. (p. 41).

Following the impact of the Catholic mission among the people, communities like Ossomari, Nsugbe, and Igbariam had to send applications for Christian missions to be established in their places. In any case, Kalu (2003) observes that “material interest and fascination with the presence of whites influenced these advances made between 1892-94” (p.90).

Unlike the CMS missionary expansion which has been described as ‘sluggish’, the expansion of the Catholic mission in Igboland was highly exponential that between 1885 and 1917, there were about ten central stations of the Lower Niger Mission. In this regard, Omenka (2012) observes that:

In 1917 a decision was taken to found a station among the Agbaja and this was provisionally fixed at Eke. Thus, Eke became the tenth central station of the Lower Niger after Onitsha Waterside (Holy Trinity) 1885; Aguleri (St. Joseph) 1891; Onitsha Town (Immaculate Conception) 1902; Calabar (Sacred Heart) 1903; Nteje (Sacred Heart) 1907; Ozubulu (St. Michael) 1907; Igbariam (St. Anthony of Padua) 1908; Emekukwu (Our Lady of Mt. Carmel) 1912; Anua (St. Joseph). (p. 14).

Hence, the Catholics were soon to overrun the Igbo hinterlands and beyond. In view of this, Kalu (2003) observes that “their rapid pace of expansion with solid infrastructure, medical facilities and schools struck sacred dread in the hearts of other denominations quite early” (p.129). Being fair to history would be the proper thing to do. For, though the Catholics came late, they embarked on vigorous missionary propaganda under strong leadership, and outstripped the Niger Mission. In spite of the challenges of the obvious cultural conflicts between the new Catholic faith and the worldview of the people, Ayandele (1966) attributed their success to “evangelistic methods upon close understanding of Ibo religion” (p. 134).

Remarkably, the optimistic missionary report concerning Eke in the present Enugu State and its environs by Father Grandin in 1921 corroborates what had happened at Aguleri Christian village and becomes historically relevant in considering the speedy expansion of the Catholic mission in Igboland. Cited in Omenka (2012), Grandin says that:

Despite all these fetish practices and despite all the opposition from certain chiefs, the barriers are not insurmountable judging from the statistics: 8 central school-churches, 3500 pupils, 850 Catechumens (not attending school), 360 baptisms, 14 Christian villages. . . These figures do not include those of Enugu – the miners. (p. 16).

The conversion of some notable personalities and chiefs also contributed immensely to the expansion of Christian mission among the Igbo people. For instance, Kalu (2003) specifically mentioned the conversion of “*Ogbuinyinya* Joseph Idigo who was actually not the ruler of Aguleri but a wealthy trader who had taken the highest title, “killer of horses”. His daring conversion and tenacity to the new Catholic faith had won much notice” (p.90). This experience is also true of the role and patronage of Chief Onyeama to the Catholic missionaries in Eke and its environs which stands out conspicuously to the successful missionary expansion of the Catholics in Agbaja, Ojebeogene, Nike, and Eha- Alumona Nsukka axes.

Apart from this, as in other missionary enterprise, education was effectively used as a veritable tool for the expansion of the Christian mission among the Igbo by the Roman Catholic mission. Abernethy (1969) notes that “all the Mission groups in Southern Nigeria were interested in educating the common people, but none served this cause more energetically than the Roman Catholics of the Eastern Region” (p.39). Hence, with an eye to penetrate Igboland, the mission laid much emphasis on giving those entrusted to them the possibility of acquiring higher skills so that they would be ambassadors to their communities. Schools were therefore set up within this



framework. In a missionary report of 1888 cited in Nwosu (1982), the Catholic missionaries said that:

Shortly after our arrival, we began a school, it brings forty children together. Twenty of these children live with us in the Mission. They are the children whom we redeemed from slavery and most of whom are saved from death. We would be able to increase this number, but alas! we are forced to restrict it to this due to lack of accommodation and especially due to lack of resources. (p. 442).

When Father Shanahan arrived in 1902, he considered the strategic import of formal education for evangelization, and views it as most promising, instead of the Christian villages. In view of this, Onwubiko (1985) observes that:

Many people have been wondering why the Catholic Church takes very great interest in education. Christ Himself mandated His Apostles to teach all nations. The successors of the Apostles continued the work of teaching and educating the nations of the world. Missionaries all over the world, therefore see education and evangelization as part and parcel of their vocation. (p. 225).

Much as the Anglican missionaries in Igboland, the Roman Catholic missionaries also found the interaction with the worldview of the Igbo people, especially their language and the need for Bible translation as a necessity for their expansion. Against this backdrop, Obi (1985) views that:

The people's traditional religion and culture prepared them to receive the gospel message. The Igbo are a people who can take challenges and make sacrifices for their beliefs and aspirations. Christianity, even though it demanded more sacrifice than school education, satisfied the people's spiritual longings and gave meaning to their lives. That must be the reason why it drew the people in their thousands.

The generality of the converts were drawn by the message itself, even if some could have become Christians for pragmatic considerations. (p. 136).

Nevertheless, the experience of Father Shanahan when he arrived at Ogboli in the present day Enu-Onitsha or Onitsha Inland Town is worth retelling. He was met with the indifference of the people, since he lacked the means of communicating with them. Besides, the villagers were free-born citizens who saw no reason to concern themselves with affairs of the white man or embrace his religion. However, to break this language barrier, Obi (1985) says that:

Father Shanahan set up a hut for his own habitation in the midst of the conglomeration of mud huts scattered all through the village. His next step was to learn enough Igbo to make himself one of the villagers so that he could tell them the Good News. He later discovered that the children were better disposed to talk with him and he gathered a small crowd of them. With their help, he set up a small mud hut to serve as school. (p. 112).

Obviously, apart from serving as a very effective means of evangelization and getting a well-paid employment, formal education also provided the missionaries with the forum to intimately interact with the people, and to acquire the knowledge of the local language in order to reach every sector of the society. It is nonetheless the role and importance of the Catechumenate in relation to interactive language development between the missionaries and the indigenous Igbo people that excites attention. Ezeanyino (2012) says that:

These were brilliant young men selected from the village schools as helpers to the missionaries. They were first prepared for the sacraments, after which they in turn took up the duty of preparing others. They performed the functions of teachers, interpreters, evangelizers, and counselors, as the case may be. (p. 39).

The roles of the Catechumen contributed immensely to the expansive impact which the Catholic mission has made upon the Igbo people and culture, having achieved a wider coverage

of missionary expansion in Igboland than any other single missionary group. Okon (1985) notes that “with a fairly reduced area to evangelize, following the creation of two Prefectures in 1934, it was possible for the Church . . . not only to continue her penetration of Igbo hinterland but also to begin to consolidate around many centres – Parishes” (p.179).

In spite of the obvious challenges of evangelizing a given cultural context, its interactive dialogue with Igbo culture seems to be gaining much and robust attention of interest for studies. The introduction and promotion of formal education by the mission was simply a means to an end for the expansion of the Catholic mission. This objective would seem to have been largely achieved since the Catholic faith had taken a strong root, with the creation of several Dioceses in Igboland. Okon (1985) therefore observes that:

Between 1935 and 1950 there was a great demand for the creation of new Parishes. Expansion of schools and promotion of higher education, apart from the growth of indigenous clergy and religious, were also noticeable phenomena. With the benefits of Western education becoming more and more obvious to the people, and being convinced that actual residence of a priest in a town would increase would increase opportunity for education as well as bring other temporal and spiritual benefits associated with the Church, the people of various towns increased their request for resident priests. (p. 180).

This resulted in the creation of parishes, which did not only help in the expansion of missionary outreaches, but also the establishment of primary schools. It also helped to promote higher education such as secondary schools and Teacher Training Colleges in many towns of Igboland.

### **3.3.2 The Primitive Methodist Missionary Society (PMMS)**

Another major milestone in missionary expansionism in Igboland was marked with the coming of the Primitive Methodists in 1910. Anyika and Ekebuisi (2010) said that:

In discussing the entry of Primitive Methodism into Igboland therefore, reference must be made as the driving motivation to its expansionist policy, to the opening up of the interior parts of the territory to their relative pacification to the co-operation between the protestant bodies and their respect for denominational boundaries which sought to prevent friction and overlapping of interest in the execution of their expansionist programmes. (pp. 42-43).

In view of this, in 1899, the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society saw the need to devise a new expansionist strategy in the south-eastern Nigeria. According to Boocock (cited by Anyika and Ekebuisi, 2010), “PM drew up a definite missionary policy which instructed that in opening new stations the missionaries should use Oron as a base and should proceed northwards in the direction of the Igbo country” (p. 11). This was how it all began.

It is true that much of the history of Methodism in Igboland have been related to Rev. F. W. Dodds, but the credit of how it all began must be accorded to Rev. William Christie who initiated the move following a letter he wrote on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1908 to the General Secretary of the Primitive Methodist for African Missions. But most passionate was yet another letter he wrote on November, 1909 as cited by Anyika and Ekebuisi (2010):

You know we have been sandwiched in between two Rivers for the whole period of our stay in Oron. On neither of these dare we go without coming into conflict with other missions. So we have been trying to creep up gently. So long as we keep in a corner and never showed our face or lift our voice, nobody heeded us, but in natural expansion of our work, we have to move. (p. 46).

This motivation led to their entry into Arriam, which was the first Igbo town that the Primitive Methodist missionaries stepped into in 1909. But following the failure, which Rev. Christie encountered at Arriam, he later moved into Ndioro where he experienced a much disheartening disappointment. Nevertheless, fortune opened for them in the middle of 1910 through the favourable disposition of, and invitation from Major W. A. C. Cockburn who was then the Bende District Officer.

It would be recalled that in 1904, the Niger Delta Pastorate had made an unsuccessful effort to evangelize Bende. This time however, the presence of the District commissioner proved an inestimable advantage such that Christie viewed that Bende provided a fine opportunity for missionary endeavours which could scarcely be afforded by another place. Hence, it can be said that Bende is the first town in Igboland where sustainable missionary expansion by the Methodist mission began.

Among other factors that facilitated the expansion of the Primitive Methodist Mission into the Igbo hinterland was the construction of the railroads. Indeed, the railroads captured the imagination of Rev. Fredrick William Dodds who took over from Rev. Christie for expansive missionary enterprise not only in Igboland, but in the larger Nigerian society. In this regard, Kalu (2003) wrote of Dodds that:

From his location at Uzuakoli he had watched the planning and implementation and devised a missionary strategy that would firstly, place the Primitive Methodist on all the railroad junctions of Igboland and secondly, extend his mission to the Munchin country as the Southern Railway Line joins the Northern Line. (p. 128).

Upon this backdrop, Rev. F. Dodds expressed much optimism, and thus drew up a sketch for accomplishing this enterprise, believing that by the end of the operation his mission would be the second largest after Roman Catholicism in Nigeria. On this note, he moved the seat of his mission from Bende to Umuahia, having secured Ihube, Ovim, Uzuakoli, Aba, Okigwe; he

therefore headed for Enugu through Agbani which was another major railway junction. His letter to Horton on 18<sup>th</sup> September, 1916 is symptomatic for evaluating the expansion of Methodism in Enugu area. According to Kalu (2003):

Fred Dodds also claimed that during the boundary sharing discussion that Bishop Tugwell had offered Enugu to the Primitive Methodists but that the hesitation by the Home Committee gave the Anglicans the opportunity to rethink, seeing that Enugu acquired a new-fangled importance. (p. 129).

At this point, it is important to refer to the Protestant missionary co-operation of the time which could also explain the development paths of Christianity in Nigeria. This co-operation otherwise referred to as the 'Comity Agreement' initiated in 1911 following the impulse from the famous Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, gave areas of coverage and delimitations to specific mission groups, in order to reduce competition, avert rivalries and duplication of missionary efforts in the same locality especially among the Protestant bodies. For instance, Kalu (2003) observes that:

The Northern, North-Western, Central, and North-Eastern Igboland were preserves of the Protestant Anglicans except where they indicate inability to occupy. Methodists had Southern Igboland and the Okigwe-Isukwuato corner of the Central Igbo, while the Presbyterians enclaved in Cross River Igboland. The Qua Ibo Mission had most of their desire among the Ibibio and Anang and a patch of Southern Igboland. The Roman Catholics ranged freely untrammelled. (p. 130).

The advantage and impact of these boundary delimitations were enormous. Apart from the co-operative relationships which it engendered for missionary expansion in Igboland, Kalu (1978) explains that "this early beginnings later produced the discussion of Church unity which collapsed in 1965 and was nailed by the Civil War, 1967-70" (p. xiv).

Meanwhile, it is the interaction between Methodist missionaries and the language of the Igbo people and their contribution towards the development of the same especially in the course of Bible translation into Igbo language that forms the interest of this research. Not much was said about Rev. William Christie's encounter with the language of the people, but Anyika and Ekebuisi (2010) say that:

By the beginning of February 1911, Dodds was set to commence work at Bende. The town being within Igbo-speaking area, the missionary included on the list of his priorities the study of Igbo language, a knowledge of which he considered very necessary for facilitating his interaction with the indigenous population. (p. 59).

To further explicate the import of the indigenous language, particularly as expressed and developed through Igbo Bible translation for missionary expansion, Anyika and Ekebuisi (2010) cites a report written by Rev. F. W. Dodds to Mr. T. Guttery on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1920, that:

In Eastern Nigeria, PM adopted a policy which made mandatory for every missionary the study of the language of the people amongst whom he was labouring. To enforce this policy, it was mandatory for each new missionary on the field to pass three language examinations conducted at different times in the course of his first two terms of two years each on the field. The missionary knew without being told that he had to strive to pass these examinations for failure would rob him of his annual salary increment. Were he to fail a second time, he ran the risk of being withdrawn from the field. (p. 73).

Evidently, by 1915, the rate at which the Christian knowledge permeated into families, particularly at Bende Circuit received a whooping boost as educational materials worth well over £77 were sold, which yielded for the mission a profit of over £8. It was reported that among the

materials sold were more than three hundred copies of the Igbo Bible Nso already translated by Archdeacon T. J. Dennis of the CMS and printed in 1913 by the British Foreign Bible Society.

### **3.3.3 The Church of Scotland Mission (Presbyterians)**

The story of missionary expansion in Igboland would be greatly bereft if mention were not made of the strides of the Foreign Mission Committees of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Although Kalu (2003) noted that:

the Presbyterians suffered the fate of many small missionary bodies of the time such as the Primitive Methodists and the Qua Iboe with whom they shared the same terrain; low funding, low personnel availability, inhospitable climate and high personnel turn-over rate. (pp. 216-217).

In any case, the gamut of the Presbyterian missionary impact on Igbo cultural identity portends great significance for consideration.

Like the Anglican mission in Igboland, the Presbyterians could only make very slow expansionistic moves, huddling around the mangroves of Cross River until nearly forty-five years, being able to open only eleven stations. The initial goal of Hope Waddell (the pioneer Presbyterian missionary) was to Christianize the Efik community, developing a native agency, which would then move out into the interior using the Efik language. However, the fear of Efik domination by the neighbouring communities, coupled with the counter-productive effect of the Ekpe secret society explains the rough challenges the church had at the period. The Ekpe society was then the major instrument of social control tightly linked to the belief systems of the people. Afigbo (1972) pictures it succinctly thus:

In the event of the expansion of the Presbyterian Mission and of the Protectorate Government on the Cross River and Calabar river meant the expansion of Efik



influence at the expense of their neighbours and traditional rivals. The result was that the tribes of the Upper Cross River found themselves in a quandary. (p. 39).

To break through this challenge however, Hope Waddell even had to resort to the use of British gunboats mostly led by Sir Ralph Moor, against the host communities. But, Kalu (2003) notes that this approach to mission “created both the theological problem over the use of force in the Christian cause and blurred perception of the missionary as an imperialist writ large” (p.217). Obviously, missionary enterprise would not effectively survive in such uncertain atmosphere. As a result of this, the people for a long time suspected and resisted missionary incursions, such that from 1846, the Presbyterians could only make the first contact with the Cross-River Igbo at Akunakuna and Unwana in 1888.

Apart from the constant conflict, which the mission had with traditional religion, the increased presence and impact of the Presbyterians was accentuated with the coming of Mary Slessor who joined the mission in 1874. Nevertheless, it would be said that the Aro expedition earlier mentioned also helped immensely in throwing open the hitherto closed doors of Igbo hinterland for missionary activities. It would appear that the Aro converts such as Nwafor Ogwuma of Obinkita, Mazi Okorafor Uro of Amankuru and some others evidently contributed greatly to the rapid Christianization of Cross River Igboland. Such men became missionary agents who employed the kind of zest their forefathers used in slave trading business, to ensure that missionary activities itinerated widely into the hinterland.

For instance, Kalu (2003) aptly cited the report by Rev. John Rankin to the Calabar Mission Council, which reflects the potentials for missionary expansion in the hinterland from Arochukwu, thus:

Within a decade from the entry into Arochukwu, the Presbyterians covered the rest of the lower and middle Cross River Igboland. They reached Isu (1908), Ututu (1909), Ohafia (1910), Abriba (1910, 1918), Abam (1918, 1919), and

Igbere (1916, 1919). From a different direction, they went into Uburu (1912), Okposi (1913), Edda (1920) and Afikpo (1923). There is little doubt that such a rate of physical expansion exceeded in a decade what the mission had accomplished in all her years of operation. . . The young churches grew with extraordinary rapidity. (p. 225).

To advance this cause, a common denominator strove through the various missionary expansionistic enterprises; and that is the use of education as the primary tool of not only civilizing, but also of proselytizing the people. To achieve the desired Christianizing of the people, Kalu (2003) noted that “the prevalent ideology included the missionaries as the civilizing agents of the civilizing mission or those to inculcate ‘the restraints of Christianity’. So the education of the native was the mode of accomplishing the task” (p. 244). This led to the establishment of schools alongside the planting of churches. Against this backdrop, this paper agrees with Achunike (1995) that “overtly speaking, Christianity was and remains probably ‘the good thing’ (change agent) that happened to Igbo” (p. 45).

Nonetheless, since the heart of this research is an examination of the import of Igbo language and the consequent Bible translation on missionary enterprise, it is observed that cultural influence especially the language of the people played vital role in communicating the message of the new faith to the natives of this sub-culture area. For instance, at Isu, the Aro influence is such that their dialect is now tinged with Aro dialect resulting to their reference as Aro-Isu. The Aro took advantage of this and their close relationship with the Isu to share the Christian message. Again at Ohafia, it is said that when Rev. A. K. Mincher, one of the graduate clergymen in the field succeeded Robert Collins who died in 1933, he struggled for some years to fill the leadership roles of Collins. However, he eventually succeeded by learning the

language, dialect and proverbs so well that Ohafia and Abiriba people created a story that the initials in Mincher's name were Ohafia names. They referred to him as "Awa Kalu" Mincher.

On the Igbo Bible translation project, Kalu (2003) mentions one:

Inya Agha from Unwana, who was the one deputized by Presbyterians to work on the Bible Translation into Union Igbo with Archdeacon Dennis at Egbu. Another was Nwafor Ogwuma from Obinkita Arochukwu who was the first Igbo to administer the Sacrament in the Church of Scotland Mission and one of those who assisted Archdeacon Dennis in the translation of the Igbo Union Bible. (p. 220-224).

Evidently, it could have been utterly difficult to expand the course of Christian mission, particularly the Anglican Church in Igboland without effectively inter-mingling the new faith with the cultural realities of the people, particularly their language. This was what the Igbo Bible translation was poised to achieve.

### **3.4 Anglican Missionary Impacts and Redefinition of Identity in Igboland**

With the planting of Christianity, especially by the Anglican mission, and the consequent expansion of their missionary activities in Igboland, there have been diverse experiences resulting into the redefinition of identity among the people. Evidently, and in a general sense, the encounter with mission left the Igbo society topsy-turvy manifesting not only in missionary advancement but also in the identity crisis that hacked seriously on socio-cultural worldview of the Igbo. An examination of some of these factors of change in the cultural perceptions of the people was pursued in this section.

#### **3.4.1 Education**

Coupled with the impact of Bible translation, the Anglican (CMS) mission adopted education as the other side of the same coin in their proselytization process and missionary

enterprise. Evidently, this would explain why on arrival, the CMS team led by Crowther, with J. Schon, J. C. Taylor opened a school immediately to address the glaring and cogent needs. On this note, Obi (1985) observes that “evangelization through formal education seems to be the most promising method” (p.120). The essence of education was therefore, not only to teach the people to read and to write, but also to learn the language of the people. Hair (1967) recaptured that J. C. Taylor:

Opened a school and endeavoured to learn Igbo as well as translate parts of the bible, prayer book and catechism into Igbo language. He taught Reading, Writing at first and later became more sophisticated with Grammar, Geography, Music, Arithmetic, Bible Knowledge and Catechism. (p. 88).

Generally speaking, education (both formal and informal) is perceived as a process of socialization, whose primary objective is to lead people away from ignorance and into capabilities to cope with changing environment. In this regard, Nwafor (2012) observes that:

Education as information and formation for the purpose of intellectual, mental and moral growth is one of the things that distinguish man from other mammals and the most precious gift an individual can acquire. It is the art of informing, forming and strengthening of powers of the body and mind – human faculties; thereby transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth. (p. 160).

Missionary education was actually the framework upon which communication was to be modeled. Being mindful of this, the Anglican missionaries necessarily, needed interpreters and catechists who could learn and understand their languages and be able to interpret their Christian gospel or ideological messages for the unlettered masses. In fact, referring to the need for education in relation to the roles of these catechists, Obi (1985) says that:

Their importance will the more be appreciated when we consider that they alone had sufficient knowledge of the English language to understand the missionaries

and were well at home in the local dialect to act as interpreters between the missionaries and the local people. It is doubtful whether the team of missionaries working with Shanahan at this period under study, knew as much of the local languages as their predecessors. (p. 122).

Therefore, the main essence of education from missionary perspective was to enhance communication, so as to ensure that the natives understood their message. To achieve this goal, Kalu (2003) observed that the missionaries:

Thought it was best to use the vernacular. If the message came in the native language, comprehension would be faster and apprehension which should catalyze conversion will follow ineluctably and untrammelled. In front of this model stood the problem of translation. The subject-matter or the message was of course, the gospel. (p. 244).

For instance, apart from the effort of the Anglican missionaries, Bishop Joseph Shanahan was said to have consistently averred that education is the major tool for evangelization, which according to Jordan (1949) “Led him to the resolution to provide many schools where children could learn the principles of the faith and later on pass them on to their parents” (p.69). Meek (1937) noted that in his 1905 report to Propaganda Fide, “Father Shanahan reminded Rome that the Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist and C. M. S. missionaries and the Government itself built and operated schools knowing that this was the most effective way to away with slavery” (p. 204).

In fact, nearly every mission station, in all cases carried the seed of a school as a tool for their mission expansion. For instance, among the Methodists, the first of such schools in Igboland is the Central School Bende, which sprang up in 1910 with the establishment of the mission. Specifically, on January, 1930, F. W. Dodds (cited in Anyika and Ekebuisi, 2010) said that;

Our object is in general terms, the spread of specifically Christian education for the Africans as an African. Stated more generally, it is an attempt to provide education not merely as an independent good, or as a means to material ends, but also in definite relation to his spiritual foundations of life as exhibited in the teachings of Jesus Christ, and at the same time to relate the instruction to African life so that the product may be as truly African as the native material provided. (p. 202).

On this note, it is unarguable that education as handed down by the Anglican missionaries not only initiated, but also has greatly impacted upon the formation and development of Igbo literacy. Although there existed some form of structured informal education in Igboland before the advent of Christianity, the ability to read and write would be primarily attributed to the contributions of the early Anglican missionaries towards the advancement of the dignity and enlightenment of the Igbo people.

The general effect of the Anglican missionary education upon the Igbo people and their culture is obvious. It is no doubt that the Anglican mission was committed to providing education that took into account African culture. Anyika and Ekebuisi (2010) argued that “apart from religion, the mother tongue was conceived as absolutely necessary for any educational activity geared towards character and spiritual development” (p.203). Simply stated, the Anglican missionary regarded the schools as the gateway to the church.

Truly speaking, most index analysis of any national development is usually based on the level of the education of such people. For instance, in Igboland, the painting of the people as receptive, aggressive, and competitive is often based on the great ardour with which they sought after western education; knowing that it would uplift their civility and offer them opportunities of development beyond the scope of their immediate circumstances. Describing the penchant for missionary education among the various Nigerian ethnic groups of the late nineteenth century,

Ayandele (1966) aptly observes that “it was in Iboland that insatiable desire for education rose to fever pitch” (p. 290).

Nevertheless, western or missionary education has often been linked with attack on the original worldview of the people, mostly because of its suppressive impact on the cultural and institutional structures, particularly of the Igbo people. Hence, Ayandele (1966) noted that “missionaries could not escape being singled out for attack by educated Africans. For African culture was essentially a religious culture. Its customs and behaviour were geared to religious concepts almost completely” (p. 242).

Against this backdrop, it is observed that despite the effort to develop the literary form of the native languages, the missionaries, much as the colonialists still upheld English language as an important medium of communication, to be employed in the upper classes. Kalu (2003) therefore observed that, “more importantly, western or missionary education (used interchangeably) constituted an attack on primal worldviews, the milieu in which educational ideology operates” (p. 243). Agreeing with this position, Nwene-Osu (1973) decried that, “Africans are of a race whose culture, wealth, and personality have been taken away. They were all alienated in America, in Nigeria, in Ghana, in Haiti, in Jamaica and other places” (p.3).

Without necessarily undermining the Anglican missionary effort, it has however been alleged by African historians that, commendable as its impact may be, missionary education did not present any substantial plan for the higher education and holistic development of the Africans. For instance, Ayandele (1966) noted that:

From the mission viewpoint, higher education was not conducive to the spread of Christianity in Nigeria. This was because, in the circumstances of a pacified Nigeria, many of the mission agents found one excuse or the other to resign their appointment in mission work in order to take employment in Government services or in commercial establishment. In Bishop Crowther’s experience, most

of the agents who had grammar school education ultimately went over to the Royal Niger Company or became traders on their own account. In 1900 the CMS Training Institution at Asaba, which had been established as a nursery of the Niger Mission in 1895, had been closed down because most of the trainees left the mission for secular appointments. (p. 288).

### **3.4.2 Health**

One major challenge that put Anglican missionary activities in Igboland to danger was the high rate of death casualties among the missionaries and the grave lack of medical facilities. Malaria was the greatest killer, especially of the white missionaries, and there was yet no discovered medicine for its cure. For instance, in the case of the failed 1841 expedition, Kalu (2003) noted that “Malaria had within two months killed 42 of the 120 members of the expedition” (p.81). Apart from the Anglicans, it was a general malady for all missionary groups in Igboland. Obi (1985) cites the painful lamentation of the trials that befell the Lower Niger Mission by Shanahan of the Catholic Society for African Mission, and says:

Death had struck and carried off Fathers Lejeune and Bubendorf. Five other missionaries very seriously ill had been sent back to Europe . . . the victim of acute jaundice or hepatitis. . . To forestall the death casualties, he indicated that the health and general wellbeing of missionaries should be safeguarded by providing well ventilated and health promoting bungalows in the hinterland. (p. 121).

This ugly experience could only see a light of relief with the discovery of quinine as an antidote for malaria. Meanwhile, Christian medical or health services began early, especially with the coming of the Roman Catholics. To expatiate on this, Akukwe (1985) noted that “By July 1890, the care for the sick in Onitsha was far exceeding the use of a corner in the mission house” (p. 237). Ozigbo (1982) however specifically mentions that “on 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1890 the



Rev. Father Joseph Lutz of the Holy Ghost Congregation of the Roman Catholic Mission opened a dispensary at Onitsha” (p. 88).

Nevertheless, to evaluate the specific Anglican impact in this regard in Igboland, the CMS missionaries then led by the Rev. H. H. Dobinson (though not a trained medical personnel) also opened another dispensary at Onitsha in 1893. Anyika and Ekebuisi (2010) cited a letter written by Dobinson in this regard:

I have a good many patients coming to me – everyday – to have their sores bound up. They have terrible ulcers. I see them between 7a.m and 10a.m and refuse to see them any later: quite professional eh! They are very grateful for attention. I give not tremendous doses of Espon Salts, - doses – which would almost slay a white man. But our friends at Onitsha come up the next day and ask for more. (p. 226).

While this research is poised towards evaluating missionary expansion in Igboland through the instrumentality of the language of the people as particularly developed in Bible translation, medical and health services provided ample space for closer interaction and integration with, not just the spiritual and moral up-lift of the people but also their physical and emotional well-being. This is why even the Methodists established their first “hospital” at Ama-Achara near Umuahia on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1921, while according to Kalu (2003) “As far back as 1890, the missionaries of the United Presbyterians College in Scotland undertook to finance a medical station at Unwana. Peter Rattray labored there till 1906 when it was closed partially . . . because of low patronage and poor staffing” (p. 237).

It is however expedient to note that Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland necessarily needed to give attention to the health needs of the people, which led to further establishments of such facilities as hospitals, leprosaria, in various parts of Igboland like Iyi-enu, Oji-River and others. Nevertheless, the effective expansion of their mission and all its fortunes

would have been grossly impaired if communication was not established through the use of the native languages of the people. The subsequent translation of the Bible into Igbo language was then a development that greatly enhanced, not only the preaching of the message of the Christian gospel, but the acceptance and integration of the Anglican missionaries into the cultural exigencies of the Igbo people.

### **3.4.3 Urbanization**

It would be recalled that at its entrant into Igboland, like in other places, Christianity flocked together as birds of the same feather with Commerce and Colonialism. Thus, Anglican missionary expansion necessarily followed the routes of the colonial administration and commerce. The desire to establish legitimate trade on produce in place of slave trading, the discovery of coal and the building of railroads among other factors facilitated the drive to reach into the unexplored interiors of Igboland. This consequently created room for the conglomeration of people from different ethnic and language groups. The colonialists who created district centers and divisional headquarters to ease administration would often provided the back upon which the missionaries rode by granting them military protection.

In this regard, Afigbo (1981) notes that “the attempt to supply the economic needs of the population at the divisional capital led to the coming and going between villages around and the headquarters. In time adventurous spirits from the neighbouring villages and beyond came to settle there more or less permanently to meet these needs on a regular basis” (p. 344). It is this coming together of people of different interests in a common environment like Port Harcourt, Aba, Umuahia, Owerri, Onitsha, Enugu, etc, that eventually snowballed into urbanization, with the consequent need for effective means of communication. This migration of population increased with the construction of railway between 1913 and 1915, which brought in some non-Igbo elements who were needed to work the trains and to do other services. Language therefore assumed a common denominator for the effective transaction of each person’s concerns.

The opening of Coal mining in Enugu is a case in point. It attracted several people from all over Igbo land and beyond, most of who came to work as miners. It was in these different ways that urbanization came into Igboland. It is true that the colonialists as well as the Anglican missionaries employed the services of interpreters to enhance understanding in such places; it is evident that the cultural specifics of the dominant population, especially the indigenous languages of the people are inextricably needful for effective communication. On this, Nwadiolor (2014) maintains that:

Since culture is relative, some of these culture criteria may derive from a dominant culture within the nation, and could become the springboard for domestic colonialism. Language alone cannot create any government exclusively. Besides, with the introduction of western education by the missions, and the consequent urbanization, English came to be the *lingua franca* of groups, which gave them a sense of common identity (pp. 30-31).

The argument that the translation of the Bible into Igbo language provided the ground for deep-rooting the Christian faith in Igbo land and developing the literacy of the language is therefore well stated as it contends that Anglican missionary expansion would have been a farce if its message was not reduced to the simplest form of expression for the natives. Nevertheless, contemporary evidences reveal that in spite of the missionary effort to take advantage of the Igbo language, there is obvious decline of the use of the language for religious expression in most urban centers of Igboland. This might well explain why Ayandele (1966) views that “it was the logical outcome of missionary teaching that they should expect that by acquiring the language, manners clothing and education of the Europeans they would be one with white men at social gatherings, while in both Church and Civil Service” (p. 247). On the contrary, Afigbo (1981) argues that:

It is a gross exaggeration to say that Igbo society and culture have disintegrated or collapsed under colonial rule, for to a greater extent than has so far been recognized, the Igbo have sought to use institutions and techniques acquired through the link with the outside world established by colonial rule to maintain those values and styles of life intrinsic to their separate identity. (p. 284).

In any case, while there may be no measurable standard to disagree with this opinion, it can be said to a reasonable extent that though urbanization enhanced the economy and the confluence of cultural diversities, it reduced the Igbo identity to some extents. Thus, Ayandele (1966) decried that, “His European master and teacher has so stripped him of his own skin, so robbed him of his own soul and language, so daubed him over with spots and stripes of his own veneer, so tall-hatted and be-frocked him that he has turned him into an unrecognizable human being” (p. 249). This has often been referred to as the identity crisis in Igbo cosmology.

### **3.4.4 Nationalistic Consciousness and Evolution of Igbo Ethiopianism**

Despite the seeming overwhelming influence of western missionary activities upon Igbo cultural identity, there is also glowing evidence that the same missionary activities in Igboland constitute a decisive factor for the emergence of nationalistic consciousness of the people. Evidently, at a certain point in time, the gospel message of the equality of human dignity as preached and taught by the missionaries began to raise the awareness that no race, colour, or language was ‘more equal’ than the other, which led to the struggle for the rediscovery of the common identity of the Igbo people. According to Nwadiolor (2014), “Nationalism anywhere in the world and under whatever manner or shape it operates is the awareness that oppression, exploitation of the less privileged nations by the powerful ones are manmade, sinful and therefore contradicts what justice and even the gospel stands for” (p. x). In this way, the missionaries through the institution of the church provided a forum in which the Igbo people

could give free and unfettered expression to their own personality. This consciousness may therefore be well regarded as a child of historical necessity.

Obviously, this consciousness is resultant to looking inwards and asking searching questions with regard to Igbo cultural heritage, especially their language and their history in relation to the expansion of missions among their people. One of such questions could be, 'Has the translation of the Bible into Igbo language made any substantial contribution to missionary expansion in Igboland or the general well-being of the people'? The demands to the re-awakening of the Igbo language and culture may therefore, be well attributed to the development of Igbo literacy by the missionaries. The fact that Henry Venn insisted on, and instructed J. C. Taylor to understudy the people among whom he was to work, their culture and their language underscores the conviction that missionary contribution to the identity consciousness of the Igbo cannot be under-estimated.

The disturbing issue however, is the evident decline of the use of Igbo language in many contemporary religious and social circles. Adiele (1975) recaptures this alarming proportion of apathy about Igbo language when he cautioned that, "A race whose language cannot be used for literary and serious purpose has no identity; the race is decadent. The most conclusive conquest of a people is the conquest through language" (p. xii). Idowu (1973) further decried this as he painfully observed that:

It was in this way that Christianity arrived in Nigeria dressed up in European garb. It was immediately associated with civilization in the sense of being well dressed in European fashion, dexterity in European etiquette and manners, and proficiency (or dabbling) in the use of English language with a corresponding disdain for their own culture, a disdain which crystallized into inability to use their own language properly. (p. 5).

Against this backdrop, Afigbo (1975) observed that:

The schools were introduced not as a means of perfecting the process by which Igbo language and culture were transmitted from generation to generation, but as the most effective means of attracting our people out of what was considered their barbarous culture into the supposedly exciting new world of Christianity as interpreted by Western civilization. (p. 77).

In this way, Igbo language was relegated and English language became a status symbol and a gateway to respectable and lucrative appointments in government and business organizations. Thus, today, we find that in spite of the political independence of Nigeria, the way things are done in Europe and America still form the norm and standard by which the most of the life of the Church in Igboland is ordered. In a recent submission, Okwajie (2017) though admitted that English language was the second language, yet she graphically eulogized it thus; “of all the heritage inherited from our colonial masters, English Language remains the best legacy to be remembered and celebrated” (p. 24).

Nevertheless, the truth is that missionary education ironically and pre-eminently equipped and prepared the early-educated people for nationalistic consciousness. Ayandele (1966) observed that “Unrestricted access to the Bible, with its notions of equality, justice and non-racialism, provided the early converts with a valid weapon which they were not reluctant to employ against the missionaries (p.176), in order to express their nationalism and to redefine their own identity. In this context, Ethiopianism having been derived from Psalm 68:31, ‘Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands to God’ portends enormous implications for the renaissance of black identity consciousness, particularly the repositioning of Igbo language in Christian religious circles.

This is why, Nmah (2010) describes Ethiopianism as “a missionary factor which denotes a struggle between those who recognize the claim to equal participation in socio-cultural and

political rights with others and those who for themselves and their order assert a certain superiority of race, and claim for it as a consequence of causes, however accidental, exclusive and special privileges” (pp.482-493). In this regard, Kalu (2008) reiterates that:

The Ethiopianism movement should be reimagined as an early expression of the interior African spirituality. It operates within the church to promote Christianity, but of a different kind: one that was sensitive to the African environment and dignity of people. Its concern was the modus in which the faith was communicated. (pp. 32-33).

Since Ethiopianism was biblically rooted on ancient prophetic promise, the time is now, when Africans, with their language and culture would have unrestrained expression in the scheme of God’s kingdom. However, while this research does not envisage secession as found in the early Ethiopian ideologies as in South and Central African settings, Igbo Ethiopianism is a drive to attain true selfhood, to prove a sense of worth and ability. It is to re-evaluate and redefine the stigma of colonialism or European trademark, which the Anglican Church in Igboland has damagingly continued to bear, especially with regard to the language of the people, in spite of the effort of the Bible translation.

### **3.5 Impacts of Western Encounter on Igbo Language**

Aside from the significant civilization impacted on the general worldview of Igboland through western education, the translation of the Bible into Igbo language stands out, as one of the major Anglican missionary contributions to the Igbo consciousness and identity. On the contrary, the attitude of the colonial government and some missionaries towards the cultures of the people especially their language, however tended to represent a ‘bullying into acquiescence’. In this regard, Ejiofor (1984) laments that:

There are thousands of primary schools; hundreds of secondary schools, and a reasonable number of tertiary schools in Igboland. More will be built. The literacy

rate in English is therefore impressive by any standard. Unfortunately, the situation is not that rosy regarding the Igbo language. Up to 60-70% of such educated Igbomen cannot read or write Igbo. Most of our educated people converse with fellow Igbos in English right in their very palours and kitchens. We can also add that about 90% of all welcome addresses presented in Igboland by Igbo host to Igbo dignitaries – civil and religious- are written and read in English. Igboland is English through and through in terms of the means of communication. Where English has gained, Igbo has lost. The net effect is that the Igbo language is gradually but very perceptibly getting obsolete. (pp. 98-99).

In truth, the encounter of Igbo socio-cultural milieu with the western colonial mentalities produced an ambivalent dimension to the reinterpretation of, not only the Igbo response to western cultural influence, but also the missionary message as presented by the Christian Church in Igboland. It also posed a major challenge of identity crisis, particularly on the language of the people, which the section of this research is set to espouse.

### **3.5.1 Effects of Western Cultural Influence on Igbo Language**

There is no doubt that the white man deliberately sponsored the study and use of English more than the indigenous languages. Ejiofor (1984) argues that “to do otherwise would be unnatural. Making English the official language fitted into the grand design of up-setting colonial value system in favour of imperial values and priorities.” (p. 101). To reiterate this opinion, Kalu (2003) says that “the complexity of the relationship was demonstrated over cultural policy, education and ethics” (p. 20). In fact, Umeh (2015) decries that:

The tragedy of the situation today in Igboland is that the colonial and post-colonial education/propaganda not only demonized Igbo ancestors and their knowledge; wisdom, institution, culture and contributions, and mis-educated Igbo



people who schooled in them away from their fathers and mothers; but also at the same time virtually confined to studying for certificates, diplomas, and degrees for the purposes of getting civil service and other paid jobs, without bringing them to the pursuit of knowledge and truth *per se*. (p. 116).

For instance, in 1882, during the tenure of Metcalfe Sunter as the first Inspector of Schools, the British Government enacted her first educational ordinance in her West African colonies, with an aim to control and direct the educational activities of the Christian missionaries. The ordinance specified among other conditions for grants-in-aids for schools, that, “the subjects of teaching shall be reading and writing of English Language”. In effect, this means that the teaching of Igbo and other indigenous languages would not qualify any voluntary agency for the grant-in-aids (Nwadike: 2012, 74). Although protest was raised, to no avail, against this ordinance by the Anglican and Wesleyan missions who demonstrated support for mother-tongue education, Nwadike (2012) observes that “this British attitude towards indigenous mother tongues was inimical to sound pedagogical principles, for depriving a people the right education in their own languages was like cutting a tree from its roots” (p. 76).

A similar case in point is the Government Education policy earlier referred to as introduced in September 1903 by Sir Ralph Moor, which insisted that English must be the only medium of instruction. This policy was apparently meant to reduce the significance of the language of the people for social transactions. Of course, among the common maxims of the colonialists then was, ‘if you want to rule over a people, overcome their mentalities by subduing their languages’. Afigbo (1981) observes that “from what we know of the history of many languages, political control is probably the most effective agency for standardizing a language or leveling its various dialects into one ‘national speech’” (p. 357). Perhaps, this is why, Adiele (1975) had earlier said that, “the most conclusive conquest of a people is the conquest through language” (p. xii).

Hence, after the exit of Taylor from the Anglican (CMS) Niger mission, the experience of Solomon Perry would properly demonstrate the crisis of confidence, which the Igbo language suffered in the CMS missionary enterprise. It was not uncommon to observe the struggle between Christianity and culture, which naturally affected the speed of missionary expansion in Igboland. With regard to this, Kalu (2003) notes that Perry:

Soon ran into a problem over language policy. The Society had decided to teach in vernacular for more effective communication. Now, we may extol them for the preservation of Igbo language and culture. But in those days, it was a costly risk. People preferred English. Perry conceded, arguing that the mixture of races in Onitsha made the use of English necessary in schools. (p. 88).

Therefore, by 1870, Perry was said to have reorganized the school and introduced what he regarded as a thorough English education, insisting on the need for a boarding school in every station. This idea of boarding school may not be remotely different from the objectives with which the Roman Catholic mission later introduced the Christian Villages, especially in Igboland. According to Forristal (1990), “The establishment of Christian Villages was a system adopted by French missionaries which were intended to be settlements where new converts could live a full Christian life without interference from their pagan neighbours” (p. 46). This has been criticized, as it tends to uproot the adherent from the cultural realities of his people. In view of this, Ezeanyino (2012) observes that “it did not appeal to the Igbos who were a closely-knit, industrious, enterprising and intellectually curious people; hence the turning to the strategy of schools” (p. 38).

The exaggerated emphasis on the use of English language in Igbo societies is counter-culture productive, resulting in the unpretentious and erroneous treatment of the Igbo language as a second-class or even an inferior language by uninformed people, including some religious practitioners. Idowu (1973) therefore observes that:

The shortcoming that are now manifest due to the fact that the foreign preachers were very limited both in their methods and means of communication, while the Nigerian preachers . . . have not yet developed their own original concept of preaching. We find that to a large extent, the Nigerian preachers are under the erroneous notion that stilted language, which is adequately adorned with flowery phraseology and spiced with fanciful terminology constitutes the preaching of the Gospel. It is not uncommon therefore to hear a Nigerian preacher trying to show off his cleverness by introducing Latin tags or English phrases and jargon into his sermon, even where he preaches in vernacular to a village congregation whose only language is Yoruba, Igbo or Nupe. (pp. 17-18).

Although, Nigeria is a multi-lingual society, which requires that a common language of expression would be needed for inter-ethnic communications and transactions; that does not however inspire superiority to the European or any other foreign language to the native languages. Unfortunately, the faulty of perception, which many indigenous religious practitioners, especially in Igboland exhibit tend to reveal a morbid kind of exaggerated admiration for everything foreign and European, almost to the disdain, born of a deep-seated inferiority complex for the things of his own race.

The remote factors responsible for this attitude towards Igbo language may not be far-fetched. Firstly, the colonial mentalities that engendered the perceived civilization of the Igboland and the rest of the African societies endeavoured to create a superiority complex of themselves; and an inferiority complex of their subjects. In this regard, Nwene-Osuh (1973) observes that:

Colonialism like any evil system created contradictions . . . The colonial rulers wanted some Africans to be their collaborators on the one hand, and be the

spokesmen for the natives, on the other hand. Some Africans were educated in the colonial tradition. They considered themselves a cut above others. (p. 8).

Any pattern of civilization that colonialism and western influence has wrought in terms of its overall relationship with the identity of the Igbo people, particularly their language needs to be re-examined. Thus, in relation to Igbo language and culture, Adiele (1975) notes that:

A civilization will always re-examine itself, eliminate what is bad in itself, and embellish what is good. This process goes on endlessly in all aspects of any living civilization; if a civilization rests from this constant self-examination and self-improvement, it stops growing. It rots, or it decays. (p. xi).

The second factor, which affects the Igbo language, is like the first. It is closely tied to the question of identity crisis and reconstruction in Igboland. Within the Igbo socio-cultural setting, common culture and similar language dictated that they were of one group as defined by outsiders, but most of the times they identify themselves by their own clan names. This identification complexity may perhaps, be traced to the dialectical differences and varieties of cultural practices among the Igbo communities.

It is likely that the early missionaries and colonial government did not immediately understand the cosmological homogeneity of these diverse Igbo cultures, and so treated the common Igbo heritage with segregated perceptions. This has adversely affected the proclivity of this language among others of its neighbours. However, Ejiofor (1984) observes that “the fact that Hausa, Yoruba, and Edo thrived under the same colonial masters makes the onus of proving imperial subjugation of Igbo language rest squarely on the Igbos” (p. 101). Truly, there exist myriads of dialectical differences, but, Nwaezeigwe (2012) says that “the fact remains that the term ‘Igbo’ has come to depict a people with similar language, common culture, detectable behavioural traits and instincts” (p. 139).

There is a growing apprehension nonetheless, that if nothing is done to reconstruct this apparent loss of identity especially with reference to Igbo language, the culture and value system of the Igbo people would be consumed to the point of extinction by the invading western imperialistic influence. It is doubtless that the missionary effort to communicate the Gospel through the language of the people and the resultant translation of the Bible into the native languages such as the Igbo, was meant to achieve an identity definition of the people in missionary expansion. The habit of some contemporary mission practitioners who still do not make substantial use of the cultural resources for missionary expansion is unnecessary. Idowu (1973) reiterates that:

The time has come when the Nigerian preacher should boldly and legitimately draw upon the wisdom of ages which God has inspired through the indigenous sages of his own nation. In the oral traditions-the folklore, the proverbs and adages, ancient sayings, songs, and the bodies of recitals in which the philosophy of the nation is enshrined - there is invaluable wealth of material. The early Christian writers acted wisely when they communicated the Gospel and explained its truth in concepts which their hearers and readers would readily understand. (p. 20).

Given the efficacious trend of language for effective communication, there is therefore the urgent need to re-appraise the place of Igbo language, particularly for Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland in the face of the challenges of western influence and modernity. It is a truism that apart from the fact that language is a major trait of a peoples' identity; their feelings, thoughts, customs and cultural values are naturally expressed, and spread by the means of their language. Thus, a conscious and deliberate rediscovery of the cultural realities of the people, particularly their language must necessarily provide a benchmark for realizing and sustaining an effective Anglican missionary expansion, especially in the contemporary Igbo society.

### **3.5.2 The Encounter and Effect of Pentecostalism on Igbo Language**

Apart from the missionary spread already achieved by the Anglicans in Igboland through Bible translation and other factors, the emergence of Pentecostalism had its own effect on the socio-cultural identity of the people, particularly their language. It would be recalled that by 1901 when Pentecostalism emerged from the Holiness movements in the far away United State of America following the Azusa street revival experience, the Anglicans and other mission groups have gained footholds in Igboland with their missionary accomplishments in areas such as western education, health care services, among others. This Pentecostal experience which is manifested mainly in the acclaimed baptism in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, and the consequent emphasis on regeneration through a personal encounter with Jesus Christ as saviour and healer, with the potential for converts to be “born again” as Christians and be empowered for ministry, began to spread in Igboland like wildfire.

Ukah (2007) notes that “the hallmarks of these manifestations are faith healing, prophesy, exorcism, speaking in tongues, spontaneous prayer, exuberant liturgical expression, stress on dreams and visions (pp. 1-18). To further expatiate the core belief systems of the Pentecostals, Kalu (1998) observes that:

Pentecostals emphasis the power of the Holy Spirit to enthuse life, the immediacy of Jesus Christ as a living presence, the authority of the Bible as written, relying on the immanence of the supernatural and on the traditional understandings of the inspiration of the bible (pp.1-24).

Meanwhile, Hollenweger (cited in Nmah, 2013) considers Pentecostal as a Christian movement with:

Spirituality on oral liturgy, narrative theology, and witness, the maximum participation of the whole community in worship and service, the inclusion of

visions and dreams into public worship and understanding the relationship between body and mind manifested by healing through prayer (pp. 5-6).

In Nigeria, for instance, the Pentecostals found early expression among the emergent charismatic groups of African Initiated Churches (AIC) such as the *Aladura*, like the Cherubim and Seraphim founded in 1925. Nevertheless, Kalu (2008) observed that “Nigerian Pentecostalism emerged in the 1970s as University-educated, Charismatic youths began creating their own spaces for worship . . . bringing with them a religious tradition whose face has changed drastically in every decade and whose full import is still in the making” (p. 88).

Its emphasis on prosperity message and a new world of hope and fulfillment presented an unimagined attraction, conversion and followership almost to chagrin of the mission churches. According to Kalu (2008), “By 1980s, the fascination with media technology and the hypnotic allure of prosperity gospel quietly reshaped the Pentecostal attitude toward status, elitism and the big man syndrome” (p. 113). In any case, since this is not a full-scale Pentecostal historiography, it is to be acknowledged that the rise and entrance of Pentecostalism into Igboland exerted a whole new sense of redefinition on the general cultural landscape of the people, including their language.

On this note, Berger (cited by Kalu, 2008) observes that:

Language is crucial for cultural diffusion. The principal vehicle of Hellenism was kione, rather than vulgar Greek in which, not incidentally, the New Testament was written. Today, the English language in its American rather than British form is the koine of the emerging global Pentecostal culture . . . People do not use language innocently. Every language carries with it a cultural freight of cognitive, normative, and emotional connotation. So does the American language, even

apart from the beliefs and values propagated through American mass communication media (p.11).

Following this understanding, a reflection on the interface of Pentecostalism and Igbo culture would present a vivid picture of not just an integration, but intrusion and redefinition of the people's cultural identity. Evidently, Kalu (2008) argues that "people express new relationships in various ways that reflect on their indigenous cosmologies . . . they reconfigure certain aspects of what they teach, believe, and practice, and translate the charismatic affirmations and expressions into the language that people understand and in ways that serve the people's need (p. 17).

In any case, it might be assumed, and perhaps rightly that because of its roots, most Pentecostal messages are communicated primarily, not in the vernacular of its cultural contexts, but are vivaciously garbed in American accents and perhaps interpreted in some cases. The evidences of this are rife. Although Achunike (2004) fails to elaborate on the medium of their communication, he observes that Pentecostals enthrone preaching with oratorical skills, which he described as "their eloquent and resounding sermons that are tape recorded, advertised and marketed" (p. 6). On the other hand, he notes that "they demonize the African past which should not be. Inculturation must of necessity be encouraged." (p. 110). Granted that Pentecostalism has exerted several positive influences on the religious scene of Igboland, their little or no emphasis on the development of the people' native tongue in religious expression may indeed reflect a marginal response to the challenges from indigenous cultures and ecosystems.

Generally, Igboland is a prototype for examining the relationship between Christianity and indigenous cultures, especially its consequent effect on the expansionist activities of the Anglican Church. Obviously, an interface between the native language and missionary enterprise took a broad pattern, which was manifested in the Bible translation efforts to ensure the expansion of Christian presence among the people. However, Kalu (2003) observes that as



“efforts were made to consolidate and to domesticate Christian values. Government control over missionary activities tightened. Indigenous reaction assumed more menacing forms as the gods of the land became embattled. A new generation of educated elite emerged as the bastion of Christianity”. (p. 94).

It is no doubt that Pentecostalism brought its own evolutionary impression and impacts on the general worldview of the Igbo people. The enlightenment and liberation of the human soul often associated with their evangelistic campaigns and teachings may necessarily have proved veritable tool for the Christian religious consciousness of the Igbo. Nevertheless, what remains to be examined, is the alienation of the Igbo person, especially his language in the gamut of many Christian religious expressions, even within the Igbo socio-cultural milieu.

### **3.5.3 The Alienation of the Igbo Person**

Ejiofor (1984) retorts, “The Igbo Language: Is it a tongue without a mouth? Surely it looks like a dying Language of a Living people.” (p. 98). These were the despondent words of lamentation by a desperate heart for the posterity of the Igbo language. There is no doubt colonial and missionary intervention into the Igbo cosmology brought its own goods to the people, but the deliberate processes of Europeanization of the people attendant to it, is observed to have done much havoc to African cultural heritage, especially the indigenous languages of the people, particularly the Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria. In fact, Nwene-Osu (1973) observed that “Africans are of a race whose culture, wealth, and personality have been taken away. They were all alienated in America, in Nigeria, in Ghana, in Haiti, in Jamaica and other places” (p.3).

Hence, to speak of the alienation of the Igbo person is to imagine the loneness of the Igbo identity, especially their language in the comity of cultural synthesis. It is true that there is some degree of similarity in cultures of the different ethnic groups, since they are products of man’s relationship with his environment; yet, it is often observed that there is a general tendency for ethnic groups, which can best hold their own culture to gradually supersede the less fit ones. In

order words, the “superior” cultures tend to absorb the “inferior” cultures. On this notes, Ejiofor (1984) laments that “the Igbo language is fast being displaced not just by the international juggernaut - English - but by some more vigorously patronized Nigerian languages because the Igbo language is weakly patronized by an indigenous language – shy people” (p. 61).

In a contradistinctive evaluation of the two major languages spoken within the Igbo socio-cultural milieu, Ezeakunne (1977) nevertheless noted that:

In the East-Central State, bilingualism (Igbo-English) is here with us. Both English and Igbo are important. Igbo is a language . . . localized, but it is a symbol of the social and cultural identity of its native speakers. . . We also need the English, which is useful equipment for anyone who hopes to gain access to the secret of modern science and technology. We need English not for its own sake or for the sake of its native speakers who were once our colonial masters but for the sake of our being heard and understood by others and for our being able to understand millions and millions of others all over the world who use it as an international medium of communication. (p. 26).

However, the point of this enquiry is not that the Igbo language cannot or should not cohabit with another language, but the challenge of the assimilation of the Igbo language, and the identity of the Igbo person, even within its own cultural environment. For instance, Ejiofor (1984) is worried that “in 90% of the homes of Igbos married to expatriate wives, English is literally the mother tongue of the children. About 60-70% of such wives cannot converse in Igbo even after living in Igboland for over ten years.” (p. 98). The fact remains that many Igbo persons tend to popularize the foreign language and habits over and above his own.

Meanwhile, it will be recalled that the earlier Christian missionaries had earlier made substantial contributions to the pioneering work of reducing the Igbo language to writing. Abraham (cited in Ejiofor, 1984) observed that:

One of the first works on the language was by the German, Schon, who wrote the *Isuma Ibo Primer* in 1852. This was followed *Polyglotta Africana* by Koelle, another German. The *Ibo Cookery Book* was written by Gladys Plummer in 1947 . . . The missionaries were on their part busy translating the Bible or portions of it, the Missal, the Prayer book, as well as Catechisms into Igbo language. (p. 101).

The paucity or perhaps lack of emphasis in certain quarters of Igbo cultural environment, particularly within some religious domain to continue and to extend the Igbo language is disappointing. Unfortunately, as observed by Ejiofor (1984), “in place of a vigorous sponsorship programme, the Igbo language was for decades subjected to campaigns of slander and defamatory myths by the very people who should have promoted it” (p. 101). To explicate further, it is evident that Igbo traders in the North learn Hausa because they have to in order to sell, and every other person speaks it. The same is applicable with those in Yorubaland. But the Hausa cattle trader in Igboland need not learn Igbo – his Igbo customers stutter Hausa to him in order to buy from him. Thus, one would agree with Nnaji (cited in Ejiofor, 1984) when he said, “I fear that in this part of the country (Igboland), we tend not to speak our mother tongue fluently. In short, one can say that WE ARE ALIENS IN OUR MOTHER’S DOORSTEP” (p. 118).

It is therefore, the socio-cultural import of Bible translation in Igbo Language as a form and pattern of consolidating the expansion of Anglican mission in Igboland and the development of Igbo language and literacy that remains to be evaluated. There is no doubt that coupled with its educational policies, Bible translation in Igboland spelt a particular and significant landmark in the general Igbo history. These considerations would form the focus of the subsequent chapter in which we shall be x-raying the historical perspectives of Bible translation, particularly in the Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **BIBLE TRANSLATION IN ANGLICAN MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE**

Over time, those who have been caught with the passion of missionary expansionism have often and necessarily been confronted with the need for Bible translation, especially into immediate native languages. This is because right understanding, interpretation and application of biblical texts, which is the main content of the message of the Christian faith, would be dangerously bereaved without correct translation. Consequently, the Anglican missionaries in Igboland were, therefore faced with this challenge. It would be recalled that persons like Jerome, Martin Luther, John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, Bishop Ajai Crowther, Rev. John Christopher Taylor, Archdeacon Thomas John Dennis and a host of other reformers and missionaries understood this and thus pursued the course of Bible translation as a necessity for evangelism and missionary expansion in their generation.

This is because, the understanding and interpretation of the content of the Bible for effective preaching is no less dependent on correct translation and availability of the translated Bible. This is what several earlier translation efforts, such as the Septuagint in about 280BC, (which was the Old Testament Greek translation from the Hebrew), and in fact the Bible Society of Nigeria, Catholic Biblical Apostolate of Nigeria, Nigerian Bible Translation Trust and other translation agencies had vigorously pursued. These efforts to translate the Bible from its original Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek roots, to enhance effective propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ by the Christian missions has not been without some nascent impediments and major challenges. This chapter would therefore necessarily evaluate the contributions and challenges of Bible translation into Igbo language to Anglican missionary expansion among the Igbo people.

#### **4.1 The Bible as Tool for Christian Missions**

From the start, the centrality of the Bible in the practice of all Christian missions cannot be under-estimated, and its importance as a veritable tool for catechesis and proselytization is

strongly obvious among the Anglican missionaries in Igboland. While it is to be said that the Bible contains the fundamental teachings of the beliefs, values and practices of the Christian faith, the Anglican missionaries view it as a major instrument of evangelization, teaching, and indoctrination. There is however, the understanding and challenge of communicating its message, which they believe is potently transformative and would bring purer morality and civility to the people. Evidently, there is that strong confidence among the Anglican missionaries that a higher standard of morality, purer form of religion, and substantial expansion of mission would be achieved among the natives if they were introduced to the knowledge of the Bible.

For instance, Thomas Fowell Buxton strongly advocated the policy of the “Bible and Plough” as the principal instrument to counter and forestall slave trading, and to engender civilization in Africa. This advocacy may not be unconnected with the conviction that the message of the gospel as contained in the Bible coupled with the provision of alternative and legitimate trading would advance victory over the dehumanizing trade in persons. According to Nwadiolor (2014), “The harsh fact of history, is that the principal, if not the only interest of Europe in tropical Africa for many centuries was trade in slaves carried on mainly by Christian peoples of Western Europe and Arabs” (p.33). They believed that the demand for labour, for the care of the cane and its harvesting for processing into sugar and rum could only be met by the Negro slaves.

Nevertheless, after several centuries of inhuman treatment and suffering inflicted on the Negro slaves, the conscience of the religious and humanitarian groups in Western Europe and America was roused against the iniquitous trade. In this regard, Okeke (2006) observes that:

Thomas Fowell Buxton believed that a new approach to the anti-slavery campaign must be sought. His scheme was devised to involve the British Government, the humanitarians, interested businessmen and the missionary societies in a

cooperative endeavour. The success of the venture, they anticipated, would mean a death-blow to the traffic in persons. (pp. 4-5).

On the strength of the above-espoused position by Buxton, and other persuasive arguments of persons like William Wilberforce, slave trading was eventually outlawed in 1807, by the British parliament. The Bible and its concepts therefore would become a major tool for re-orienting the mindset of the slave dealers, including many African coast chieftains who had become accustomed to the ready profit accruing from the sale of their own people, and to civilize the world of the Negroes. Of course, following the Biblical injunctions of the Great Commission, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19), Africa and its inhabitants were to be liberated and made Disciples of Christ and not slaves to undignified and inhuman treatment.

Thus, the argument becomes obvious that Christianity with its Bible message laid the foundation for European civilization, and that if any meaningful effort were to be fostered in African civilization, it has to be based upon the Christian teachings of the Bible. In fact, Fuller (2001) appreciated the fact that “the Bible was the primary transforming agent in the establishment of the gospel in Africa” (p.122). On this note, Nwadiolor (2014) observes that:

Generally speaking, the form and pattern that modern Nigeria was to take was embedded in the Bible . . . The nation was one that could compete with others in the comity of nations. It was to be based on European model; it was to have a Christian foundation, wield several ethnic groups together and rest on a solid industrial base. The tool for building of the nation-state would be Christianity, commerce and civilization. (p. 36).

On the contrary, Kalu (2008) notes that “in contemporary assessment of missions and their impact on non-western societies, certain emphases are economic and political in nature . . . There is the tendency to reject the religious motivation and Christian ideology” (p. 53). In fact,

Ayandele (1966) notes that “thoughtful educated Africans were becoming worried about the sort of Christianity that was being propagated in the country, and began to look into indigenous religion to remove their anxieties. The Christianity brought to them . . . was not that of the Bible, but that which Europeans had formulated for themselves” (p.261). Agreeing with this opinion, Idowu (1973) says that:

After the liberation of the slaves and their settlement in Freetown, they were placed under care of European guardians and tutors. Inevitably, they were educated by methods and along the lines known to their educators. They were introduced to Christianity and taught Christian truths; but Christianity as they learnt it was heavily tinged with Western culture. (p. 4).

Obviously, there seemed to be a wide gap between the African realities and the presentation of the gospel as contained in the Bible by the early missionaries. In fact, Fuller (cited in Maxey 2014) noted that “the early missionaries gave us the Bible, but they did not teach us about the power in the blood of Jesus” (p.43). In this regard, Maxey and Ozodo (2017) observe that:

The failure of a majority of the earliest missionaries to teach the Bible truths about the spirit world and the power of Jesus Christ over that world had created a major problem . . . the majority of discipleship programs did not deal with the converts’ fear of and bondage to demonic powers. (p. 127).

The above-mentioned western cultural influence notwithstanding, it is important to attest to the significance of the Bible for Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland, particularly as the Great Commission was obligatory for them. This Bible-based consciousness may not be unconnected with the move of the Holy Spirit, which ignited the 18<sup>th</sup> century revival in Europe. It can therefore be said that from the beginning, evangelical spirituality and manifest biblical

obligation were instrumental to the conviction that it was proper to introduce Christianity, which would eventually lead to civilization.

Fundamentally, the Anglican missionaries, as most other Protestants, hold to the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, which insists that what is written, and as contained in the Bible is the only infallible basis for faith and practice; without tradition or any other aid, for human salvation. For instance, Martin Luther (cited in Fosdick, 1952) is said to have insisted that, “unless then I shall be convinced by the testimony of the scripture, or by clearest reasoning, I must be bound by those scripture which have been brought forward . . . yes, my conscience have been taken captive by these words of God” (p.80). The fact is that the Anglicans believe that Bible is God-breathed and by it Christian believers are equipped for every good work (2Tim 3:16-17), and that it provides a basis and final authority for the practice of missions, especially for and among the so called be-nighted Africans. Based on this understanding, Ayandele (1966) observes that:

In the Niger Mission, Bishop Crowther discovered the best people for the spread of Christianity were . . . the unsophisticated folk who took the Bible seriously and treated it with deep, pious reverence. In the judgment of all the missions such men lived Christ more than they talked Him. If they needed any training at all, all they were given was periodic courses in Bible study. (pp. 286-287).

Undoubtedly, Anglican missionaries in Igboland viewed and used the Bible as a major tool for expanding the course of their missionary work. It formed the hub upon which the catechetical grills revolve; religious education is also centered on the teachings of the Bible. For instance, the Bible, being mostly regarded as divine, was central and indispensable to J. C. Taylor for effective missionary enterprise in Igboland. On this, Okeke (2006) notes that:

The Bible, for Taylor and early Igbo converts, was an encyclopedia. Discussions on its inspiration or composition ought not to be encouraged. One hears even



today, among the Igbo, during conversation not entirely religious in nature, such remarks as ‘*Akwukwo Nso kwulu* – The Holy Book says’ . . . the Bible therefore became substitute for the oracles, and the messenger of God who explained God’s word, eventually attracted a sort of aura to his role and status. (p. 58).

#### **4.2 Early efforts in Bible Translation and its impacts in Missionary history**

Apart from the very earlier translation efforts of the Septuagint in about 280BC, (which was the Greek translation of the Old Testament from the Hebrew), Jerome’s translation of the Bible from its original languages to Latin was reputedly the most profound. Before the translation of the Jerome's Vulgate, all Latin translations of the Old Testament were based on the Septuagint, not the Hebrew. However, it is said that Jerome was a renowned Greek scholar, who also knew some Hebrew when he started his translation project, but moved to Jerusalem to strengthen his grip on Jewish scripture commentary. He began in AD382 by correcting the existing Latin language version of the New Testament, commonly referred to as the *Vetus Latina*. By AD390, he turned to translating the Hebrew Bible from the original Hebrew, having previously translated portions from the Sepyuagint, which came from Alexandria. He believed that the mainstream Rabbincal Judaism had rejected the Septuagint as invalid Jewish scriptural texts because of what were ascertained as mistranslations along with its Hellenistic heretical elements. He completed this work by AD405. Jerome's decision to use a Hebrew text instead of the previous translated Septuagint went against the advice of most other Christians, including Augustine, who thought the Septuagint inspired. Modern scholarship, however, has sometimes cast doubts on the actual quality of Jerome's Hebrew knowledge.

The very essence of Jerome’s translation was not just to create a new historical sage of himself, but to bring into context the meaning and relevance of the Bible in the Latin-speaking cultural milieu. This was the only way by which the gospel message and the Christian culture could find fertile ground for rooting itself into the soil of the people. Undoubtedly, the Jerome’s

Vulgate translation has over the years, formed the foundation of subsequent translations especially among the Roman Catholics.

Africa was the nursery bed for the development of several Christian theologies and the homestead of many early Church fathers, yet there was no conscious effort to translate the Bible into the native languages of the people. For instance, the Berber tribe of Tagesthe in the present Morocco of North Africa, is known to be the native language of St. Augustine of Hippo. Islam has predominantly overrun the tribe, like many others in North Africa, probably, because no deliberate attempt was made to translate the Bible into the indigenous languages, or to inculturate the gospel using the native language of the people.

Instead, St. Augustine was said to have insisted on the authority of the Septuagint translation, which, according to him, would save the honour of the Hebrew original, which is to be preferred to all translations. Wace and Schaff (1890) who edited the Correspondences of Augustine and Jerome concerning the Latin translation of the Bible, cites Augustine as saying:

For while there were other interpreters who translated these sacred oracles out of the Hebrew tongue into Greek . . . yet, the Church has received this Septuagint translation just as if it were the only one; and it has been used by the Greek Christian people, most of whom are not aware that there is any other. From this translation there has also been made a translation in the Latin tongue, which the Latin churches use. Our times, however, have enjoyed the advantage of the presbyter Jerome, a man most learned, and skilled in all three languages, who translated these same Scriptures into the Latin speech, not from the Greek, but from the Hebrew. But although the Jews acknowledge this very learned labor of his to be faithful, while they contend that the Septuagint translators have erred in many places, still the churches of Christ judge that no one should be preferred to the authority of so many men, chosen for this very great work by Eleazar, who

was then high priest; for even if there had not appeared in them one spirit, without doubt divine, and the seventy learned men had, after the manner of men, compared together the words of their translation, that what pleased them all might stand, no single translator ought to be preferred to them. (p. 243).

Concerning the Latin version, Augustine says, 'Itala is preferable to all the others, as it keeps more closely to the words at the same time clearly rendering the thought'. Evidently, the Church lost its missionary ground in North Africa for quite a wide range of other reasons including lack of indigenization of the Christian faith in the culture area.

Apart from Jerome, John Wycliffe (1320-1384) was another figure standing tall in the early history of Bible translation efforts. It was to Wycliffe that the striking of the spark of reformation in England was attributed; being the most influential preacher of time. He repudiated the corruption of the Church, which he said was ruined by mammon. Shelley (1995) notes that “the decisive year of his career was 1378, the date of the Great schism in the papacy, with one pope in Rome excommunicating the other in Avignon” (p. 226). Though he was later anathemized by the church as a heretic, his most outstanding contribution to the history of English Christianity was his translation of the Bible couched in the archaic and style of his period. Wycliffe (cited in Fosdick 1952) said of his translation of the Scriptures: “This Bible is translated and shall make possible Government of the people, by the people, for the people” (p.7).

William Tyndale, an English scholar, was another person who left a landmark in Bible translation history. He had a burning desire to translate the Bible into English Language such that anyone could easily read the Bible. Being able to speak seven languages including Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English, and French; it was said that William Tyndale was the first make direct translation and printing of the English version of the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek. He wanted everybody as much as possible, including illiterates, to have adequate

knowledge of the Scriptures. He met bitter opposition. He was accused of willfully perverting the meaning of the Scriptures, and his New Testaments were to be burned as “untrue translations.” He was finally betrayed and publicly executed and burned at the stake in October 1536. On this note, Mordi and Ajiboye (2016) observe that:

His request to translate the New Testament into English was turned down and when he eventually did the translation, copies of the Bible were seized and destroyed until he was shamefully and publicly strangled death and his body burnt. He was killed at the age of 42. Interestingly, less than 100 years later after Tyndale’s death, King of England, James 1 endorsed and sponsored a new Bible translation (or revision) which is now known as the King James Bible. (pp. 3-4).

In any case, Tyndale’s work became the foundation of subsequent English versions, notably those of Coverdale 1535; Thomas Mathew 1537; the Great Bible 1539; the Geneva Bible 1560; the Bishops’ Bible 1568. In 1582 an English translation of the New Testament, made from the Latin Vulgate by Roman Catholic scholars, was also published at Rheims.

Another person whose contribution to the history of Bible translation cannot be undermined in antiquity was Martin Luther. He was not the first, but by far the greatest translator of the German Bible, and is as inseparably connected with it as Jerome is with the Latin Vulgate. Schaffer (1910) said that:

The richest fruit of Luther's leisure in the Wartburg, and the most important and useful work of his whole life, is the translation of the New Testament, by which he brought the teaching and example of Christ and the Apostles to the mind and heart of the Germans in life-like reproduction. It was a republication of the gospel. He made the Bible the people's book in church, school, and house. If he had done nothing else, he would be one of the greatest benefactors of the German-speaking race. (p. 163).

According to Shelley (1995), “Luther’s effort in translating the New Testament into German was an important first step toward reshaping public and private worship in Germany” (p.242). He also revised the Latin liturgy and translated it into German. Although it has often been said that Luther’s greatest contribution to history, was not political, but religious; Chadwick (1964) observes that “it is undeniable that his achievements ultimately transformed not only Christianity but all of Western civilization” (p. 126).

The early efforts of Bible translation are replete in history. Another translation effort standing as one of the major breakthroughs recorded in the European, and in fact worldwide Christianity was the translation, publication and authorization of the King James Version, otherwise known as the Authorized Version of the Bible, commissioned in 1604 and completed in 1611. This was just 85 years after the first translation of the Tyndale New Testament into English appeared in 1526. Nevertheless, it was in 1604, January to be precise, that King James 1 convened the Hampton Court Conference following the perceived problems of the earlier translations as detected by the Puritans, a new English version was conceived to be produced as a response. According to the Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia, the Authorised version, which was translated by forty-seven scholars, all of whom were members of the Church of England and had become effectively unchallenged as the English translation used in Anglican and English Protestant churches.

Presumably, this version of the Bible is the most widely printed book in history, with its flowing language and prose rhythm having a profound influence on the literature of the past four hundred years. Subsequent developmental history of Bible translation and its consequent impact on world evangelization and missionary expansion would however be incomplete if adequate reference were not made to the contributions of Africans and missionaries in Africa, particularly in Igboland.

#### 4.2.1 Samuel Ajai Crowther and the Making of the Yoruba Bible

The history of missionary expansion in the Western Equatorial Africa, especially in the Yorubaland, the Niger, the Delta and some Northern areas of the present Nigeria would be incomplete without adequate consideration of the contributions of Samuel Ajai Crowther. He was born around 1806 in Osoogun in Iseyin of the present Oyo State of Nigeria. Okafor-Omali (2012) recaptures that:

Ajai was kidnapped by slave traders in 1821, and was rescued in 1822 and taken to Freetown. He became a mission school boy in 1823 and was baptized in 1825. He became one the first set of students of Fourah Bay College when it was established in 1828 and was ordained into the Holy Orders in 1843, only twenty-one years after his liberation from slavery. It is also remarkable that it was exactly twenty-one years after this on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1864, that he was consecrated Bishop in the Anglican Church through the relentless and irrepressible efforts of the then CMS General Secretary, Henry Venn. (p. xiv).

Jesse, (1892) noted that Crowther began translating the Bible into the Yoruba language and compiling a Yoruba dictionary. In 1843, a grammar book which he started working on during the Niger expedition was published; and a Yoruba version of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer followed later. Crowther also compiled *A vocabulary of the Yoruba language*, including a large number of local proverbs, published in London in 1852. He also began codifying other languages. Following the British Niger Expeditions of 1854 and 1857, Crowther produced a primer for the Igbo language in 1857, another for the Nupe language in 1860, and a full grammar and vocabulary of Nupe in 1864.

It would be difficult to underestimate Ajai Crowther's roles in the course of missionary expansion in Africa especially in the area of cultural integration; he particularly in pioneered the translation of the gospel content and contributed to the development of the literary form of some

of the native languages, such as Yoruba, Nupe, and Igbo. In vocabulary and style, Crowther sought to get behind the colloquial speech by listening to elders and naturally relying on native speakers as informants and guides. Over the years, wherever he was, he noted words, proverbs, forms of speech. Okafor-Omali (2012) therefore summarizes that:

Through his efforts the Bible was translated into Yoruba. The Book of Common Prayers was also translated and the Yoruba Book of Hymns was compiled. He compiled a Yoruba Dictionary with the assistance of his friend J Schon. His whole ministry proved wrong the persistent campaign mounted by a one time colleague that as an African, he was incapable of leading the Church as a Bishop. (p. xv).

Expatriating further on the Crowther's effort of the Yoruba Bible translation, Mordi and Ajiboye (2016) note that:

By the year 1884, all the books of the Bible had been translated into Yoruba. That same year, the books of the Bible had been arranged and grouped into three parts and published separately as a group: I. Genesis to Ruth (1867), II. 1 Samuel to Song of Solomon, III. Isaiah to Malachi had earlier been published in 1865. It was in the year 1900 that the Old and New Testament were combined and printed together as one which was called *Bibeli Mimo*. (p. 71).

Okafor-Omali (2012) observed that Crowther undertook "the translation of the English Bible into Yoruba language which he completed in a record time" (p.8). Kayode Falade (2013) who examined the question, "*Where did Ajayi Crowther Translate the Bible into Yoruba*" states that "It is to the eternal credit of the race that it produced the translator of the Bible to their language, Bishop Ajayi Crowther and that it is on their land that the great work was done". While there are speculative arguments as to whether he did the translation at Badagry or Abeokuta, the emphasis of this research is not an inquiry into the location of the translation or a

tribute to ethnic pride and contribution to Bible translation; it is a critique of the impact of Bible translation on Anglican missionary expansion, especially in Igboland. Hence, Hair (cited by Tasie, 1996) says that:

while it must in fairness be mentioned that he produced the Igbo primer and an Igbo-English vocabulary, his Bible translation and therefore his major contributions (in terms of evangelistic tools) were all in Yoruba and it was thus possible for the Yoruba Mission to have vernacular Bible as early as 1884. (p. 81).

This effort made available the Bible, which is believed by Christians to be the Word of God for the enlightenment of those who has hitherto been described as “Barbaric”. Crowther’s ingenuity in the translation project and development of the literary Yoruba vocabulary, has not just affectively impacted upon the missionary and religious life of the Yoruba nation and beyond, but has also advanced the socio-political and economic life of the people. Evaluating the Crowther’s translation of the Yoruba Bible however, Idowu (1973) avers that:

From the archives of the British and Foreign Bible Society, we learn with reference to the Bible in Yoruba that the New Testament, which was the first part of the work to be tackled, was translated wholly from the English Authorized Version, and that the Old Testament (or at any rate part of it) was translated with constant reference to the Hebrew of the original. (p. 16).

In any case, Bishop Crowther was doubtlessly a great African missionary of the nineteenth century with an African heart for the African people. Hamilton (cited in Akamisoko, 2002) argues that:

His intellect and zeal in the field of African mission cannot be equaled by his colleagues. His contribution and achievement in the Yoruba mission of 1842 and Niger mission of 1857 is without question. Despite the conflict which led to the



gradual decline of the Niger mission of which Lokoja was a part, Crowther's adversaries noted the simplicity and sincerity of his faith. His willingness to spend and be spent for the cause of his country in the area of evangelism is not in doubt. (p. 82).

Nevertheless, following the contemporary developments in the Yoruba language, there were subsequent corrections in 1932, 1959 (New Testament), 1960, 1969, and 2003. According to Mordi and Ajiboye (2016):

Up till now, the work of correction continues as the Yoruba language, like other languages is a dynamic phenomenon. . . In October 1969, The Bible Society of Nigeria appointed Ajayi Dahunsi, to translate the New Testament into contemporary Yoruba language from the original Greek. He did this work from October 1969 to June 1975. The outcome of this translation is what we have as the "Iroyin Ayo" (Good News). It was an excellent piece of his work. The Old Testament was translated by various translators which gave birth to the publication of the *Bibeli Iroyin Ayo* in 2006. (p. 72).

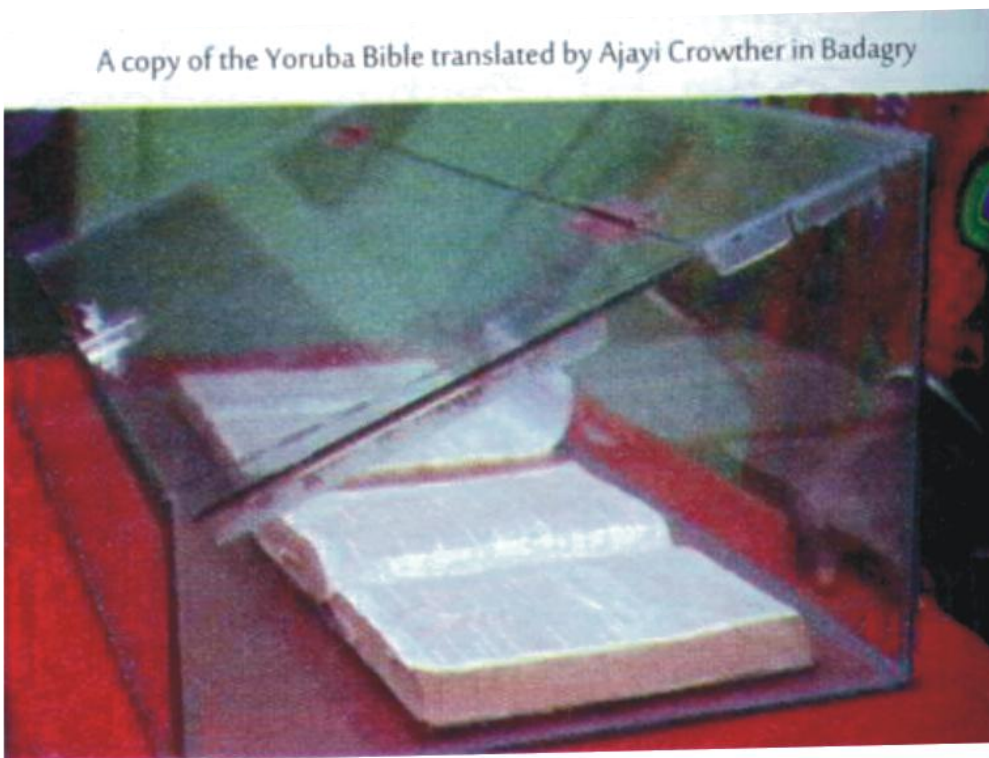
While the scope of this research does not extend to detailed diary of Yoruba Bible translation, the overwhelming influence of Ajai Crowther's linguistic sagacity, especially the translation of the Yoruba Bible and his contribution to the development of Yoruba literacy leaves much inspiration for modern civilization and cultural dialogue for missionary expansion. The significance of the Yoruba Bible translation cannot be underestimated. It was not the first translation into an African language; but insofar as Crowther was the leading influence in its production, it was the first by a native speaker. Wall (1998) therefore says that "written Yoruba was the product of missionary committee work which the outcome of its orthography may be seen in the durability of the Yoruba translation of the Bible to which Crowther was the chief contributor and the vigorous growth of Yoruba vernacular literature" (p. 23). In this regard,

Beyerhaus (cited in Kalu, 2003) notes of Crowther that, “it can be said without exaggeration that nothing was further from Crowther’s mind than the foundation of a mission church endeavouring to prove its African roots in organization, doctrine and rites” (p.72).

The figure below is the picture of the first storey building in Nigeria at Badagrey where Ajayi Crowther did the translation of the Yoruba Bible and a copy of the translated Yoruba Bible.



The first storey building in Nigeria where the Yoruba Bible was translated in Badagry, Lagos



A copy of the Yoruba Bible translated by Ajayi Crowther in Badagry

Adapted from Mordi, B and Ajiboye, D. (2016). pp.70

### 4.3 Preliminary Efforts to Translate the Igbo Bible

Archdeacon T. J. Dennis was not the first to attempt translating the Bible into Igbo language. It would be recalled that the pioneering missionary work up the Niger were done mostly by Africans, who were better able to withstand the disease of what came to be called the white man's grave; and who had greater facility with the language. In this regard, Goodchild (2003) observes that:

Taylor made the first translation of the Bible into Ibo. Dennis reviewing the situation in 1912 wrote, 'the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and some of St. Paul's Epistles were translated by him and published by the BFBS between the years 1860 and 1866. The translation was from the Authorized Version and was extremely literal, betraying besides an inadequate knowledge of English idiom. It did not take sufficient account of the peculiarities of Onitsha dialect ever to become popular with Onitsha readers, for whom it was primarily intended, nor was it better adapted to the needs of Bonny and other Ibo stations of the CMS in the Niger Delta. (p. 16).

Meanwhile, as far as available evidence shows, the German Philologist and Anglican missionary, John F. Schon was the first to begin the study of the literary form of Igbo language, which laid the foundation for Bible translation for missionary expansion. Tasie (1996) argues that "He had reduced Igbo to writing in 1841 for the use of the famous Niger expedition of that year when he availed himself of the opportunity of interpreters belonging to the various tribes then employed" (p. 63). But Beyerhaus (cited by Tasie) says "that this particular work later proved useless because Schon apparently had not investigated enough to discover the standard Igbo dialect" (p.82). It is true, as observed by Kalu (2003) that "the earlier primers by J. F. Schon and Samuel Ajai Crowther, and the translations by J. C. Taylor had been vigorously criticized as inadequate for learning the native language, which "explains the low standard of

Christianity” (p. 83), they truly provided a springboard upon which later developments took off.

In fact, Tasie (1996) views that Schon:

had not investigated the Igbo language enough to discover the standard dialect of the language; besides his time for the study of Igbo was often much distracted by his devotion to Hausa, the language which he considered more significant because of its wider usage, and probably too because it was the native language of a considerable population of Muslims. (p. 63).

Meanwhile, in fairness to the missionaries, Tasie (1977) vividly reflects the handicap they encountered with early interaction with the native and with the translation efforts when he explains that:

The Saro workers were for the most part uneducated; Crowther’s major work was Yoruba; his Igbo prima proved unusable though better than Schon’s which are useless; Crowther did not translate the Igbo Bible (sic); Taylor translated a few parts in Isuama language but clashed violently with Schon and Crowther and left in 1868. (pp. 61-70).

The Igbo First Reader later popularized as *Azu Ndu*, which was produced by Rev. Julius Spencer, a missionary stationed at Asaba provided a great resource for learning the Igbo language. Evidently, Spencer was also said to have made an Igbo translation of the Acts of the Apostles. To authenticate this information, Goodchild (2003), says that, “In November 1894, Dobinson said he had revised Spencer’s Ibo translation of Acts. Spencer had also produced an Ibo First Reader” (p. 17). It is also said that Archdeacon Dandeson Crowther translated the St. John’s Gospel into the Isuama Igbo, which was printed in 1892. The need for Bible translation into the native languages of the people became very cogent that in 1895, Tugwell recorded Dandeson Crowther’s constant demand for Bible translation in the Delta dialect.

Another attempt to translate the Bible into Igbo language was made by Rev. Henry H. Dobinson, who came to the Niger mission in 1890 at the heat of tension between African agents and European missionaries, which led to the resignation and eventual death of Bishop Crowther on December 31, 1891. Although learning the language was not easy, given the difficulties and sameness of words for different things, only usually distinguished by accentuation, yet, Dobinson was gaining sufficient fluency in Igbo with the help of some natives such as Isaac Mba (who died in Lagos in 1894); he was now able to preach in the language. Dobinson's main task was revising the earlier translations and providing material for worship. By 1892, he was revising Matthew, Mark and translating Luke. After the death of Isaac Mba, Dobinson was greatly assisted in the translational work by T. David Anyaegbunam, one of the native agents dismissed during the 1890 CMS crisis, who was now being paid as a schoolmaster.

In spite of the progress being made with language and translation work, at the end of 1893, Dobinson (cited in Goodchild, 2003) notes that:

One great joy I have had this year, and that was to see the Gospels in Ibo in the hands of our people here. It is unfortunately true that at Onitsha no great enthusiasm exists for learning to read in the vernacular, owing to the great zeal for learning English. We therefore look to the Ibo translations to be of more value and better appreciated as time goes on, and places are opened that are less accessible to English speaking natives. The translative work is being continued and already the Acts are ready for the Press, while most of St. Paul's epistles are translated. (p. 17).

On the question of the preliminary efforts to Igbo Bible translation, Mordi and Ajiboye (2016) observe that:

The first translation of the Bible was made into Onitsha dialect or the Upper Niger dialect. Rev. J. C. Taylor . . . was the first Igbo Bible translator. He translated the

Gospels, Acts, and some Epistles of Paul between 1860 and 1868. . . David Anyaegbunam, an Igbo man who had worked for CMS as a Catechist, translated the book of Psalms and all the Pauline epistles. The New Testament of the Niger Igbo translation was published in 1900 and the complete Bible in 1906 by the British and Foreign Bible Society [BFBS]. (pp. 72-73).

The glaring challenge, which the early translation works encountered in Igboland was however, the considerable dialectical differences which inherently marked and distinguished the various sub-culture areas. In fact, a translation that suited one sub-culture would perplex another. For instance, Dobinson's work in Onitsha did not meet the needs of the Igbo people living in the further South. His translations might be described as Niger or *Upper* Igbo as opposed to the Delta or *Lower* Igbo known as the Isuama Igbo. There is also the Unwana Igbo which these early translations did not meet their literary and spoken dialectical needs. The obvious challenge of resolving the dialectical differences necessitated the later development of the Union Igbo by T. J. Dennis and his team for the translation of the Igbo Bible Nso.

#### **4.3.1 Simon Jonas: The Catechist and Interpreter**

Although the 1841 Niger Expedition has often been described as tortuous and painful following the huge loss sustained, but its implications for the subsequent missionary enterprise in Igboland were momentous. Since Sir Thomas Buxton had advocated that in order to replace what has become illegitimate trade in persons, means and ways of introducing Christianity into the interior of Africa must be explored, two personnel of the Church Missionary Society selected to join the expedition were Rev. James Fredrick Schon and Mr. Samuel Ajai Crowther (both of were linguists).

To achieve this goal, the CMS personnel organized and took along with them, on board, a number of ex-slaves who had learnt to speak English and who could be used as interpreters in

various languages they were likely to meet. Among them was Simon Jonas, an ex-slave of Igbo parentage. Rowbory (2009) says that:

Simon Jonas was an Igbo freed slave, who had been living in Sierra Leon. He was a competent mother-tongue speaker and was one of those who accompanied Schon and Crowther on the 1841 expedition into Igboland. When Schon moved on from his work on Igbo to concentrate on Hausa, the Igbo work left to Crowther, and it was Jonas helped him extensively in preparing his Igbo primer and other materials. (p. 5).

To buttress this, Tasie (1996) observed that, “Crowther confessed he depended, for his sources, mainly on the colony-born whose parents were known to be good Igbo speakers” (p. 63). It would be recalled that the CMS mission to Igboland was conceived distinctly as a response to the possibilities both in terms of communication and willingness of the Igbo people at Freetown to take the gospel to their kinsmen. Dike (cited by Anyabuikie, 1996) gave a descriptive picture of the expedition and says that:

On arrival at the King’s house, the missionaries explained the purpose of their mission and preached the Gospel message. At the end they presented two Bibles, one in English and the other in Arabic. King Obi could neither read nor write. Obi was astounded that an Igbo could equally read and write like the English. The Obi made special request for Simon Jones to remain behind as the others went elsewhere. Jones remained at Aboh preaching and expounding the word of God, while the others proceeded to Idah. (p.23).

Simon Jonas’s involvement in this mission would rightly be viewed as God’s provision for the awaited chance to bring the light of the Gospel to their benighted kinsmen. In fact, Kalu (2003) cites William Balfour Baikie’s satisfactory declaration of the 1854 expedition when he said that:



Gifted as we have been with a revelation from on high, it is our duty to attempt to impart its doctrine to our less favoured brethren, and that a great noble task is in store for those who will pioneer the way of civilization and Christianity. (p. 80).

According to Kalu (2003):

To focus specifically on the Christianization of Igboland, Baikie had recruited a certain Igbo man Simon Jonas, who was serving as Constable in Fernando Po, as an interpreter. Abo was an important commercial center linking the delta commercial axis to Benin and Idah. In 1841, the King was receptive to the commercial and missionary overtures. So on this expedition an opportunity came to renew old contacts and pledges. Jonas stayed back as a bible teacher as the party moved to Asaba in October 1854. (p. 82).

To further elucidate the significant roles played by Simon Jonas in the Igbo Anglican missionary enterprise, Okeke (2006) observes that:

Simon Jonas assisted them while they travelled through the Igbo portions of the lower Niger basin. As soon as the Expedition moved into the non-Igbo speaking areas, Jonas was sent back to Abo, where he continued his evangelistic dialogue with Obi Ossai, King of Aboh, and his people. He was there until the party returned. (p. 6).

The seeming failure of the 1841 and 1854 expeditions created some set-backs in the efforts to bring about an in-depth socio-cultural relationship between the British and Igboland. But Simon Jonas's impressive contributions to the said expeditions, especially in terms of interpretation for effective communication would explain why he was slated again for the 1857 expedition which offered firm ground for opening a missionary base in Igboland. Anyabuike (1996) who noted that the expedition was significant for the history of Christianity in Igboland, says that, "The Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther, led the C. M. S. group which included Rev. J. C.

Taylor, Simon Jones Augutus Raddillo (liberated slaves of Igbo origin) and a number of Catechists and schoolmasters” (p.24).

It is to be noted that the purpose of the C. M. S. in supporting the earnest appeal of the Freetown Igbo Christians for a mission in Igboland was to help in the development of committed Christians who will be mature and proud of their own cultural heritage. This was intended to be an accomplishment of Henry Venn’s missionary policy of developing a native Church that would be self-supporting, self-expanding and self-governing. One major way of accomplishing this was goal was through education, particularly the linguistic, industrial, and religious education.

Although Simon Jones was not particularly involved in any Bible translation effort, his early contribution to the interpretation of the message of the Bible into the language of the people, however, set the foundation for the need for Igbo Bible translation. The excitement of Obi Ossai of Abo on hearing Simon Jones communicate the message of the new faith would reasonably be connected to, the fact that he heard him speak in his own language.

#### **4.3.2 Rev J. C Taylor and Evolution of Igbo literacy**

Not much of the early days of Rev. John Christopher Taylor are known, except that he was born in Sierra Leone to a Christian parentage of Igbo ex-slaves. He was educated at the Charlotte Primary School and later at the Fourah Bay Institution Freetown. He served as a catechist in the Temneh Mission, and was ordained on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1856, and later priested by the Bishop of London on 19<sup>th</sup> June, 1859. In any case, Taylor’s role as one of the Igbo-born assistants to Crowther on the Niger Mission was what brought him to the front-page of Igbo missionary history. There is hardly any doubt that the early successful missionary enterprise of the CMS on the Niger, particularly at Onitsha would be mostly attributed to him. Sundkler and Steed (cited by Rowbory, 2009) observe that:

Taylor was sent to Onitsha, where the first mission station was established by the CMS in 1857. He spent several years working alongside Jonas and growing in confidence in the Onitsha dialect, which gave him to conduct some linguistic analysis of Igbo. It seems that he made a big impact on Onitsha society, with his uncompromising preaching and behavior. (pp. 5-6).

Importantly, it is to be noted that Taylor was a pioneer missionary, second-in-command only to Bishop Crowther on the Niger, but in fact, he was the man in charge of the day affairs in the entire Niger Mission, one time evangelist in Akassa itself while he waited for a boat to go up the Niger. Therefore, in principle, Taylor's wider missionary constituency included Akassa as well as his immediate Igbo mission field. In this regard, Okeke (2006) says that "Taylor, at the start of the mission to Igboland, was virtually the head of the enterprise" (p.83). Of course, as far as Taylor and Freetown Igbo were concerned, Crowther belonged primarily to Yoruba mission. His involvement in the 1857 establishment was very minimal. Against this backdrop, Adiele (1996) observes that:

Rev. Crowther played supervisory role. He spent most of his time outside his ecclesiastical area. The translation of the Bible and other works into Yoruba language seemed to have been his priority. Even during his occasional visits, he spent more time in the Northern than Onitsha and Bonny areas. Incidentally, the resident clergyman in Onitsha was the Rev. J. C. Taylor. In the strict sense of the word, he pioneered the work in the Niger with a team of ex-slaves. (p. 15).

Although the common slogan was "Africa for Africans", the oversight of the heterogeneity of different Nigerian languages could have been the reason a Yoruba missionary in the person of Samuel Ajai Crowther was to head the Missionary team to Igboland; a people whose depth of worldview and language he did not know. Truly, Crowther was an African ex-slave with a passionate missionary drive for African enlightenment, but he was not a native in

the Niger mission of Igboland. Although, Mgbemene (1996) had argued that “no other one was better suited than he, during his time, to lead the people out of darkness he was born into civilized Christian light he had now entered” (p.392). Nonetheless, it is therefore, the opinion of this research that Crowther could not have been more properly fitted for leading the mission to Igboland than Taylor. In fact, it is said that all through the missionary period in Igboland, his wife never stepped into the Niger mission field.

According to Okeke (2006), it is evident that “J. C. Taylor of Igbo parentage was therefore chosen as the leader of this Igbo mission” (p. 16). Nevertheless, Okeke (2006) viewed that “Henry Venn’s decision to thrust Crowther on the 1857 party to Igboland was *volta face* designed to save Crowther from the unwelcomed cooperation with his European counterparts in the Yoruba mission” (p. 23). Hence, it is likely that the early challenges and perhaps, misconceptions of the peoples’ worldview by the missionaries would be attributable to this choice. This could be why Anyadele (1966) noted that “the missionaries saw nothing worth preserving in the African customs and institutions outside the languages” (p.183). Of course, it might not be out of place to postulate that even the language was not given adequate treatment, as it was only used as a means, and not an end in itself.

J. C. Taylor’s contributions and activities both in the development of the Igbo language and nationalistic consciousness had often been obscured in history. Nonetheless, Tasie (1996) views that “the attention now being paid . . . to the languages of the Upper and Lower Niger Delta, especially Igbo language, as a subject for serious academic study and research, was in a sense pioneered by Taylor” (p.53). It is indubitable that following his linguistic sagacity, a primer for Igbo language was attributed to Crowther in 1857, but the monumental contributions of J. C. Taylor to the development of Igbo literacy and vocabulary cannot be over emphasized. Okeke (2006) observes that the gigantic task of reducing Igbo sounds into syllables, words and sentences was entrusted to him. In fact:

As an aid to his teaching, he translated Dr. Watt's First Catechism into Igbo. This was printed in 1859 during his visit to England, although he used the manuscript. He also began the translation of St. Matthew's gospel which was printed in 1860. As new words came to hand he made alphabets which resembled them. The alphabets were used for teaching . . . Taylor prefixed each of the translation with Isuama Igbo. Thus he carefully avoided the assumption that the dialect he was using was the only one . . . His wholehearted involvement in the translation, evangelistic, and formal education, stemmed from his belief that the mission belonged to him; a task he owed to his countrymen. (p. 38).

The task of translating ideas from one language to the other, especially at its pioneering stage has often not been an easy one. At a certain point, Taylor (cited by Okeke, 2003) described the strenuous demands involved in this sort of project, saying that:

Engaged in translation. Oh for more strength in these mental exercise! How often one is one obliged to rack his brain for the derivation of words, and the construction of sounds especially in the nasalization with which the Ibo language abounds. Nevertheless it is a delightful work; it has the highest aim to convey the wonders of redeeming love to mankind. With this thought we go cheerfully to work and wait in patience for its accomplishment. (p. 38).

But, on the quality and acceptability of the translated works of the early Anglican missionaries in Igboland, Hair (1967) notes that:

In terms of translation, chiefly because of their meager or defective education, these assistants could do little or nothing. The outstanding exception among them however, was John Christopher Taylor. . . His major interest was in the Isuama Igbo dialect and he translated portions of the New Testament, the Liturgy, a primer for Igbo at Akassa in the Niger Delta, Dr. Watt's First Catechism, some

prayers and hymns, the Ten Commandments and an extensive Igbo vocabulary in the Isuama dialect. (p. 130).

It is true that Taylor's translations have been criticized mainly for the evidence that he was a second generation Igbo and that he used interpreters, but it would be understood following the diversity of dialects in Igbo language. Okeke (2006) however notes that "at Onitsha, he met with difficulty. But from 1862, he preached without interpreters" (p.88).

On a general consideration of the Anglican missionary contribution to the development of Igbo language however, Adams and Ward (1929) commented that:

So far as we are aware previous investigators such as Bishop Crowther, Rev. J. Schon, Rev. J. Spencer, Archdeacon Dennis and Mr. N. W. Thomas have only considered the language as subsidiary to their chief work. The result has been that dialects have been dealt with piecemeal. (p. 58).

Meanwhile, due to the multiplicity of dialects in the Igbo society, it was for a long time difficult to produce an acceptable Igbo Bible. Tasie (1996) observed that "for nearly fifty years after the beginning of missionary work in Igboland, the Igbo Christians had available to them in the vernacular only parts of the Bible"(p.84). But, having referred to J. C. Taylor as the "Apostle to Igboland", Okeke (2006) was incisive to say that:

For the C.M.S. represented by Taylor, nothing short of a comprehensive education was advocated and contemplated . . . The curriculum produced by Taylor and the responses by the Igbo were dictated by the contingencies of need and opportunity. To think of Christianity in Igboland without Taylor may be similar to thinking of Christianity of the apostolic times without Paul. (p. 89).

Taylor's Igbo nationalistic consciousness was prominent given the challenge that Africa must be regenerated by Africans themselves including people of African descent like himself,

born and bred under better conditions than most other Africans. According to Tasie (1996), “Taylor would recommend that, wherever and whenever possible, an African should be deployed to serve in his native area in order to eliminate unnecessary language, psychological and emotional problems”(p. 57). Although his nationalistic and detailed consciousness of African heterogeneity has been criticized as tribal, it is certain that Taylor’s motivation in the matter of Igbo language must have been the importance he attached to the use of the local languages for effective communication in missionary expansion. On this note, Tasie (1996) noted that:

Taylor devoted much of his spare time to the study of Igbo language. He worked very hard on it as can perhaps best be illustrated by the fact that by 1860 he had translated the four Gospels, Acts of the Apostles and Epistle to the Corinthians and to Philemon and was hoping to finish his translation of the New Testament by 1866. (p. 64).

Apart from the challenge of the multiple dialects of the Igbo language, it was however Taylor’s frequent disagreement with Schon on the correctness of the nature and translation of the language, and with Crowther on the administration of mission respectively that dealt a frustrating blow to the extent of achievements he would have made to the development of Igbo language. For instance, although Schon was a trained linguist, Taylor believed that since it was his mother tongue, he had a better advantage to judge the correctness of nature of Igbo language than Schon. Tasie (1996) cites Taylor’s outburst thus:

I maintain that my learned friend Mr. Schon cannot do better in the language than I who have actually been at the spot and have advantage of acquiring it from the lips of my parents. I cannot correct him in his native language, however perfect I might be in the German language. (p. 66).

In spite of this and other issues which led to Taylor’s untimely exit from the Igbo mission in 1870, Okeke (2006) says that:

Taylor's greatest legacy to his fatherland was his translation enterprise, his ability to reduce many Igbo sounds, proverbs, ideas and culture into letters, words and sentences. Between 1864 and 1866, he completed the remaining portion of the Gospel, the Book of Acts, and a greater portion of the Epistles. (p. 87).

Inadvertently, his translations were sometimes incomplete or defective, but, Okeke (2006) observes that "Taylor's labours in translation introduced the Igbo to the art of reading. This in turn enabled them to master English language and opened up for them the immense wealth in literacy" (p. 88). Meanwhile, by the beginning of the twentieth century, partly in the interest of the mounting numbers of Christians who understand only the vernacular, there arose the urgency for an Igbo Bible that would be understood in all Igbo sub-culture areas. Granted that the bulk of Taylor's work in Igbo was in Isuama Igbo dialect, there were traces of some sort of amalgam of Isuama and Onitsha and even Akassa dialects. One may therefore view that the concept of the "Union Igbo" involving the amalgamation of the different Igbo dialects, which was to be accomplished more successfully later under Archdeacon T. J. Dennis, may truly be traced to J. C. Taylor's initiatives.

#### **4.4 Archdeacon Dennis and the Making of the Union Igbo Bible Nso**

The story of the translation of the Union Igbo Bible Nso is significantly historic considering the eventful and fruitful impact it has wrought on not just the missionary expansion, but also on the socio-cultural milieu and general civilization of the Igbo society. The Psalmist had first said that the entrance of God's Word gives wisdom to the simple-hearted and makes light to shine upon the heart of the people (Ps.19:7-8). This is especially when the said God's word is planted in the heart of the people through their language. The man who should receive much of the credit for this, particularly for the evolution of the Union Igbo and the eventual translation of the Igbo Bible was Archdeacon Thomas John Dennis.



Thomas John Dennis was born on 17<sup>th</sup> September, 1869 as the first child of his parents, Edward and Margaret Dennis. While other details of his family background would be reserved for a different historiography, Dennis indicated his conviction for call to mission and was offered admission into the CMS Institute at Clapham in 1889, where he received the foundational trainings. Although, Dennis was destined for the Niger mission, he spent his first months as a missionary in Sierra Leone in 1893. Goodchild (2003) notes that “Bishop Herbert Tugwell requested that Dennis should be free from Sierra Leone, to be set apart for the Niger so he can act as Examining Chaplain, believing that his knowledge of Hebrew and Greek would qualify him for good service as a translator” (p.14). He left Sierra Leone on 5<sup>th</sup> November, 1894 and arrived Onitsha on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, having reached Brass first, on November 25 of the same year.

In his early missionary encounter, Dennis described his experience with the language in a letter he wrote home in 1895. Goodchild (2003) cited him saying, “I can’t say I have done much today except to grind away at the language . . . I think there is no hope of learning the language otherwise . . . Pray for me that I may be able to master the language” (p. 20). His passion for learning the language was deeply expressed in his desire to spend an extended period with the people so he could master the language. Goodchild (2003) reported that on 26<sup>th</sup> September, 1895, Dennis wrote home, saying that; “I wish I had the chance of going to some outstations for 3 months or so. I could then easily pass the 2<sup>nd</sup> Language Exam and would make up my mind never to preach to an Igbo congregation in the English language” (p. 32).

By August 1896, Dennis was said to be reporting that he had done three years in the field and passed the second language exam and determined to preach no more to an Igbo congregation through an interpreter. He preached his first sermon in Igbo on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1896 at Onitsha. In fact in an annual letter of the same year, T. J. Dennis reported that he had dispensed altogether with the services of an interpreter. He was very thankful to God that he had at length the privilege of preaching to the people in their own tongue. These were all preliminaries to the

making of what would eventually become a major tool for expanding and inculturating the gospel message in Igboland, that is, the translation of the Bible into the Union Igbo.

It would be noted that earlier translations of parts of the Bible and primers by Schon, Crowther and J. C. Taylor were predominantly made in the Isuama dialect. The later translations by T. J. Dennis assisted by T. D. Anyaegbunam and N. O. Nzekwu were done in Onitsha dialect. Referring to the developments following the challenge of evolving an acceptable Igbo language for missionary expansion in the various sub-cultures of Igboland, Nwadike (2012) observes that:

With the failure of Isuama dialect, the use of dialects such as Onitsha, Ika, and Awka for both academics and pastoral purposes arose. This situation perturbed the CMS at Onitsha, more especially as she was anxious to produce a version of the Igbo Bible, which could be used in all parts of Igboland. A compromise dialect to adopt for this purpose was a matter for thought. (p. 60).

Okeke (2006) says that “the failure of the first Igbo Language conference (held on December 5, 1904) to adopt either the Onitsha or Isuama dialects constrained those concerned with a search for a common ground” (p.35). In order to address this challenge, Ekechi (1972) reports that “help came from the hands of Leslie Probyn, the acting High Commissioner at Calabar, when he suggested to Bishop Tugwell that Owerri would prove a fertile ground for missionary activity. This was around 1904. . . and that around Owerri, the purest version of Igbo was spoken” (p.209). Evidently, the Bishop who was delighted with this, appealed to the CMS authorities to send Archdeacon Dennis to Owerri for a feasibility survey of area.

In fact, Okeke (2006) notes that:

The second Igbo language conference was held at Asaba in August 14-16, 1905. In attendance were the Bishop, Dennis, Rattray, C. Green, Nzekwu, Onyeabo, T. D. Anyaegbunam, Archdeacon Crowther, J. Joyle and J. Spencer; and Rattray was elected the Secretary. The meeting agreed to print the Old Testament in Onitsha

dialect already translated by Dennis, T. D. Anyaegbunam and N. O Nzekwu. Enthusiastically, the Bishop suggested that Owerri might become the centre of the mission. The importance of this meeting lay in the fact the each side, Onitsha and Bonny expressed its misgivings about the project: each side pointing out the enormous difficulties entailed. (pp. 35-36).

A few examples of the observable differences in pronunciations between Onitsha and Owerri Igbo would necessarily highlight this challenge. For instance Goodchild (2003) notes that in Owerri dialect:

H was used in place of F, e.g *Ihe* for *Ife*, a thing

N was used in place of L, e.g *Mini* for *Mili*, water

R was used in place of L, e.g *Uratta* for *Ulatta*

W was used in place of B, e.g. *Wu* for *Bu*, to be. (p. 151).

Evidently, ‘R’ was more distinctly pronounced at Owerri than at Bonny. There were also some grammatical differences. The salutation at Owerri was *Ndewo*, which differed from that at Bonny and Onitsha. For instance, Anyaegbunam was said to have been doubtful that the Union translation would be understood at Onitsha. In any case, this envisaged difficulty is not insuperable, but it was feared that a translation might be made so general as not to be understood in any district. Goodchild (2003) highlighted that during 1905 Language Conference, a random sample of the differences of the dialects was illustrated with John 8: 28 thus;

Bonny, Isuama Ibo: *Mb’ahun Jisus bia si ha, Mbe unu kpalitere Okpara Madu n’elu, mb’ahun ka unu ga mata se, Ikem Awum Ya.*

Onitsha: *Nyaka Jisu ji si Mgbe unu wenatsili Nwa nke madu n’enu, mgbe afu ka unu gama na Munwa bu Ya.*

Ungwana: *Orua Jisus odoyeriwo, osi, Ra mbe un paburoto Aparu Madu r’elu, orua unu ja amare, si Mo mbu Ye (p.152).*

To analyze the implications of this translation test, Tasie (1996) observes that:

This, however, was a very simple verse and hardly lent itself to the real test of theologically laden passages or words in which there would have been much variance between the dialects it was not Onitsha but Unwanna which differed most from the Isuama basic translation. (p. 85).

In spite of these differences, Dennis was however determined to produce a translation, not on the dialect of one district, but one that would be understood in the different sub-culture areas of Igboland. In 1905, Dennis accompanied by A. C. Onyeabo (who later became the first Igbo CMS Bishop) was deputed on fact-finding mission to Owerri. They eventually chose and recommended Egbu near Owerri. Nwadike (2012) notes that “The Igbo Language Translation Committee, delighted at the report, recommended to the Executive Committee of the Mission that Dennis should be sent to Owerri with the sole purpose of producing a Union Igbo which would be used in both the Onitsha and Owerri districts” (p.61). Ekechi (1972) cites the Executive Committee’s resolution in this regard, affirming that:

This Committee support the petition of the Ibo Language Conference that the Ven. Archdeacon Dennis be definitely set apart, after furlough for work of Ibo translation with a view to the production, as soon as may be, of a combined version of the Ibo scriptures suitable for the use over the whole area of the Ibo-speaking people. (p. 230).

Although Dennis did not consider the Owerri more intelligent than the Onitsha, Goodchild (2003) cites that:

Dennis thought that the Owerri Ibo was perhaps as pure Ibo as could be found. It differed from the Onitsha and Bonny dialects, but was more like that of Bonny. Mr. Onyeabo could converse intelligently with the people after a day or two practices. Anyone knowing Onitsha Ibo would in a short time become familiar with the Owerri language. They were well received and they thought that

missionaries would be welcomed in and around Owerri. No mission work had yet been attempted, and the Roman Catholics had not settled there. Some Hausa Mohammedans who might have followed the soldiers, had a place of prayer. (p. 150).

Egbu-Owerri was the location at which Archdeacon Dennis did the translation work with the help of some indigenous assistants. Arriving in 1906, in the company of G. N. Anyaegbunam and A. C. Onyeabo, Dennis did not only set about his task but also carried out vigorous evangelization work. Okeke (2006) cited Dennis's letter of January 1907 and says that:

As a preparation for the difficult task of producing the Bible in the Union Igbo, the third Igbo Language Conference was held at Egbu on November 26 and 27, 1906. Attending were S. R. Smith, G. N. Anyaegbunam, A. C. Onyeabo: Archdeacon Crowther, J. Boyle, C. Gree; T. D. Anyaegbunam and T. J. Dennis. Alphabetical alterations and additions were agreed upon. The use of Bonny Igbo *gh* for negatives was accepted against Onitsha dialect *mm*; *nyabu* of Onitsha gave way also for *ya mere* [sic] of Bonny Igbo, in translating 'therefore'. They agreed to include the letter 'v' in their translation of the use of margins. Work on the translation of the Bible into the Union Igbo began on December 31 [sic], 1906 and was jointly undertaken by Dennis, T. D Anyaegbunam, C. Green and an Arochukwu youngman. Also of great assistance were David Eze and Moses Ofodueme from the western Igbo. By the end of January 1907 St. Matthew and St. Mark Gospels were completed and copies of each were sent to the three centres. They were met with approbation and this stimulated the translators for harder work. (p. 51).

The Igbo Bible translation office at Egbu, Imo State where  
Archdeacon Dennis and others translated the Bible into Igbo.  
It was rebuilt in 2011



The seat and table used to translate the  
Igbo Bible by Archdeacon Dennis and his team

Adapted from Mordi, B and Ajiboye, D. (2016). pp.72-73

Agreeing with this historical information, Kalu (2003) says that “he worked with a team selected from Unwana, Arochukwu, Bonny, Onitsha, Asaba and Owerri: Anyaegbunam, Onyeabo, Aneke, Nzekwu, Agha, Ogwuma and others. Each completed part would be circulated among participating protestant denomination for comments” (p.187). Ward (cited by Nwadike, 2012) gave credence to this information and said that:

Union Ibo was devised in order to provide the Bible in a form, which it was hoped would be easily understood by speakers of differing dialects. It was constructed from material belonging to five areas (Bonny, Owerri, Arochukwu, Ngwana and Onitsha) . . . it might reasonably be thought, indeed it has been considered, that it would fill the role of a literary medium for the Ibo people. (p. 59).

The translation of the Igbo Bible now begun, Goodchild (2003) quoted Dennis as saying that, “Now I must set to work on the new translation and make up my mind to stick to it as closely as it is possible consistently with due attention to health and other missionary duties” (p.169). Their commitment to this project would better be reflected in the words of Dennis (cited in Goodchild, 2003), “we have decided to begin on Monday (3 December, 1906) and hope to be able to put in 8 hours a day every working day of the week except Saturday when we shall put in 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> hrs only” (p.169). The task of translation was so absorbing as vividly described by Dennis’s sister, Frances M. Hensley (1948) when she said that:

Every single word had to be considered, translated from the original Hebrew and Greek, and the word found which would be known and understood by all parts of the Ibo race with its several dialects. Three educated Christian Africans from different parts sat with him (Dennis) at a table on the veranda of his mud house for eight hours a day, absorbed in this gigantic work. (pp. 133-134).

Although the task would not be an easy one, Archdeacon Dennis projected that possibly five years might pass before the translation of the entire Bible could be completed. Goodchild

(2003) observes that, “copies of the translation would be sent to Bonny, to Ungwana, and to the Revision Committee at Onitsha for criticism” (p. 151). Dennis (cited by Goodchild, 2003) says that:

The numerous difficulties arising from differences of dialect were necessarily our chief concern while making a Union version. We often had four or five, even more entirely distinct words for the same object to chose from, and it was not by any means always easy to decide which one among them would carry farthest and one ought on that account to be placed in the text. (p. 173).

Apart from the challenge arising from the variety of words, the notable grammatical variations, especially the particles used to form certain tenses, the negatives, the prohibitive and other verbal forms, the prepositions and conjunctions were conspicuously evident in the dialects of the Igbo. Nevertheless, it was noted that the most troublesome of all, which in fact constituted the most serious obstacle to the complete success of the Union Igbo Bible, is the baffling differences of pronunciations that exist among the various Igbo dialects. In view of these dialectical variations, Goodchild (2003) cited Dennis as saying that:

It may not be out of place here, to say that close comparative study of Ibo dialects necessitated by my labours on the Union version has forced me to the conclusion that in the long–forgotten past a number of relatively small tribes, speaking originally distinct languages of their own, have been absorbed by the greater and more virile Ibo nation or nations. Without some such assumption . . . I do not for a moment lose sight of the possibility that much of the variation in dialect is traceable to the state of anarchy prevailing all over the country for untold generations prior to English occupation, when every town was perpetually



engaged in defending itself against stronger neighbours or harassing or oppressing weaker ones. (p. 174).

In spite of this emerging challenge from the Igbo dialectical differences, it is interesting to note that the translations were considered not just from the English language, but directly from its original Hebrew and Greek roots. Dennis (cited by Goodchild, 2003) particularly adverted that, “I usually devote my evenings to reading through in the Greek that part of the Gospel which I judge we may possibly be able to translate the following day. We are making this translation entirely from the original” (p. 176). In fact, mention was made of particular experience the translators had of having to find appropriate Igbo equivalents for certain words. For instance, in a letter written on January 29, 1907, Dennis (cited by Goodchild, 2003) says that:

The translators spent an hour this morning in a vain search for an Ibo equivalent for the word ‘hope’. There are equivalents for ‘trust’ and ‘expectation’ we shall be compelled to make use of one or the other just as in our Onitsha translation. This . . . discussion is but a sample of many we have had since we commenced our work. (p. 175).

Against this backdrop, Achunike (1996) was apt to say that history studies things said, thought, and done by human beings in the past following their evidence in the present through the historians research and reflection”(p.35). The evidence of the present in this case is the translated Igbo Bible which provides springboard for the reconstruction and reinterpretation of what happened in the human past especially in the Igbo missionary historiography. Thus, in an article written for the Church Missionary Review in 1912 Dennis described the translation process in details. Goodchild (2003) cited Dennis as saying:

Our method was roughly as follows. We translated from the original, sparing no pains to hammer out, sentence by sentence, translation which, as far as we could judge, would be intelligible in any and every part of the Ibo country for which we

were qualified, individually or collectively, to speak. Not one of the difficulties we encountered – and they were innumerable – was shirked. Every point raised by any of my helpers or occurring to myself, as we went along, was duly discussed, and we allowed no sentence to pass as translated until we were mutually agreed that the best possible had been done with it. Throughout, ‘the greatest good of the greatest number’ was our aim, so we consistently fought shy of dialectical peculiarities, and, wherever we had a choice of words or expressions, invariably chose the one most widely known. (p. 172).

By the later part of 1907, the New Testament was already in manuscript. In fact, Okeke (2006) reports that before fourth Igbo Language Conference held at Egbu on November 15 and 16 1907, “T. D. Anyaegbunam and Amos Ejikeme had toured parts of Arochukwu and Unwana, testing the Union Igbo New Testament. It was reported that they made use of the version and discovered that they were quickly understood”(p. 52). Importantly, part of the decision of the 1907 conference was to adopt the use of *Ubu* of Bonny dialect for translating ‘*now*’, in place of *Kita* of Onitsha or *Onwunta* of Unwana dialects respectively. Again, the decision to use ‘*Chineke*’ instead of ‘*Chukwu*’ became trendy as a reaction to the confusion in the mind of the people following the influence of Chukwu at Aro.

An evaluation of the implications of these decisions for the Igbo socio-cultural cosmology is critical. In this regard, Okeke (2006) appropriately observes however that:

This was an unfortunate and restrictive decision. *Chukwu* and not *Chineke* implies God’s creatorship, sustaining activities, omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience. *Chineke*, which has displaced *Chukwu*, points to one attribute of God, only his creatorship. The Supreme Being in Igbo cosmology is more than a creator. Just as the political authority of the imperial government destroyed what they feared as Aro dominance, likewise the missionaries through translation,

removed what they considered the fulcrum of Igbo religious past. Similarly, they exchanged Onitsha *Dinwennuayi*, which translated Lord for *Onyenweayi*. (The former connotes the union between God and his Church as that between a husband and wife, while the later carried the idea of a slave and his master). (p. 53).

Meanwhile, parts of the Old Testament were also, translated simultaneously. The first consignment of the printed Union Igbo version of the New Testament arrived at Bonny and Onitsha in August and September 1909 respectively. On August 22, 1909 Dennis (cited by Goodchild) wrote in appreciation to the native assistance he received saying:

Alphonso was the first boy I had when I came to the Niger from Sierra Leone in 1894 . . . I used to call him Alf or Cukuma. He helped me much in my early efforts to get hold of the Ibo language. When I made my pioneer visit to Owerri in May 1905 it was he who accompanied me . . . Alphonso has been present at all our (language) conferences so far and has taken the keenest interest throughout in this new translation. I am glad to have been able to supply the Bishop with one of the specially bound copies of the Union Ibo New Testament (sent to me by the Bible Society) for presentation to Rev. A. C. Onyeabo at his ordination. (p. 216).

There was however, a looming challenge for the acceptance of the new translated Union Bible. Impressively, in his Annual Letter of 1909, Dennis (cited by Goodchild, 2003) says:

In my visit to Arochukwu and Ungwana in April, and when I went up to Onitsha in August, I had ample opportunity of testing the new translation in the widely differing dialects of the extreme eastern parts of the country, and I also subjected it to a very thorough test here in the centre at Egbu. In addition it has been tested in the southernmost part at Bonny and other Delta Pastorate stations, and with deep thankfulness to God I now report that we have by His grace succeeded

beyond all doubts in our attempts to produce a translation of the New Testament intelligible everywhere. . . I rejoice to think that there are already not far short of 1000 copies in the circulation throughout the length and breadth of Iboland. (p. 220).

In spite of this noteworthy remark, Ekechi (1972) observes that, “although, a remarkable achievement and fulfillment of an objective, the Owerri version of the Bible (as the missionaries at Onitsha saw it) if adopted would totally stifle the Onitsha dialect” (p. 234). Contrary to this view however, Goodchild (2003) cited Dennis as saying that he received a letter from Smith on 9<sup>th</sup> October which told him that; “the Union version is selling more freely at the Onitsha Waterside than anywhere else up in the neighbourhood . . . where it seemed likely considerable prejudice would be manifested” (p. 217).

Aside from continuing the translation of the Old Testament, Dennis was anxious to encourage the use of Union New Testament. This time, catechumen candidates were required to learn to read the Union New Testament. For instance, Goodchild (2003) reports that “Rev. J. Rankin had made it a rule that all baptism candidates at Arochukwu had to learn to read the Union NT first” (p. 227). But of a particular interest, Archdeacon Dennis, in his letter of 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1910, (cited by Goodchild, 2003) was said to have gladly reported that:

Our sales of the Union Version Testament from Egbu now amount to not far short of 500 copies. Archdeacon Crowther sold out of his assignment of 500 copies some time ago. So, besides those sold at Onitsha, there are pretty well a thousand already in circulation in Iboland. You should see that those copies may be ‘read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested. (p. 223).

In November 1910, the translation conference was convened again to review the progress made so far with the new Union NT and the continued work on the OT. Apart from its decision to ask the British Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) to print transliterated loan words other than

proper nouns in blacker type with a glossary to be placed at the end of the book, the Conference ended with thanks to Dennis and his fellow workers and to the BFBS for their generous aid. Dennis (cited by Goodchild) reports that:

There were 3 representatives of the CMS Niger Mission, one from the NDP, five from UFCSM and two from PMM. It was reported that 2,500 copies of the Union New Testament had been sold at one shilling. Of the Old Testament, Genesis to Proverb had now been completed. (p. 231).

It is instructive to note that the request of Conference was not granted by the BFBS. Hence, Goodchild (2003) reports that on 3 January 1911, Kilgour wrote to Dennis at Egbu thus:

I have read with great interest the minutes of your last Egbu translation conference . . . the second point, which I ought to make clear at once is where it is suggested that instead of the present footnotes, a glossary be placed at the end of the book. This, our rules would not permit. We are not allowed to admit in our translation anything beyond what is really a translation (p. 231).

Alongside other factors, this meant another tortuous journey of the struggle for the acceptance of the Union version of the Igbo Bible. Nevertheless, they were not to lose hope. On 16<sup>th</sup> May 1911 the translation of the Old Testament was completed. Goodchild (2003) cited Dennis as saying that:

There was still much to be done in the way of revision and getting everything ready for the press but that was comparatively easy. 'The total number of foolscap pages of manuscript is 3025 and that means about 2500 of typed matter. Thank God for the health and strength vouchsafed during the two years of close application. (p. 236).

Meanwhile, with a determined commitment to accomplishing the target of producing a unified volume of the Old and New Testaments of Bible for missionary expansion in Igboland, on 26<sup>th</sup> May, 1911, Dennis (cited by Goodchild) says:

I am busy reading rapidly through the Old Testament manuscripts with my helpers with a view to finding errors in spelling and grammar. After that I can get along with any further help correcting the typed sheets and preparing them for the press, though that final part of my task may take many weeks. I hope to do some on the voyage and complete it after my arrival in England. (237).

Interestingly, the continued use of Onitsha edition had remained a critical challenge to the evolution of the Union Igbo Version. In fact, it was discovered that the perspectives of missionaries such as Rev. G. Basden who had always worked in the Onitsha area was obviously different from Dennis who had also worked in Owerri and had close contact with the NDP, UFCSM and PMM. It was also argued that the reason for the comparatively poor sales of the Union version was that the old Onitsha version was still the recognized text for schools in Onitsha. The report sent by Banfield on 14 April, 1916 on the attitude of the people towards the Union version is quite revealing. Goodchild (2003) cites Banfield's report thus:

I entered the Ibo field from Onitsha and of course met those had already had the Bible in their own language. I found the European Missionaries in Onitsha, the Hospital, the Girl's School and the Training College Awka very much prejudiced against the Union Version. . . Cases have been known where the native told his Pastor that he could not understand the Union version, and yet when the Archdeacon came around and offered prizes for the best readings in the Bible, the very boys who claimed that they could not read or understand it, were the ones who carried off the prizes. One must not be guided altogether by what the native says. (p. 287).

Without doubt, the challenge of the acceptability of the new version was glaringly obvious. Dennis, according to Goodchild (2003) acknowledged that, “Naturally, the new translation sounds strange and perhaps harsh to ears accustomed hitherto to translations in their own dialect only, and one has often heard some such remark concerning it as, ‘we hear (i.e understand) it, but we don’t speak it that way” (p.242). In fact, Edmund Ilogu (1967) brashly criticized it as ‘nobody’s language saying that it was “coined out non-existent mixture of Onitsha, Owerri and Umuahia dialects” (p. 18). Archdeacon Dennis had actually noted that “the strongest objection urged against it at Onitsha is, strangely enough, that it is Ibo, the average Onitsha man fondly clinging to the absurd idea that his dialect is not Ibo at all but a distinct language” (p. 242).

Nevertheless, Archdeacon Dennis’s view on the question of the acceptability of the Union Igbo is worth reflecting. On April 1912, Dennis (cited by Goodchild) says:

All the above adverse influences . . . notwithstanding, the Union Version is rapidly winning its way, and that entirely upon its merit. While of course very fully occupied the whole of the time in translating the Old Testament, I regard it as part of my duty to thoroughly test the Union Version New Testament in different parts of the country, and exceptional opportunities had been afforded me for doing this personally, with most gratifying results. ‘The testimonies of fellow-missionaries, both European and African, as well as many intelligent natives who adequately represent each and all of the Ibo dialects taken account of in the translation, serve but to strengthen my conviction, formed from personal observation, that God has graciously vouchsafed us entire success in our endeavour, made in prayer dependence upon Him, to produced a translation which should be intelligible everywhere. We have thus achieved what up to 1905, was by almost everybody deemed an impossibility, and to God be the glory! (p. 242).

Significantly, by the beginning of 1913, the Union Igbo Bible Nso of the two Testaments bound together was finally produced at a total cost of about £2000, with the British and Foreign Bible Society, being the single largest contributor, providing two-fifths of this amount. This took place in a record time of eight years. Hensley (1949) reported that “the news of the translation was received in Igboland and England with excitement, great joy and contentment” (p.11). Dennis (cited by Goodchild) hopefully evaluated its expected impact on the missionary expansion in Igboland thus:

The appearance of such a weapon as I trust this Bible will prove to be in the hands of those engaged in the evangelization of the Ibo country is most opportune, for the operations of the (British Colonial) Government, carried on steadily and without intermission since 1900, have at last resulted in opening-up of the country. . . . The outlook for Iboland is much more hopeful than it was when we commenced translating our Union Ibo Bible. May that Bible, in the hands of the faithful and Spirit-filled evangelists and teachers, make multitudes of pagan Ibo wise unto salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus! (p. 242).

Green (1936) had admirably but critically assessed the evolution of the Union Igbo and said that “the making of Union Ibo was a difficult and delicate task involving questions of inter-group jealousy and prestige as well as purely linguistic considerations and as such it certainly commands respect” (p.510). Evaluating the impact of this translation, Tasie (1996) said that, “although the Union-Igbo was first produced primarily for evangelistic considerations, it has considerable positive effects upon the making of an Igbo nation” (p.90). This research agrees that the gamut impact which this accomplishment has wrought on Igbo cosmos was not just for missionary expansion in Igboland but also in the general development of Igbo literacy and consciousness.



In this view, it is evident also, that the eventual success achieved in the translation of the Igbo Bible contributed significantly to the advancement of the Christian religious faith among the Igbo people. It went further to break the barriers of dependency, the chains of illiteracy and ignorance, and the consequent socio-economic backwardness of the people, especially when compared with the Yoruba who had earlier received the Bible in their own language following the effort of Ajai Crowther. Hence, Tasie (cited by Adiele, 1996) notes that:

With regards to evangelistic work . . . nobody can deny that it filled a need which hitherto was not provided for in any other way. For those who made any meaning out of it, it enriched or nourished their understanding of Christianity, especially if we remember that previously, there was no such access for the vernacular Christian; all his knowledge of Christianity came through the medium of the pastor . . . resulting in the equation, 'Christianity equals the pastor' which is unsatisfactory and dangerous. (p. 87).

In 1917, Archdeacon Dennis died at the age of forty-seven (47) years, having been drowned in a shipwreck at the south coast of Ireland while travelling home. A false account of that incidence had however often been told. The story says that Dennis's manuscript for the Igbo Bible floated ashore and was recovered and printed posthumously. The story was a good one and had normally been given a 'miraculous' colouration, but it is not actually true. The source of this story was an article by Rev. Charles McAlpine in the *Christain Endeavour* reprinted in the *American Bible Society Record* for 1922. According Goodchild (2003):

Kilgour of BFBS wrote to Dr. LB Chamberlain of the American Bible Society on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1922 to set the record straight and his letter was published in the *American Bible Society Record* in August 1923. What did survive the shipwreck was part of an Ibo grammar and a dictionary which were found washed up on the Welsh coast. (p. 311).

History is truly the reconstruction of the past events especially with reference to the impact such events portend on the present realities based on which, an espy into the future could be projected. Accordingly, Tasie (cited in Adiele, 1996) observes that:

The Union Igbo Bible was published in 1913. Despite the points raised above, Christians (Onitsha, Niger delta, Unwanna etc) welcomed the publication and bought copies. Perhaps, more interesting is that even those who could not read also bought them and listened to others who could. Those who could read tried to learn the Union Igbo grammar and vocabulary in Sunday Schools and by using Union Igbo primers. The overriding factor in the way the Bible was received was that it contained the word of God and for the first time in a language near enough to theirs. (p. 90).

In the same vein, the Rev. F. W. Dodds of the Methodist Mission, interestingly and graphically illustrated the enduring impact of Bible translation among the Igbo speaking people was in the tribute he paid to Archdeacon Dennis at his death. Dodds (cited by Ross, 1959) says that:

As long as Ibo remains a spoken language and it is numbered among those along the West African coast, which seem destined to survive, the influence of that extra-ordinary man's work will live. Of all who have succeeded in making any impression on Ibo life and thought, Archdeacon Dennis must be counted the greatest. . . out of heterogeneous as the Latin tongues of Europe, he has made an Esperanto of Ibo that has caught on with the masses, thereby giving to this people, third largest of West Africa, a common vehicle of expression and a language of literature which has widened the tribal consciousness. (p. 63).

#### **4.4.1 The Uncelebrated Native Contributions to the Igbo Bible Translation**

It has been noted earlier, that Crowther confessed that he depended for his sources mainly on the colony-born, whose parents were known to be good Igbo speakers. It is therefore evident that the successes of the various translations, and particularly the making of the Union Igbo Bible version under T. J. Dennis would have been a farce without the valuable assistance of natives whose song have really not been sung in Igbo missionary historiography. It is this gap in missionary historiography that constitutes part of the problems this research is set to address. Although missionary historiography would necessarily provide the platform for the reconstruction of events, African Church history particularly those of the Igbo, would be properly set in course when it rises to the responsibility of retelling our stories from our perspective, rather than having as told by outsiders.

On this note, Adiele (1996) maintains that:

The arduous task of translating the Igbo Bible was undertaken by a team of dedicated Igbo translators, Messrs T. D. Anyaegbunam and A. C. Onyeabo led by an Englishman Archdeacon Thomas John Dennis who was an erudite Biblical linguist. They were all Anglicans. Before Dennis came to the Niger, he had improved or rather sharpened his knowledge of Igbo language through the Igbo people resident in Sierra Leon. Besides, his tenure of office as the Vice Principal of Fourah Bay College afforded him the opportunity of understudying the Igbo people including their language, preparatory to his main task in the Niger. (pp. 99-100).

It would be recalled that, Kalu (2003) says Dennis “worked with a team selected from Unwana, Arochukwu, Bonny, Onitsha, Asaba and Owerri: Anyaegbunam, Onyeabo, Aneke, Nzekwu, Agha, Ogwuma and others. Each completed part would be circulated among participating protestant denominations for comments” (p.187). Evidently then, Archdeacon

Dennis as well as Crowther, and others who were no natives to the Igbo mission depended heavily on their Igbo native assistants for the verification and confirmation of their translation work. It would therefore be said without prejudice, that missionary enterprise in Igboland, particularly the effort to translate the Bible into the language of the people, would have been a colossal failure, comparable to the failure of the earlier sixteenth century effort of the Portuguese in Warri and Benin area, without the devoted and willing support of the Igbo natives.

It is worrisome however, that these valuable contributions had often been obscured in missionary historiography. Incidentally, the activities of the non-natives missionaries had usually been given overwhelming publicity; being ascribed with such stature which naturally overshadows the significant contributions of the native. This can be seen in the various tributes written in honour of these English or European missionaries, where virtually no references were made to the assistance they received from the natives, especially in the translative work. Institutions also abound in Igboland in memorial of such non-native missionaries like Crowther, Dennis, Shanahan and others, with little or no such tributes and institutions to immortalize the contributions of natives to the course of missionary expansion in Igboland.

All of life is history. Although it is said that history is usually determined by perspectives; it would be said that until, and unless the significant and relevant perspectives are thoroughly reflected in a particular history, such would not be properly representative of the reconstruction of the events of the past. In this case, the history of Bible translation in Igboland would rightly be assumed to be correct when the uncelebrated native contributions to the project have been given the necessary rhythm of historical emphasis. This is a task the Igbo Church historians must necessarily engage in, not just for missionary undertone, but most importantly for the redefinition of Igbo identity and national consciousness in world missionary history. Although the Anglican Church in Igboland has immortalized T. J. Dennis by naming a Grammar School at Onitsha and Egbu after him, similar recognition is expected to be made, to celebrate

the efforts of J. C. Taylor, A. C. Onyeabor, G. N. Anyaegbunam and others who made substantial contributions to Igbo Bible translation for Anglican missionary expansion

#### **4.5 Contemporary Developments in Igbo Bible Translation**

It is no doubt that the differential responses particularly between the Roman Catholics and Protestants in Igboland towards the Union Bible Nso published in 1913 by the Anglicans, and the concerted efforts by these Christian Missions especially after the Nigerian civil war in 1970 to narrow down their areas of differences predicated the need for a revised Igbo Bible. Obviously, the desire to establish and nurture the Christian faith among the Igbo people gave rise to the urgency of translating the message of the Bible into the language of the people. Incidentally, Onwere (cited by Adiele, 1996) had “alleged that the Protestants rightly but hurriedly translated the Bible into vernacular” (p. 106). In this regard, the contemporary efforts to translate new Igbo Bible versions would constitute another historical journey that requires a detailed treatment.

With the developments in Igbo language studies therefore, the need then became obvious to produce a revised Bible in the modern and more generally acceptable orthography. It would be recalled that in this wise and for educational purposes, the Government had set up a committee in 1961 headed by Dr. S. E. Onwu to make recommendations aimed at resolving the existing orthography controversy in Igboland. Reporting that both the Roman Catholics and Protestants accepted the 1961 Committee’s official or compromise orthography with ‘no victor no vanquished’ spirit, Adiele (1996) say that “the Catholics who favoured Onicha were given the Onicha letters of the alphabet while the favoured the Central dialect were allowed to continue doing so, but using the Onicha sound system” (p. 104).

The existing Union Bible Nso predates the new approved and acceptable Igbo orthography. Therefore, the desire to make the Bible more relevant to the contemporary society

contributed to the revision of the Bible Nso. Given the fact both the society and language are dynamic, the revised edition was intended to coincide with the latest orthography and to include words or expressions that have come into existence since the publication of the Union Igbo in 1913. In order achieve this desired goal, Iwuagwu (cited by Adiele, 1996) says that “short sentences are preferred to long ones. Consequently, complex and compound sentences are broken. At times, a verse or passage is restructured where necessary to make the meaning clearer” (p. 107).

The decision to revise the Bible Nso was made in September 1970 when twenty-two representatives of Igbo speaking people from different Church groups met at St. Bartholomew’s Church Asata Enugu. The principal translators selected for this task were Rev. Dr. (later Bishop) A. O. Iwuagwu of the Anglican Church and Rev. Fr. Dr. (later Bishop) A. E. Ilonu of the Catholic Church. They were to be helped by twelve reviewers, drawn from various denominations from different parts of Igboland, including among others, Rev. Dr. G. Igwe of the Methodist and Mr. Izima of the Seventh Day Adventist, Bishop B. C. Nwankiti and Rev. A. I. Eneasato of the Anglican and Eze Akanu Ibiam of the Presbyterian Church.

The actual work on the revised translation started in 1971, but the presentation of the New Testament published by the Bible Society of Nigeria as *AKWUKWO AGBA OHUU* took place in 1984. It is to be noted that the collaborative effort of the various Churches in Igboland including the Catholics in producing this revised Bible, had been well commended in the Enugu Diocesan Synod Report. In that report, Amuta (1983) says that “this is the first time the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches in Igboland are having a common version of the Holy Bible for use in their various Churches” (p.71). Other logistic factors and perhaps the exigencies of the new Episcopal offices now being occupied by the two principal translators might be responsible for the delay in the complete translation, but, according to Iwuagwu (cited by Adiele, 1996), “The complete edition of the Bible is expected soonest” (p.108).

It is not clear why and when the Catholic representative withdrew from the translation project, but, the Revised Igbo Bible version was eventually completed and by published as *BIBLE NSO OHUU* in 2001. The preface to the new translated version is very insightful to the contemporary efforts being made in Igbo Bible translation especially with the view of the modern trends and developments in the Igbo language orthography. It states that:

*Bible Nso Ohuu nke Igbo bu ndeputa ohuu puru iche nke Bible Nso. Ndi kwadoro ndeputa nke a bu United Bible Societies nke uwa nile, na Bible Society nke Nigeria. Ha weputara ego ha, na akwukwo ndeputa Bible di iche iche, na ngwa olu ha, na ndi okasi mara ha n'asusu Hibru na Grik, inye ntuzi-aka maka ndeputa nke a.*

*N'ih i nke a ka ndi choch ji roputa Bishop abua, bu ndi ndeputa Akwukwo Nso a maara aha ha, ndi na-asu Igbo na ndi ghotara Hibru na Grik na asusu nile ozo di mkpa, ka ha deputa Bible Nso Ohuu. Ha na ndi okasi-mara nke United Bible Societies lukoro olu. Komitii nochitere Choch di iche iche ndi na-asu Igbo gugharikwara ya bu ndeputa.*

*Na Union Igbo ka e edeputara Bible Nso mbu nke Igbo, ijikota olu di iche iche nke asusu Igbo n'otu. Ya bu Bible gbara mbo, ihe kariri iri aro asato, jikota n'otu asusu olu-onumara di iche iche nke asusu Igbo. Ma n'ogologo aro ndi a, iwu grama na spelling di iche batara n'usoro isu na ide asusu Igbo. Usoro ndeputa, na nkowa, na nghota nke nkpuru okwu ufodu enweela mgbanwe. Ndeputa nke akuku ufodu na Union Igbo Bible adighizi mfe nghota. N'ih i na iwu ndeputa na-achi n'oge ochie na-ebuputa ahiri okwu, na ama-okwu na nkebi-akuko otu ha di n'asusu Hibru na Grik na-ebughi uzo choputa uzo a ga-esi deputa ya n'Igbo nkowa ya aputa ihe nke oma.*

*E deputara Bible Nso Ohuu nke a na Komon Igbo ma o bu n'udi asusu Igbo nke ga-ekwe mmdu nile nghota- ma ndi okenye ma umuntakiri, o buna ndi na-akarighi iri aro tao na ise. Bible nke a kowari isi-okwu nile nke Bible nke oma karia Bible Nso nke mbu. O kowakwara ha na Komon Igbo kari bu nkpuru okwu ufodu, na okpurukpu okwu ufodu na okpurukpu asusu, ma o bu idiom, na ilu ufodu sin a Hibu, Grik na English puta.*

*Ka e wee nyere nghota aka, etinyekwara Okwu Mbido na Mmalite Akwukwo o bula nke Bible a, ikowa na mkpirikpi ihe o bula ihe bu isi-okwu nke Akwukwo o bula. E kewakwara n'ime Akwukwo o bula nkebi-akuko di iche iche, gosikwa ebe a ga-guta ihe yiri ha n'akuku ozo nke Bible Nso Ohuu. Aha ma o bu ebe na-enweghi nkowa n'Igbo, uda ha n'asusu Igbo; ihe dika Aizaia, Jakob, Devid, Yawe, Jon, Korint, Rom, na ndi ozo. E tinyekwara na ngwusi Bible a Nkowa Usoro Okpurukpu Okwu di iche iche.*

*Nani ndi deputara Bible Nso Ohuu nke a maara ihe ha huru na ndeputa nke a, n'inyocha Bible Hibu na Grik, na Bible ochie Grik na latin di iche iche, na ndeputa Akwukwo Nso di iche iche, na Akwukwo Nkowa Okwu di iche iche ,na iroputa mkpuru okwu na okpurukpu okwu di iche iche. Obi uto ha bu na ha jere ozi a di mkpa, dikwa nso. Olile anya ha bu na Chineke ga-eji ndeputa nke a gozie ndi nile ga –agu ka e wee nye Chineke otuto. (p.iii).*

Evidently, the popularity of the *Bible Nso Ohuu* would easily be attested to, especially for the commissioning of the revised Igbo hymn book, *Abu Iji Kpere Chineke*. Adiele (1996) observes that:

Though the revision of the Bible was undertaken by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), that of the hymns book was limited to the Christian Council of



Nigeria (CCN). This is without prejudice to the fact that the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) will also make use of it. (p. 108).

Apart from the publication of the Bible Nso Ohuu by the BSN, another historical landmark was, simultaneously attained with the Igbo Bible translation in 1988 with the publishing of a new version as *BAIBULU NSO*, by the International Bible Society (IBS), Nigeria. This new translated version was reprinted in 1993. It is true that the names of the translators or other historical details concerning the new version were not specified, its preface (*Nkowa Nmalite*) states that:

*Baibulu Nso bu akwukwo di oke mkpa na ndu onye Kraist o bula . . . Gini bu ihe di iche na nsughari Baibulu Nso a? Nke mbu, anyi gbaliri ihu na mkpuru okwu di iche iche e ji dee ya bu nke onye o bula nwere ike ighota. Nke abuo, ebe o bula o putara ihe na onye na-agu akuku ahu ga-enwe nsogbu ighota ya, anyi gbaliri jiri mkpuru okwu abuo ma o bu karia kowaa otu mkpuru okwu. Nke ato, ebe nwere okwu di iche iche di na Baibulu Nso, nke ndi guru n'oge e dere ya ghotara ihe onye dere ya na-ekwu, ma nke na-enye anyi nsogbu nghota n'ih i na onodu di n'oge ahu adighikwa ugbu a, anyi deghariri okwu ndi ahu n'uzo mmadu nile ga -esi ghota ihe onye dere ya na-ekwu.*

*Nke ano o di ufodu mkpuru okwu gbara okpurukpu di na Baibulu Nso nke mmadu nwere ike ighota nani mgbe o lere anya n'Okowa okwu, ma obu n'akwukwo Nkowa di iche iche . Ihe anyi mere bu iji okwu di iche kowaa okpurukpu okwu ndi a n'ih i na anyi maara na obughi mmadu nile nwere Okowa okwu. O bukwaghi mmadu nile nwere akwukwo Nkowa di iche iche.*

*Nke ise, ndi okachamara n'asusu Hiburu na Griik, bu asusu mbu e ji dee Baibulu Nso lenyekwara anya na nsughari Baibulu Nso a. Out a kwa, ndi oka mmuta n'asusu Igbo legharikwara anya na nsughari akwukwo Nso a, nyere anyi*

*aka ihu na udi asusu na na edemedede okwu Igbo anyi ji ruo oru anyi bu udi asusu na edemedede nke di taa. (n. p).*

Aside from the contemporariness of the Igbo language in the new translation, the remarkable difference between this translation and other ones was the explanatory commentary, which the translators endeavoured to give to the texts of the Bible. Although, for no clear reasons, the IBS is no longer functional in Nigeria, and the circulation of the publications have been limited, yet the contributions of the translated Baibulu Nso to the development of Igbo language and missionary expansion in Igboland cannot be underestimated.

In 2007, the Bible League of USA, made another substantial contribution to the translation of the Bible into the Igbo language with the publication of an Igbo Revised edition, *Baibul Nso (Ndezighari Ohuru)*. While the historical details, including the names of the translators are not clearly stated, the purpose and process of the new translation can be gleaned from the preface (*Okwu Nkowa*) of this revised edition. It states that;

*Akuko gbasara ntughari akwukwo Nso n'asusu Igbo bidoro n'afo 1905 mgbe Tom Denis nke out uka Church Missionary Society batara n'obodo Egbu maka imalite oru isite n'asusu bekee tugharia akwukwo Nso n'asusu Igbo. Achdikon Denis na ndi out ya, bu ndi ime obodo so ya ruo oru ahu kwenyere na o disiri mkpa ike naa-atughariri akwukwo Nso n'asusu ndi obodo. Ntughari ahu ga-eme ka okwu chineke gbasaa ngwangwa n'etiti ndi Igbo meekwa ka enwekwuo ezi nghota nke okwu Chineke. Ke mgbe ahu Achdikon Denis na ndi otu ya biakotara onu nke mbu, out nari afo agafeela.*

*Na Baibulu nke a, e dere ya n'asusu Igbo e deggaziri edegharizi. A na-atu anya na Onye obula na-agu akwukwo Nso nke e ji asusu Igbo e deggariziri edegharizi*

*wee dee, ga-enwe ntughari uche oge nile wee nweta okwu nke amara na ihe omimi juru n'ime ya.*

*Oge a no n'oru ntughari akwukwo Nso a, ndi natpia okwu nke ndi otu Bible Leagu na ndi nka edemede ha lebara anya na udi edemede asusu Igbo nke Igbo niile kwenyere na o bu ya kacha mma.*

*Anyi lebakwara anya na ntughari na ntughari adi nke ebiputara tupu nke a wee nye nkowa doro anya n'ufodu ebe ndi na-enwechaghi ido anya. Okwu ndi nke anutara anuta ka edekwara n'udi otu esi jiri ha na-eme ihe taa.*

*N'ikpe azu, n'iji hu na ndi mmadu na-agu ma na-enwekwa omumu n'ihe e dere n'akwukwo Nso a, agabakwunyechara ama okwu na obere isi okwu na ha niile.*

*Ezi okwu, amamihe na ezi nghota sitere n'okwu Chineke. N'ih i nke a anyi na-akpoku ndi niile na-agu ntughari asusu Igbo nke a edezighariri edezighari ka ha na-anu site isi nke okwu Chineke, ka ha wee di ike n'ihe nke ime mmuo ma na-ebi ndu mmeri dika umu Chineke n'elu uwa. (n. p).*

From the ongoing, it is clear that the various efforts made in Bible translation by the Anglican Church in Igboland was with an aim to address the need and indispensability of communicating the gospel message to the people in the context of their immediate language. The expansion of their missionary activities would have been adversely hampered if the Igbo language were not given the required emphasis in religious expression. The contemporary challenge, however, is to evaluate how the Igbo language is presently being enhanced through the Christian religious activities in Igboland. It is not uncommon to see some religious practitioners in Igboland who imagine that imposing the foreign language on the people would give them a better societal aura as 'educated' clergy than when they use the vernacular. As a

response to this however, the Roman Catholics also embarked on their own translation of the Bible into the Igbo language.

#### **4.5.1 Roman Catholic Contribution to Igbo Bible Translation**

The overwhelming historical evidences have so far tended to present a picture that the efforts to translate the Bible into the Igbo language has been a predominantly Protestant affairs, especially by the Anglican (CMS) agents. It is true, as observed by Adiele (1996) that “it would however, amount to over-statement to say that all the Christian Missions exhibited the same degree of interest in the pioneering effort of translation” (p. 98). In fact, there was, until recently, a strong rumour, particularly among the Protestants that the Catholics were prohibited from reading the Bible. But, this may not be a complete representation of the fact.

The truth, however, is that the Canon Law 1391 had imposed certain restrictions and not outright prohibition on the Roman Catholics from reading non-Roman Catholic books. Danjuma (2003) says that:

What the Church has, in fact, done is to encourage a guided reading and study of the Bible . . . under the guidance of a Director or a competent authority. The effort of the Church in this regard received a boost especially with the emergence of the encyclical of Pope Pius XII entitled *Divino Afflante Spiritu* in 1943, which encouraged Catholics to become informed by reading the Scriptures. (p. ii).

But, since the available Bible Nso and The Holy Bible were basically Protestant initiatives and were published by the BFBS; they were regarded as unapproved versions and Catholic faithful were discouraged from reading them. In any case, the Vatican II has further brought a radical response to bringing the Bible as the Word of God to the world. Danjuma (2003) cites the *Dei Verbum* 21 & 25 thus:

It follows that all the preaching of the Church, and indeed the entire Christian religion, should be nourished and ruled by the Sacred Scripture. It is for the Bishops with whom the Apostolate Doctrine resides suitably to instruct the faithful entrusted to them in the correct use of the divine book, especially of the New Testament and in particular of the gospels. (p. 1).

In this regard, it would be said that there are ample historical evidences that the Roman Catholic Mission also encountered the challenge of communicating their message to the immediate Igbo cultural milieu in the language of the people. In a glance analysis of this challenge of language for missionary expansion among the Roman Catholics, Afigbo (1981) noted that:

The Union Igbo was a creation of the Church Missionary Society. The other Protestant Churches were prepared to adopt it, at least in so far as they used the same Bible, as well as the same or more or less similar Prayer Books. But the Roman Catholics would not. . . As a result, the R. C. M. at first stuck to the Onitsha dialect . . . After some time, however, when the Roman Catholics discovered that the importation of Onitsha dialect into Owerri Province and beyond hindered their work, they turned around and issued primers in both Onitsha and the Union Igbo. (p. 363).

Meanwhile, consistent effort to resolve the challenge of translating both liturgical materials and the Bible in a standard Igbo that would be acceptable in Igboland continued relentlessly among the Roman Catholics. For instance, Isichei (1978) observes that, “the Roman Catholic Mission which arrived Onitsha in 1885 published a book on Igbo Grammar in 1899, and an Igbo Dictionary in 1904; both in Onitsha dialect of the Igbo language” (p. 147). Moreover, aside from the publication of such catechetical materials as *Ndu Dinwenu*, *Mary Nne Jesu*, the

Holy Ghost Fathers at Onitsha, in 1944, received an imprimatur to publish the translated Igbo Catechism. Referring to this Agu (2012) says that:

The “Yellow Catechism” as it was usually called was a compendium of the Catholic Doctrines, comprising Questions and Answers. It was written in Igbo, the language of the people, so that every literate Igbo can read and understand. It was the handwork of our missionary fathers. (p. 126).

It was however, not until the Igbo Catholic Bishops Conference held at Onitsha on 5<sup>th</sup> February, 1991, under the leadership of Archbishop Stephen Nweke Ezeanya (1985-1995), that the resolution to embark on an Igbo Bible translation for the Catholics in Igboland was made. This, being their conviction that over one hundred years of the gospel of Christ in Igboland, there has been a yearning among the Igbo Catholics for the gospel to be translated into their language. Acknowledging that this was the first of its kind among the Roman Catholics in Igboland, Obinna and Obiefuna (1999), observed that “*Mmuo na atumatu ndi NNAUKA nke Nzuko VATIKAN NKE ABUO (Second Vatican Council) biaziera gboo ya bu aguu ha site n’ikowa ka o si di mkpa kwesi ekwesi na mba nile ga-enweta Ozioma n’asusu ha*” (p. v).

Those commissioned by the Bishops to do this translation were Rev. Fr. Christopher Ifenatuora, Rev. Fr. Chudi-Peter Akaenyi, and Rev. Fr. Ernest Ezeugo. The result of their translative effort was the production of the Baibul Nso- Nhazi Katolik. However, Rev. Fr. Fidelis K. Obiora, edited and proof-read the manuscript, together with Rev. Fr. Bernard Nwokeleme and Rev. Fr. Lawrence Eke. Others were G.U. Ukairo, P. A. Nwachukwu, S.U. Oruchalu, I. A. O. Ume, G. A. Dike, and M. C. Ngoesi. Ifenatuora (2015) notes that the translators employed original Scriptural materials such as “*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, (di n’olu Hibu); Septuajint, (di n’olu Grik) Volget (di n’olu Latin); ndi ozo bu: The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition, na Jerusalem Bible” (p. vii). They received financial assistance from

*Missio Aachen*, Germany but the project was actually sponsored by the Bishops of the Archdioceses of Onitsha and Owerri.

Although, on behalf of all the Igbo Catholics, the imprimatur for the translated Baibul Nso-Nhazi Katolik, was endorsed by Archbishop Albert K. Obiefuna of Onitsha Archdiocese (then Chairman of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria) on November 28, 1999, the publication of the Baibul Nso-Nhazi Katolik was not immediately embarked upon, until 2015, when it was first published by St. Paul Publication Nigeria. The full Igbo text of the foreword endorsed by the Catholic Archbishops of Owerri and Onitsha respectively would be necessary for proper historical documentation. Obinna and Obiefuna (1999) state that:

*Kemgbe ihe kariri nari afo ozioma Kristi biakwutere ndi be anyi, ndi Igbo bu ndi otu Kristi nwerennoo aguu inwe Ozioma Chineke e dere n'asusu ha. Mmuo na atumatu ndi NNAUKA nke Nzuko VATIKAN NKE ABUO (Second Vatican Council) biaziere gboo ya bu aguu ha site n'ikowa ka o si di mkpa kwesi ekwesi na mba nile ga-enweta Ozioma n'asusu ha.*

*N'ih i nke a, anyi bu ndi Bishopu Nke Uka n'ala Igbo wee gbaa nnoo nnukwu mbo ihu n'anyi nyere ndi be anyi Okwu Chineke ahu n'asusu ha na n'omenaala ha. O buuru anyi ihe anuri ugbu a anyi gbalisiri ike otutu afo, site n'odudu nke Mmuo Nso duru anyi, iweputara unu mbo ahu anyi gbara: Baibul Nso: Nhazi Katolik*

*Anyi na-agwazi unu si:*

*Gbakwaanu mbo na-ege nti n'okwu ahu dika oku nke na-enwu n'ebe gbara ochichiri, ruo mgbe chi ga-abo n'obi unu, anyanwu ututu achawaputa n'obi unu (2 Pita 1:19).*

*Anyi na-akpokuzi unu, ndi nke Chukwu, ndi anyi huru n'anya, ka unu were onu nara ya, mee ka o buru ihe unu ga-iji obi uto agbakwuru mgbe niile. Dika Mosis tiri iwu nye ndi nke ya nwere okwukwe, etu ahu ka any si na-ariosi unu ike si:*

*Ka okwu ndi a m nyere unu n'iwu taa biri n'obi unu; ka unu doo anya na-akuziri ha umu unu; ka unu na-ekwu maka okwu ndi ahu mgbe obula unu no n'ulo, mgbe unu na-aga n'uzo, mgbe unu dina ala, na mgbe unu biliri. Unu ga-ekegide ya n'aka unu dika ihe nribaama, yirikwa ya mgbe niile ka akwa. Unu ga-edede ya n'onuuzo ime ulo unu, na onuuzo ama unu (Deut. 6: 6-9)*

*Anyi na-ekele ndi ahu ji obi ha niile, ndi agbanyeghi ka oru ahu siri sikaike wee ruo ya nye anyi Baibul nke a n'asusu Igbo. Nke a bu izizi e nwere ihe di otu a na Nzuko Katolik n'ala Igbo. Chineke Okasiakasi ji ebube ya wee duo, nonyekwara anyi, goziekwa mbo a abgara wee ruo na njedebe ya. Ka Ebube na Nsopuru diri Ya, ugbua a na mgbe niile. Amen. (p. v).*

The achievement of this translation spells another landmark in the expansion and indigenization of missionary activities in Igboland. It would be observed that unlike the Union Igbo Bible Nso whose translation was headed by Archdeacon T. J. Dennis, a European English-speaking expatriate, the translation of the Baibul Nso–Nhazi Katolik is an entirely Igbo indigenous initiative and effort. Aside from the orthographical and some theological variations however, the remarkable difference between this and other Igbo versions is that the Inter-testamental books, commonly referred to as ‘*Deutro-canonical*’ are integrally contained in Baibul Nso-Nhazi Katolik as possessing equal inspiration by the Holy Spirit as the canonized books of the Bible. For instance, Ifenatuora (2015) notes that, “*Akwukwo Makabii nke mbu na nke abuo so n'akwukwo nzuko Katolik nabatara dika akwukwo e dere na nkwado nke Mmuo Nso nke na-adighi n'akwukwo nso nke ndi uka ozo na nke ndi Juu*” (p. 692). Nonetheless, African



Church history is by this, assuming a colossal and significant posture in world missionary historiography; it portends a re-telling of the gospel message using the instruments of African culture, by the Africans themselves.

#### **4.6 Impacts and Challenges of Bible Translation Agencies in Nigeria**

Over time, particularly after the independence from colonial rule in 1960, the emerging nationalistic consciousness began to assume wider range including the formation of independent Bible translation, publication and distribution agencies. This section would briefly examine the historical origins, impacts and contributions of the indigenous Bible Societies to the socio-cultural interplay of Bible translation into the native languages, particularly the Igbo language for Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland.

##### **4.6.1 The Bible Society of Nigeria**

Not much can be said about the origin and founding of the Bible Society of Nigeria without adequate reference to the pioneering efforts of the late Sir Dr. Francis Ezeogo Akanu Ibiam. He had his University education in Scotland and was impressed with the work of The Bible Society of Scotland, and felt that such work could be replicated in Nigeria. In spite of the prevailing national and Church Union crisis of the time, Dr. Ibiam, who was at that time, the first indigenous Governor of the defunct Eastern Region of Nigeria had earlier initiated and convened a meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1963, on the need to form a national Bible Society in Nigeria. The said meeting was presided by Mr. T. M. Uzo on his behalf at the State House Enugu. A subsequent meeting was held in Enugu in February 1965, to provide a wider base for the new Society in consultation with representatives of most of the Churches (Church organizations) in Nigeria. Nevertheless, it was consequent upon the unanimous decision of the meeting, and the resolution put forward by Sir Louis Mbanefo, “that the Bible Society of Nigeria be formed” that led to its inauguration at the Enugu sports stadium on February 8, 1966

Before 1966, the activity of Bible publication and distribution was under the supervision of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS). Then, the Bible House at Apapa Lagos was serving as a distribution centre to other neighbouring West African countries. Mr. Ross J. Manning, who was the representative of the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) in West Africa during the independent era, became the first General Secretary of The Bible Society of Nigeria, while Rt. Rev. S. O. Odutola of the Anglican Diocese of Ibadan was the first Provisional National Committee Chairman, with Sir Francis Ibiam as the founding President. At a meeting of the United Bible Societies' Council in May 1966, BSN was received as an Associate Member of UBS and thus became part of the fellowship. Mordi and Ajiboye (2016) observe that "one outstanding feature of the work from its inception was the participation of the Roman Catholic Church and of many of the independent African Churches" (p. 16). The significant role played by Mr. Ross Manning towards the formation of BSN was his ability to ensure the unification of the East and West Blocks.

According to Mordi and Ajiboye (2016), "The Bible Society of Nigeria is a not-for-profit-making interdenominational Christian organization that translates the Word of God, publishes and distributes it; raises funds for the Bible work and organizes programmes that help people interact with the Word of God" (p. v). The mission statement of the Bible Society of Nigeria is that it exists to meet the Scriptural needs of every Nigerian in general, Christian Churches and Confessions in particular and to help people interact with the Word of God. Danjuma and Ejide (2003) say that "the main aim of this non-denominational organization is to make the Bible (the Word of God) accessible to people at an affordable rate" (p.5). The Core Values of the Bible Society of Nigeria include:

- Total commitment to the Bible as God's Word.
- Productive service to the Churches.

- Absolute commitment to exceptional performance standard, productivity and team work.
- Integrity, total accountability and honesty of purpose in all transactions.
- Willingness to meet the challenges of the dynamic environment in which we serve.
- Seeking to model the highest ethical standards and best sustainable business practices.
- Respect and kind consideration for staff and its welfare.

Part of the major roles of BSN is to translate the Bible into the Nigerian languages for the benefit of those who cannot read the Bible in foreign languages. To elucidate on the processes of this translation project, Mordi and Ajiboye (2016) note that:

Translation is a very rigorous, time-consuming and capital intensive project. Our desire is to complete each translation project within 12 years but we have not been able to achieve this. The Itsekiri Bible for instance, took over 38 years and the Hausa Common Language over 30 years. (p. 19).

At present, the BSN has 39 Areas across the country and six Bible depots in Nigeria. It is estimated that over one million copies of the Bible are distributed yearly. So far, there is complete Bible in 24 Nigerian Languages including Efik, Hausa and the recent Tiv and Idoma translations. The New Testament is translated in 60 local Languages, and one book or another in 98 Languages. Presently, Bible translation is said to be going on in 16 different Nigerian Languages. Among these languages include: Ajami, Isoko, Igala, Epie, Kalabari, Ogbia, Okrika, Urhobo and others. Evidently, the above information about the BSN and the work of translation, printing and distribution indicate that much is still left to be accomplished in Bible translation for the effective evangelization of the 500 languages in Nigeria.

Apart from the translation, the BSN has continued to play significant role in the publishing of the translated materials. Mordi and Ajiboye (2016) highlight that:

After the translation, the Bible is taken through a rigorous quality control process. The translated materials are keyboarded, checked and corrected before they are finally published. The first portion of the Bible (Book of Romans) was published in Yoruba by the British & Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) in 1850 while The National Bible Society of Scotland (NBSS) published the Efik New Testament in 1862 and the complete Bible in 1868. Thus, Efik Bible became the first language Bible to be published in Nigeria. The complete Bible in Yoruba was published in 1884, the Igbo Bible was published in 1906 [sic], the Egun was published in 1923 and the Hausa Bible in 1932. (pp. 19-20)

In spite of the logistic and funding challenges, the BSN is also integrally obligated to the distribution of the translated and published in Nigeria. In order to reach the various unreached people groups for missionary expansion, especially in Igboland and among other ethnic and language groups of Nigeria, a deliberate, conscious and concerted effort is being employed to ensure effective and efficient communication of the Gospel in the language of the people. The BSN, in February 2016 celebrated 50 years of its existence with a landmark publication of the Legacy Bible, printed together in four Nigerian Languages including Yoruba, Igbo, Efik, Hausa in comparative with the English version .

As noted earlier, a faith can only be deemed to have been truly received by a people when it has become their culture. A situation where Christianity is still garbed in western civilization, cloak and accents is not a healthy signal for missionary expansion in Africa, and Igboland in particular. The Bible Society of Nigeria therefore has enormous roles in this regards; especially to ensure that the concerted translation, publishing and distribution of the Bible in the indigenous languages of Nigeria.

#### **4.6.2 The Catholic Biblical Apostolate of Nigeria (CBAN)**

Over time, different biblical groups and societies have sprung up among the Roman Catholics in Nigeria with an aim to promote better and deeper understanding of the Bible. They include groups like the Catholic Bible Society of Nigeria, Catholic Biblical Instructors Union, Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Nigeria and Catholic Biblical Movement of Nigeria. Kaigama (2003) says that “as a way of harmonizing the activities of the different Biblical groups . . . CBAN . . . is the coordinating body that regulates, defines, and promotes the activities of the various Bible groups in Nigeria” (p. v).

To reflect its history properly, the Catholic Biblical Apostolate (CBAN) is an official body established by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) for the promotion, co-ordination and supervision of the Biblical Apostolate in Nigeria. It was officially launched in 1980 as the Catholic Biblical Movement of Nigeria (as it was then called). Its origin could however be traced back to the inauguration in 1969, of the World Catholic Federation for Biblical Apostolate (WCFBA) in Rome, at which Rev. Fr. Ephraim S. Obot (now Bishop, formerly of Idah Diocese) represented Nigeria. Presently, this world body is known as the Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF). With the approval of the National Episcopal Conference of Nigeria, the Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria became a full member of WCBF in September, 1977, of which Bishop Felix A. Job of Ibadan Diocese represented the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria at the WCFBA’s Plenary in 1978.

In October 1979, Bishop F. A. Job organized the first meeting of the Catholic Biblical Apostolate in Nigeria at Ibadan. According to Danjuma and Ejide (2003), “One of the recommendations of meeting which was approved by the Bishops’ Conference was that there be established an organization known as the Catholic Biblical Movement of Nigeria under the Biblical Commission of the Bishops’ Conference” (p. 2). In December 1980, during the second national meeting held in Kaduna, the CBMN was officially inaugurated by His Grace, Most Rev.

Peter Y. Jatau, Archbishop of Kaduna, under the Chairmanship of Bishop Gabriel Gonsuaga of Jos, who was then the chairman of the Education Department of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria. The first national promoter was Brother Clement Okere who was the Secretary of the Education Department of the Catholic Secretariat when the Movement was formed. The name of the Movement has now been changed to Catholic Biblical Apostolate of Nigeria.

The CBAN functions under a structured Provincial and Diocesan levels to help in implementing the directives of the Catholic Bishops' Conference on Biblical Apostolate and to ensure co-operation and orderly action in the service of the Word of God. In reference to their relationship with the Bible Society of Nigeria, Danjuma and Ejide (2003) maintain that;

Even though majority of this group is Protestants, the Catholic Biblical Apostolate has identified areas of cooperation. The issue of Bible production is one such area. For a long time, the Apostolate has been exploring ways and means of producing the Bible locally, but that has not been possible because of the cost implication. In this new partnership, the BSN is prepared to make available the Catholic editions of the Bibles (RSV and Good News) to the Apostolate at reasonable rate. (pp. 5-6).

The growing interest in using the Bible, especially in its translated or indigenized forms as a tool for evangelization and catechesis has continued to be a common occurrence among the various missionary groups in Igboland. The formation of CBAN which is intended to co-ordinate and ensure harmonized production and use of biblical materials is certainly a cogent response to promote a better and deeper understanding of the Bible by the Catholics, and to share and spread it because it is God's treasure given to humanity.

#### **4.6.3 Nigeria Bible Translation Trust**

The Nigeria Bible Translation Trust (NBTT) was a child of necessity, born to salvage the ministry of the defunct organization called Institute of Linguistics (Nigeria) Trust (ILT). The founding fathers of ILT were expatriates with a burden for language development in Nigeria in all its ramifications. The Institute was the branch of the then two-but-one organization called Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) Britain and its sister organization, Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT). It was established in 1963.

According to La'ah (2017), it was in 1961 that a member of SIL, John Bender Samuel came to Nigeria and started the activities of language survey first in Enugu in order to work on Nigerian minority languages. He facilitated and affiliated the branch to the University of Nigeria Nsukka. Due to the prevailing political atmosphere in the country at that time, the centre was moved to Zaria and was affiliated with Ahmadu Bello University from where the team started reaching out to the minority languages in the Northern part of the country. The team was denied purchasing land in Zaria, but by 1970, they were able to secure a piece of land in Jos, and moved there, where they built their own centre, equipped with offices, printing press and other facilities.

In 1976, during the nationalization of expatriates, after the military coup, SIL was directed to hand over the running of the Institute to Nigerians because they accused of being an outpost the American Central Intelligence (CIA), as they were evicted from the country. The Federal Government gave them three months to close down activities and leave the country by June 30, 1976. The Council for the promotion of Bible Translation in Nigeria swung into action. Following a series of meetings with the government functionaries in Jos and Lagos, they formed the Nigeria Bible Translation Trust (NBTT) to take over the activities of Institute of Language Translators (ILT) and had it registered on July 1, 1976 with the Corporate Affairs Commission. Thus, NBTT assumed the responsibility for Bible translation for the minority language groups in Nigeria.

On May 26, 1996, NBTT was formally admitted as a Wycliffe Member Organization. La'ah (2017) avers that “for over 41 years of its existence, NBTT has developed into a reputable Nigerian Translation Institution next to the Bible Society of Nigeria”. In terms of spread, NBTT facilitates translation work among the minority languages in the North-East, North-West, North-Central, South-East, and South-South.

At present, NBTT works with the following statistics:

- Nigeria has over 170 million people
- There are over 525 Language Groups in Nigeria, and ONLY
- 34 of those Language Groups have the complete Bible
- 93 Working on the New Testament
- 38 Working on the Old Testament
- 35 Others have commenced mobilization for possible translations
- Over 250 are yet to have any translation.

The Nigerian Bible Translation Trust (NBTT) has been working through the years to help individual Christians and non-Christians as well to access God's Word for holistic growth through mother-tongue language development and literacy. Beyond this, NBTT has helped many communities to produce reading and writing system as well as literacy materials in their languages. Some of these communities have developed their language to the level that Government has approved the teaching of such native languages in Primary and Secondary schools.

La'ah (2017) states that the core activities of NBTT include, but not limited to:

- Survey Languages – the sound and grammatical systems of mother tongue is studied, and analysis to discover orthography is established
- Develop Literacy materials- Compile word list, charts, dictionary, grammars, readers. And primer construction for literacy activities.
- Bible Translation – facilitates the Bible Translation in the Language Groups



- Literacy Training – trains Literacy Teachers on how to teach the language.
- Workshops for training translators - Laymen/women are trained to be Translators through the use of computers, Introductory Course in Translation Principle (ICTP), and Introductory Course in Applied Linguistic (ICAL)
- Working on fulfilling the Mission of God through mission education, networking/partnering with local Churches, vision sharing and advocacy
- Helping every Christian access God's Word in the language they understand best.
- Vernacular Media activities – records and facilitates audio/video Bible versions.
- Scripture engagement activities – helping the Church in Nigeria with tools for Evangelism and Church growth.

NBTT undertakes courses on Translation Principles including Greek and Hebrew courses, Reviewers course, Project Strategy course, Scripture Use Workshop and others. The NBTT course has been progressing due to the existing partnership with other organizations like Nigeria Group/SIL Nigeria, Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN), Lutheran Bible Translation, Wycliffe Associates, The Seed Company, the Churches and the various Nigerian Language communities. NBTT is part of a Global Bible Translation movement called the Wycliffe Global Alliance, also known as Wycliffe Bible Translators International (WBTI).

To achieve the set objectives of translation projects across the Nigeria minority language groups, the NBTT decentralized its activities to eleven zones, spread across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. About 132 minority language groups have received or are receiving Bible translation at various stages. The list of Language projects NBTT is working with according to State and status is as follow: Table 11

S/No	Language Projects	States	Stage
1.	Abuan	Rivers	OT
2.	Agatu	Benue	OT
3.	Alago	Nasarawa	NT
4.	Alis Rons	Plateau	NT
5.	BeKwarra	Cross-River	OT
6.	Bwatiye	Adamawa	NT
7.	C'Lela	Kebbi	NT
8.	Dadiya	Gombe/Taraba	NT
9.	Ebira Koto	Kogi	NT
10.	Eggon	Nasarawa	OT
11.	Ehugbo	Ebonyi	NT
12.	Ekajuk	Cross River	OT
13.	Engenni	Bayelsa	OT
14.	Erei	Cross River	NT
15.	Etulo	Benue	NT
16.	Ezaa	Ebonyi	OT
17.	Gade	Nasarawa	NT
18.	Gamai	Plateau	NT
19.	Gokana	Rivers	OT
20.	Gworok	Kaduna	NT
21.	Hyam	Kaduna	NT
22.	Heba (Kilba)	Adamawa	NT
23.	Ibani	Rivers	NT
24.	Icen Fi Foron	Plateau	NT
25.	Ika	Delta	OT
26.	Ikwere	Rivers	OT
27.	Ikwo (ABC)	Ebonyi	OT
28.	Izi (ABC)	Ebonyi	OT
29.	Jenjo	Taraba	NT
30.	Jibu	Taraba	OT
31.	Jju	Kaduna	OT
32.	Kamwe	Borno	OT
33.	Kambari Ot Cluster Auna	Niger	OT
34.	Tsiknmba	Niger	OT
35.	Agwara (Cishingini)	Niger	OT
36.	Salka (Tsishingini)	Niger	OT
37.	Rakuna	Borno	OT
38.	Karai-Karai	Yobe	NT
39.	Kibaku	Borno	NT
40.	Izere	Plateau	NT
41.	Kuteb	Taraba	OT
42.	Legbo	Cross River	NT
43.	Lis Ma Ron	Plateau	NT
44.	Lokaa	Cross River	OT
45.	Mada	Nasarawa	OT
46.	Maya	Adamawa	NT
47.	Mbembe	Cross River	OT

48.	Mbula	Adamawa	NT
49.	Mgboliziha (ABC)	Anambra	NT
50.	Mushere	Plateau	NT
51.	Mwaghavul	Plateau	OT
52.	Ngas	Plateau	OT
53.	Ninkyob	Kaduna	NT
54.	Nigerian Pidgin	Delta	OT
55.	Ninzo	Kaduna	NT
56.	Obolo	Akwa Ibom/Rivers	OT
57.	Ogba	Rivers	OT
58.	Okphela	Edo	NT
59.	Rigwe	Plateau	OT
60.	Tangale Billiri	Gombe	NT
61.	Tangale West Kaltungo	Gombe	OT
62.	Tarok	Plateau	OT
63.	Tera	Gombe	NT
64.	Tula	Gombe	NT/OT
65.	Tyap	Kaduna	NT/OT
66.	Gure, Gbiri	Kaduna	NT
67.	Migili	Nasarawa	OT
68.	Jukun-Takun	Taraba	OT
69.	Jukun-Wukari	Taraba	OT
70.	Gijim-Cham	Gombe	NT
71.	Kuce	Plateau	NT
72.	Akurmi	Kaduna	NT
73.	Mande	Kebbi	NT
74.	Kyanya	Kebbi	NT
75.	Shanga	Kebbi	NT
76.	Illo Busa	Kebbi	NT
77.	Khohumono	Cross River	NT
78.	Agoi	Cross River	NT
79.	Iko	Cross River	NT
80.	Ga'anda	Adamawa	NT
81.	Kamo	Adamawa	NT
82.	Jaar	Bauchi	NT
83.	Yungur	Adamawa	NT
84.	Waja	Adamawa	NT
85.	Kabanda	Adamawa	NT
86.	Hona	Adamawa	NT
87.	Margi	Adamawa	NT
88.	Waja	Gombe	NT
89.	Nzanyi	Adamawa	NT
90.	Lala	Adamawa	NT
91.	Iten	Plateau	NT
92.	Tal	Plateau	NT
93.	Mambilla	Taraba	OT
94.	Moro'a	Kaduna	NT
95.	Takad	Kaduna	NT

96.	Bille	Adamawa	NT
97.	Akum	Taraba	NT
98.	Ngamo	Yobe	NT
99.	Bade	Yobe	NT
100.	Bata	Adamawa	NT
101.	Lunguda	Adamawa	OT
102.	Vere	Adamawa	NT
103.	Surubu	Kaduna	NT
104.	Emai	Edo	NT
105.	Yukuben	Taraba	NT
106.	Iuleha	Edo	NT
107.	Ivie	Edo	NT
108.	Ora	Edo	NT
109.	Janji	Kaduna	NT
110.	Ngizim	Yobe	NT
111.	Amo	Plateau	NT
112.	Zaar	Bauchi	NT
113.	Kaan (Libbo)	Adamawa	NT
114.	Dera (Kanakura	Adamawa	NT
115.	Banbuka	Taraba	NT
116.	Kwanchi	Taraba	NT
117.	Zoh	Taraba	NT
118.	Munga Dosso	Taraba	NT
119.	Kode	Taraba	NT
120.	Gwomu	Taraba	NT
121.	Ampandi	Taraba	NT
122.	Fete	Taraba	NT
123.	Pero	Adamawa	NT
124.	Erach	Edo	NT
125.	Ihievbe	Edo	NT
126.	Uokhaa	Edo	NT
127.	Ikao	Edo	NT
128.	Igue Sale	Edo	NT
129.	Ogori/Magongo	Kogi	NT
130.	Kadung	Plateau	NT
131.	Fer	Plateau	NT
132.	Anabozu	Plateau	NT

This table is as sourced from the office of the Executive Director of NBTT.

#### **4.7 A Comparison of the Translated versions of the Igbo Bible**

Although this research is not set to embark on the exegetical analysis of the texts of the Igbo Bible, it is pertinent to reflect the variety of the orthographical patterns adopted in the different translated versions of the Igbo Bible. As earlier noted, the obvious dialectical

differences in among the Igbo communities, and the orthography question in Igbo language development have remained a lasting issue, which even the effort of Archdeacon T. J. Dennis in the evolution of the Union Igbo could not resolve. The differences in the various versions nonetheless, may not infer differences of theology, rather an emphasis of the different orthographical patterns adopted by the various translators. Examples have selected from the Old and New Testament passages of the various Igbo Bible versions as follow: Jenesis 1:1-3

English: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the dep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light (RSV).

Bible Nso: *Na mbu Chineke kere elu-igwe na uwa. Uwa we buru ihe togboro n’efu na ihe togboro na nkiti; ochichiri dikwa n’elu obu-miri: Mo Chineke nerugharikwa n’elu miri. Chineke we si, ka ihe di: ihe we di.*

Bible Nso Ohuu: *Na mbido, mgbe Chineke kere elu igwe na uwa, ebe nile togboro n’efu; togbokwa na nkiti. Oke ochichiri kpuchikwara n’elu ogbu mmiri ahu nke kpudoro ihe nile. Mmoo nke Chineke na-erugharikwa n’elu mmiri ahu. Chineke wee si, “Ka ihe di!” Ihe wee di.*

Baibulu Nso: *Na mmalite, Chineke kere elu-igwe na uwa. Ma n’oge ahu uwa bu ihe na-enweghi udiri o bula, burukwa ihe togboro n’efu. Ochichiri gbar n’elu ogbu mmiri nke na-enweghi nsotu. Ma Mmuo Chineke na-erugharikwa n’elu ochichiri ahu. Mgbe ahu Chineke nyere iwu si, “Ka ihe di.” Na –atughi oge ihe adi.*

Baibul Nso (Ndezighari Ohuru): *Na mbu Chineke kere eluigwe na uwa. Uwa wee buru ihe togboro n’efu na ihe togboro nkiti; ochichiri dikwa n’elu ogbu mmiri.*

*Mmuo Chineke na-erugharikwa n'elu mmiri. Chineke wee si, Ka ihe di: ihe wee di.*

Baibul Nso-Nhazi Katolik: *N'isi mbido Chineke kere elu na ala. Ugbu a uwa enweghi udi nke o na-enwe ihe di n'ime ya; itiri ochichiri gbachitere n'elu ndagwurugwu ahu, ebe mmuo Chineke no na-erughari n'elu mmiri ndi ahu. Chineke siri, "ihe diri," ihe adiri.*

Jon 8:28.

English: So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father taught me (RSV).

Bible Nso: *Ya mere Jisus siri, Mbe o bula unu geweliwori Nwa nke madu elu, mbe ahu ka unu gamara na Mu onwem bu Ya, na o dighi kwa ihe M'neme n'onwem, kama dika Nnam zirim, otu a ka m'nekwu ihe ndia.*

Bible Nso Ohuu: *Ya mere, Jesus siri ha, "Mgbe o bula unu welitesiri Nwa nke Mmadu elu, mgbe ahu ka unu ga-ama na mu onwe m bu ya, na adighi m eme ihe o bula n'onwe m. Kama ana m ekwu ihe ndia dika Nna m si kuziri m.*

Baibulu Nso: *N'ih i nke a, Jisos doro aka n anti si, "Mgbe unu mere ka m nwuo, unu ga-amata na unu egbuola Onye nzoputa ahu, bu onye Chineke zitere. Unu ga-amatakwa na ihe nile m gwara unu esiteghi n'uche m kama ha bu ihe nile Nna m choro ka m gwa unu.*

Baibul Nso (Ndezighari Ohuru): *Ya mere Jizos siri, Mgbe obula unu welichara Nwa nke mmadu eluelu, mgbe ahu ka unu ga-amara na Mu onwe m bu Ya, na o dighikwa ihe M na-eme n'Onwe m, kama dika Nna m ziri m, otu a ka m ne-ekwu ihe ndi a.*

Baibul Nso-Nhazi Katolik: *Jesu siri ha, “Mgbe unu ga-ewelitecha Nwa nke mmadu elu, unu ga-amata na abum onye ahu; na adighi m eme ihe obula n’ike aka m, kama ana m ekwu dika Nna si kuziri m.*

Evidently, concerted efforts have been made to translate the Bible into the different indigenous languages of Nigeria, especially the Igbo language in order to achieve effective communication of the Christian gospel and expansion of missionary activities among the natives. The interplay of these efforts and its consequent impacts on the socio-cultural realities of the Igbo society, particularly the literary development of the Igbo language and its contemporary usage in religious expression is what remains to be examined in the next chapter. The challenge is enormous. While western education was meant to develop the capabilities of the human person, its imperialistic influence on the cultures of the Igbo people, especially their language, is the persistent and major question for Igbo identity.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **RE-EVALUATING THE SOCIO-CULTURAL INTERPLAY OF BIBLE TRANSLATION IN IGBOLAND**

History, being the activity of enquiry, reconstruction and interpretation of what happened in the human past, is a living, necessary and ever-relevant discipline. An institutional approach to reconstruct histories therefore, especially those of particular nations, Churches or institutions, will be grossly inadequate if it is only a re-telling of stories, compilation of dates and names, perhaps, with gratuitous accreditation of personalities. Instead, history and particularly history of Christianity, must not only present the salvation-history to humanity as vicariously offered by Jesus Christ her Lord, it must also be ecumenical in nature, with an impactful relevance for the human society. In this regard, Achunike (1996) avers that:

History necessarily investigates the past of human beings and events and not merely for the light it throws on the present. By teaching about the past, history widens the intellectual vistas of people by teaching about human behavior, inaction, circumstances and conditions, which bear on individual and social systems. (p. 48).

In this chapter therefore, this research would re-evaluate the inter-play of the socio-cultural realities of Bible translation in Igboland, particularly, its significance for Anglican missionary expansion and the contemporary challenges of Igbo language development and usage in religious expression.

#### **5.1 The Role of Western Education in the Expansion of Anglican Mission in Igboland**

Before the advent of the missionaries to Igboland, education was more of an informal type, especially by means of oral tradition. It began in the nuclear family and graduated in the larger society. It is no doubt, however, that with the coming of the various Christian missions in the nineteenth century formal education was introduced in Igboland for the purposes of creating



self-perpetuating congregations. This, was perhaps informed by the experiences of the failure to plant Christianity in Benin and Warri kingdoms in the sixteenth century. To strengthen this opinion, Adiele (1996) argued that “these previous attempts would have succeeded if the earlier missionaries had introduced and promoted education among the local people as it would have enabled them to read the Bible and share the gospel among themselves when the whitemen had left” (p. 99).

Incidentally, Pope Paul VI (cited by Omeh, 2012) believes that “the simultaneous development of man’s psychological and moral consciousness is a precondition for his emancipation and the full awareness of their rebirth to a new life” (p. 120). The early missionaries understood that the only means of achieving this was through authentically formational education, which provides not only a choice of intellectual values, but also an avenue for presenting one with other range of values upon which life is lived. Precisely, Fafunwa (1974) notes that “prior to 1882, educational activities had been the exclusive concern of the missionaries in Nigeria” (p. 92).

In view of this, an incisive reflection on the import of western education for the development of missions and vernacular in Igboland, and the reaction of the colonial masters becomes inevitable. Nevertheless, apart from the development of missions and vernacular, it is to be noted that as the colonial administration developed and expanded, added to the growth of mercantile houses, the missionary schools came to be the source of manpower production. In fact, from the beginning, some of the Onitsha citizens who passed through Taylor’s schools, soon became engaged with commercial firms as clerks, salesmen and agents; others were trained as artisans and builders in the European fashion. Through this education, many of these discovered their capabilities. In this regard, Okeke (2006) views that education at this point, “led directly to the second-phase-the era of a more organized and advanced literacy achievement and its consequent political consciousness” (p. 89). Thus, many scholars see Onitsha as the base from

which the C.M.S. spread missionary work and education to far off places. Comparatively however, Kalu (2003) observes that “the communities ranged along the Lower Niger Flood Plain: Odekpe, Atani, Ogbaru, through to Ossomari . . . as neighbours to Onitsha, they could see the value of education and modernity, but covenants with the gods of the river and ancestors made it extremely difficult to yield fully (p. 105). Nonetheless, Igwe (2015) aptly noted later that:

There was a more or less spontaneous reaction in favour of Western education, and when its acquisition became a mark of success, towns and villages competed to establish their own schools, without seeking approval or disapproval from any traditional authority, in order not to be left behind by their neighbours. (p. 22).

Education is generally meant to lead people away from ignorance and into capabilities to cope with changing environment; empowering them to self-understanding and actualization of set targets. The whole essence of missionary education was to breed all-round efficiency. Therefore, the missionary expansionist intentions of the Anglican Church (CMS), as well as other missionary agencies in Igboland meant that wherever there was an official mission agent, there was a school. By 1870, when Solomon Perry had taken over Romanie, who succeeded Taylor, the compelling need to reopen the schools became a priority of the agenda. He reorganized the school and introduced what he regarded as a thorough English type of education with up to six classes with boarding. Perry (cited by Okeke, 2006) notes the need for:

A boarding school in every station in these parts, for, without trying to limit divine grace, it seems to me to be one of the best ways by which Christianity will gain ground among these people The reasons are obvious, as it naturally developed indigenous manpower who would decisively continue the course of missionary expansion in Igboland. (p.136)

The objectives of missionary education are obvious and have been properly re-interpreted by many African Church historians. The mission-agents hoped that with proper education and guidance, the pupils would in the next twenty years, prove a goodly number of intelligent and useful Christians. Uruakpa (1996) says that:

The involvement of the missionaries in education was tied to the aims of missionary enterprise in their areas of operation. The major objective was the evangelization by which the gospel of Christ was spread to the people. Education, which involved the establishment of primary schools and related institutions, became necessary for obvious reasons. First and foremost, the missionaries considered it easier to achieve their aim of conversion using the schools when the children . . . who at their impressionable stages of development, were exposed to the catechism and Christian teachings. (p. 124).

In order to achieve these aims, the Anglican missionaries established primary schools as well as Churches wherever they went, with emphasis on the “Scripture” as the Christian Religious Knowledge was then titled. To further this course, the establishment of the Awka Training Institute in 1904 became a major and important landmark by the CMS in this direction. According Anagbogu (2000):

St. Paul’s College Awka was born, and the institution was the key to the success recorded by the European missionaries in the period 1904-1920, on the account of professional Igbo evangelists produced by the College . . . , which acted as a catalyst in the evangelization of Igboland. (p. 8).

There is no gainsaying that the early native missionaries and school teachers were mainly trained in this institution in order to produce good Christians who would witness for Jesus Christ wherever they may go and in whatever they may do. By this means, the Gospel of the new faith was to be spread to all the lengths and breaths of Igboland and beyond. It has been observed that

the education received by Igbo agents at the Awka College was of high standard; and this enabled them to play a critical role in the spread of Christianity in Igboland. Thus, the Anglican mission produced through the schools, the needed trained manpower for successful missionary expansion. It would be noted that the first ordained Igbo clergymen in the persons of Revs. A. C. Onyeabo and G. N. Anyaegbunam were home-trained at the Awka College. Several evangelistic campaigns by the CMS toward the expansion of their mission frontiers were mainly expedited by the instrumentality of Awka-trained agents and catechists.

One of the lasting contributions of the Anglican mission in Igboland was her impact in the literary development of the language of the people. Uruakpa (1996) notes that “She realized early that the Gospel was best spread in the language of the converts, that the printed was a powerful transmitter of Christianity and civilization” (p. 125). It would be recalled, for instance, that by 1866, Rev. J. C. Taylor, one of the foundation member of the CMS church at Onitsha had completed the translation of majority of the books of New Testament in Igbo. The Anglican missionary education policy was principally driven by the Henry Venn’s theory of developing an indigenous pastorate where the natives would gradually and naturally undertake the task of expanding their own mission. Upon this backdrop, Okeke (2006) affirms that:

From the 1903 CMS Education Code, it was noted that the missionaries insisted that should it be observed that children absent themselves without reason on the days when reading and writing are taught in the vernacular, and attend when instructions is in English, such pupils will not be allowed to receive instructions in English. (p. 7).

Apparently, the original design of the CMS missionary education policy encouraged not just the advancement of religion but also the development of the native languages, which is central to the objectives of the Henry Venn’s missionary policy of developing a mission that would be self-supporting, self-governing and self-extending Church in Africa.

Doubtlessly however, the imperialistic interest of the colonial government at some point collided with this missionary drive. There became an obvious conflict of interest on certain other issues, particularly education, between the missionaries and the colonial masters, such that Okeke (2006) notes that:

The decision of the CMS to control its own schools and teachers, and to make the teaching of vernacular and religion compulsory agitated the minds of the colonial authority. In his attempt to give the area a political unity and to secure personnel who would assist him in his political programme, Sir Ralph Moore drafted a different Education code. His administration believed that government support of educational programme conducted through religious operations was not conducive to the political climate they so needed. Therefore, a Government Education code was introduced in 1903 which made provision for three features contradicting the CMS missionary policy: that English must be the only medium of instruction; that grants to schools must only depend on examination results conducted by the Government inspectors; and that religious instruction must not be compulsory. (p. 8).

The implication of this educational policy with regard to the development of the native languages, which would have aided early Bible translation efforts for effective missionary expansion, especially in Igboland was very unhelpful. Obviously, the spiritual foundations that the missionaries have laid with great pains were not only jeopardized, but their effort to produce mature, useful and well-informed indigenous Christian people was painfully put at an adverse condition. Not only that, the missionaries lost the Government grants, but were eventually compelled to compromise on this. Hence, Okeke (2006) cited a letter written by Baylis on November 11, 1904 saying:

Is there any good reason why we should not bring the schools under Government inspection and secure Government grants? ... We are of course open to correction as to any specific difficulty in the matter on the Niger, but until we have fresh light on the subject, we should expect to find that we should do well to bring the schools under Government inspection. (p. 10).

In fact, Bishop Tugwell was accused of supporting Ralph Moor's Government educational policy, perhaps, because of a kindred interest, thereby losing sight of the local needs, particularly the endangered cultural exigencies. A critical analysis of the status quo is mind-boggling, showing that while the missionaries tended towards integral mission approach through their education policy, whereby the natives and their languages would be developed, the imperialistic government proposals left the missionaries discouraged. This led the missionaries to fall into compromising with colonial government as they were really birds of the same feather that really flocked together.

Consequent to this, the quest to inculturate the gospel message was ignored or treated with half-hazard attention. Referring to such developments in the relationship between Christianity, colonialism and culture, Okwueze (2012) says that:

We all must remember that in the past, as part of the consequences of the 'over finished' battles, only Christian names could be used as baptismal names. Western names naturally became equated with Christian names. I say naturally because since Christianity started its growth under the tutelage of western civilization most of its value became accepted as Christian values. Christianity is now in our own environment and we have all been guilty of making Christianity feel that our churches are standing right at the streets of Rome and their occupants Romans and not Africans. (p. 150).

Nevertheless, a consideration of the stiff colonial government policies on education especially with reference to religious education would show that there was an eventual decline in school enrollment in mission schools. In 1909, Julius Spencer (cited by Okeke, 2006) states that:

At the beginning of last year, when the Government school was started at Asaba a great number of our children went over as there was no school fees charged, the town having paid a school tax towards its support. But after a while when the novelty passed away and they discovered that no extraordinary teaching was being imparted there, they began to return in groups of two and three, until our school became numerically stronger than it was before the opening of the rival school. (pp. 13-14).

From the foregoing, it would be established that the evolutionary history of Igbo identity and consciousness would be incomplete or in fact be lost without the emerging contribution of western education as pioneered by the Anglican (CMS) and other mission groups. In other words, Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland was literally driven on wheels of missionary education, whereby mission centres were naturally established as inseparable part of the mission education. Up to the 1960s, there was hardly any Anglican (CMS) Church established without a corresponding mission School to educate and to empower the adherents. The contemporary evidence would however, indicate a painful decline from this missionary interest, where neither education nor the vernacular seem not be receiving the deserving attention and treatment.

## **5.2 The place of the Bible and its Interpretive Methods in Anglican Missionary Enterprise**

The Anglican Niger mission was founded under the auspices of the CMS (an Evangelical Society of the Church of England) for whom the Bible was primal in the propagation of the Christian faith. However, a consideration of the Christian faith and its different missionary groups in Igboland, therefore reveals that its principles and practices have mostly been dependent

on and largely led by the prescriptions of the Bible, often referred to as the Holy Scriptures. Together with other monotheistic religions such as Judaism, and Islam, Christianity has usually been regarded as the “People of the Book”. In view of this, Stronstad (2015) states that,

The Bible is the written record of God’s past revelation. Nevertheless, the interpreter experiences it not merely as a historical document, but as a contemporary word from God to us. The understanding of this historical-contemporary word, then, involves both cognitive and experiential presuppositions; that is, the understanding of the Bible is as much pectoral as it is cerebral. On the one hand, the cognitive dimension is necessary in order that the interpreter may understand languages that are not his own, cultures that are radically different from his culture, and the history of other peoples that is not his history. On the other hand, whereas experience can never be the basis of theology, experience is the contemporizing of history. Thus, the understanding of the Bible generally involves a hermeneutical cycle.

It is evident nevertheless, that almost all Christian missions believe and hold the doctrine of the inspiration, clarity and authenticity of the Scriptures. The divergence of opinion, persuasion and belief regarding the Scriptures among the various Christian denominations, however, is prominent in reference to its sufficiency for human salvation, and its position and authority in relation to other vital elements of Christian doctrine and practice such as tradition and reason.

Obviously, most Protestants of the Reformation background hold the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*, which is a Latin expression of “Scripture Alone”, which teaches that the Bible is the supreme authority in all matters of doctrine and practice, including missionary activities. Hence, all things about human salvation and Christian conduct are to be examined and judged by the



Scripture. However, others like the Anglicans and Methodists uphold almost in complete agreement a similar concept of “*Prima Scriptura*” which teaches that Sacred Scripture is illumined by tradition, reason, and in Methodism, experience as well, thereby, completing the four sides of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral”. Nevertheless, these are subject to and are examined by Scriptures. Any tradition, reason or experience seen to be contradictory to the Scriptures is viewed not to be valid.

The major implication of the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* resides mainly in the fact that the human interpretation and application of the Scriptures do not hold the same authority as the Scriptures themselves. Thus, even ecclesiastical authority; tradition and reason are viewed as subject to, and can be corrected by the Scriptures. Interestingly, most Protestants especially Lutheranism insist that the Bible of the Old and New Testaments is the only divinely inspired book and the only source of divinely revealed knowledge. Scripture alone is the formal principle of the faith in Lutheranism, the final authority for all matters of faith and morals because of its inspiration, authority, clarity, efficacy, and sufficiency. Its reliability, relevance and viability for missionary expansion in Igboland therefore is doubtless.

The doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* is a presupposition for the revelation, inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy of the Scriptures. While it is obvious that the inspiration and revelation of the Scripture are almost generally accepted among the various Christian groups and Church denominations; it is the principle of the canonization and authority of the Bible that mostly set the Churches, especially the Protestants and the Roman Catholics apart. However, the doctrine of inspiration of the Scripture is immensely important because most other evangelical doctrines are developed from the Bible. They rest upon, and find their relevance and authority on the Scriptures. Geisler and MacKenzie (2009) particularly advert that

*Sola Scriptura* among Protestants means that Scripture alone is the primary and absolute source for all doctrine and practice (faith and morals). *It implies* that the Bible is a direct *revelation* from God; it is sufficient, and divinely authoritative. Thus, what the Bible says, God says. In this sense the Scriptures do not just contain the Word of God, but in its entirety is the Word of God.

Understandably, the Bible does not contain all knowledge; it does contain that which is necessary for salvation. But, if something is not found in Scripture, it is not binding upon the believer. This view does not deny that the Church has the authority to teach God's Word, nor did the Reformers reject everything that every Christian in earlier ages has said. In any case, while tradition is valuable, Protestants insist that it has to be tested by the higher authority of the Scriptures.

It is evident however, that the direct personal involvement in reading, interpreting and applying the message of the Bible, which was opened to the Anglican adherents from the beginning, helped to produce a crop of Igbo Christians who were rooted in the knowledge of the message of the Bible. It is doubtless that the formational mode of Bible study that is seen to be mostly used among the Anglicans allows one to willingly stand himself before the text of the Bible, which makes him ready for the message of the Bible to have control over him. In this way, the message of the Christian faith as contained in the Bible is allowed to challenge or confront the way one lives his life in the society. This inadvertently produced a significant moral transformation on the Igbo society.

Again, the consequent implication of translating and its interpretive method helped to produce ready hands for Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland. It would be recalled that majority of the native itinerant missionaries, mostly used by the Anglican Church for missionary

expansion in Igboland, were not highly educated people versed in the technicality of hermeneutics, but people who simply believed the authenticity of the Bible as the written word of God; and its sufficiency for human salvation. They literally carried its message as they understood it, convincing their kiths and keens of the transforming power of the word of God as contained in the Bible.

Nevertheless, that the differences of interpretive methods by the different missionary groups paid its own dues toward the seeming confusion in Igbo cosmology on the true nature of the Christian Gospel as propagated by the different mission groups. The remote factor for the missionary rivalry in Igboland therefore, may not be attributed to an inherent socio-cultural structure, particularly as the Igbo socio-political framework was primordially knit together by the *Umunna*; it is viewed to be theologically underlined especially by the diverse missionary catechesis. Today, the ordinary Igbo Christian adherent is drawn between the confusion emerging from the various and different biblical and theological interpretive emphasis. The truth nonetheless, is that all the missionary groups in Igboland, including the Protestants, Roman Catholics, Pentecostals and others pursue the missionary propaganda by making their appeals to, and through the Bible. In any case, what remains is to examine other areas in which the translation of this Bible has significantly impacted the socio-cultural milieu of Igboland, especially through the Anglican missionary expansion.

### **5.3 The Impacts of Bible Translation and its Roles for the Socio-Cultural Evolution in Igboland**

It is evident that missionary enterprise would have been adversely shortchanged if conscious attempts were not made for the effective communication of the gospel through an understandable means, especially using the indigenous languages. The reasons are obvious. According to A. Orisakwe (Personal communication, December 5, 2016), people think through a

language, and that they do, very often through their first or native language. So, for the Igbo people to believe and to understand the concepts of the Christian faith, it has to be properly communicated to them through the language of their thoughts – their first language. Significantly, the translation of the Bible into Igbo language therefore, became a springboard upon which a wide variety of socio-cultural developments, including identity and nationalistic consciousness, economic, linguistic and Anglican missionary expansion for Igboland evolved.

For instance, the early attempts to understudy the people, and their language as proposed by Henry Venn, in order to develop a native pastorate signalled an instinct by the Anglican (CMS) missionaries to establish a Church that would truly belong to the people. Crowther and his team, as particularly advanced by J. C. Taylor believed that until the message of the Gospel has been made available to the people in their native languages, it would not be said to have been effectively planted in the African soil. These necessitated not just the establishment of schools for educating the adherents, but also the development of the literary forms of the Igbo language, and the consequent attempts to translate portions of the Bible in Isuama or Onitsha dialects, for expanding the course of their missionary work in Igboland.

It is however the question of the literary development of Igbo language, that stand out as a fundamental contribution of missionary enterprise and the subsequent Bible translation to the Igbo socio-cultural locale. Certainly, before the coming of the missionaries, Igbo language had flourished at the various Igbo communities in its informal and unwritten form. Although strong advocacy had been made that certain aspects of education in Igbo language and culture such as carving, painting, pottery, farming and home training came close to the formal school system of the western world, yet, they did not assume a literary form.

In fact, it has been argued that before the coming of the missionaries, the Igbo evolved sign writings through which they preserved and transmitted information, like the Egyptians and the Sumerians. Nwadike (2012) says that “the most well known of these writings was the

NSIBIDI script which was greatly used by many Igbo communities of the south-east and their Ibibio neighbours of the present Cross River and Akwa Ibom” (p. 18). Nsibidi is a form of pictographic writing, and so, Nwadike (2012) notes that Nsibidi was “unsystematic mode of recording and interpretation . . . which lacked the support of modern technology such as ink and paper for its advancement” (pp.23-24). In essence, it did not possess the orthographic form of the contemporary writings as introduced by the missionaries.

Therefore, what we have today as our writing form, the alphabets in the Igbo language was really coined and introduced first, by the Anglican (CMS) missionaries. To substantiate this, Tasie (1996) had said that “the study of Igbo language, as far as available evidence shows, was begun by John F. Schon, the German Philologist and missionary . . . he had reduced Igbo to writing in 1841 for use of the famous Niger expedition” (p. 63). On the other hand, Okeke (2006) maintains that Taylor’s greatest legacy to his fatherland was his translation enterprise, his ability to reduce many Igbo sounds, proverbs, ideas, and culture into letters, words and sentences (p. 87). By this contribution, a lasting foundation was laid not only for Igbo literacy, but also for the translation of the Bible into Igbo language.

Again, on the issue of Bible translation efforts, Archdeacon Dennis, in 1904, was said to have expressed his conviction that, with the adaptations, Isuama Igbo would be of great service for the extension of Christ’s kingdom in Igboland. Nevertheless, Okeke (2006) notes that, he also maintained that he had “looked through the Bonny translations, and I am more than ever convinced that it is possible to produce a translation of the Holy Scripture which readers in every part of country will have no difficulty in understanding” (p. 31). Tasie (1996) further points out that “He argued that the solution would be in creating what he called “Union Igbo” which was to be an amalgam of various Igbo dialects “which will meet all the needs of the Igbo speaking tribes” (p. 85).

This was how the need for a common Igbo that would take into cognizance the dialectical differences of the various Igbo sub-cultures became imminent for achieving greater results. Thus, during the 1905 CMS Language Conference held at Asaba, there was a unanimous agreement that an attempt be made to produce a single version of the Igbo Scriptures. Okeke(2006) says that “T. D. Anyaegbunam, F. Green, and a Presbyterian representative were to associate with Dennis in this great task. Thus, the road was mapped for the unity of the Igbo people through the Holy Scriptures” (p. 37).

Igbo unity in the scheme of other ethnic consciousness in Nigeria is a matter of utmost concern. Considering the unifying effect, which the Igbo Bible translation has had, not only among the various Christian peoples who speak different dialects, but also among non-Christian peoples, one would agree that the project was worth it. Truly, as observed by Tasie (1996), “the language itself presented other difficulties. Igbo is usually classified by linguistics as one language, but it has many dialects, some of which are totally so different that the people speaking one are hardly intelligible to those speaking another dialect” (p. 83). Nevertheless, Onwuejeugwo (1975) maintains that “since all Igbo dialects derive from one proto-Igbo language, they share lots of grammatical, lexical and phonological features in common. Yet as would be expected, they do differ in certain . . . details” (p. 3).

Although it has been argued that there is hardly much inhibition of mutual understanding among these dialects, it is possible to suggest that Bible translation, especially as evolved in the Union Igbo by the CMS (Anglican) missionaries played a critical role of bridging the gap, for effective communication among the Igbo communities and beyond. Okeke (2006) says that “it was partly to offer a common means of religious contact that the Bishop and Dennis conceived the Union Igbo enterprise” (p. 67). As earlier noted, as long as Igbo remains a spoken language and is to be numbered among those in West Africa, which seem to survive, Bible translation

made an Esperanto of the language, thereby giving the people a common vehicle of expression and a language of literature, which has widened their tribal consciousness.

It has been mostly accepted that the translation of the Bible into the Union Igbo was not an easy task, but the fact remains that it brought a completely new sense of identity and national ethnic consciousness among the various Igbo speaking sub-groups. Green (1936) admirably observes that “the making of Union Ibo was a difficult and delicate task involving questions of inter-group jealousy and prestige as well as purely linguistic considerations, and as such it certainly commands respect” (p.510). The creation of the Union Igbo through the Bible translation project, actually saved the Igbo society from what would have been the imposition of one dialect, as the language of the Christian religion upon all others. In a further examination of the monumental significance of the creation of the Union Igbo, Afigbo (1981) says:

Archdeacon Dennis’s was the bravest and most historic effort to create for the Igbo a national dialect . . . At one point in the search for an Igbo national dialect, the Education Board in Lagos resolved to adopt the Union Igbo ‘as the literary dialect of the Ibo languages. (p. 364).

The translation of the Bible into Igbo language actually made the Gospel the property of the Igbo worshipping community. The fact that the people could see the Bible written, read and its message spread by the instrumentality of their own language became an assurance that the Gospel of Christianity was now no longer alien to them; they have become partakers of the common grace in the commonwealth of God’s kingdom. It is true that Ilogu (1967) had vehemently criticized the Union Igbo translation as having been “coined out of non-existent mixture of Onitsha, Owerri, and Umuahia dialects” (p. 18), yet, Tasie (1996) argues strongly that:

Nobody can deny that it filled a need which hitherto was not provided for in any other way. For those who made any meaning at all out of it, it enriched or

nourished their understanding of Christianity, especially if we remember that previously, there was no such access for the vernacular Christian; all his knowledge of Christianity came through the medium of the pastor, which is unsatisfactory and dangerous, especially as the distinction is seldom drawn between the person as an individual and the religion he represents. The Union Igbo gave the native Christian the fundamentals of his faith, helped him to look beyond the pastor-medium and reach the actual repository of the essentials of the Christian faith. (pp. 88-89).

Furthermore, the Igbo Bible translation not only provided a framework for effective missionary expansion, but also became a possible aid to communication, and thus a breaking down the barriers of the dialectical suspicions and superiority complexes, thereby creating a lingua franca for the Igbo people. The Igbo Bible translation served a wider public. For instance, in spite of the struggles of acceptance among the Anglican missionaries, particularly in consideration for the Onitsha dialect, the evangelistic interests of the Methodists and the Presbyterians took the whole argument out of the parochial concern of the Anglican missions or rather the Igbo CMS. They adopted the translation. In fact, Okeke (2006) views that:

A new cohesive agency was badly needed in Igboland. This, the Union Igbo provided. For any section of Igboland to reject the means through which a new religion was drawing the Igbo together, was to encourage Igbo fragmentation. Thus, the Union Igbo has encouraged the acephalous Igbo to look beyond their local confines to wider Igbo community more integrative and so more useful . . . and bequeathed to the whole Igbo people a new vision of unity. (pp. 79-80).

In spite of all the challenges that surrounded its acceptance from the beginning, Igwe and Obiakor (2015) maintain strongly that:



The Union Igbo language should be credited for having succeeded in creating the first written standard Igbo language. The Union Igbo created several written versions of the language; and proved the existence of a unified Igbo language for the first time, thereby stimulated interest in the existence of the language by many people in Igbo nation. (p. 73).

Interestingly, several other critical evaluations of the translated Igbo Bible have been made. Emenanjo (1975), for instance, says that:

It must be conceded that Union Igbo is an interesting, fascinating, but still-born Igbo Esperanto which was based on five discontinuous Igbo dialects – Onitsha, Owerri, Bonny, Arochukwu and Unwana and which was manufactured at Egbu in Owerri between 1905 and 1912 by the superhuman intelligence and misguided over-enthusiasm of Archdeacon Dennis. (pp. 116-117).

In a specific sense, the translation of the Bible into Igbo language has continued to contribute immensely to the development and growth of the Igbo Christian spirituality, especially in the Anglican Church. The traditional practice of *Ekpere Ututu* (daily corporate morning prayer), among the Anglican Churches in Igboland using the Igbo Bible, wherein the reading, interpretation, and application of its message for daily living is encouraged, has continued to produce enormous positive impact on the social and spiritual lives of the people. This practice, which has become a religious habit among many Anglican Churches and members, has engendered unquantifiable spiritual growth, with its consequent moral upliftment of the people, development of literary and intellectual capacity of the members.

Nonetheless, the ecumenical dimensions of the impact of the Igbo Bible translation are significant. Aside from the cooperative stance produced among the Churches in Igboland, particularly the Protestants, the daily Igbo reading mentioned earlier, was normally conducted

among the Anglican Churches, particularly those in rural areas, with the aid of a translated Bible reading guide *Inyeaka*, produce by the Scripture Union. Although the coming of Scripture Union generated some suspicion and sometimes persecution from the mission Churches, the production of the Daily Guide '*Inyeaka*' for Igbo Bible reading, helped to engender religious tolerance and ecumenical spirit between the Anglican Church and some non-denominational organizations.

In addition, it is doubtless that the Igbo Bible translation produced an evangelistic zeal, which led to the planting of new churches and its resultant numerical growth among the Anglican Churches in Igboland. Evidently, the excitement and opportunities that came from missionary education spurred many Igbo communities to demand for the opening of mission stations for their people. Of course, this may not be estranged from the competitiveness that usually exist among neighbouring Igbo communities, where each wants to outdo the other, especially in terms of development. In some cases nonetheless, these communities not only offer the land resources, but also the material and labour for ensuring the establishment of the new mission stations.

It would also be a correct presupposition to say that the emergence of Pentecostalism and new Christian religious movements in Igboland could as well be traceable to the impact of the Igbo Bible translation. Evidently, many of the founders of such movements were sometimes neither educated, nor adequately lettered in proficient English education. They drew their inspiration mostly from their reading, interpretation and application of the Igbo Bible to the immediate needs of their cultural realities, thereby, espousing their nationalistic identity. For instance, Nwadiolor (2014) observes that "in 1914 in the Delta region, a movement occurred under the leadership of a Nigerian who called himself the second Elijah. The movement was puritanical and Christian in character. But the leader, Garrick Braide who sought the spiritual emancipation of his people, became progressively anti-European" (p.222). This development may not be different from the rise of *Ekpere Ufuma*, in the northwestern Igbo area, where the

founder Madam Nwokolo, was greatly allured to visions and interpretations of dreams. She was uneducated in the English fashion but like Garrick Braide, she depended on the inspiration drawn from Igbo Bible, and the use of native language and nuances for the practice of their faith.

Undeniably, the later developments in regards to recent translations of new Igbo versions are evidence of rekindled consciousness in the use of Igbo language for religious expression. Nonetheless, in the inter-play of religion and culture, education and civilization, missionary enterprise and Igbo society, the Igbo Bible translation produced significant impacts far beyond the spheres of only the Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland; it portends a critical intervention and influence of the divine world into the holistic spectrum of life in the Igbo society. The extent of its relevance, especially in the contemporary socio-religious and cultural expressions of the Igbo people is the challenge that requires an evaluation.

#### **5.4 The Challenges and Development of the Igbo Language for Missionary Expansion in Igboland**

It is not speculative to say that, in spite of the exploits of the Igbo Bible translation and other efforts to develop the Igbo literacy and acceptable orthography, the Igbo language, and in fact, their history faces a challenge of posterity; ranking below expectation, especially in status comparison in the comity of other major Nigerian languages. Adiele (1975) illustrates this well by saying:

Looking a little beyond our borders we find that Legal Draftsmen have tried to translate legal materials into some Nigerian Languages but no such translations has been attempted in Igbo. An intellectual speaking to some University dons in Ghana recently, claimed that Mathematics and Science can now be successfully taught in a local dialect in Nigerian Schools where the language is commonly spoken. When can Igbo language boast of such usage and effective manipulation?

A race whose language cannot be used for literary and serious purposes has no real identity; the race is decadent. (p. xii).

Despite the trendy rebirth of Igbo national consciousness, it is obvious that apathy about Igbo language is still assuming an alarming proportion in many quarters of the Igbo society. A situation where some religious practitioners literally impose the foreign language, especially English, on their Igbo congregation; erroneously thinking that it enhances their status syndrome than when they speak the Igbo language is a common occurrence. Similar to this, is a case where a teacher was sent to teach Igbo in a secondary school, and when the students discovered that he was only a qualified Igbo teacher, they laughed. One asked if he could not have learnt any other thing. To summarize their reaction, the students thought that he was good in no other subject. How can a language not proudly spoken by its people, a language that has limited literature survive in the comity of other languages?

In fact, a recent survey of the Bible distribution by the Bible Society of Nigeria (BSN) shows some mind-boggling facts concerning the very low distribution and sales rate of the Igbo Bible in comparison with the Yoruba or the Hausa Bibles, not to talk of the English versions. According to Ajiboye (2017), “In spite of the seeming higher Christian population density among the Igbos in comparison with the other ethnic groups, the Igbo Bible is distributed and sold at much lower quantity rate of less than 30% compared with the English Bible in Nigeria”. The Yoruba Bible or the Hausa Bible is said to be distributed and sales more than the Igbo Bible. The implication is evident; many Igbo Christians and families seemingly prefer to use the English Bible for their private or corporate studies and devotions instead of the translated versions of the Igbo Bible.

The factors responsible for this unfortunate perception in regards to Igbo language are obvious. While Adiele (1975) notes that “our false sense of value comes first to mind” (p. xii); the colonial government education policies aimed at cutting down the influence of indigenous

languages, which have been highlighted earlier, had its toll on the development of the indigenous languages, especially the Igbo language. Nevertheless, of great interest is the 1922 Report on Education in Africa as sponsored by the Phelps-Stokes Fund, which is an American philanthropic organization, established in 1911, with an interest in Negro education. According to Lewis (1962), the report states that:

Native tongue is immensely more vital in that it is one of the chief means of preserving whatever is good in Native Customs, ideas and ideals and thereby preserving what is more important than all these, namely, Native self-respect . . . All peoples have an inherent right to their language. It is the means of giving expression to their own personality; however primitive they may be . . . No greater injustice can be committed against a people than to deprive them of their own language. (p. 63).

With these developments in regards to interest in the native languages, coupled with the efforts already made by the CMS in the translation of the Bible Nso; the course was now drawn for the future progress that would be made in Igbo language studies for both educational and missionary expansion in Igboland. In this regard, Igwe and Obiakor (2015) note that:

Despite the criticisms, the Union Igbo generally remained in use within most sections of the Anglican Communion in Igboland. The major issue critics of the language raised was in the area of some aspects of its orthography. While this issue raged, far away in England, the International Institute of African Languages and Culture (IILC) was inaugurated in London in 1926. The IILC later published a pamphlet, *Practical Orthography of African Languages* in 1927, which was quite different from the Lepsius Orthography used by the CMS in the Igbo language. (p. 73).

Given that the Roman Catholics had actually not accepted the orthography of the Union Igbo, this became the beginning of the great Igbo language orthography controversy. Tracing the developmental crisis in the literary improvement of the language, Oraka (1983) says:

The debate was between the colonial government (which invited an official of IALC in 1929, who recommended the use of IALC's orthography) and the Catholics on one side; and the Protestants on the other side. While the former insisted on the use of IALC's orthography, the latter vehemently rejected it and continued to use the Lepsius orthography. This gave rise to the 'Roman Catholic Orthography' and the 'CMS Orthography' which existed side by side while the orthography debate lasted up till the early 1960s. (p. 33).

To resolve the impasse, in 1939, the colonial government sponsored I. C. Ward, a Linguist, to embark on a research on Igbo language standardization, which later resulted in what came to be known as the standardized central Igbo. Oraka (1983) says that "the central Igbo was based on the Owerri and Umuahia dialects, with particular inclination to Ohuhu" (p. 35). In the course of time, Emenanjo (1975) evaluated the import of this development, and views that:

The Central Igbo met with such a need. Not only was spoken in the large Owerri Province, but also, some of the Northern dialects, including Nsukka, Eke, Udi, as well as a number of what may be called borderline dialects (which are mainly in the Onitsha Province show more affinity with the Central Igbo than with Onitsha dialect. (p. 115).

Meanwhile, it is to be noted that the colonial government, the Roman Catholics and the Methodists accepted the central Igbo, but the Anglican Communion in Igboland held on to the Union Igbo. Although the colonial government resolved in 1944 to adopt the central Igbo for literatures related to official transactions, Emenanjo (1975) notes that:

Mr. F. C. Ogbalu, a very well-known figure in popular Igbo studies, observes, rather dogmatically, ‘The official dialect is the Central dialect. This is particularly difficult for students who have not been to the area where such is used. In fact there is nothing really like the Central Dialect since almost everytown has its own dialect. It is an average of several dialects around Umuahia. (p. 116).

In view of the continued orthography debates, F. C. Ogbalu formed the Society for the Promotion of Igbo Language and Culture (SPILC) in 1949, which was, officially inaugurated in 1950, with a consequent issuance of his “Compromise Orthography” in 1955. It was however, in 1961 that the Eastern Region government set up an Orthography Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Onwu. According to Oraka (1983):

The committee did a thorough work; a compromise was reached, as all parties including the SPILC accepted the Onwu Committee’s recommendations. The Committee used diacritical marks to distinguish ‘light’ and ‘heavy’ vowels. Consequently, in June 1962, the government issued an order that the Onwu Orthography must be put to use in the teaching and studying of Igbo language. (p. 43).

Following the effect of the civil war on the implementation of the Onwu’s orthography, the long-drawn debate was rekindled after the civil in 1970, when the SPILC reactivated its role of promoting Igbo language. Thus, in 1972, the SPILC set up another Igbo Language standardization committee and charged it with the responsibility to adopt words from different dialects of Igbo for the purpose of enriching the Igbo language. The result of the SPILC committee was the emergence of the Standard Igbo currently being used. Any contemporary discourse therefore, on the inter-play of the Igbo language, for education, translation, or even missionary expansion in Igboland without adequate reference to the promotional role played by

F. C. Ogbalu in the development of the language and culture of the people, would amount to a miscarriage of history.

It is true that several criticisms have been leveled against the various attempts to standardize the Igbo language, its impacts starting with the Lepsius orthography of the Union Igbo Bible have been of great benefits to the socio-cultural evolution of the Igbo people. According to Igwe and Obiakor (2015), “Achebe decried the collapsing fortunes of the Igbo language and heaped the blame on all forms of standardization of the language, with more emphasis on the Union Igbo” (p. 74).

In fairness to all of these efforts, however, the Igbo language would have remained dichotomized, and perhaps would be grossly lacking in structured literary forms without the primary contributions of the Anglican missionaries in Igboland. At any rate, Igbo language development and standardization actually ‘involves conscious human intervention in language change and maintenance; and the drive towards language uniformity has social and economic goals’ (Milroy, 2001). With the Igbo Bible translation, the journey to standardize the language of the people was begun, which consequently facilitates communication among its speakers. The Bible translation effort, not only simplified teaching and learning in the language, it became a veritable tool used by the Anglicans, and other agencies for the expansion of missionary enterprise in Igboland. In the next chapter, we shall be dealing with summary and conclusion.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

#### **6.1 Summary**

An important ingredient for the success of any missionary enterprise is its ability to study the factors that led to the successes or failures of other similar enterprises; and its aptitude to adapt to or be cautious with such factors in such a way that the people's original culture is not demeaned. In this case, the Igbo Bible translation, and indeed the language of the people have been discovered in this research, based on empirical data, to be indispensable vehicles for effective socio-cultural interplay, especially for missionary expansion in Igboland. It has often taken into account that education, social integration, group dynamics and cultural realities of the Igbo society are the valuable factors upon which the missionary expansion was driven.

This research work started by way of introduction in chapter one. Chapter two deals with the review of related literatures using the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, in which the the empirical studies of other historical resources provided veritable evidences for effective evaluation of the subject of our study. In chapter three, the Igbo ethnography in pre-colonial era and missionary encounter was treated, while chapter four deals with the historical perspectives of Bible translation, especially in the Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland. The re-evaluation of the interplay of Igbo Bible translation with the socio-cultural realites of Igboland, which provided the springboard for critical analysis of its impacts and challenges for the Anglican missionary expansion was x-rayed in chapter five, whereas chapter six ends the research with summary and conclusion.

It is no wonder then that the Anglican (CMS) missionaries, from the onset considered the translation of the Bible into the language of the Igbo people a major missionary necessity. In the fact of the issue, Crowther, coming from his experience at the earlier expeditions, was said to be in many ways ahead of his time, as he was convinced that the translation of the Bible, especially

by mother-tongue speakers, would be a necessary tool for achieving the task of planting the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the African soil. For instance, Ogharaerumi (1986) observes that Crowther had written in 1856, to Henry Venn, Secretary of the CMS that the best course of action would be:

To train up some Ibo young men in the way of translations [since] the Ibo language is easy; and if proper rules be laid down for the guidance of the young men about how to trace out and analyze words from sentences . . . it would prove beneficial. (p. 177).

It was because of this cogent need that some mother-tongue speaking ex-slaves such as J. C. Taylor, Simon Jonas and others were included in 1857 mission to Igboland. The fact that Crowther acknowledged the immense help he received from these Igbo-born assistants, like Simon Jonas, for the production of his first Igbo primer attests to this. In the truth, J. C. Taylor's role in the translation of the Igbo Bible is a very important one and has been examined, in order to understand some of the issues, which led to the seeming delay of the translation of the Igbo Bible Nso. Taylor, as a mother-tongue speaker with less formal linguistic training, but much more experience in working with the language, could not agree with Schon. This disagreement between Taylor and Schon over some linguistic features of the Igbo language, which was never resolved, became a key factor in the slow development of the literary form of the language, and the delayed translation of the Bible.

Furthermore, it is obvious that the multiplicity of dialects among the Igbo-speaking peoples posed a major challenge to the early Anglican (CMS) missionaries in Igboland. As observed, there were some problems with the language study carried out by J. C. Schon and Crowther. All of the Igbo speakers they had encountered in Sierra Leon were obviously removed from their natural linguistic environment and had come in contact with speakers not only of other Igbo dialects but also of other languages, which had affected the way they spoke Igbo. A large

number of the Igbos they met had been born in Sierra Leone to Igbo parents and had never actually encountered Igbo, of any dialect, as it was spoken in Igboland itself, but he did not allow for this in the preliminary linguistic analysis he made (Rowbory, 2009). Although dialectical differences do not spell any cultural or language disorientation among the various sub-cultures of Igboland, Afigbo (1981) notes that:

One result of this, and unfortunate one at that, is that they began their study of Igbo languages with dialects of Igbo which were heavily influenced by other languages, rather than with what might be called the language of the Igbo heartland – what Dr. Ida Ward called the Central Dialect of Igbo . . . By the first decade of this century when Igboland was conquered and thrown wide open to the missionary, the administrator, the scholar and the traders, various primers and grammars and word lists had been published in these peripheral dialects of the language. (p. 360).

The challenges arising from this multiplicity of dialects notwithstanding, the doggedness of the early Anglican missionaries in Igboland, particularly with regard to the Igbo Bible translation and the literary development of the Igbo language still stands as a springboard for the contemporary missionary activities. Therefore, to suggest that the linguistic difficulties were basic to the slow progress of the translation of the Igbo Bible would be to over-simplify the situation. In any case, missionary historiography had often presented the account from western perspective, but, this research had tried to reconstruct the history, as it really is; giving due emphasis to the contributions of the natives, which have before now, remained a song unsung. Using the ingredients of Venn's missionary theory and its related inculturation ideologies, the study espoused that effective missionary expansion would be achieved, only when there is conscious, deliberate effort on the side of the missionary to interact with the language of the people among whom missionary activity is taking place.

The Igbo people are by nature deeply religious. Although the question of their origin and dispersion has been a longstanding issue of scholarly discourse, their cultural and language affinity defines their homogeneity as a people with common worldview. Any religion therefore that does not find its expression within the language and cultural milieu of the Igbo people, would not be deemed to have been properly planted into the Igbo soil. The Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland was not examined in isolation; other missionary agencies also made substantial contributions to the Christianization of Igboland. To establish the extent of the import of Bible translation in Anglican missionary expansion, a comparative survey of the efforts of these other mission agencies, was made in this study, to ascertain their respective contributions and influence to the evolution of the contemporary socio-cultural identity of the Igbo people.

It is doubtless that education played significant role in the overall assessment of Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland, but it is their unique and early effort in the Igbo Bible translation, and language development, particularly the evolution of the Union Igbo, that brought a new definition to the Igbo national consciousness, unity and identity. Truly, there existed some forms of informal education in Igboland, but, the formal education that gave literary forms to the sounds and words of Igbo language was a product of missionary education, pioneered by the Anglican (CMS) missionaries in Igboland. Thus, the fact that Christianity engendered the civilization that is currently being enjoyed by the Igbo people, particularly, in terms of education, abolition of some obnoxious practices, improved healthcare methods, urbanization for wider social integration and other benefits is obvious.

The Bible remains an important resource for missionary expansion. The early Anglican missionaries in Igboland saw it, not only as a tool for catechesis for the new religious faith, but also for the transformation of the people to a purer morality. The conviction was very evident among the missionaries, that the message of the gospel as contained in the Bible coupled with

the provision of alternative and legitimate trading would advance victory over the dehumanizing trade in persons in Africa. On this note therefore, it is clear that with other educational policies, Bible translation in Igboland spelt a particular and significant landmark in the general Igbo history. Nevertheless, it is the stretched internal struggle for the acceptance of the Union Igbo over Igbo-Onitsha that is a reality, which would hardly be forgotten in the history of the Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland. For instance, Afigbo (1981) notes that:

By the time the entire Igboland was thrown open to the missionaries, the peripheral Igbo zones had seen over four decades of missionary evangelization and Western education. As a result they had raised a significant crop of men trained to read and write in English and their own dialect of Igbo. It was with these men that the missionaries now made their assault on the presumed darkness and heathenism of the Igbo interior. As these men went along, they carried with them the primers, grammars, dictionaries and word lists written in their own, especially the Onitsha, dialect of Igbo. (p. 360).

The orthography question therefore, has remained an issue in consideration for an acceptable literary pattern in Igbo language. Against this backdrop, Afigbo (1981) observes that “it was at this point that the future of the Igbo language reached the cross-roads and took a turning that led to the present confusion in the matter of evolving a literary dialect” (p.360). Thus, while it may be assumed that the 1962 Onwu Committee’s recommendation is the official standardized orthography for Igbo language, it is obvious that Igbo language in religious expression still differ on orthography grounds, especially between the Protestants and the Catholics in Igboland. In regards to this, Afigbo (1981) observes that “the C. M. S. tried to launch the Igbo into this orbit of history through the efforts of one, though a highly gifted man, and in less than a generation if not in fact overnight” (p. 364). This may explain the reasons for

the difficulty in acceptance of the Union Bible Nso and the emergence of later translations the different versions of the Igbo Bible.

The reconstruction of the events of the Igbo Bible translation efforts would nonetheless be incomplete without adequate reference to the contributions of the Igbo natives. Most of the missionary historiography had actually chorused the contributions of western missionaries without due emphasis on the valuable and inestimable contributions of the mother-tongue ex-slaves, let alone those of the indigenous and locally trained assistants. Nevertheless, it would be recalled Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland was indeed mostly undertaken by the indigenously trained Igbo natives such A. C. Onyeabo, Isaac Mba, G. N. Anyaegbunam, Isaac Uzowulu Ejindu and others. It was with these men who had received the influence of missionary evangelization and western education that the missionaries now made their assault on the presumed darkness and heathenism of the Igbo interior.

It is evident from this work, that the effort of the Igbo Bible translation however, marked the beginning of an historical era in the development of the socio-cultural identity of the Igbo people, especially their language. The periodization set in this research therefore suggests that in spite of the influence of western civilization, which came along with the Anglican and other missionary expansions in Igboland, the political independence of Nigeria in 1960, should have also spelt a cultural independence from the western colonial vestiges, especially on the language of the people. This was what Igbo Bible translation intended to achieve – to make the Christian faith the property of the Igbo people. This is because, a religion would become the property of its practitioners, only when it has been correctly translated, and effectively communicated, in not only the language understandable to the people, but in their own immediate language.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

Missionary history in Igboland is fascinating; it would be incomplete without adequate reconstruction of the events and impacts of Igbo Bible translation on the general socio-cultural

worldview of the people. It offers a purview into the past of the people before the western colonial intervention and civilization, and sets in focus the redefined Igbo identity as a result of its encounter with the new religious faith of Christianity. The Anglican mission facilitated by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) is epochal in this consideration.

Through their extensive missionary activities in Igboland, the Anglicans missionaries have played a critical role in the overall development of Igbo socio-cultural identity, particularly through education and the development of the literacy of the Igbo language, which in no small measure engendered an Igbo nationalistic consciousness. Without doubt, this has in many ways, also enhanced the economic empowerment, the political, religious and cultural identity of the Igbo people. To further elucidate this, Nwdialor (2014) observes that “they did not limit their endeavour to port towns, rail or river lines, or commercial centres, rather, they undertook to penetrate the most remote areas in their interior with the determination to remain there until Christianity was firmly established” (p. 268). Their encounter with the traditional society was with the objective to transform it; a process, which brought about the emergence of educated elites in Igboland.

An increasing number of Igbo adherents to the Christian faith were empowered through the provision of western education. Within the mission stations education was the main instrument used for establishing and maintaining the new Christian values. Literacy was actively pursued as a means of gathering the converts to read the Bible for themselves. This necessitated the desire for having the Bible not just in an understandable language, but having it translated into the language of the people. Moreover, the sense of the Igbo curiosity, coupled with the missionary being an object of great emulation factored in significant ways the desire in the Igbo natives to be in every sense like the European missionaries.

As in other places, the Bible is so central for the Anglican missionaries in Igboland, to the extent that, Okeke (2006) observes that it “became a substitute for the oracles, and the messenger

of God, who explained God's words, especially attracted a sort of aura to his role and status" (p. 58). Therefore, the need and impact of its translation on the Igbo society not only brought about the active and meaningful presence of the message of the gospel, but also the transformation of the mentalities of the people with regards to the procedures of the Christian faith, in relation to the world around them. Without undermining its originality and uniqueness, the Igbo language, which had flourished in an unwritten form, and in diverse dialectical differences now received incisive missionary attention, which snowballed into, not just literary development for the people, but also a nationalistic consciousness of a united Igbo identity.

The missionary proposals of Henry Venn of raising a missionary church that would truly be indigenous would have been practically unachievable without proper integration with the cultures of the people using their language. Language is so powerful that people actually think and express their feelings through it; the cultures and mentalities of any given people find its expression mainly through their language. In this sense, the translation of the Bible became an important or rather indispensable consideration for missionary expansion in Igboland. The concern of the missionaries was to reach the largest number of the people in the shortest possible time. Thus, they, especially the CMS embraced the study of the Igbo language because they believed it would be easier to evangelize the people in their native language than in a foreign one like the English.

Igbo Bible translation project has not been an easy task. Incidentally, the exploits of the missionaries in this regard have often, been emphasized almost to the obscurity of not only the contributions of the natives, but also of its overall impact on the socio-cultural milieu of the Igbo society. In any case, apart from its re-definitive implications for the development of the literary structure of Igbo language, it is evident that the enhanced Christian spirituality of the Igbo adherents, which gave rise to the emergence of many African Independent Churches in Igboland was ignited by the Igbo Bible translation. Many of the founders of such religious groups, who



were not well lettered, especially in the English language; caught the flame their inspiration and revival through the effective communication of the message of the Bible, as made available in their immediate language through translation.

In truth, the Anglican Church in Nigeria is making some reasonable progress, especially with the creation of missionary Dioceses in the hinterlands of Igboland. The expansion of the message of the Gospel by the means of this missionary policy of the Church, has been greatly enhanced by the availability of the message of the Bible in the language of the people. It is obvious that many of the newly created Dioceses in the Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion, especially in Igboland, are mostly located in rural areas. Worshippers in such rural environments would necessarily and most effectively, receive the gospel in their own language. In the final analysis, our discussion on the Anglican missionary expansion in Igboland suggests that in spite of the current challenge of reviving and repositioning the Igbo language in social and religious expressions, Igbo Bible translation has proved to be a veritable tool for the redefinition of Igbo identity and nationalistic consciousness through the development of its language. No doubt, it is a contemporary vehicle for effectively communicating the Church's message for its missionary expansion.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

The socio-cultural presuppositions and realities of any given people normally provide the ground upon which Christianity and of course, any meaningful missionary expansion would thrive. The Igbo language is one such reality. These were the considerations, which weighed the Anglican missionaries into the crucial decision of translating the Bible into the language of the people. This effort was aimed at not only planting the seed of the Christian Gospel in Igboland, but also to make it the property of the people among whom it is practiced. In view of the lessons learnt from this, the following recommendations are put forward as the contributions of this research.

1. Christianity in Igboland should not continue to overwhelmingly, wear the garb of European civilization. A situation where in spite of the Bible translation efforts, its messages are still being presented in many cases, even to the uneducated or rural Igbo communities in English language or with English Bible, with the pretence of elitism, leaves much to be desired. While it is not our advocacy that Christianity be completely de-robed of its western influence, it should be expressed predominantly through the Igbo cultural realities, particularly their language. In view of this, the attitude of using a foreign language to communicate the message of the gospel in a place where everybody or almost everybody can speak or understand the vernacular is unnecessary. The time is now, when the Anglican Church in Igboland, particularly their preachers, should boldly and legitimately draw upon the wisdom of the ages, which God has inspired through the language and philosophy of the Igbo people.
2. As a matter of synodical policy, Churches in Igboland especially the Anglican Church should ensure that Igbo services, and in fact readings from Igbo Bible are made primary features of their worship. Situations especially in the urban centers where Igbo services or readings from Igbo Bible are not given its rightful place, should be discouraged.
3. The project of Bible translation should be encouraged in other Nigerian language groups or even dialectical groups, which have not received any translation of the Bible into their language. This is in view of the substantial missionary expansion and impacts it signifies.
4. The Anglican Church in Igboland should truly and effectively inculturate the Gospel message by re-evaluating the realities of Igbo cosmological views, without necessarily undermining the core of the Christian doctrines. This is one way to truly Christianize Igboland and effectively 'Igbonize' Christianity. It is no doubt that the Church in Igboland will continue to acknowledge the contributions of the missionaries in regards to the translation of the Bible and the literary development of our language. Nevertheless,

the time is now overdue for the Church in Igboland, especially the Anglican Communion, to look at herself, and to examine her own soul in the context of the socio-cultural realities of Igboland.

5. The Anglican Church in Igboland should re-examine her policy of selection and training of her clergy, with to the view to improve their intellectual level.
6. The content and motif of the theological curriculum and ex-curriculum should importantly reflect the exigencies of the cultural context of the people. Significantly, while emphasis would be laid on true sense of divine calling and merit, training of indigenous ministers should no longer be overtly tinged with illustrations, from western cultural background, but should be situated in the cultural context of the people among whom it is to be practiced.
7. The Church in Igboland should endeavour to develop a distinctive Christian theology and practice, which bear a substantial stamp of Igbo identity.
8. The study of the original languages of the Bible is very essential. Translations can only be efficient and effective with an enhanced knowledge of Hebrew and Greek. The different Christian theological seminaries should therefore encourage and even enforce the requirement of a basic knowledge of the same as condition for ordination. The situation where persons of influential connections or people from other professions, are drawn up for ordination by some dioceses, without proper training spells danger and doom for the future of the Church. It is true that, not everybody may become proficient in the biblical languages, but a basic knowledge of them would encourage the development of some professionals in this area for effective Bible translations.
9. The study of Igbo language is as well very significant for missionary expansion in Igboland. It is true that the United Nations has designated 20<sup>th</sup> February as 'World day of the Mother Tongue' for annual commemoration of indigenous languages, but in fact, this

researcher advocates that, in order to ensure the realization of its purpose, Igbo language should be made a core course in the Primary and Secondary schools in the Igbo-speaking parts of Nigeria. The only insurance against the obsolescence of the Igbo language is for the Igbos to start loving their language, to speak it, write, and read it, and to take all legitimate measures to develop it.

10. Moreover, the proceedings of the State Houses of Assembly in the southeastern Igbo states of Nigeria should be conducted in Igbo language. This is to ensure the promotion and integration of Igbo national identity consciousness, engendered by the people's language in the schemes of other ethnic realities. Evidently, Igbo language is one of the three languages recognized in Nigeria. The two others (Hausa and Yoruba) are conveniently used in some state Houses of Assembly where these languages are indigenous to the people. Why should the Igbo language not be used also in states of its domain?
11. The present Igbo scholars should fill up the gap in the development of Igbo language and culture by evolving an orthography, which would be widely accepted irrespective of the denominational sentiments and dialectical disparities of the various sub-cultures. The missing link between the era of persons like F.C. Ogbalu and the contemporary times may be wide, but efforts should be made to reconstruct the Igbo nationalistic consciousness through the Igbo language.
12. The proceedings of the meetings and activities of the many Igbo organization, including *Ohaneze Ndigbo* should be conducted in Igbo language. Apart from the ceremonial *igo Oji* that is often performed in Igbo language, it is baffling to realize that the proceedings of the meetings and activities of the many Igbo elite organization and political gatherings are usually conducted in English language. This is unlike what is mostly obtainable in the cultural practices of the neighbouring ethnic groups. The promotion of the Igbo language

should become a conscious and deliberate interest. We cannot afford to be destroying the elements of our own history with our own hands. This advocacy inspires that the development of the Igbo language, which was begun in the course of the need for Bible translation, and can be further advanced, not only for missionary reasons, but also for political and economic transactions.

13. To make substantial contribution to the development and preservation of the language and identity of the people, the Anglican Church in Igboland should encourage the ability to read the Igbo Bible as a prerequisite for such Church rites as confirmation, admissions, investitures, ordination, and others. In this way, the Church would have been advancing not just the course of the language, but also the expansion of Anglican mission in Igboland

#### **6.4 Suggestions for Further Studies**

Cultures and languages are constantly in dynamic progression. The interplay of religion with these cultural presuppositions, especially in Igboland portends enormous significance beyond the limits of missionary realities. They possess both identity and nationalistic implications, involving a redefinition and restoration of the position of the Igbo in the scheme of the Nigerian socio-religious and political gradations. In this regard, this researcher makes the following suggestions for further studies.

1. The examination of the Igbo language as an ecumenical factor among the various missionary groups in Igboland forms an interesting area for further study. This researcher views that the contemporary level of relationship between the Churches in Igboland is not encouraging. A study of how the Igbo language, which is their common cultural reality can enhance the unity of the Churches would be necessary.
2. There is the need for developing a distinctive Christian theology within the Igbo cultural context for recapturing the Igbo values, culture, language, wisdom and literature in the

mainstream of the global Christian teachings and practices. Igbo Christianity should of necessity, be able to assert the reality of Christ the Son of God to them in the context of their culture. Christ as revealed in the Bible should no longer remain a stranger to the Igbo, in colour and language, or in other distinct forms. In consequence therefore, the present researcher is suggesting a further research into the possibility of developing an Igbo Christian theology espoused in relation their distinctive knowledge and appropriation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

3. The question of Igbo unity as a reconnection with the impact of the translation of the Bible forms an important area of interest. With developments of the Union Igbo through the effort of Bible translation, the Igbo language was said to have attained a linguistic unity that broke the barriers of dialectical differences. However, the repeated notion of disunity among the Igbo, especially in the Nigerian political domain is already worrisome. As such, the notoriety of the notion of *Igbo enwe eze* (Igbo has no king) is a repudiation of the moral values of 'respect' with which the Igbo is known. The truth is that the Igbo socio-religious and cultural concepts are deep-rooted in the doctrine of human dignity and respect. Ironically, with the coming of the Christian religion in the wings western civilization, 'things have fallen apart'. In order to resolve the dilemma of proper definition of Igbo personality in the socio-cultural and political predispositions of the contemporary Nigeria, the present researcher therefore suggests a further study in this regard.

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## Letter of Recommendation from the Department of Religion & Human Relations

## **Appendix II**

### **RESEASRCH QUESTIONS**

1. What do you understand by Translation?
2. How is the concept of translation related to the Bible being made available in different indigenous languages?
3. Do you think that Bible translation is necessary for missionary activities?
4. Why did the Anglican Missionaries include Igbo language interpreters among their early missionary team?
5. Is it true that Igbo culture, including their language is “barbaric”?
6. Do you think that the language of a given people is indispensable for preaching the Christian Gospel to them?
7. Is true that foreign languages are being promoted and celebrated above the native languages, especially the Igbo language?
8. When was the Igbo Bible Nso translated?
9. Where did the work of Igbo Bible Nso take place?
10. Do you know any name among those who translated the Bible into Igbo Language?
11. What are the ways by which Igbo Bible translation enhanced the expansion of Anglican missionary activities in Igboland?
12. Do you think that translating the Bible into the common language of a people can enhance the ecumenism of the different missionary groups in the same cultural milieu?
13. To what extent has the translation of the Bible affected the development of the literacy of the Igbo Language?
14. Do you think that Igbo Bible translation has in any way influenced Igbo nationalistic identity consciousness?
15. What are the challenges you envisage that can militate against effective Bible translation into the various Nigerian languages?
16. How would the Anglican Church in Igboland help to preserve and propmote the the Language of the people?

### Appendix III – List of Primary Sources

S/N	Name	Age	Location	Occupation	Date of Interview
1.	Dr. Austin Orisakwe	74	Egbu Owerri	Registrar, Gregory University Uturu, Abia State	December 5, 2016
2.	Very Rev. Prof. D. C. Okeke	73	Awka, Anambra State	Anglican Clergy, Lecturer Paul University, Awka	February 20, 2017
3.	Ven. Adiegwu Louis	59	Enugu	Anglican Clergy, Enugu Area Chairman, Bible Society of Nigeria	March 3, 2017
4.	Dr. Mordi, B	63	Lagos	Executive Secretary, BSN	April 15, 2017
5.	Mr. Lucky	46	Lagos	Staff, BSN	April 21, 2017
6.	Mr. Sanusi	48	Lagos	Staff, BSN	April 24, 2017
7.	Fr. Anthony Ngwu	53	Eke, Enugu State	Chaplain, Catholic Biblical Apostolate of Nigeria, Enugu Diocese	May 24, 2017
8.	Okere, Gabriel	44	Enugu	Lecturer	June 13, 2017
9.	Prof Anthony Nkwoka	73	Awka, Anambra State	Director, Institute of Theology, Paul University Awka	June 28, 2017
10.	Chief Dan Agbo	85	Amechi Awkunanaw, Enugu	Retired Civil Servant	July 15, 2017
11.	Very Rev. Chike Nwizu	84	Enugu	Retired Anglican Clergy (Provost)	July 28, 2017
10.	Umeh, Chinwe	62	Enugu	Lecturer	August 20, 2017
11.	Uchendu, John	43	Enugu	Lecturer	August 25, 2017
12.	Aneke, Emmanuel	48	Enugu	Lay Reader, Anglican Church	September 8 2017
13.	Dr. Yakubu A. La'ah	56	Jos, Plateau State	Director, Nigeria Bible Translation Trust	October 16, 2017
14.	Rt. Rev. Prof Emmanuel Iheagwam	74	Egbu Owerri	Retired Bishop	October 20, 2017
15.	Eze, Ifeanyi	32	Enugu	Civil Servant	November 13, 2017
16.	Iwuagwu Progress	53	Enugu	Medical Practitioner	January 2108

17.	Eze, Kenechukwu	49	Nsukka	Lecturer	January 16, 2018
18.	Ugwu Collins	45	Nsukka	Lecturer	January 16, 2018
19.	Odigbo, Johnson	36	Ugbawka, Nkanu	Anglican Church Catechist	February 24, 2018
20.	Ezenwata, Chinedu	39	Obeagu-Uno Awkunanaw, Enugu	Anglican Church Lay Reader	March 12, 2018
21.	Ani Humphery	57	Amechi Awkunanaw, Enugu	Anglican Church Lay Reader	March 20, 2018
22.	Most Rev. E. O. Chukwuma	64	Enugu	Anglican Archbishop	May 7, 2018
23.	Fr. Ikpenwa, Albert	53	Enugu	Priest and Lecturer	May 16, 2018
24.	Fr. Chiegboka, ABC	56	Awka	Priest and Lecture	May 23, 2018
25.	Asigbo, Alex	52	Awka	Lecturer	May 25, 2018
26.	Ugwueze, Odinaka	46	Enugu	Pentecostal Pastor	June 18, 2018
27.	Ani, Chukwuemeka	58	Enugu	Busnesman	June 23, 2018
28.	Eke, Chidiebere	32	Afikpo	Clergy	June 29, 2018
29.	Nnajiofor, Solomon	42	Amagunze, Nkanu	Clergy	July 4, 2018