

The Evangelistic and Developmental Importance of Creation of Anglican Dioceses in Igboland (1864-2009)

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Abstract

The Church Missionary Society (CMS) which is the missionary society that brought Anglican mission into Igboland believed that Christian mission must be done in the context of a Diocese. The purpose of this paper is to attempt a historical exploration of the history of creation of Anglican Dioceses in Igboland and to critically examine the evangelistic and developmental importance of the system in the Igbo society from inception till the year 2009 when the last set of Anglican Dioceses were created in Igboland sequel to an official embargo placed on creation of Dioceses by the Primate of Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) the same year. This study essentially adopted descriptive phenomenology for data collection and analysis. In the process, it was discovered that the first Anglican Diocese in Igboland was created in 1864 and that between 1864 and 2009 about 50 Dioceses were created in Igboland. The analysis also showed that the Anglican Diocesan system did not only constitute a religious factor in the Igbo society but also a factor of human and social development.

Keywords: Anglican church, Dioceses, Evangelicalism, Development, Importance

1. Introduction

Anglican Church is the name borne by all the churches in communion with the see of Canterbury. The Church became an autonomous church during the 16th century Reformation. Her root goes back to the time of the Roman Empire when Christianity entered the Roman Province of Britain through the influences of St. Alban, St. Lirud, St. Ninian, St. Patrick and later through the more formal missionary activities of St. Augustine (David, 1984). Initially, the church acknowledged the authority of the Pope until the 16th century under the reign of Henry VIII when the Church of the Province of England jettisoned the authority of the Pope and consequently assumed an independent ecclesiastical status and the name *Anglicana Ecclesia* (Anglican Church). The religious settlement that emerged in the reign of Elizabeth I gave the Church the distinctive identity that she has retained till today.

In the 19th century, precisely in 1857, the evangelistic movement of some Anglican evangelicals in London known as Church Missionary Society spread to Igboland, Onitsha, to be precise, via Freetown in Sierra Leone and in 1864 the Anglican Diocesan system was inaugurated in Igboland with the creation of the Diocese of the Niger Territories with headquarters at Onitsha. From Onitsha, the Anglican Diocesan system spread to other parts of Igboland including the hinterlands and suburbs. The system, in addition to being an evangelistic factor, brought a lot of social and economic development to Igboland. These included among other things: education, enhanced human health via scientific medicare, legitimate trade and agriculture and infrastructural facilities.

The Church Missionary Society, according to Okeke (1994), was of the brand of Evangelicals who during the Evangelical Revival in England believed in the need for the evangelicals to remain part of the Anglican Church under its Diocesan and Episcopal system of administration. They believed that the injunction to spread the Gospel was to all Christians as individuals, and not to the church as an organization, but that evangelization required to be done within the context of a Diocese because the converts would eventually need to be constituted into a church which is a unit of the Diocese (Okeke, 1994).

A Diocese from the Greek term *dioikesis* meaning “administration” is the district or see under the supervision of a Bishop. In the Anglican context a Diocese is comprised of Unit Churches, Parishes and Archdeacons. A Diocese may also be referred to as a Bishopric or Episcopal see, though strictly the term “Episcopal see” refers to the domain of ecclesiastical authority officially held by the Bishop and the term “Bishopric” to the post of Bishop (<http://en.wikipedia>).

How the Anglican Diocesan system came into and spread throughout Igboland and how the system impacted upon the Igbo society in terms of evangelism and social development is the focus of this paper. In this

paper, the various areas of Igboland were grouped into five zones, and the processes of the planting and growth of the Anglican Church in each zone with emphasis on the growth of the church into a Diocesan status in various zones were studied in details.

2. The Concept and Origin of Diocese as a System of Church Administration

Diocese from the Greek *diokesis*, meaning “administration” is the district under the supervision of a Bishop. It is also known as a bishopric. A Diocese is divided into parishes (in the Anglican Church into Archdeaconries and Parishes). This structure of Church administration is known as Episcopal polity.

Originally, the term “Diocese” signified management of a household, hence administration or government in general. This term was soon used in Roman law to designate the territory dependent for its administration upon a city *civitas* (<http://www.episcopalarchives.org/pdf/2009:123-166>).

What in Latin was called *ager* or *territorim* namely a district subject to a city was habitually known in Roman East as a Diocese but as the Christian Bishop generally resided in a *civitas*, the territory administered by him being usually co-terminus with judicial territory of the city came to be known ecclesiastically by its civil term “Diocese”. The name “Diocese” was also given to the administrative subdivision of some provinces ruled by legates under the authority of the governor of the province.

The original term for the local groups of the faithful subject to a Bishop was *ecclesia*, and at a later date, *paroika*, i.e. the neighborhood. The Apostolic Canon and the Canon of Nicaea in 325 applied this latter term to the territory subject to a bishop. This term was retained in the east, where the council of Constantinople reserved the word Diocese for the territory subject to a patriarch. This usage finally became general in the west, though parish was sometimes used to indicate parishes in the present sense of the word (James, 2014).

In the later organization of the Roman Empire, the increasingly subdivided provinces were administratively associated in a larger unit, the diocese. With the adoption of Christianity as the Empire’s official religion in the 4th century, the clergy assumed official positions of authority alongside the civil governors. A formal church hierarchy was set up, parallel to the civil administrations, whose areas of responsibility often coincided.

With the collapse of the Western Empire in the 5th century, the bishops in Western Europe assumed a large part of the role of the former Roman governors. A similar, though less pronounced, development occurred in the East, where the Roman administrative apparatus was largely retained by the Byzantine Empire. In modern times, many dioceses, though later subdivided, have preserved the boundaries of a long-vanished Roman administrative division. For Gaul, Bruce Eagles has observed that “it has long been an academic commonplace in France that the medieval Dioceses, and their constituent *page*, were the direct territorial successors of the Roman *civitates*” (Onyekwere, 2014).

Modern usage of ‘Diocese’ tends to refer to the sphere of a bishop’s jurisdiction. This became commonplace during the self-conscious “classicizing” structural evolution of the Carolingian empire in the 9th century, but this usage had itself been evolving from the much earlier *parochial* (“parish”), dating from the increasingly formalized Christian authority structure in the 4th century (Albuquerque, 1911).

According to Wikipedia Encyclopedia, the Diocesan system of the Anglican Church was inherited from Rome as the English Reformation did not tamper with or wash away the Diocesan tradition (<http://en.wikipedia>). During the Reformation, a number of new Dioceses were founded in England. But after that period, no new Dioceses were created until the middle of the 19th century, when the Dioceses were founded mainly in response to the growing population of the Anglican world (<http://en.wikipedia>).

It is customary in the Anglican world to name each Diocese after the city where its Cathedral is located. Occasionally, when the Bishop’s seat has been moved from one part of the Diocese to another, the Diocese may retain both names, for example the Diocese of Bath and Wells. More recently, where a Cathedral is in a small or little known city, the Diocesan name has been coined to include the name of a nearby larger city, for instance the name of the Diocese whose Cathedral is in Rippon is the Diocese of Rippon and Leeds (<http://en.wikipedia>).

Initially, in Nigeria, a Diocese was more usually named after the geographical area covered by the Diocese, example Diocese of the Niger Territories, Diocese of Western Equatorial Africa, Diocese on the Niger, etc. In modern times, a Diocese is usually named after the major City or Town in the area covered by the Diocese, for example; Diocese of Lagos, Diocese of Enugu, Diocese of Nsukka, etc. Most recently, a Diocese has been named after the name of a notable church historical figure who hailed from the area, for example, Ajayi Crowther Diocese (Church Year Calendar, 2014).

An Anglican Diocese usually has a number of essential infrastructural features that characterize its formation everywhere the world over. One of such features is the Cathedral church which is the headquarter church of the Diocese where the Bishop of the Diocese is enthroned the Chancel of which contains the Bishop’s Episcopal seat commonly referred to as Bishop’s throne. Other infrastructural features of a Diocese in the Anglican Church include Bishops court which is the official residence of the Bishop and his family, and the Diocesan Secretariat which is the administrative complex of the Diocese containing the Bishop’s office and

those of his officials. The Diocesan Secretariat is otherwise called Diocesan Central Office. It contains a number of offices which are usually occupied by some elected, appointed and employed clerical and lay personnel.

3. Creation of Anglican Dioceses and Their Evangelistic Roles in Igboland (1964-2002)

The stimulus of the planting of Anglican Church in Igboland unlike the case with the Yorubaland came directly from the directive of the leadership of the CMS from London Diocese in 1857 (Nwankiti, 1996). This according to Adiele (2001:34) is without prejudice to the recruitment of Negro settlers in Sierra Leone who worked in the Niger Mission. Following the successful establishment of the Igbo mission commonly called the Niger Mission and the fast growth of the mission, the churches in Igboland were soon carved out of the Diocese of Sierra Leone and constituted into a new Diocese with in 1964 with headquarters at Onitsha.

From Onitsha (1857) the Anglican mission spread to the other areas of Igboland: Rivers/Abia area (1865) through Bonny; other parts of Anambra area outside Onitsha (1903) direct from Onitsha; Imo area (1905) direct from Onitsha; Enugu area (1916) through Awka; and Ebonyi area (1959) through Enugu, etc (Diara, 2004). By 2002, the mission which started as a single station at Onitsha in 1857 has developed to a chain of self-supporting and self-governing Dioceses. Thus, to state that the Anglican Church in Igboland is a fast growing church is simply stating a clear fact. In less than a century and half (1864-2009), the first Igbo Diocese grew and spread the Anglican mission to every part of Igboland, thereby giving birth to about 50 Dioceses (Church of Nigeria, 2014).

This remarkable growth was due to the sacrifice, hard work and burning zeal of the indigenous converts of the CMS some of whom were employed as the pioneer lay agents of the Mission in different parts of Igboland. The Sierra Leone agents laid the foundation of the work and the indigenous converts stepped into it and carried it on creditably. For the purpose of this research, the various areas of Igboland have been grouped into five zones as follows:

3.1 Anambra/Ika Zone

By 1857 when the Anglican mission was first established in Igboland, Onitsha which was the first mission town in Igboland, being a commercial town had started to attract a lot of migrations of people from various parts of Igboland and beyond. This brought about the rapid growth of the church to the effect that by 1864, the church had fully grown to a Diocesan status, hence the creation of the premier Diocese in Igboland and in Nigeria in general namely, the Diocese of Niger Territories with headquarters in Onitsha which was later renamed the Diocese of Western Equatorial Africa in 1891 (Adiele, 2001).

At the creation of the Diocese Ajayi Crowther who was the superintending priest of the Niger Mission was appointed the first Bishop of the Diocese. At his death in 1891, the two Missions, the Yoruba and the Niger were merged and given the name Diocese of the Western Equatorial Africa. Bishops J.S. Hill (1891 – 1894) and H. Tugwell (1894 – 1915) were the Diocesan Bishops successively. When the Diocese of Lagos was later carved out of the Diocese in 1919, the Diocese was renamed Diocese on the Niger, the name earlier on suggested by Crowther for the Diocese during its creation (Adiele, 1996).

At this juncture, the Diocese needed training centers where converts could be trained to become evangelists, church teachers, catechists and pastors. The idea was to get Igbo people who could help spread the gospel among their own people. The first training institute was established in Asaba in 1895 (Onyeidu, 2002). Difficulties of staffing and equipment led to the closure of the Institute in 1899. Students from there were moved to the old mission compound in Onitsha, and later to Ozalla in the same Onitsha in 1902 (Adiele, 1996).

Onitsha was considered unsuitable for training of church workers because the township environment had adverse effects on the character of some of the trainees. What was more, government establishment hemmed in mission property so that there was very little room for expansion. Subsequently, S.R. Smith, a priest, formed a class of evangelists in Iyienu. But Iyienu was not equally satisfactory for such purpose. By this time, Awka people were known by the missionaries to be skilled, intelligent blacksmiths who plied in many parts of the country and live peacefully with their hosts. Converts from Awka would most likely be effective in spreading the gospel in their host communities. Awka town then became the target for the setting up of a training college for evangelists, catechists, etc.

On January 20, 1899, S.R. Smith led a team of missionaries to Awka. This first mission to Awka was a failure, and as a result, Smith and his group went back to Onitsha (Okeke, 1994). Later, in 1903, the group returned to Awka, this time with Bishop Tugwell Bishop of the Diocese of Western Equatorial Africa. The people of Agulu Awka gave them a bad bush bordering Obibia stream, in the hope that the evil spirits and poisonous reptiles and the ghost of evil men, women and children dumped there would kill them. Smith and his group immediately began to clear the bush in order to build a house. On January 11, 1904, an oblong shaped, mud-walled and thatched-roof building was completed. It was there that the C.M.S. Training College took off. Six days later, G.T. Basden brought a group of six trainee evangelists there from their base at Iyienu (Nonyelum, 2000). The house so completed became the oldest of all the buildings in the then Awka College (now Paul

University, Awka).

The first group of the students of the College was being trained as evangelists, church teachers and catechists. Later, training of catechumen and women workers was introduced. Also, training of school teachers was introduced. The training of pastors followed later. The college thus became the powerhouse for the evangelization of the entire Igboland and beyond. The Anglican Church was thus established in Awka in 1904 (Adiele, 1996). The church continued to spread as the Holy Spirit empowered the missionaries and the gospel was penetrating the hinterlands.

Following the full growth of the Anglican Church in Awka area, the Diocese of Awka was carved out of the Diocese on the Niger on 8th March, 1987 with Maxwell Anikwenwa as its first Bishop (Church of Nigeria, 2002). Earlier, in 1976, the Diocese on the Niger gave birth to the Diocese of Asaba with Rowland Nwosu as the first Bishop. Another new Diocese was created twenty years later (1996) namely, Nnewi Diocese, with Godwin Okpala as the first Bishop. In 2001, the Diocese of Ika was carved out of Asaba Diocese with Peter Onekpe as the first Bishop (Church of Nigeria, 2002). This brought the number of Dioceses within the period under review in what the present writers refer to as “Anambra/ Ika zone” to five.

3.2 Rivers/Abia Zone

Owing to the economic circumstance of Ukwa area in Abia State, situated along the Southern base of the Oil River, Christian traders from Bonny introduced Christianity to the people (Tasie, 1978). Bonny people had received the gospel earlier through the Church Missionary Society under Samuel Ajayi Crowther who established the Bonny mission in 1865. The initiative to establish the mission was, however, taken by King William Dappa Pepple of Bonny in February 1861, having been baptized as a Christian in 1856 by Rev. George Henry M.C. Gill of the Christ Church, Watney Street, Middlesex (Tasie, 1978). King Pepple requested the CMS in London to send a missionary to Bonny for the evangelization of the people and he was referred to Ajayi Crowther at Onitsha, and through him the Bonny mission was established.

The Christian traders from Bonny preached the gospel in various parts of Abia zone including Ukwa, Ngwa and Umuahia, and established the first mission stations in Ndokiland at Ohambele, Akwete and Azumiri. The same group took the gospel to Asa and by 1898 Okirika traders preached the gospel at Oyigbo. Between 1906 and 1916 the juju shrines in the area were demolished and mission stations established. This brought Ndoki and Asa under Opobo District while Oyigbo was under Port Harcourt District. In 1958, Asa District was carved out of Ndoki (1978).

With the rapid growth of the churches in Abia Archdeaconry of the Niger Delta Diocese, the Diocese of Aba was created and inaugurated on January 9, 1972 with H.A Afonya as the first Bishop (Church of Nigeria, 2002). In 1993, during the Aba Diocesan synod held at St. Stephen's Church Umuahia the official resolution to create Umuahia and Ukwa Dioceses were made. Following the approval of the resolution, the Diocese of Umuahia was created and Inaugurated on January 9, 1994 with Ugochukwu U. Ezuoke as the first Bishop of the Diocese. The next day, January 10, 1994, the Diocese of Ukwa was inaugurated with Uju O.W. Obinya as its first Bishop (Ezuoke, 2001). The creation of Niger Delta North Diocese on 16th May, 1996 with I.C.O. Kattay as its first Bishop brought the number of the Dioceses in what the present writers describe as “Rivers/Abia Zone” within the period under review to four.

3.3 Imo Zone

What became the Diocese of Owerri, which is the first Diocese in Imo State started by the evangelistic work of Archdeacon J.T. Dennis. Archdeacon Dennis, a C.M.S. missionary arrived at Owerri through Oguta in April 1905. Dennis in the company of T.D. Anyaegbulam and A.C. Onyeabo, a catechist (who later became Bishop) arrived at Egbu and stayed briefly with Chief Egbukole in whose house they worshipped God for some time (Nwankiti, 1997).

Later, they were given a permanent site in an area called “Ogodo” in which Archdeacon Dennis and his team built a mission house. This became the headquarters of what was known as the Egbu mission within the then Diocese of Western Equatorial Africa. Thus, Egbu became a center for missionary work in Imo zone.

On 27th September 1906, Archdeacon Dennis proposed to the C.M.S. headquarters in London that the Igbo language spoken by Owerri people was “as pure a form of language as any other in the country”. He recommended the translation of the English Bible into Igbo language. By 30th December the same year, Archdeacon Dennis assisted by Anyaegbulam and Onyeabo, G. Green, David Eze, Moses Ofoduome and others, started the translation of the English Bible into what was called the “Union Igbo”.

In 1921, two years after Archdeacon Dennis' death, the Union Igbo Bible came out in print. The Bible facilitated the spread of the gospel in the Igbo hinterland and the evangelization of the entire area presently known as Imo, Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, part of Rivers and part of Delta States.

On January 27, 1959, the Diocese of Owerri was created with George E.I. Cockin as the first Bishop of the Diocese. On 6th November, 1984, the Diocese of Owerri gave birth to the Diocese of Orlu/Okigwe with S.C.

Ebo as its first Bishop. Later, on November 30, 1992, the Diocese of Mbaise was created out of the same Owerri Diocese with Cyril Anyanwu as its first Bishop (Nwankiti, 1997).

In 1994, what was then known as Okigwe/Orlu Diocese was split into three Dioceses, namely Orlu, Okigwe South and Okigwe North Dioceses. The Diocese of Okigwe North was inaugurated on January 7, 1994 with Alfred I.S.Nwizuzu as its first Bishop while the Diocese of Okigwe South was inaugurated on January 8, 1994 with Bennet Okoro as its first Bishop.

On February 15, 1996, the Diocese of Egbu was carved out of what remained of Owerri Diocese and Emmanuel U. Iheagwam was consecrated as the first Bishop of the Diocese. Three years later, on 12th July, 1999, the Diocese of Ideato emerged out of Orlu Diocese with Godson C. Echefu as its first Bishop. With the creation of Ideato Diocese, the number of Dioceses in Owerri zone within the period under review came to seven (Nwankiti, 1997).

It is interesting to note that it was in Imo zone that the dynamics of the lay agents was more visible than any other zone. The response of the people to the gospel was massive and so was the number of missionary volunteers. The lay agents who were deployed as “probational teachers” and “learner evangelists” depended on the local congregations in which they laboured for occasional help for food without receiving any payment.

In 1911, Rev. S.R. Smith, the then secretary of the Mission reported that six young men from the neighborhood of Ebu (Egbu) have volunteered to go out as teachers to be supported by the people to whom they go. Also in the course of the same year, Julius Spencer made an appeal for more volunteers. In response to the appeal, eight converts volunteered and were located at Atta, Olodo, Akabo, Umugwu, Isiobiaonu, Ifite, Ngo and Nekede. In this way, the gospel spread very fast in Imo Zone.

3.4 Enugu Zone

The beginning of Anglican Church in Enugu zone could be traced to Saturday, 22nd of April, 1916 when a Lay Agent, Jeremiah Ekemezie Ikejiani (later Rev. Canon) under the directive of Archdeacon G.T. Basden, first preached the gospel at Ogwe-Oji Ubala, Awlaw in Oji River Local Government Area. Ikejiani led one of the two groups of missionaries sent by Archdeacon Basden to plant the Anglican Church in Enugu zone. With him were Paul Nweke Ude, Joshua Nweke Okeke and Anubo Obi who helped in the evangelistic campaign in Awlaw community and its environment including Inyi and Achi.

The second group of missionaries went to Ngwo in 1917 under the leadership of Isaac Uzowulu Ejindu, a native of Obosi. From Ngwo, Ejindu and his team took the gospel to the coal miner and traders in Ogbete Enugu. Later, Ejindu became the superintendent priest of the newly created Enugu District of the Diocese of the Western Equatorial Africa. The district by then included Nsukka and Abakiliki zones and part of Benue State (Chukwuma, 2001).

In 1945, C.J. Patterson became the Bishop of the Diocese on the Niger. Enugu District then came under his ecclesiastical jurisdiction. On January 1, 1960, Patterson inaugurated Enugu as an Archdeaconry. Seven years later, precisely in 1967 at the request of the Synod of the Diocese on the Niger, the Provincial Standing Committee of the Province of West Africa (Anglican Communion) passed a resolution approving the advancement of the then Enugu Archdeaconry into a Diocesan status. Thus on 29th June, 1969, Enugu Diocese was inaugurated with Gideon Otubelu as its first Bishop.

Twenty five years later, on January 11, 1994 the Diocese of Enugu gave birth to the Diocese of Nsukka with Jonah Chukwuemeka Ilonuba as the first Bishop of the Diocese (Church Year Calendar, 2002). Later on, the Diocese of Oji River emerged out of the same Enugu Diocese on July 12, 1999 with Amos Madu as its first Bishop, thus bringing the number of Dioceses in Enugu zone within the period under review to three.

3.5 Ebonyi Zone

The planting of the Anglican Church in this zone was of very recent time. Before 1959, there was no Anglican Church in the zone. This was as a result of the zoning system adopted by the early Christian Missionaries in Eastern Nigeria for avoidance of conflicts among the missionaries of the three earliest Protestant Denominations, which evangelized Igbo land – the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches. Following this agreement, Abakaliki and its environs were zoned to the Presbyterian Church.

Thus, the Presbyterian Church was the first non-Roman Catholic Church in Abakaliki. For this reason, all other non-Roman Catholic Christians including those of the Anglican Church all of whom were stranger elements living in Abakaliki worshipped at the Presbyterian Church at Kpirikpiri, Abakaliki, using the order of service of the Presbyterian Church (Ezechukwu and Idede, 1999).

The Anglican Church which later sprang up in February 1959 at Hossana Hill Hall with only 601 members who were entirely non-indigenes, grew by leaps and bounds and attained an Archdeaconry status in 1989. Thus, Abakaliki Archdeaconry of the then Diocese of Enugu was created and it spread its tentacles to the entire Abakaliki senatorial zone and Afikpo area, and beyond, including Ogoja in Cross River State and its environs.

The Archdeaconry of six parishes and a number of missionary churches grew and developed into a Diocese in 1997 with Benson C.B. Onyeibor as its first Bishop. By 2002, the Diocese of Abakaliki is the only Anglican Diocese in Ebonyi area.

4. Developmental Importance of Anglican Dioceses in Igboland

Between 1864 and 1919, the Diocese of the Niger Territories later known as the Diocese of Western Equatorial Africa with headquarters at Onitsha encompassed almost all the regions in Nigeria, particularly the Eastern Region which is synonymous to Igboland. According to Onyeidu (2001: 41) about the year 1883, Niger Diocese was comprised of the whole of the Country Nigeria with a little exception. This Diocese spearheaded the establishment of the major factors of socio-economic development, such as education and medicare, in Igboland. This was because the colonial government was so slow in becoming aware of her duty to provide health care for the citizens as well as in accepting her responsibility for the education of the citizens.

Initially, the government only gave assistance in form of grants to missionary hospitals hence Christian Missions took the direct responsibility of establishing orthodox healthcare in Nigeria and Igboland in particular. According to Baur (1998:416) “comparably, the Protestants were well ahead in this respect and the Anglican missionaries were the pioneers”. A shining example was the pioneering Anglican medical services in Igboland through the Iyenu Hospital. Perry Brown who was stationed at Lokoja was the first medical staff of the Anglican Mission in Niger Diocese (Onyeidu 2001: 41).

Medical services occupied a second place in the missionary program of Anglican Dioceses in Igboland, second only to the actual preaching of the gospel. Just as Christ was primarily moved by genuine compassion to heal the sick, so also the pioneer Anglican Dioceses in Igboland were moved not only to preach the gospel in words but also to heal the sick. The officials of the Dioceses occasionally attracted the support of the governments in this respect before they gradually assumed full responsibility. For the pioneer missionaries their medicine chest was like a magical box working miracle of healing and winning the people’s confidence where their preaching would have failed. In rural areas simple medical care was until quite recently part of a missionary’s daily routine (Baur, 1998).

The building of the first school in Nigeria, precisely in Badagry by the CMS with the backing of the Diocese of London marked the formal introduction of western education in the country which could well be described as the barometer of the people’s development hence schools are the most important missionary social institutions in Nigeria as a whole (Baur, 1998). Greater number of children went or were sent to schools in order to have the white man’s knowledge, the secret of his power, and mostly, to learn in order to get a job. Whatever the motives in the historical and sociological perspectives may be, the mission schools were the greatest service done to Igbo people by the missionaries.

Initially, Sunday schools were established in which those who could read and write in Igbo language were assigned to teach. By this time, that was, before the 20th century, there was no formal schools recognized by government in rural areas. In fact, government was only based in Lagos (Adebisi, 1994). The Anglican missionaries spearheaded the task of educating the children of Igbo converts in vernacular with the aim that they would be converted and taught how to read and write the language of their people and hence be used for the work of the mission in their area. Thus, initially, the Anglican mission adopted native languages, namely vernacular, as language of instruction in their schools. This implies that Anglican missionary education in Igboland was introduced in stages. The first was literacy education followed by commercial/industrial education, then the Secondary and Grammar school education and finally, the Teacher’s Training Education (Onyeidu, 2001).

The efforts of the CMS and the Anglican Diocese of London and subsequently that of the then Anglican Diocese of the Niger Territories (later, the Diocese of Western Equatorial Africa) also affected the commercial and agricultural aspects of the economic life of the Igbo. The CMS missionaries from London Diocese assisted in re-establishing the legitimate trade on which European nations hitherto traded with Africans before the era of slave trade such as pepper, gum-arabic and Bini-cloth. In this way, the missionaries introduced European system of commerce in Igboland in place of the illegal trade on slaves. Industrial institutions were established to teach carpentry, bricklaying, dyeing, etc. (Okeke, 1994). New crops hitherto not found in Igboland were also introduced by the missionaries such as cassava, tomatoes, carrots, orange, mango, pineapple, sweet potato, cashew etc. (Agha, 2012).

From inception, Anglican Dioceses have contributed so much in transforming the Igbo environment starting from Onitsha where the Cathedral, Bishopscourt, Diocesan Secretariat and other infrastructural features of the first Diocese were sited. There is no doubt that such infrastructural and administrative provisions and facilities of an Anglican Diocese have the propensity of both environmental and human development such that a place where a Diocesan status is granted usually enjoys a reasonable level of developmental prospect.

No Diocese existed without a Cathedral, Bishopscourt, Secretariat and other basic infrastructural facilities. Thus, it is a constitutional matter that before a Diocesan status is granted an area, the Anglican

community in such area is required to source for funds from philanthropic individuals, governments and non-governmental organizations for the purpose of constructing the essential infrastructural requirements. However, in some exceptional cases, especially as it affects areas mapped for missionary Dioceses, concession is given for provisional Cathedral commonly called Pro-Cathedral and other temporary infrastructural outfits. In this case, some already existing structures are borrowed, reconstructed and or renovated as the case may be for temporary use until the Diocese grows and develops to be able to provide her own permanent structural requirements for a full-fledged Diocesan status.

5. Era of Abuse of Creation of Dioceses in Igboland (2003-2009)

Creation of Dioceses without infrastructural considerations which gave rise to abuse of creation of Anglican Dioceses in Nigeria actually began following the declaration of Decade of Evangelism by the Lambeth Conference in 1988. But the problem never arose in Igboland until the year 2005 when the first set of Missionary Dioceses were created in Igboland. From 2001 to 2005, 19 dioceses were created in Nigeria, out of these, six were missionary Dioceses and four of them belonged to Igboland namely, Ika, Arochukwu, Isikwuato and Ikwuano (Asadu, 2014). In addition, one full-fledged Diocese namely, Aguata was created the same year.

The abuse of creation of Anglican Dioceses in Igboland was climaxed between 2007 and 2009. In 2007 25 Dioceses were created out of which five were full-fledged Dioceses. Out of the 20 missionary dioceses created, Igboland alone had 9 Dioceses. These included: Afikpo, Ngbo, Ikwo, Enugu North, Awgwu/Aninri, Ogbaru, Etche, Ikwerre and Isiala-Ngwa South Dioceses. Out of the full-fledged Dioceses created that year Igboland got 3 – Nike, Isiala-Ngwa and Aba Ngwa North Dioceses bringing the number of Dioceses created in Igboland in one year to 12. The succeeding year 2008, twenty more dioceses were created. Out of these, Igboland got 9 Dioceses, two full-fledged - Udi and Oru Dioceses and 7 missionary – Eha-Amufu, Ihiala, Niger West, Mbamili, Ohaji/Egbema, On the Lake and Ndokwa Dioceses. In 2009 before the Primate placed embargo on creation of Dioceses after considering the degree of abuse of the exercise, 4 more Dioceses had already been created in Igboland, 2 full-fledged – Amichi and Ikeduru Dioceses and 2 missionary – Evo and Okigwe Dioceses (Church of Nigeria, 2014).

During this period, creation of Dioceses was not preceded by consideration of whether any meaningful evangelistic and developmental work has been done by those demanding for Diocesan status. Hence Dioceses were created at frivolous demands without actually considering how the areas to be created as Dioceses have fared in terms of evangelism and development and whether the people can actually carry the enormous responsibilities involved in maintaining a Diocese. This situation is considered an abuse of creation of Anglican Dioceses. This can be clearly seen in the fact that from 1864 to 2002 a period of 138 years only about 20 Dioceses were created in Igboland whereas between 2003 to 2009 a period of only 6 years as many as 30 Dioceses were created.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations were proffered as solutions to some of the problems discovered in the course of this research work.

1. Creation of Dioceses should be preceded by much caution and considerations as touching the infrastructural conditions attached to the status. This is to ensure that the new Dioceses will be able to bear the developmental and evangelistic responsibilities of a Diocese.
2. It is high time the embargo placed on creation of new Dioceses in Nigeria was lifted because of the developmental and evangelistic importance of the ecclesiastical exercise. Areas that are due for Diocesan status after all considerations have been put in place should not be denied the opportunity to serve God in the same capacity as others who are in the same level of evangelism and development.
3. The conditions for creation of missionary Dioceses should be heightened to avoid frivolous demands for Dioceses. Nothing less than strict conditions are required from those demanding for Diocesan status to checkmate further abuse of creation of Dioceses.
4. A number of inspection visits should be paid to an area preparing for a Diocesan status, missionary and full-fledged alike, to ensure that the requirements for creation of a missionary and full-fledged Dioceses respectively are on ground before the date of the creation/inauguration.

7. Conclusion

The Anglican Dioceses of London and her offshoots in Nigeria laid the foundation for the socio-economic development of Igboland. The colonial government was as slow in becoming aware of their duty to provide for the socio-economic development of the Nigerian citizens. For a long time, government contribution to education and healthcare was in the form of grants to the Christian Missions. The Christian missionaries were more responsible than the government in this respect, and the Anglicans were the pioneers.

Also, being the first to introduce the Diocesan system in Igboland, the Anglican Church has initiated

sustainable church-based infrastructural development in the various parts of the Igbo society where her Diocesan system has been established. There is no doubt that availability of the essential infrastructural facilities required for the establishment of an Anglican Diocese always facilitates human and environmental development. For instance, such towns in Igboland as Onitsha, Enugu, Owerri, Aba, Nnewi, Nsukka, Orlu, Umuahia and Okigwe, among others, where Anglican churches and subsequently Dioceses were established within the period under review no doubt enjoyed much developmental advantages over others.

The role of the CMS in that respect cannot be under-estimated but they could not have mediated sustainable socio-economic and infrastructural development without the funding role of the Dioceses. The CMS essentially provided the missionary personnel while the Dioceses provided the funding for missionary establishments. It was also the Dioceses that attracted governmental supports.

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