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AN EVANGELISTIC STRATEGY FOR THE MEN'S MISSIONARY  
UNION IN SOUTHEASTERN  
NIGERIA

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Theology

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by  
Christopher Okechukwu Uche  
May 2018

**APPROVAL SHEET**

AN EVANGELISTIC STRATEGY FOR THE MEN'S MISSIONARY  
UNION IN SOUTHEASTERN  
NIGERIA

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Date: May 2018 \_\_\_\_\_

For the glory of God

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## PREFACE

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Christopher Okechukwu Uche

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The proclamation of the gospel in Africa is producing remarkable growth, according to John Piper in his book *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Mission*,<sup>1</sup> Piper cites Perkin's "Believing in the Global South,"<sup>2</sup> and writes that Africa is currently recording a 2.36 percent annual growth in its Christian population. Piper further maintains that such growth will increase by 2050 with a projection that "Christianity will be chiefly the religion of Africa and the African diaspora."<sup>3</sup> This encouraging statistic reflects what the gospel work in Igboland, in Southeastern Nigeria is experiencing.

Christianity is popular in Igboland. Peter DomNwachukwu asserts, "Most Nigerians regard the majority of the Igbos as Christians. Almost everyone in Igboland will claim to be a Christian. What most Igbo men and women mean when they identify with Christianity is that they belong to one church or the other. However, not all Igbo people are Christians."<sup>4</sup> Although Igboland is Christianized, problems abound. The most noticeable problem is doctrinal issues that are not biblically supported but that are practiced by most churches. Other issues may relate to lack of discipleship and follow-up.

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<sup>1</sup>John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Mission*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 16-17.

<sup>2</sup>Philip Perkins, "Believing in the Global South," *First Things* 168 (December 2006): 13.

<sup>3</sup>Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!*, 17.

<sup>4</sup>Peter Nlemadim DomNwachukwu, *Authentic African Christianity: An Inculturation Model for the Igbo* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 4.

Hence, Igboland needs gospel-centered evangelistic ministry that will present the undiluted message of Christ to the people. Therefore, the men's leadership role in evangelism is required for this purpose because of their headship in the home in Southeast Nigeria.

Therefore, to prepare hearts for the Kingdom, an evangelistic ministry geared toward training men in the gospel is necessary. This thesis will explore possible evangelistic strategies that will galvanize the ministry of the Men's Missionary Union of Baptist Churches in the Southeastern part of Igboland. The geographic limit space of this thesis will cover the main five Southeastern geo-political states. They are Abia, Anambara, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States. The project will also explore gospel-centered methods that will provide avenues for men to present God's word effectively. This gospel presentation will be mindful of the socio-cultural, economic, and religious beliefs of the people of Southeastern Igboland.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to present some evangelistic strategies needed to energize the Men's Mission Union in Southeastern part of Nigeria. Therefore, I will seek to answer the following six questions: (1) Who are the Igbo people? (2) Where is their geographical location? (3) What is the historical background of the people of Southeast Nigeria with keen interest on identifiable cultural portraits, social life, religious and traditional beliefs of the people? (4) What efforts have been made in the past to reach the Igbo people with the gospel, with concentration on the Southern Baptist Mission, the Nigerian Baptist Mission, and the Men's Missionary Union in Nigeria? (5) What are the possible evangelistic strategies that the Baptist Men's Missionary Union of the Southeastern Nigeria can use to reach the people with the gospel of Christ? (6) What are some hindrances that will hamper evangelistic ministries in the area and some recommendations that can be of help while evangelizing the Igboland?

## **Background**

This study is based on the need to engage the Men's Missionary Union of the Southeastern Nigerian Baptist Convention churches in serious evangelistic work in their area. The interest in the Men's Missionary work grew because of the achievements of the Women's Missionary Union (WMU) in the area that has recorded some measures of success in expanding the gospel of Christ to their fellow females in the area. Due to the peculiar nature of the traditional and sociocultural life of the people, the men are leaders of the people, homes, and marriages. The expectation is that they should be able to utilize that opportunity of their vantage position in evangelizing their fellow males, their families, and the society at large with the gospel of Christ.

As an indigenous son of Southeastern Nigeria (Igboland), this writer studied at the Baptist College of Theology in Obinze, Owerri, in Igboland for three years, 1987 through 1990. He also served in the ministry for fourteen years in a neighboring tribal group. While serving there, this writer found that there were noticeable evangelistic deficiencies within the men's ministry of southeastern Nigeria. The deficiencies include lack of commitment in church planting efforts and evangelism. Furthermore, I have observed socio-culturally that men are the breadwinners of the homes in the area. They engage more in economic activities that provide for their families than any other venture. Considering the following, (1) the importance of the gospel, (2) the position of the southeast men in the family, and (3) the importance of men in the society, their efforts could be channeled towards evangelizing their male counterparts in the area. The study will seek to suggest evangelism strategies that will lead to such a goal. Another area the thesis will seek to address is to have a written document that will expose Baptist men in Southeastern Nigeria on what is required to engage people with the gospel of Christ in the area.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem of this study consists of the lack of proper evangelistic strategy for the men's ministry of the Baptist faith in the Southeastern region of Nigeria. The Women's Missionary Organization has dominated the ministry efforts in Southeastern Nigerian Baptist Convention churches. Deji Ayegboyin maintains that the Women's Missionary Union has contributed immensely to the advancement of the church and her mission especially in education and other mission programs.<sup>5</sup> Concerning the mission growth in Southeast Niger Delta, Basden's observes that the churches are "self-governing, as well as self-supporting and now operate independently under their own Constitution."<sup>6</sup> Basden's observation is based on leadership and administration, and not on a true reflection of the believers who uphold the evangelical truth of the gospel in Igboland. Proper evangelistic strategy, which centers on the Great Commission, is lacking in this geographical area. Christian believers in Igboland lack the evangelistic qualities of the early church. Therefore, a strategy is needed that will engage the Men's Missionary Union in discipleship and church planting in the East.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

Some scholars have researched the study of the evangelistic strategies within the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) and Southern Baptist Mission. Therefore, this study will delimit itself within the Baptist Men's missionary ministry in Igboland. The limitation of this study will not attempt to compare evangelistic strategies of other

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<sup>5</sup>Deji Ayegboyin, "Breaking the Chains of Illiteracy: The Contributions of the Baptist Women's Missionary Union in Nigeria," in *Pedagogy: The Church, Leadership and Theological Education in Africa*, ed. Ademola Ishola, Deji Ayegboyin, and Sayo Oladejo (Ibadan: Baptist Press Nigerian, 2009), 424-33.

<sup>6</sup>G. T. Basden, introduction to *Niger Ibos: A Description of the Primitive Life, Custom, and Animistic Beliefs of the Ibo People of Nigeria* (London: Seeley Services and Company, 1938), 11.

denominations nor the Women’s Missionary Union in the area. That will be beyond the scope of this study. The work will focus on the men reaching their counterparts, families, and the society in which they live, with the gospel of Christ.

### **Literary Review**

Larry McSwain’s explanation of the role of the committed Christian in a modern society is twofold: “the *oughtness* of commitment,” and “translating the *oughtness* of commitment into *isness* of ordinary life.”<sup>7</sup> This explanation is important to Christian evangelism. According to him, Christians living in modern society need to apply all advancements in technology in the presentation of the gospel to the society. He further notes, “the first effect of modernization upon a committed Christian is to challenge the personal value of commitments of biblical Christianity.”<sup>8</sup> McSwain then asserts that “our present modern context is as favorable as any in history for the effective communication of the gospel” through obedience to the will of God, and believers living a kingdom life style.<sup>9</sup> The argument that McSwain posits demands a sense of oughtness of commitment from the men in the southeastern region of Nigeria. Commitment on the part of the men especially in gospel presentation will lead to church revival and growth that is lacking in the area under consideration.

While giving an overview of evangelism, Will Metzger notes that believers being “change agents” through their presentation of the gospel of Christ should make the difference.<sup>10</sup> He maintains that the key to achieving success in gospel presentation is to examine and implement the foundational meaning of evangelism from the biblical point

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<sup>7</sup>Larry McSwain, “The Committed Christian in a Modern Society,” in *Witnessing Giving Life* (Nashville: SBC Stewardship Commission, 1988), 177.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 188-89.

<sup>10</sup>Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel Wholly by Grace Communicated Truthfully and Lovingly* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 16.

of view. He believes such foundation removes, “confusing our task, conveying the message accurately and lovingly, with God’s responsibility as the one who saves. We plant the message.”<sup>11</sup> Metzger argues that an adequate theological foundation in evangelism will create an opportunity to present a balanced and holistic gospel of Christ. He stresses that such foundation will prevent “the prevalence of nominal (in name only) Christians (which) is a plague in America and many parts of the world.”<sup>12</sup> According to him, believer’s lives should reflect the total effects of the gospel to those they are witnessing to. The outcome of such effects will lead to genuine conversion, he maintains.<sup>13</sup> Metzger’s emphasis in his book will prevent nominal Christianity among the southeast Men Missionary Union. Therefore, a theological foundation that will encourage a holistic gospel through the men’s ministry is important in Southeastern Nigeria.

Gregory Koukl, in his book *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions*, advocates an ambassador model of presenting the gospel.<sup>14</sup> He sees this as a friendly and diplomatic approach that will avoid confrontation in gospel presentation. According to him, there are tactics that will be employed to present the gospel which puts the presenter in control. He suggests that the ambassador should understand (1) the basic knowledge of the message, (2) the wisdom to convey the message clearly, and (3) the persuasiveness and character that projects virtues of the kingdom to the listener. The evangelistic strategy that will engage the believers in this ambassadorial approach is required for men in ministry. Such approach is needed in the Men’s ministry in Igboland.

Lewis Drummond emphasizes lay-centered ministry when discussing the

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<sup>11</sup>Metzger, *Tell the Truth*, 17.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Gregory Koukl, *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing your Christian Convictions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 20.



outreach strategy in today's church.<sup>15</sup> He stresses that lay-centered ministry will create a resurgence of dynamic churches. He believes that "Christianity was from inception a lay movement, and so it continued for a remarkable long time. Ministry for the early Christians was a happy, unself-conscious effort. They just went about quite naturally sharing their faith, 'gossiping the gospel' as it were."<sup>16</sup> He sees today's intellectualized professional Christianity that is left in the hands of the clergy as different from the early church days. The period was characterized by Christian faith being shared through spontaneous informal lay evangelists. According to his stand, the Church being the body of Christ, has different functions and gifts from the Holy Spirit. Therefore, these gifts should be harnessed for the growth and expansion of the Church around the world (1Cor 12: 29-30; 12-13).<sup>17</sup> Lay-centered ministry that will give men the opportunity to serve in different offices in the church that will in turn promote Church growth is required in Igboland.

DomNwachukwu suggests that the presentation of the gospel message to the Igbos must recognize "their socio-cultural context."<sup>18</sup> He further stresses that in the presentation of the Christian faith, the presenter must study the indigenous nature of the people. According to him, the Igbos are religious, and their cosmological worldview does not separate the sacred from the secular. He acknowledges the presence of churches but disputes the claim that almost everyone in Igboland is a Christian. Rather, he observes, they are merely identifying with one church or the other.<sup>19</sup> He maintains that biblical

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<sup>15</sup>Lewis Drummond, *Evangelism-The Counter Revolution* (London: Impact, 1972), 68.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>DomNwachukwu, *Authentic African Christianity*, 1.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 5.

strategies should be employed, and such strategy should be transforming in nature.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, the suggestions of the authors cited will be vital for ministry in Igboland. They include (1) becoming Christ's agents in character, (2) utilizing the available opportunities for lay-centered ministry, and (3) presenting the gospel in light of the socio-cultural and religious life of the people.

### **Methodology**

The thesis research was conducted at the J. P. Boyce Centennial Library, the Louisville Presbyterian Library, and others. Furthermore, the work employed fieldwork including interviews of pastors, missionaries, and Men's Missionary leaders of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. The material for the thesis came mostly from primary and secondary sources. The sources included dictionaries and books that focus on evangelism, church growth and mission. Articles from the libraries that focus on evangelistic strategies and from the Internet form the sources that were used in the work.

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<sup>20</sup>DomNwachukwu, *Authentic African Christianity*, 164.

CHAPTER 2  
THE GEOGRAPHY AND ETHNOGRAPHY OF  
SOUTHEAST NIGERIA (THE IBO OR IGBO  
ETHNIC GROUP)

The geographic and demographic information of the Southeastern states of Nigeria will come from national data and maps. Further information on these data will come from the historical facts of the Igbos as a people. The Southeastern states are located within the thirty-six states of the nation Nigeria. The states are also referred to as the South East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria.

**Geographic Location**

The Southeastern people of Nigeria, or the term Igbos, according to Cajetan Ebuziem, “refers to the indigenous people of Southern Eastern Nigeria and their language...covers the states of Abia, Anambara, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, and some parts of Delta and Rivers states.”<sup>1</sup> They make up six of the 36 states of the federation of Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> He further states that the geographical location of Igboland is situated within the tropical rain forest zone of West Africa. The area is found within longitudes 6 degree and 82 degrees east and latitude 42 degrees and 7 degrees north. He states that the land mass is about 15,800 square miles.<sup>3</sup>

Peter Okuma observes that although the Igbos are mostly located in the southeastern part of Nigeria, “they are scattered all over the country...And could also be

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<sup>1</sup>Cajetan Ebuziem, *Doing Ministry in the Igbo Context: Towards an Emerging Model and Method for the Church in Africa* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 25. See Maps of Igboland in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ebuziem, *Doing Ministry in the Igbo Context*, 25.

found in every part of the world.”<sup>4</sup> According to Richard Burgess, some of the urban cities found in Igboland outside the European initiated existing towns include, Enugu, Aba, and Port Harcourt.<sup>5</sup> Although he acknowledges that the Igbos were not city dwellers before their contact with the Europeans, this trend has change due to the emergence of other cities like Owerri, Nsukka, and Onitsha from 1960s in the region.<sup>6</sup>

This land lies between the Niger and Cross River states of present Nigeria.<sup>7</sup> Within that confine, the Igbos nation share boundaries with the Ibibios, Ijaws, the Igalas, and the Edos. Igbo-Ukwu in Anambara state is recognized as the people’s historical ancient settlement. This ancient settlement in the past served as an outpost of West African trade routes that traded gold, slaves, salt, cowries, ivory, pepper, kola nut, and other goods that are found in the area. The European presence in the areas following the abolition of slave trade boosted trade in palm products, timber, elephant tusks, and others.<sup>8</sup>

The five subgroups that characterize the major divisions in Igboland include the following: The Northern Igbos that is made up of Igbo-Ukwu, Onitsha, Enugu, Nri-Awka while the Western part consists of divisions of Ogwashi-Ukwu, Asaba, and Agbor. The Southern Igbos includes areas that cover Owerri, Umuahia, Ngwa, Owerri, Port Harcourt, and Eleme. The Eastern Igbos’ areas include Afikpo, Arochukwu-Ohafia, and Bende, and the North-Eastern Igbo: Ogu-Ukwu and Abakaliki.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Peter Chidi Okuma, *Towards African Theology: The Igbo Context in Nigeria* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2002), 69.

<sup>5</sup>Richard Burgess, *Studies in Mission: Nigerian’s Christian Revolution, the Civil War Revival and its Pentecostal Progeny (1967-2006)* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008), 35.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>“Igbo States Map, Igbo Cultural and Support Network,” accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.icsn.co.uk/igbo-statesmap>. See figures 3, 4, and 5.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

The British colonial rule that controlled these areas in the 1900s created the Eastern region from these subgroups during the amalgamation of the region. Meanwhile, the modern government of Nigeria after independence created Igbo States, following the location of these five subdivisions. Currently, the Igbos can be found in Abia, Anambra, Delta, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, and Rivers States.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the Igbos inhabit the land situated in the southeastern part of Nigeria, stretching from Niger to present day Cross River State. Furthermore, the recognized ancient settlement of the Igbos is at Igbo-Ugwu in present Anambara state, which served as ancient trade route in the past.

### **Ethnographic Data**

Demographically, the Igbo ethnic group is the third major tribe in Nigeria. Other tribes include the Hausa/Fulani, the Yorubas and more than 250 other ethnic groups in Nigeria, according to Ebuziem.<sup>11</sup> He further notes that “the population of the Igbo race is somewhere between 35 to 40 million people among Nigeria’s estimated population of 152 million people today.”<sup>12</sup> Another report puts the population of Nigeria at about 123 million people and the Igbo’s estimate is at 18 percent of the total Nigerian population.<sup>13</sup>

Holly Reed and Blessing Mberu examined the characteristics of Nigerian population using the two most recent Demographic and Health survey plans of Nigeria for (2003 and 2008), the 2006 Census figures, and the United Nations Data.<sup>14</sup> Generally,

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<sup>10</sup>“Igbo States Map, Igbo Cultural and Support Network.” Some of these states are not located in the Eastern part of Nigeria like Delta and Rivers, but geographically, some Igbo Speaking communities form part of the groups found in those states. See figure 4.

<sup>11</sup>Ebuziem, *Doing Ministry in Igbo Context*, 26.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>“Igbo” Countries and their Cultures, accessed October 9, 2016, <http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Mauritania-to-Nigeria/Igbo.html>.

<sup>14</sup>Holly E. Reed and Blessing U. Mberu, “Capitalizing on Nigeria’s Demographic Dividend: Reaping the Benefits and Diminishing the Burdens,” *African Population Studies*, accessed October 25,

the population of Nigeria is estimated around 162 million people with a future projected increase to 239 million by 2025 and 440 million by 2050.<sup>15</sup> According to their demographic survey data, the major growth in the population will be between the working ages of 15 and 64. Following the UN statistics, the authors note that in 2010, 49.8 percent of Nigerians lived in urban cities; this figure was expected to increase to half of the population by 2015, and continue until three-quarters of the population would live in cities by 2050.<sup>16</sup> This projection reflects the ethnographic situation of the Southeastern states.

The demographic survey report further shows that the annual growth rate of the population is around 3.26 percent. Reed and Mberu maintain that majority of the population falls under the age of 30. They again reveal that “male and female ratio reverses occasionally, but male mortality among adults may be quite high as well, especially in light of high maternal mortality rates for young adult females.”<sup>17</sup> Concerning household composition, the average data shows Nigeria households to contain 4.6 people on average. Out of the figure, 19 percent are headed by women while about 46 percent fall under the age of 15. The report further indicates that fertility rate in the south east is at 4.7 percent and the region has one of the lowest teenage fertility rates.<sup>18</sup> This report of Reed and Mberu on population annual growth rate and others in Nigeria reflect what is obtainable in Southeast Nigeria. The 19 percent figure of women reveals that men are the head of most family settings in Nigeria.

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2016, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4335263/>.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> “Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2013,” accessed October 20, 2016, <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR293/FR293.pdf>.

## Religion

Reed and Mberu maintain that Nigeria is a Christian and Muslim Nation. In 2008, 45 percent were Islamic, 42 percent were Protestant Christians and other Christian groups. According to the statistics, among these Christian groups, about 11.5 percent are Catholics. The religion statistics show that Catholic Christians are mainly concentrated in the southeastern area.<sup>19</sup> A comparison of the Southeast and Southwest shows that Southerners are mostly Roman Catholics, while Southwesterners are mostly from various Protestant denominations. The report indicates that “today, close to half of the Southwestern and far more than half of the Southeastern peoples are Christian, usually along lines of churches established by Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran and Baptist missionaries.”<sup>20</sup>

Okafor and others believe the 2006 census figures to be incorrect due to poor planning and execution as well as avoidable policy and implementation errors. The other reason is the failure to factor in two important variables—the ethnic and religious affiliations from the census questionnaires.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, the southeast census figures of 2006 reflect a growing population compared to the 1991 figures. The female population is slightly higher than the male population. The report also indicates the low teenage fertility rate in the southeast that is put at 4.7 percent. Another affirmation about the Igbo’s religious faith in this thesis is that they are mostly Roman Catholics.

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<sup>19</sup>Reed and Mberu, “Capitalizing on Nigeria’s Demographic Dividend.”

<sup>20</sup>“The People of Nigeria, Religion,” accessed October 20, 2016, <http://www.countryquest.com>.

<sup>21</sup>Okafor, Raymond, Ismaila Adeleke, and Athanasius Oparac, “An Appraisal of the Conduct and Provisional Results of the Nigerian Population and Housing Census 2006,” *American Statistics Association*, accessed November 3, 2016.

## CHAPTER 3

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

An understanding of the historical, cultural, and religious lives of the Igbos should be seen as an important element in the design of evangelistic strategies for the Men's Missionary Union of the Baptist denomination. Therefore, the historical background of the people's origin, the cultural life that is prevalent in the area, some traditions that exist among the Igbos, and the religious practices, will be examined in this chapter.

#### **The Historical Background of the Southeastern People of Nigeria**

Raphael Njoku believes that the Igbo nation must have been formed as a result of peculiar people with common dialects merging together over a period of time. He further maintains that this coming together of these groups "with varying peculiarities and linguistic dialects," promoted cultural and commercial interactions that resulted in the formation of Igbo language.<sup>1</sup> Another understanding of the historical background of the people has been linked to the pottery and tools that date back to 4500 BCE at Nsukka and Ibagwa respectively.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, as Sophia Dickson maintains, the other identifiable source of origin links the Igbos to the traditions of the Umueri clan in Anambra Valley. She stresses that recent records in the late 1970s maintain that some of the southeast

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<sup>1</sup>Raphael Chijioko Njoku, "Missionary Enterprise and Sociocultural Change in Igboland, Southeastern Nigeria: Realities, Myths, and Continuities, 1900-1960," in *Religion, History, and Politics in Nigeria: Essays in Honor of Ogbu U. Kalu*, ed. Chima J. Korieh and G. Ugo Nwokeji (New York: University Press of America, 2005), 76.

<sup>2</sup>Sophia Dickson, "History and Origin of Igbo People in Nigeria," accessed November 8, 2016, <http://www.academia.edu/6442785/historyandoriginofigbopeopleofnigeria>.



divisions that include, Owerri, Okigwi, Orlu, and Awka, show similar historical, linguistic, and cultural evidence that identifies these areas as the “Igbo heartland.”<sup>3</sup>

Another trace of the Igbo origin includes the relationship they have with their other neighbors that identify them as “the proto-Kwa group.”<sup>4</sup> The Kwa group hailed from “the African Great Lakes and Mountains of the Moon of East and Central Africa and settled at old Saharan grasslands.”<sup>5</sup> The Kwa group were forced to migrate southward to the Niger-Benue confluence areas to form the Nok people. The Kwas that formed the Nok people include the following- Igala, Idoma, Yoruba, Igbos, and the Tiv people. That will explain why the Igbos share similar linguistic ties with the Binis, Igalas, Yoruba, and the Idomas.<sup>6</sup> The Kwa Ibos mostly migrated further southward to settle in the North central uplands of Nsukka, Afikpo, Awka, and Orlu around 5000 BCE.

The *New World Encyclopedia* corroborates Dickson’s account because the “archaeological, linguistic, botanical and anthropological evidence suggest that the Igbos and their ancestors have lived in the present homes from the beginning of human history.”<sup>7</sup> A.E Afigbo, a renowned Igbo heritage scholar, stated that “the Igbo, and perhaps the Idoma and most likely the Ijaw (Ijo), would appear to be the one and only surviving coherent ethnic groups from the first set of proto-kwa speakers to penetrate the forest area of southern Nigeria....”<sup>8</sup> In accordance with Dickson’s view, the Igbos share

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<sup>3</sup>Dickson, “History and Origin of Igbo People in Nigeria.”

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>“Igbo People,” *New World Encyclopedia*, accessed November 8, 2016, <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/igbo>.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

linguistic ties with the Binis, and Igalas people group of Nigeria that date back to five to six thousand years.<sup>9</sup>

Obiakoizu Iloanusu chronicled various possibilities that have been promoted by scholars on the origin of the people of Igboland. According to him, the possibility of the Igbos as a people is known as “the lost tribe of Judah theory.”<sup>10</sup> The theory holds that the Igbo people have some similar cultural traits with the Jews that results in the people being acclaimed as “the Jews of Africa or the Jews of West Africa.”<sup>11</sup> He cites C. K. Meek’s similar hypothesis that traces the Igbo origin to ancient Egyptian cultural, religious and sociological ways of life. Meek, according to Iloanusu, describes another trace of Igbo origin when he observes, “Many traits of European culture must have begun to filter through Igbo community in the sixteenth century.”<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, citing G. T. Basden, who opines that the Igbos must have had an association with the Semitic races. Iloanusu again notes that successive invasions from Northeast Asia down to Egyptian territories must have resulted to a downward movement of the Igbo people to their present location.<sup>13</sup>

Another speculation on the historical origin of the Igbos is from Augustine Okwu’s belief on the people’s background and their derived name. Okwu believes that

Virtually, every missionary, colonial administrator, merchant, ethnographer, anthropologist or historian who had worked in Eastern Nigeria had always identified the Igbo with certain common attributes but was always uncertain as to their historical origin. Simon Ottenberg a noted scholar in the study of the Igbo characterized them as “one of the most unusual peoples in Africa.” Indeed “unusual people” probably because despite their acknowledged achievements, yet their

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<sup>9</sup>“Igbo People.”

<sup>10</sup>Obiakoizu Iloanusu, *Myths of the Creation of Man and the Origin of Death in Africa: A Study in Igbo Traditional Culture and Other African Cultures* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), 68.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 69.

history is still unknown and is mostly based on speculation.<sup>14</sup>

One of such speculations that Okwu mentions is that of the writings of Olaudah Equiano in the eighteenth century, and Horton in the nineteenth centuries that are based on Igbo culture and religion that have the semblance with that of the “Hebrewisms.”<sup>15</sup> Okwu maintains that such speculated semblance is found in the word Ibo, that is spelt “Heebo” or “Eboe” which is an “Ellison result from the word, Hebrew.”<sup>16</sup> Okwu notes that Horton’s opinion sees the “Eboe” as the “lost race of Israel who had occupied parts of Egypt during the days of Moses.”<sup>17</sup>

Edmond Ilogu and Iloanusi’s speculative remarks are a guide to the understanding of Igbos origin. Ilogu’s opinion is that the lack of record and archeological findings has made the people’s origin untraceable.<sup>18</sup> According to him, determining “the date of settlement or place of origin” of the Igbos is difficult. He refers to P. A. Talbot and Elliot Smith, who speculate that the people’s origin is Egypt or they possibly migrated from North Africa around 1870 BC.<sup>19</sup> He observes that tracing the similarity in customs and practices between the Igbos and the Egyptians is reasonable because of the connections between the two groups. The similarities that support this idea he maintains are traceable to the customs and practices, such as “mummification, circumcision, incision, tattooing, the use of boomerang, serpent and sun worship.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Augustine Okwu, *Igbo Culture and the Christian Missions 1857-1957: Conversion in Theory and Practice* (New York: University Press of America, 2010), 4.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Edmond Ilogu, *Christianity and Igbo Culture* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 174), 1.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

Ilogu agrees that the Igbos as a people are a product of migration and the name Igbo is being used “to indicate a language group as well as a culture group.”<sup>21</sup> He notes that the language group name was not used to designate the Igbo people ninety years ago, because they were designated through their clan’s names. He affirms the divisions of the Igboland into five subcultural entities that formed the people group.<sup>22</sup> The common theory that Iloanusu holds about the Igbos is that “the people are of Nigerian origin.”<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, he believes that lack of history and scientific proofs hamper the certainty of all the hypotheses that are stated in this thesis. According to him, to trace the origin of the Igbos of Eastern Nigeria is to depend on the word “Igbo” as a name that is used in three senses. The three senses are that the word name Igbo “refers to the territorial location; to the people themselves, and finally to the language of the people.”<sup>24</sup> The thesis will adopt Iloanusu’s view.

### **Cultural Portraits**

The Igbos live more of a communal life than an individualistic type of life<sup>25</sup> Ilogu stresses that the communal type of life of the people does not negate individual responsibility of communing with others to raise a good social, moral, and just society.<sup>26</sup> Onuh believes that the Igbos have “a very rich and complex culture.”<sup>27</sup> He argues that the cultural elements in Igboland are made explicit in the people’s vision of life. He states that “the Igbos have a religious culture or a cultural Religion... Hence it is difficult to

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<sup>21</sup>Ilogu, *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, 2.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Iloanusu, *Myths of the Creation of Man*, 69.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ilogu, *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, 22.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Charles Ok Onuh, *Christianity and Igbo Rites of Passage: The Prospects of Inculturation* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 16.

observe a dichotomy between the sacred and the profane in Igbo culture.”<sup>28</sup> Some of the cultural portraits that are noticeable among the Igbos include the following listed below.

### **Customs (Omenani)**

The customs and traditions of the Igbos are described as Omenani. It includes actions that are termed or seen as an abomination or pollution, (*Aru*) as Ilogu maintains.<sup>29</sup> He notes the other names that associates with Omenani as *Nso Ala* or translated “behavior contrary to laws of the *Ala*, the earth deity.”<sup>30</sup>

The word “*Nso Ala*” helps describe when someone has gone against the “approved social and religious norms” of the Igbo people.<sup>31</sup> Ilogu then identifies two major types of customs in Igboland. These include customs on morality and those that pertain to social and cultural practices. The Igbos, he maintains, have their moral codes in norms and in prohibitions that are approved by the earth goddess (*Ala*), and these prohibitions and approval are thereafter communicated through her to the dead ancestors to the people. He observes that the social and cultural traditional practices are conducted according to Omenani (custom), which includes marriages, burials, breaking of Kola nuts, drumming, or style of speaking.<sup>32</sup> According to him,

Culturally speaking, Omenani is the means by which the social ethos is measured, the values of the society are continued from one generation to another, and the process of socialization through the education of the young ones are facilitated. Harmony and equilibrium are in this way maintained as every member of the society knows what to expect from his neighbors and what to give to them, simply by observing the well-known custom, many ways of behavior and moral code, that

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<sup>28</sup>Onuh, *Christianity and the Igbo Rites of Passage*, 16.

<sup>29</sup>Ilogu, *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, 22.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid,

is, Omenani.<sup>33</sup>

The Omenani, he stresses, is not only fulfilling social, moral, and cultural functions but also that of religious, because it is derived from the goddess of *Ala* and sanctioned by the ancestor.<sup>34</sup>

Ilogu notes other cultural traits among the Igbos. They deal with the myths of the society that are expressed through rituals that go with public worship and seasonal ceremonies that the people observe. Prominent among these customs is the burying of the umbilical cord that falls out of a new born baby under the tap root of a fruit tree that is called “ube” (a native pear tree, *Dacryodes edulis*).<sup>35</sup> The belief is that

human beings share life with *Ala* (earth), that we have our nature which is partly made of earth, and that our sustenance comes from the fruits of the earth, and at death we rejoin in our bodies, the composition of earth whilst our soul joins our ancestors, who with the authority of *Ala*, rule and govern the earth on which the community builds its homes and society.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, Omenani as a custom is also seen as taboo or ritual that the people are to avoid in most Igbo communities.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, Omenani is an important cultural portrait of the Igbos that is practiced and cherished by the people.

### **Kola-nut Presentation**

The kola-nut presentation is another cultural portrait of the Igbos. Therefore, kola-nuts among the Igbos mean much because of “its sacred significance in Igboland.”<sup>38</sup> Another concept that follows the eating of kola-nut, especially in observing of special

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<sup>33</sup>Ilogu, Christianity and Igbo Culture, 23.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>38</sup>“Igbo Culture and Igbo Language,” accessed March 4, 2017, <http://www.igboguide.org>.

ceremonies, is its use in welcoming Igbo visitors into their homes. Still on its sacred significance, the kola-nut to an Igbo symbolizes “love, acceptance, and blessing.”<sup>39</sup> In the Igbo culture, whenever a kola-nut is presented and blessed, the visitors “will feel assured that they are welcomed and accepted with open hearts by the host/hosts.”<sup>40</sup> A major saying among the Igbos is that ‘*Oji anaghi anu asusu ozo, ma obughi Igbo*’ (the kola-nut cannot be presented in any other language except Igbo language).<sup>41</sup> Where it is not available, the Igbo man will apologize to the visitor. The major tradition that is attached to the presentation of the kola-nut to the guest by the host is the breaking of it in which the entire group will eat together as a sign of fellowship, acceptance, oneness, and unity as friends or partners. The tradition of the presentation is performed with some Igbo proverbs that go with the breaking and blessing of the kola-nut that includes, *Oji luo ulo okwuo ebe osi bia* (when kola-nut gets home, it will tell where it came from). The reason being that the visitor must pick one of them to show his people as a proof of the visit to the host’s home.<sup>42</sup> The process of breaking the kola-nut is another important aspect that is attached to the tradition.

Generally, the eldest man in the audience will take the kola-nut in his right hand and utter these blessings, prayers, or toast with this proverb: *Ihe di mma onye nacho, o ga-afu ya*. (Whatever good he is looking for; he will see it).<sup>43</sup> In the Igbo tradition, women are restricted from blessing and breaking a kola-nut. In a women’s gathering, any male child, “even if he is one-day old, will perform the rites of breaking

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<sup>39</sup>“Igbo Culture and Tradition,” Igbo Council of Traditional Title Holders USA Inc., accessed March 4, 2017, <http://erandshop.com/icotth/content/igbo-culture-and-tradition>.

<sup>40</sup>Igbo Council of Traditional Title Holders USA, “Igbo Culture and Tradition.”

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>“Igbo Culture and Igbo Language.”

<sup>43</sup>“Ibid.”

the kola nut.”<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, on its restriction of the women, they are forbidden to climb the tree.<sup>45</sup> The Igbos believe that the more parts that the kola-nut breaks into the more blessings and prosperity that follows such an occasion. Therefore, four or more broken parts mean great prosperity; but when it has about six parts, it attracts some extra ceremony and more merriment by the group.<sup>46</sup> The restriction of the women in handling kola-nuts or climbing the tree may be because of the headship and position of men in any gathering of the Igbos.

### **Music and Dance**

Music and Dancing is another cultural portrait that the Igbos usually display. The music style of the Igbos “incorporates percussion instruments like *udu*, a clay jug; *ekwe*, formed from a hollowed log; and the *ogene*, a hand bell that is designed from forged iron, *opi*, a flute, *odu enyi*, an instrument carved out of elephant tusk, *igba* (drums) and *ichika* (shakers).”<sup>47</sup> These instruments are used to form a highlife style of music and “*egwu-ekpili*.”<sup>48</sup> The highlife type of music is a fusion of jazz and traditional folklore music. The dancing method may include the regal shoulder movement, the waist-wriggling moves, or the acrobatic stunts that follow the rhythm from the traditional instruments dictating the dancer’s movement.<sup>49</sup> Music and dancing are part of the entertaining industry that is cherished by the Igbos. Tribal members can enjoy this entertainment during town hall meetings, village celebrations of new yam festivals, coronations of traditional rulers, burial, birth of a newborn baby, and other important

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<sup>44</sup>“Igbo Culture and Igbo Language.”

<sup>45</sup>Igbo Council of Traditional Title Holders USA, “Igbo Culture and Tradition.”

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.



celebrations in Igbo land.

### **Social Life**

The Igbo social structure is entrenched in its family setting that incorporates all the family members that live together to engage in social activities like meetings and recreation.<sup>50</sup> The social structures in Igboland, Ilogu stresses, model the “extended family system,” a system that sets the family as a nucleus society.<sup>51</sup> The type of extended family that is “nuclear” in this sense is called *ezi-na-ulo* and may also include other “nuclear families that are bonded together by blood relationships.”<sup>52</sup> The following social structures are found in Igbo society.

### **The Igbo Family Unit**

The Igbo family unit is made up of “a man and his wife (wives), their sons, and their daughters, as well as their dependents, if any,”<sup>53</sup> according to Cosmus Obiego. The man represents the family and meets their needs “both collectively and individually” within the social unit.<sup>54</sup> He states that the man also maintains his leadership in the socio-political and religious roles in the family. In a nuclear family, upon getting to the age of marriage, a son in a nuclear family will either suggest or the parents will suggest a wife for him. He notes that the son will set forth his own household after the marriage ceremony is conducted.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore as he posits, the nuclear family unit begins to

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<sup>50</sup>Ilogu, *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, 29.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Cosmus Okechuwu Obiego, *African Image of the Ultimate Reality: An Analysis of Igbo Idea of Life and Death in Relation to Chukwu-God* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), 40.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 41.

increase and build up when many male sons get married. Therefore, as he stresses, the marriage of the sons increases and forms this unit that is also called (*Obi, Ovu, Ezi*) or extended (or joint) family. The extended family unit is also called a compound, hamlet, or ward.<sup>56</sup>

## **Marriage**

Onuh describes marriage as, “the most important transition from one social category to another, because for at least one of the spouses, it involves a change of family, clan, village, or tribe, and sometimes the newly married couple even establish residence in a new house.”<sup>57</sup> Onuh views marriage as a rite of passage from adolescence to marital adult status.<sup>58</sup> The ceremonies begin with the visit of the home of the would-be bride by the bridegroom’s family. During the visit, the father of the bride will invite the daughter in the presence of the visitors (Grooms family) to ascertain and confirm the marriage proposal.<sup>59</sup>

Onuh describes the ceremony that begins with the formal introduction and subsequent marriage ceremony. He observes that the ceremonies will involve the father of the groom and elders of his family visiting the bride’s home for the bride’s price. The visit is accompanied with wine and kola-nuts, while the bride’s parents will provide the meal. A symbolic price that will be paid for the bride and other additional items such as kola-nuts, goat, chicken, and wine are some of the things that will be listed. The list of these items will be presented in an elaborate ceremony in the bride’s compound where “the money and other agreed prerequisites” are presented. Onuh notes that the other part

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<sup>56</sup>Obiego, *African Image of the Ultimate Reality*, 41.

<sup>57</sup>Onuh, *Christianity and Igbo Rites of Passage*, 156.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Michael Widjaja, “The Guide on Igbo Culture and Language,” accessed March 4, 2017, <http://www.igboguide.org>.

of the ceremony is the wedding oaths being taken by the two during the ceremonies.<sup>60</sup> The traditional marriage is mostly followed with a church wedding the next day, but sometimes the two events take place on the same day, and the bride will be officially accepted into the fold of the family of the man.<sup>61</sup>

Furthermore, Igbo culture upholds the checking of the bride's and even the groom's character and family background before any of the ceremonies will take place.<sup>62</sup> Another aspect that the culture takes cognizance of is the payment of dowry before the marriage rites or oath taking is performed. The belief of the Igbos is that any marriage without payment of a dowry and oath taking is viewed as an illicit relationship or friendship. Such an illicit relationship results in looking down with disdain on the couple; besides that, any child that comes through such illicit relationship is seen as a bastard and not a part of the community.<sup>63</sup> Marriage is therefore seen as an important social structure of the Igbos that helps form a home between a man and a woman before the blessings with children will follow such union.

### **Umunna or Kin Groups and Descent**

The Umunna or kin group is another cultural portrait of the Igbo society.<sup>64</sup> The Igbo kin group "places strong emphasis on lineage kinship system, particularly the patri-lineage."<sup>65</sup> The Ohafia people practice the matrilineal descent system, while the Afikpo group practices the double descent system. Generally, among Igbo groups, "One's

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<sup>60</sup>Widjaja, "The Guide on Igbo Culture and Language."

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Igbo Council of Traditional Title Holders USA, "Igbo Culture and Tradition."

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>"Igbo," *Encyclopedia of World Cultures*, accessed March 4, 2017, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/igbo>.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

mother's people remain important throughout one's life."<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, the kinship terminology that is known as Umunna, that is children of one father or localized patri-lineage system, is made up of special family compound. "The Umunna is made up of both male and female cognates of an Igbo man's father's lineage. All blood-related kinship groups are bound in the morality or ethics of Umunna, the ritualized spirit of a common mother agnates. *Ndi Ummunne or Ikwunne*, is the term used to describe the mothers."<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, Umunna can be from both matrilineal and patrilineal descents of kingship. Ilogu has similar recognition of what Umunna means to the Igbos. He maintains that Umunna is "the localized patri-lineage" that forms the central or basic social unit among the Igbos.<sup>68</sup> He sees the make-up from the background of the descendants in the male line in which the founder ancestor is named after the lineage. According to him, the size of a lineage Umunna varies in segmentations of major or minor sub-lineages. These can lead to Umunna occupying a single hamlet of scattered homesteads in forms known in Igbo as (*Ebe, Ebo, Ogbe, Ama*). These names are used to designate a group of villages. He states that various villages or sub-clans come together in forming what is known as *Obodo or Mba*, that is "village groups," or town.<sup>69</sup>

The towns (*Mba*) will later form "the highest political unit, and center of the modern forms of development and co-operative activities as he states the collective mission to be helping the town to get up."<sup>70</sup> The head of the kinship or lineages are known as Okpara or the most elderly or senior members or ancestral founders. He notes

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<sup>66</sup>*Encyclopedia of Igbo Cultures*, "Igbo."

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup>Ilogu, *Christianity and Ibo Culture*, 11.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*

the elder's responsibility to include: caring, giving direction, coordinating activities such as marriage engagements and ceremonies with other Umunna representatives attending and participating.<sup>71</sup> The Umunna kinship is a potential means that can be used to reach the Igbos as a group. The knowledge of these details and family relationships will enable the pastor/missionary to reach several people of Igbo race at the same time.

### **Igbo Masculinity**

According to Clifford Odimegwu, socially, the description of the idea and importance of Igbo masculinity is found in the works of a scholar of Igbo descent, Chinua Achebe, who wrote *Things Fall Apart*.<sup>72</sup> Odimegwu describes the social order of Igbo gender norms and values in these expressions:

At birth, boys are preferred over girls and how, through informal education, boys are groomed to be men, bold, courageous, audacious and fearless, while daughters are raised to be soft, subservient, passive, weak, and gentle. This silent but rigorous instruction into individual gender stereotypes are ingrained in the Igbo culture. Each of the sexes knows what is expected of them. As the children begin to grow up, boys and girl are socialized differently. Boys are socialized to see themselves as superior, stronger and with a feeling of authority, more important and indispensable than girls. Girls are trained to act as appendages of the men, growing to move out upon marriage.... Among the Igbo, women are called *oriaku*, or the enjoyers of wealth of their husbands.<sup>73</sup>

The concepts of Igbo family unit set up, marriage, kinship (Umunna), and the male masculinity give an average Igbo man a special position in the sociocultural set up in Igbo life. Therefore, these cultural traits mentioned above can enhance the leadership potential of men in mission and evangelism among the males in the Igbo community. More of these will be discussed in chapter 5.

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<sup>71</sup>Ilogu, *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, 13-14.

<sup>72</sup>Clifford Odimegwu, "The Cost of Being a Man: Social and Health Consequences of Igbo Masculinity," *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 15, no. 2 (February 2013): 219-34, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13691058.2012.747700>.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, 221.

## Religious and Traditional Belief

Ebuziem remarks that the traditional and religious life of the Igbos is intertwined with nature.<sup>74</sup> He underscores that “the Igbo people are highly religious people” and that “their religion is their philosophy.”<sup>75</sup> He also notes that the “Igbo religion and philosophy is a lived experience.”<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Obiego acknowledges that religion plays an important part in the life of the Igbos. He asserts that among the Igbos, “their religion is their existence and their existence is their religion.”<sup>77</sup> He maintains that every department of the people’s life revolves around their religious and traditional belief system.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, he states that there is no distinction between the “sacred and the profane” among the Igbos.<sup>79</sup> However, this study will be limited to the people’s beliefs on the Supreme Deity, the *Mmuo* or spirit forces, the ancestral deity or the spirit world, and man.

### The Belief in Supreme Deity

According to his concept, Nkem Emeghara believes that Igbos have four Spiritual beings they recognize. *Chukwu*, the supreme being that is also “most powerful of all the spirits.”<sup>80</sup> He notes that the Igbos acknowledge *Chukwu* as (the Spirit that Creates), or *Chi Ukwu* (The Great Spirit).<sup>81</sup> Other references of God as Emeghara posited

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<sup>74</sup>Ebuziem, *Doing Ministry in the Igbo Context*, 125.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Obiego, *African Image of the Ultimate Reality*, 54.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Nkem Emeghara, “The Osu Caste System in Nigeria: A Christian Response,” *African Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 13, no. 1 (1994): 26-43, accessed April 3, 2017, [https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ajet/13-1\\_026.pdf](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ajet/13-1_026.pdf).

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 28.

are *Onyeokike* (The Creator) and *Eze Okike* (The King or Lord of Creation). Furthermore, he recognizes their supreme concept of God as “the source of human life, animals, rain crops and others, and *Chukwu* (God) also gives every human part of himself called the *Chi*, which is the ‘destiny Spirit’ or ‘Spirit double’ to the man which remains throughout life.”<sup>82</sup>

M.C. Onukawa in his Igbo concept of God remarks that the “Christian-oriented analysis of *Chineke* comes from the background that is relatively expressed in God who creates.”<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, he notes that the name *Chineke* or an expression of *Chi-na-eke* sees the “*Chi*” as the “Christian God,” “*na*” as an auxiliary verb and *Eke* as a simple participle (verbal) all three Igbo words denoting, God who creates.<sup>84</sup> He denies that *Chukwu* as a compound nominal is not a Christian derivative, but an Aro Igbo itinerant group’s phrasal derivative that became popular during the slave trade business with the Europeans.<sup>85</sup> This idea is not the popular view. The popular view is that the Igbos believe that God is the creator of all things, and this is expressed in the name *Chi-na-eke*, that is, God who creates.

According to Chris Manus, religion plays a significant role in Igbo man’s life which begins with the recognition of “the Great God” known as *Chi-Ukwu*.<sup>86</sup> He states that *Chi-ukwu* is also seen as the creator of “*Uwa*” (the visible earth), who is immense – *ode na Igbo* (the one whose being covers the whole extent of Igboland).<sup>87</sup> Illoanusi

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<sup>82</sup>Emeghara, “The Osu Caste System in Nigeria,” 28.

<sup>83</sup>M. C. Onukawa, “The Chi Concepts in Igbo Gender Naming” in *Africa: Journal of International African Institutes* 70, no. 1, (2000): 107-17, accessed March 24, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1161403>.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 109-10.

<sup>86</sup>Chris Ukachukwu Manus, “The Concept of Death and the Afterlife in the Old Testament and Igbo Traditional Religion: Some Reflections for Contemporary Missiology,” *Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies* 3, no. 2 (1986): n.p.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

maintains that “God is no stranger to African peoples,” quoting a proverb that says, “no one shows a child the supreme being.”<sup>88</sup> He believes that the knowledge of God is an “instinct” to an African.<sup>89</sup>

Having recognized other divinities, Iloanusi maintains that the Igbo religious belief in God sees Him as the One and Only God of the universe, who is the creator of the world. He is of the opinion that most Africans may not have this concept, but cites examples of the Oneness of God in Igbo and other African concepts to include Igbos-Chukwu, the Yorubas – Olodumare; the Nuer Kwoth; the Ila, Leza that have similar concepts. According to him, the Igbo name, *Chi din ’uwa*, that is, God of the universe, expresses God’s “unrestricted universality” and Oneness.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, the Igbos have a strong belief in God, who is a supreme deity and creator of the universe and all that exist in it. With such belief, evangelization of the Igbos would not be all too difficult.

### **The Mmuo or The Spirit Deities**

Emefie Metuh states that there is a recognizable relationship between *Chukwu* and *Mmuo*, the Spirit deities, although such concept is not explicit.<sup>91</sup> The Igbos, he notes, see God as the creator of the world and he “infinitely transcends it.”<sup>92</sup> Another belief they hold strongly is that God also created the deities, and he supersedes them in power and excellence, although the Igbos usually worship the deities. He argues that the concept of the Mmuo deities makes it difficult to compare African Traditional Religion (ATR) with the monotheistic concept of Judeo-Christian religion.<sup>93</sup> He notes that the Igbos affirm,

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<sup>88</sup>Iloanusi, *Myths of the Creation of Man*, 49-50.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>91</sup>Emefie Metuh, *God and Man in African Religion* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1981), 60.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid.



“the unity and supremacy of God, and the greatness and the multiplicity of the deities.”<sup>94</sup>

Metuh also posits that God is seen to be distinct from the world even as distant as the sky is from the earth. He notes that all creatures including the deities inhabit the world, and all their activities take place here on earth.<sup>95</sup> The deities act as God’s representatives or his sons or his messengers, and God is present in each individual person through his “*chi*.”<sup>96</sup> According to him, the spirits or deities also have immediate access to God, and the deities administer in various provinces and report back to God. He observes that the deities have some measure of sovereignty and independence in some aspect of life they are assigned to control.<sup>97</sup>

Onuh identifies these deities by stating that the sun deity (*Anyanwu*) is deity of fortune and provider of wealth, while the sky or thunder deity (*Igwe or Amadioha*) expresses this “power and anger in thunderbolts and lightning.”<sup>98</sup> He notes that the “most prominent and most important of the Igbo deities is the earth goddess (*Ala*) that is also seen as the “president of the earth below.”<sup>99</sup> The deity *Ala* is also in charge of both the living and the dead, and is the “giver of fertility to men, animals, and crops.”<sup>100</sup> He acknowledges the relationship that exists between the living and the dead in a symbolic level.<sup>101</sup>

This thesis recognizes that the spirit deities in the Igbo concept are created beings that inhabit the earth and serve as messengers and administrators for the supreme

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<sup>94</sup>Metuh, *God and Man in African Religion*, 61.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Onuh, *Christianity and Igbo Rites of Passage*, 24.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

deity. The deities were given power by a supreme deity to control certain areas and events of life, and the most prominent of them are the anyanwu, amadioha, and the ala goddess.

### **The Ancestors**

The Igbos believe in the existence of ancestors. As Metuah maintains, this supports the idea of reincarnation in their traditional beliefs. He stresses that the Igbos believe that “life is an interminable cycle of birth, death and rebirth.”<sup>102</sup> He notes that when *Mmuo* (the Spirit) passes the three stages of life (birth, death, and rebirth) and becomes mature in status in the Spirit realm, he becomes an ancestor.<sup>103</sup> Mutuh emphasizes that through the process of changing the status, the ancestral dead spirit now assumes his position in the Spirit world, *ala mmuo*, among the ancestors. The three major rites of passage the *Mmuo* or the Spirit undergoes to reach this stage are the birth rites, puberty rites, and burial rites.<sup>104</sup>

The recognized role of the ancestors in Igboland is their worship or veneration. The ancestor’s worship or veneration has been a matter of debate in African Traditional Religion among scholars according to Iloanusi.<sup>105</sup> He observes that the ancestor’s veneration takes different forms among Africans, but he cites an example of the Igbos that usually offer morning invocational prayers to the ancestors. Iloanusi notes the form of such prayers as,

Chukwu (God) Come and eat Kola, Ala (Earth Goddess) Come and eat Kola;  
Ndichie (Ancestors) come and eat Kola. We thank you for your protection  
throughout the night and beg you to guide each member of the family throughout

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<sup>102</sup>Metuh, *God and Man in African Religion*, 90.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 90-91.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>Iloanusi, *Myths of the Creation of Man*, 60.

the day.<sup>106</sup>

He sees in this prayer that the ancestors are being assigned a place and a role as a messenger of God during cult worship. Furthermore, the ancestors are viewed in Igbo and other African Cultures as “living dead.”<sup>107</sup> They are viewed as, “no longer ordinary mortals, because they have crossed the borderland between this world and the supra-sensible world, entering and living in the latter, they have become freed from the restrictions imposed by physical world.”<sup>108</sup> What to observe about belief in ancestors is that the Igbos have strong ties and belief in the ancestors, and they venerate and accord them worship. They believe that their ancestors still live on as the living dead. This belief gives room to the idea of reincarnation in Igbo traditional culture.

### **The Spirit World and Spirit Beings**

The Igbos, according to Obiego, view the universe as a “religious arena.”<sup>109</sup> Therefore, nature, he notes, is “filled with religious significance.”<sup>110</sup> He continues by stating the Igbo’s view of the invisible world; they believe that “the invisible world is the counterpart of the visible.”<sup>111</sup> Citing V. C. Uchendu’s assertion on Igbo’s traditional beliefs on the spirit world and being, he states that the Igbo world is

...a world peopled by the invisible and visible forces, by the living, the dead, and those to be born. It is a world in which all these forces interact, affecting and modifying behaviors; a world that is delicately balanced between opposing forces, each motivated by its self-interest, a world whose survival demands some form of co-operation among its members although that co-operation may be minimal and even hostile in character... it conceives reincarnation as not only the bridge between the living and the dead, but necessary precondition for the transaction and transfer

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<sup>106</sup>Iloanusi, *Myths of the Creation of Man*, 61.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

<sup>109</sup>Obiego, *African Image of the Ultimate Reality*, 108.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 108-9.

of social status from the world of man to the world of the dead... It is a world that is spoiled by man and not by spirit, yet man is allowed a wide latitude in his behavior – an important factor in the dynamics of Igbo culture....<sup>112</sup>

Therefore, the above statement recognizes the spiritual dimension of existence among the Igbo people.

Obiego maintains that the inhabitants of this spiritual world were created by *Chukwu*, according to Igbo beliefs, includes the “*Alusi*” or “*Arusi*” (spiritual being).<sup>113</sup> He states that these spiritual beings inhabit mostly the invisible world, and some are made of good benevolent, hospitable and industrious behavior.<sup>114</sup> Others, he claims, are “wicked, malignant, unmerciful, fraudulent, treacherous and envious in nature.”<sup>115</sup> Understanding this belief will help in finding appropriate inroads of gospel presentation that will be addressed in the later part of this thesis.

## **Man**

The Igbo concept of man is that “man is a creature of God” or “*Ekechukwu*” according to Metuh.<sup>116</sup> He adds that man is the “first human pair that was sent down by God from heaven”<sup>117</sup> to inhabit the earth. Furthermore, on man as God’s creation, he maintains that the Igbo’s belief holds that God is also the creator of each individual person. The four constituent principles of man the Igbos acknowledge are that man is made of “*Obi*” (heart or breath), the *Mmuo* or “*Onyinyo*,” that of (the spirit or shadows) called “*Chi*” or destiny, and the *Eke*, the personality or ancestral guardian”<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>Obiego, *African Image of the Ultimate Reality*, 110.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 111.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

<sup>116</sup>Metuh, *Man and God in African Religion*, 87.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid.

The other description of these constituents of man is the “*obi*,” which is man’s animating principle, the seat of affection and volition. The *chi* is “believed to be an emanation of the Creator, a spark of Him in each person.”<sup>119</sup> The “*Eke*” is believed to be an ancestral shade incarnate in each newly born baby associated with the idea of reincarnation. The Igbos believe that what survives after death is *Mmuo* or the spirit. The belief again states that *Mmuo* is “directly created by God and pre-exists its appearance in the human form,” but turns to shadow at death.<sup>120</sup> Another definition of Igbo traditional concept of man is Obiego’s idea that sees man (*Mmadu*) as originating from Chukwu, (God) whom he also owes his being. He maintains that God created man and all parts of him and placed him (*Mmadu*) in a garden to observe certain laws.<sup>121</sup> According to him, the chief among the laws is that man “should be liberal in almsgiving, and show kindness and hospitality to all strangers.”<sup>122</sup>

He also notes that God brought man down to inhabit the earth after he had finished creating heaven and the earth.<sup>123</sup> Obiego mentions the people’s belief that man is the head of creation, how he was created, and has a common parlance that states that: “Chukwu is an ‘uzu-na-akpu-nwa’: Chukwu is the smith who molds, forms, or fashions children, i.e. *Mmadu*.”<sup>124</sup> The Igbos have the belief that man is created by God and placed on the earth to show a liberal mind and hospitality to each other.

The understanding of the historical setting of the Igbos, their cultural portraits, social life, and the religious and traditional beliefs of the people, show that the people,

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<sup>119</sup>Metuh, *Man and God in African Religion*, 88.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>121</sup>Obiego, *African Image of the Ultimate Reality*, 64.

<sup>122</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup>*Ibid.*

based on some of their traditional and social ways of life, will need the presentation of the Gospel message of Christ. The men, based on their position in sociocultural and traditional life of the people, can be instruments used to reach others. Therefore, the next focus of the thesis will address Christian ministries in Igboland.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE HISTORY OF MISSIONS IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

This chapter will trace the history of Christian mission work in Nigeria, specifically the influence of early attempts by explorers and missionaries to bring Christianity to the southeastern part of Nigeria. Second, it will examine the origin of Thomas Jefferson Bowen's mission work through the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) of the United States. Third, this chapter will explore the history of Baptist witness in the Southeastern states of Nigeria, which was pioneered by the Southern Baptist Convention Mission Board and later handed over to the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Fourth, based on the joint missions of the Southern Baptist Convention and Nigerian Baptist Convention, this thesis will consider the activities of the Men's Missionary Union, which coordinates the work of men and boys of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

#### **Christian Missions in Southeast Nigeria**

Taiye Ademolekun, a historian and specialist in mission and church growth, traces missions work in Nigeria to the period of denominationalism and missionary activities beginning in the 1840s. During this period, European and American missionary organizations converted many Nigerians to Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Ademolekun recounts how

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<sup>1</sup>Taiye Ademolekun, "Main Trends in the Church Growth in Nigeria," *European Scientific Journal* 8, no. 23 (October 2012): 4, accessed January 25, 2018, <https://www.eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/viewfile/450/671>.

liberated slaves, especially from the Yoruba ethnic group, embraced Christianity and later migrated to Badagry and Abeokuta in Western Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> Justin Ukpong concurs, observing that the history of Christian missions in southeastern Nigeria should be traced to the liberated slaves who emigrated to Western Nigeria and invited missionaries to accompany them.<sup>3</sup>

Church pastor and historian Peter DomNwachukwu adds that in the 1840s, “the big four” (the Methodists, the Anglican Church Missionary Society, the Baptists, and the Catholics) launched their mission work in Nigeria.<sup>4</sup> The Methodists responded first to the liberated slaves’ invitation in 1842, and the Anglican Church Missionary Society arrived in 1845. In April 1846, Hope M. Waddell began the United Presbyterian church’s mission to the people of Efik in Calabar, an old slave-trading town; this established the Church of Scotland mission in Nigeria. In 1850, the Southern Baptist Convention arrived in Badagry, western Nigeria. Father Joseph Lutz arrived with the Holy Ghost group of 35 years later, which represented the beginning of Catholic mission work among the Igbos of Southeastern Nigeria. Other groups followed, including the Qua Ibo of Northern Ireland, the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society, and the Basel Mission.<sup>5</sup>

While these historians agree on the importance of waves of missionary groups coming to Nigeria, DomNwachukwu argues that a much earlier missionary attempt was made in this area. He states that Portuguese merchants pioneered a mission in Midwestern Nigeria in 1485, but they only succeeded in setting up a school in the Oba’s (king) palace. Since the king’s successor was unreceptive to the idea, the missionaries

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<sup>2</sup>Ademolekun, “Main Trends in the Church Growth in Nigeria,” 4.

<sup>3</sup>Justin Ukpong, “Nigeria,” in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, ed. Daniel Patte (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 873.

<sup>4</sup>DomNwachukwu, *Authentic African Christianity*, 51.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.



withdrew from the area in 1516. Nevertheless, attempts by the Portuguese merchants, slavery, and denominationalism heavily influenced the beginning of Christian missions in southeastern Nigeria.<sup>6</sup>

### **Baptist Missions in Southeast Nigeria**

Baptist work in Southeastern Nigeria, as recorded in the “Nigerian Baptist Convention Highlight on History,” acknowledges that the ministry of the Baptists began in Eastern Nigeria between 1914 and 1950.<sup>7</sup> The NBC Highlight discloses that Buguma, a river town in the Niger Delta, served as an entry point. The Niger Delta Baptist Churches, which were under the administrative leadership of Mojola Agbebi, had their headquarters at Buguma.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the record shows that Baptist mission work entered the eastern part of Nigeria around 1917, when a Baptist church was planted at Ihiagwa, near Owerri, in the present-day Imo State. J. T Princewell, a Buguma Baptist church member and traveling trader to Ihiagwa, championed this church planting effort. Wariboko George Amakiri, a Baptist missionary to the area, supervised the church and later succeeded Dr. Mojola Agbebi. Amakiri, the first itinerant missionary in the Niger Delta area contributed to the expansion of Baptist work in eastern Nigeria. The first American Baptist Missionary to visit the Owerri area was W. Carson, and the first resident Southern Baptist missionary to the core eastern part of Nigeria—which is now Igboland, and comprises the present-day five Southeastern states—was Russell L. Locke in 1957<sup>9</sup> (see figures A1, A2, A3, and tables A1, A2, A3).

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<sup>6</sup> DomNwachukwu, *Authentic African Christianity*, 51.

<sup>7</sup>“Highlights on History,” Nigerian Baptist Convention, accessed January 25, 2018, <https://www.nigerianbaptist.org/about-us/highlights-on-history/>.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

DomNwachukwu notes that the first mission group to begin work in the area was the Church Missionary Society (CMS), in Onisha in 1857.<sup>10</sup> Samuel Ajayi Crowther and other team members, which include Simon Jonas, Augustus Radilo, pioneered this effort along with J. C. Taylor, all of whom were liberated slaves from the Igbo tribe. The following group was the Roman Catholic Mission at Onisha in 1885.<sup>11</sup> However, DomNwachukwu affirmed that the Baptist mission, which already had its roots in Yoruba region of western Nigeria through Bowen in 1850, had her mission established in Eastern Nigeria in 1890. DomNwachukwu reported that William Hughes, a Baptist missionary from Wales, visited Buguma, a river area of Eastern Nigeria, where he gathered a small Christian community into a church. After establishing a full evangelistic work in Buguma, which comprised a school, he handed it over to the Southern Baptist Missionary named, Mojola Agbebi of Ebenezer Baptist Church Lagos. DomNwachukwu stated further that through Agbebi's leadership, the Buguma Baptist Church members continued the work by extending the gospel presence into other parts of the Niger Delta.<sup>12</sup>

Nimi Jackreece again confirmed Hughes's role in the organization of a group of Christians in Buguma into a Baptist church. He stressed that the handing over of the Baptist work to Agbebi resulted from a long relationship with Hughes that lasted about four years before Hughes departed to Wales, citing Travis Collins.<sup>13</sup> DomNwachukwu continued by stating that the Baptist work in the heart of Igboland was derived from the evangelistic work of First Baptist Church of Buguma. He maintained that Baptist work in Igboland began in 1917 in Ihigwa, a nearby town in Owerri, with the help of J. T.

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<sup>10</sup>DomNwachukwu, *Authentic African Christianity*, 57.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Nimi Jackreece, "Contributions of Buguma/Port Harcourt Baptist Association to the Development of the Nigerian Baptist Convention," accessed January 25, 2018, <https://www.academic.ebu.com>.

Princewill, who was a trader and member of First Baptist Church Buguma. Princewill later became the Amanyanagbo (king) of the Kalabari kingdom. As DomNwachukwu further concludes, through the leadership and supervision of Mojola Agbebi and his successor, Wariboko George Amakiri, Baptist work spread from Ihiagwa to other parts of Igboland with Amakiri's itinerant evangelistic ministry. The outcome of his ministries in Igboland, DomNwachukwu maintained, led to the founding of two Baptist churches by Amakiri: Umuannu: Obinze in 1919 and Ezeobo in 1920.<sup>14</sup> Lastly, DomNwachukwu suggested that the creation of the Baptist Church in Ihiagwa led to persecutions from both adherents of Indigenous Religions and members of the same Christian churches that had roots in the area. As he stated, it took the intervention from the Colonial Secretary in Lagos and the District Officer in Owerri Province to grant protection to Baptist work in the Ihiagwa area. According to him, Baptist work later extended to the following towns in Igboland: Imerienwe in 1947, Amaimo in 1947, Uwani, Enugu in 1950, Uvuru in 1952, Onisha in 1953, and Ezumoha in 1956. He opined that the first resident Southern Baptist Missionary in Igboland was R. L. Locke. Locke, he noted, arrived in Owerri in 1959 and started the first Baptist church at Owerri. DomNwachukwu concluded by stating that the activities of Baptist Mission work included the establishment of churches and schools simultaneously.<sup>15</sup> Thus far, the mission of the Baptist work in Igboland is traced to the mission work of the First Baptist Church of Buguma, who, through Princewill, helped to establish Ihiagwa Baptist Church. Two Baptist workers, Agbebi and Amakiri, helped the sown seed to grow and expand at the level it is today.

Considering these mission efforts in southeastern Nigeria, I. C. Obieje, the Global Missions Board director of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, reiterated the

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<sup>14</sup>DomNwachukwu, *The Authentic African Christianity*, 58.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 59.

progress and the condition of Baptist Missions work from 2002 in the area.<sup>16</sup> He revealed the projected plan of the Mission Board, which aims at “targeting immediately new Home or local fields in the North and East of Nigeria, where our works are still not viable and vast areas remain unreached.”<sup>17</sup> The compendium further asserted that, as of 2011, the area contains the following mission fields: Abakaliki in Ebonyi State, Awka/Onisha in Anambra State, Okigwe in Imo State, and Umuahia in Abia State.<sup>18</sup> The mission board declared the area unreached and demands attention. This projection makes it clear as relates to the Eastern part of Nigeria the reason for more evangelistic activities in Southeastern Nigeria.

### **Southern Baptist Missions in Nigeria**

The Baptist Mission in Nigeria had its foundation in the mission efforts of the Southern Baptist Convention of the United States of America which began in 1845. Sadler notes that the Baptist work in Nigeria began during the controversy regarding slavery within the Triennial Baptist Convention of the United States. He notes that difference of opinion between the Northerners and Southerners was caused by disagreements that centered on the eligibility of the appointment of slaveholders “either as agents or as missionaries” to foreign missions.<sup>19</sup>

George Sadler acknowledged that this disagreement led to the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention and the establishment of its mission board in 1846. He also cites the minutes from the SBC meeting on February 20, 1846 when the mission board “deemed expedient to begin mission work in West African as soon as it was found

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<sup>16</sup>I. C. Obieje, *Global Missions Board of the Nigerian Baptist Convention: A Compendium of 10 Years Missions Work 2001-2011* (Ibadan: Global Missions Board, 2011), 8.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>George Sadler, *A Century in Nigeria* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1950), 29.

possible.”<sup>20</sup> The effort paid off in Nigeria with the arrival of Southern Baptist Missionary, Thomas J. Bowen, along with his companions, Goodale and Hill, on August 5, 1850.<sup>21</sup> According to Sadler, Bowen later arrived in Badagry, Nigeria, which was “a community of about ten thousand inhabitants.”<sup>22</sup>

### **Thomas Jefferson Bowen**

Christopher Fyfe stated that Bowen, the pioneer Southern Baptist Missionary to Nigeria was born in Georgia on January 2, 1814. He fought in the Native American wars, and he had an outstanding career as a soldier. Fyfe posited that Bowen experienced religious conversion in 1840, and following his conversion he agreed to engage in mission activities in Yorubaland.<sup>23</sup> While Fyfe held that the Wesley Methodist Mission that he studied previously influenced Bowen’s decision,<sup>24</sup> Sadler postulated that his interest may have originated with African explorers such as Clapperton and Denham.<sup>25</sup> Fyfe held that his ultimate goal, as the Southern Baptist Mission Board was sponsoring him, was to establish mission work among the Hausas of Northern Nigeria.<sup>26</sup> Sadler concurred that Bowen’s sole aim when he arrived in Badagry was “to proclaim the gospel of Christ to the interior city of Africa.”<sup>27</sup> He also reported that Bowen sailed to Africa

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<sup>20</sup> Sadler, *A Century in Nigeria*, 31.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>23</sup> Christopher Fyfe, “Bowen, Thomas Jefferson,” in *The Blackwell Dictionary of the Evangelical Biography 1730-1860*, ed. David M. Lewis (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 1:127.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Sadler, *A Century in Nigeria*, 39.

<sup>26</sup> Fyfe, “Bowen,” 127.

<sup>27</sup> Sadler, *A Century in Nigeria*, 43.

with two other missionary companions, Goodale and Hill from Providence, Rhode Island on December 17, 1849, and arrived in Monrovia, Liberia on February 8, 1850.<sup>28</sup>

Louis Duval states that Bowen and Goodale moved to Badagry-- in Yorubaland of present-day Nigeria-- stated and made their first missionary contact in a town called Bo Pora, in Golah. He described Golah as a distant “country” in the interior that was ruled by King Boatswain.<sup>29</sup> Sadler mentioned that, upon hearing of the death of the King, the two waited at Vonzwaw, where Bowen preached his first sermon to the Africans, with a woman in the audience. Unfortunately, Goodale died one month later, while Bowen moved on to a town known as Sama.<sup>30</sup> Continuing in his narration of Bowen’s journey to Badagry, Duval stated that he arrived at Gold Coast, present day Ghana, in July 1850 and was harbored by the Wesleyan Missionary, T. B. Freeman. Bowen, Duval noted, reached the shores of Badagry on August 5, 1850. He maintained that Bowen traveled with his mission work to Abeokuta, Ibara, Aibo, and Itale in Iketu kingdom.<sup>31</sup>

According to Sadler, Bowen’s goal of reaching the interior led him to major areas like Abeokuta, Erura, and Ijaye before returning to the United States in 1853. He noted that, in 1853, the report of Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention hailed the achievements of Bowen’s labors in Central Africa. In their minutes regarding Bowen’s activities in Africa, they remarked,

solitary, but with the companionship of God’s spirit; helpless, but with the strength of Jesus; our missionary has penetrated unknown regions, traversed mountains and plains, untrodden before by a white man’s feet, and preached in the middle of the Dark Continent the gospel of Jesus, till then unheard. After so many toils, privations and sufferings, he is now among us to tell of the people whom he has seen, and to

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<sup>28</sup> Sadler, *A Century in Nigeria*, 43.

<sup>29</sup>Louis M. Duval, *Baptist Missions in Nigeria* (Richmond: Education Department, Foreign Missions Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1928), 50.

<sup>30</sup>Sadler, *A Century in Nigeria*, 44.

<sup>31</sup>Duval, *Baptist Missions in Nigeria*, 51-55.

urge other devoted spirits to joins him in his mission.<sup>32</sup>

Bowen's courageous moves from Liberia into the interior of Africa, specifically to Badagry, and the town of Ijaye must be commended. As Sadler noted in the reports, it ignites the zeal of devoted spirits who are mission minded and ready to engage themselves in his vision.

### **Bowen's Missionary Accomplishments**

While visiting towns along his routes to the interior part of Yorubaland, Bowen's arrival at Eruwa and Bi-Olorun-pelu led to the conversion of a woman to Christianity.<sup>33</sup> Duval summarized Bowen's initial missionary movement to Ijaiye in central Africa by stating, "Thus at last after many months of vain attempts to reach the interior, he arrived at the town where he was destined to start the first Baptist Mission in what is now known as Nigeria."<sup>34</sup> Still, he made remarkable progress through his determined efforts and his vision of planting the gospel in the heart of interior Africa. Against the odds, his tenacious spirit began to influence the Baptist mission work in Ijaiye.

Bowen's second missionary endeavor began when he returned to Nigeria on August 28, 1853, with a group consisting of himself, his wife Laurena Bowen, and two other couples: the J. S. Dennards and J. H. Lacys. This group led the gospel ministries in Ijaye, which marked the beginning of the Yoruba Mission. The Bowens, having lost the Dennards to malaria, built a small chapel and baptized their first converts, a man and a woman, thus establishing the much-needed mission foundation in Central Africa, in June of 1853. This mission later expanded to Ogbomosho the following year.<sup>35</sup> The

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<sup>32</sup>Sadler, *A Century in Nigeria*, 55.

<sup>33</sup>Duval, *Baptist Mission in Nigeria*, 65.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 68-69.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 69-73.

collaborative efforts of these missionaries—A. D. Philips, J. M. Harden, W. H. Clark, J. C. Vaughan, and Mr. and Mrs. Bowen—spread the work to other Yoruba cities including Ogbomosho, Igboho, Saki, and Ilorin. Duval observed this expansion to be one of Bowen’s first objectives. Duval indicates that Bowen’s return to the United States resulted in the publishing of his two books, *Central Africa* and *The Grammar and Dictionary of the Yoruba Language*.<sup>36</sup> He later participated in another mission, to Rio de Janeiro for another mission work in 1859 but had to return to United States because of health issues. He died on November 24, 1875. Afterwards, the work in Ogbomosho grew steadily through the efforts of Clark.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Highlights of the Nigerian Baptist Convention**

History reemphasized his second missionary journey with his wife, the Lucys, and the Dennards. These second mission efforts of the Bowens were launched with a “Sabbath School,” which later became a Sunday school class, at Ijaye Orile in 1854.<sup>38</sup> The highlight also states that the first Baptist church building in Nigeria was built at Ijaye Orile. In 1855, Bowen left Ijaye Orile to visit Ogbomosho and Ilorin. He consolidated his mission work at Ogbomosho around the Oke Oshupa area, which later developed into Okelerin Baptist Church on September 30, 1855. The highlights concur with Duval regarding the end of the Bowens’ ministry in Nigeria, which was due to his ill health.<sup>39</sup>

According to the highlights, another remarkable feature of the mission that continued after Bowen’s seeds of mission germinated, although the mission suffered setbacks due to the American Civil War of 1861-1865, was the revival of the work by

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<sup>36</sup>Duval, *Baptist Mission in Nigeria*, 74.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Nigerian Baptist Convention, “Highlights on History.”

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.



William J. David who worked with W. W. Colley and Moses Ladejo Stone. They coordinated the convention work that was established in these towns: Lagos, Abeokuta, Oyo, and Ogbomoso. The report noted that, in 1876, the first Baptist Church of Lagos was organized with twenty-four members. It also asserted that S. G. Pinnock headed the work in Oyo, while William David opened the Baptist Academy-- which was the first Baptist Secondary School in Nigeria-- on November 1886. The Baptist mission continued to expand with the addition of these institutions and publication: (1) the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomosho on May 8, 1898, (2) the establishment of Baptist Medical Centre, Ogbomosho 1907, which officially opened on 1923, and (3) the first Yoruba Baptist Hymn Book, in 1907.<sup>40</sup>

Allen Olatunde noted that, in 1875, the sixteen native workers and missionaries. He acknowledges that David led a group of 52 baptized members to begin First Baptist Church Lagos, citing the SBC Annual, 1876.<sup>41</sup> The highlights recorded that, by the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, 50 years after Bowen started the work, 42 white and 6 Negro missionaries had served in the Nigerian field. Out of these, 13 died while on active service, while many suffered ill health. By the turn of the century, only three families were left in Nigeria as Foreign Mission Board missionaries.<sup>42</sup>

Commenting on Bowen's legacy, J. T. Okedara and S. Adeola Ajayi expressed in their book, *Thomas Jefferson Bowen: Pioneer Baptist Missionary to Nigeria 1850-1856*, expressed that Bowen was

a man among men, chose to be a missionary to Nigeria at a time when such choice could easily have meant death sentence on him. We should appreciate the difficulties that he and his other early missionary counterparts faced. The continent of America from where he came was separated from Africa by several kilometers

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<sup>40</sup>Nigerian Baptist Convention, "Highlights on History."

<sup>41</sup>Allen Timilehun Olatunde, "Nigerian Baptist Missions from Inception to Udoh," *African Missiology*, March 29, 2014, accessed January 15, 2018, <https://www.africanmissiology.blogspot.com/2014/03/nigerian-baptist-mission-from-8929.html>.

<sup>42</sup>Nigerian Baptist Convention, "Highlights on History."

and enormous cultural dissimilarities, while the climate in Nigeria, as in other parts of West Africa, was hostile it was indeed a life and death decision to choose to come to Africa on a missionary enterprise. . . .It is significant to note from Thomas Jefferson Bowen's adventurous career that his realization of God's divine purpose for his life created a strong vision which was backed up with his dedication to God and diligence in his work. . . .Bowen had his own ambition and plans quite alright but God had greater assignments for him. He harkened to God's voice and today his name is written in gold as a martyr of the cross in the annals of Baptist history. . . .It is noteworthy that the mustard seed, which Thomas Jefferson Bowen planted and nurtured in 1852, has today become a big tree with several branches throughout Nigeria and beyond. What started with only one church in Ijaye has expanded to over ten thousand Baptist churches scattered all over the country. . . .in recognition of the selflessness of this torchbearer, his name has been immortalized in numerous. . . .an Association in the Oyo West Baptist Conference is named *Bowen Association*. . . .The Nigerian Baptist Convention named her University which was established in 2002 and located in Iwo in Osun State, as Bowen University. . . .the first and only Baptist University in the whole of Africa.<sup>43</sup>

It is important to note steady efforts as observed from Okedara and Ajayi the progress and commitment to mission displayed by Bowen and his companions. These missionaries defied serious hazards and impediments to not only build a church but also create institutions, which sustained it through the training of ministers and other laborers in the land that posed some serious challenges.

Furthermore, Ajayi concurred with these achievements in his article "The Place of Ogbomoso in Baptist Missionary Enterprise in Nigeria," as he reported the steady growth of Baptist missions in Nigeria through the commitments of Bowen. He remarked that

Bowen was however, not destined to stay long in Ogbomoso. His adventurous and selfless service to the advancement of Baptist cause in Nigeria had not been without cost. His failing health and that of his wife compelled his retirement from the Nigerian field early in 1856. Bowen's withdrawal closed the pioneering era of Baptist work in the country. It is important to stress at this juncture that the favorable consideration given to Ogbomoso by the pioneer missionaries to experiment Baptist enterprise in the town was indeed a momentous decision. The spiritual mustard seed so planted by the Bowens was watered by William Clark(e) and nurtured in the later years by succeeding generations of missionaries. Baptist influence in the town has ever since been growing in leaps and bounds, producing remarkable effects, not only on Nigeria, but also on the continent of Africa as a

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<sup>43</sup>J. T. Okedara and S. Ademola Ajayi, *Thomas Jefferson Bowen: Pioneer Missionary to Nigeria 1850-1856* (Ibadan: John Archers Publishers, 2004), 40-48.

whole.<sup>44</sup>

Ajayi's submission adequately expressed the huge achievements, which spanned several decades and not only yielded fruits in Ogbomoso, but also in other parts of Nigeria, Africa, and the world.

### **The Nigerian Baptist Convention Missions**

According to Atanda in his "Introduction" in *Baptist Churches in Nigeria 1850-1950*, the foundation and growth of Baptist churches and mission work must be traced "directly or indirectly to the evangelization program of the Southern Baptist Convention in the United States of America" under the leadership of Thomas Jefferson Bowen.<sup>45</sup> Atanda also observed evangelical influences other than the Southern Baptist in Nigeria, "an offshoot of a new missionary spirit solidified by the Evangelical Movements from Great Britain that spread across Europe and the United States America."<sup>46</sup> The outcome of the evangelical movements across Europe and United States resulted in what he described as an "intense effort and awakening" that led to the evangelization of "heathen lands" in Africa and Asia.<sup>47</sup>

For Africa, Atanda noted that the effectiveness of early Christian mission efforts was hindered by two notable problems: (1) the resilience of the traditional religion in West Africa and (2) the aggression of Islam in North Africa. He asserted that these problems prompted the mission organizations to devise a new strategy which aimed at "not only to re-establish Christianity in Africa, but also to ensure its permanence in the

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<sup>44</sup>S. Ademola Ajayi, "The Place of Ogbomoso in Baptist Missionary Enterprise in Nigeria," *Ogrisi: A New Journal of African Studies* 8 (2011): 20-21, accessed January 15, 2018, <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/og/article/view/71758>

<sup>45</sup>J. A. Atanda, ed., introduction to *Baptist Churches in Nigeria 1850-1950: Accounts of their Foundations and Growth* (Ibadan: University Press Limited, 1998), 21.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 24

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

face of the tenacity of the traditional religion and the aggressiveness of Islam”<sup>48</sup> Atanda opined that various moves by the evangelical mission organization in Britain- such as the Careys’ Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, the Methodists, and the Independents-- influenced Baptist mission in the United States and, later in Nigeria.<sup>49</sup> This influence, he attested, led to the formation of the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in United States, also known as Triennial Convention, which began their mission agency in Burma. Atanda affirmed that the 1845 split within the Triennial Convention resulted in the parent body which began Baptist work in Nigeria, the Southern Baptist Convention of the United States of America.<sup>50</sup> He stated that the Northern Baptist Wing, known as the General Convention of America Baptist Foreign Missionary Society, pursued their mission endeavors in Belgian Congo (now Zaire), while the Southern Wing, known as the Southern Baptist Convention, decided to begin their mission work in the West Africa colonies of Liberia and Sierra Leone in 1847.<sup>51</sup>

Bowen’s record, as cited by John Grimley and Gordon Robinson, confirmed the emergence of Southern Baptist Convention, described the potential man power, and reported on the condition of West Africa mission. Bowen wrote, “the people of Sierra Leone consist of recaptured slaves from almost every part of east, west, south or interior of the continent, there would be an a priori probability that they could obtain interpreters if not Christian schoolmasters and other assistants at Freetown.”<sup>52</sup> Grimley and Robinson then conclude that “the slave trade brought to the shores of Nigeria both missionaries

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<sup>48</sup>Atanda, introduction, 25.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 27

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 30

<sup>52</sup>John B. Grimley and Gordon E. Robinson, *Church Growth in Central and Southern Nigeria* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), 272.

from Britain and America and Nigeria ex-slaves who had found and embraced Christianity in Sierra Leone and Jamaica.”<sup>53</sup> Therefore, through the observations of Atanda, Grimley, and Robinson, it becomes evident that the Nigerian Baptist Convention had its foundations in the Southern Baptist Convention work pioneered by Bowen, Goodale, and Hill. Liberated slaves from all the parts of the continent who were harbored in Sierra Leone and Liberia, provided the workforce for the Nigerian missions.

In the *Encyclopedia of Christianity* Kenneth Enang concurs with Grimley and Robinson by describing the Nigerian Baptist Convention as an offshoot of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Yoruba Baptist Association in 1914. He identified the major tools of these Baptist missions in Nigeria, which included, evangelism and the establishment of schools, hospitals, and social agencies.<sup>54</sup> The Highlights on the History of NBC noted that, beginning in 1914, the missions of the Baptists (NBC and SBC) assumed a new phase which caused significant growth and progress. This progress included, “geographical expansion, the founding of new institutions and agencies, increase in the work of missions, and the development of a successful plan of financial support.”<sup>55</sup> Baptism and church growth also increased during this period. According to the highlight, “as soon as a Baptist Community was opened up in an area, it began to spread its tentacles by helping to establish sister churches and preaching stations.”<sup>56</sup> These reports proved that the success of SBC from 1850 experienced tremendous growth that led to Yoruba Baptist Association which later gave birth or metamorphosed to the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

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<sup>53</sup>Grimley and Robinson, *Church Growth*, 272.

<sup>54</sup>Kenneth Enang, “Nigeria,” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003), 3: 760.

<sup>55</sup>Nigerian Baptist Convention, “Highlights on History.”

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*

Olatunde Allen Timilehim recognized that the Nigerian Baptist Convention was born out of SBC efforts, which later helped in developing diverse leaders that “drove the vision for decades.”<sup>57</sup> He acknowledged that John Mills who was the first to head the Home and Foreign Missions Board of the Convention led the mission. According to him, the Nigerian Baptist Convention later opened its headquarters in Ibadan. Olatunde noted that Ayo Bello was appointed the first missionary of the Home and Foreign Missions Board in January of 1954. Bello served in Kafanchan with the Soso people. Citing Mills’ records, he added that this appointment of Bello marked the beginning of full mission work by the Nigerian Baptist Convention.<sup>58</sup> Olatunde summarized the operations of the Nigerian Baptist Convention mission work by stating that, “they engaged in having workable strategies, methods of evangelization, church planting, appointment of missionaries, welfare of the missionaries and administration.”<sup>59</sup> He believed that the growth of the mission work from 1953 till 1993 was sustained in a progressive manner. Olatunde also described the NBC mission work as one which “had cradled, staggered, stumbled, crawled, yet was still on the move with hope of having a visionary missionary as leader...”<sup>60</sup> Considering the descriptions by Enang, the “Highlights of Nigerian History,” and Olatunde’s writing, it is evident that the Nigerian Baptist Mission encountered considerable growth, despite its challenges, from 1914 to 1993.

Obije traced the expansion of Nigerian Baptist Convention work—along with her mission agency, the Global Mission Board—through 2011. In his compendium, he reported that the NBC currently had 23 home mission fields across the country, 3 specialized mission ministries, and 8 international mission fields: Burkina Faso, Chad,

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<sup>57</sup>Olatunde, “Nigerian Baptist Missions.”

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Benin Republic, Mali, Mozambique, and the United Kingdom.<sup>61</sup> The restructuring of the mission department in 2010 resulted in the creation of the following ministries: the Frontier Ministry International, the Frontier Ministry Home, the Specialized ministries which included Ministry of "Daughters of Zion" (Prostitutes in Burkina Faso), the Diaspora ministries within the confines of Nigeria, Training, Research/Media, Establishment, and Budget.<sup>62</sup>

### **The Men's Missionary Union in Nigeria and the Southeast**

In the *NBC at 100, Analecta: History of the Nigerian Baptist Convention 1914-2014*, the Men's Missionary Union is described as an offshoot of the Men and Boy's Department of the Nigerian Baptist Convention in 1961.<sup>63</sup> Prior to the union's inception in 1961, the missionaries managed the department, which was headed by a director who controlled the affairs of the group. This arrangement continued until 1980, when a chairman and some executive officers were elected to preside over the affairs of the union with the director as the chief executive officer. The arrangement- with the director as the chief executive—limited the powers and operation of the chairman as a ceremonial head. The status quo of the union further shifted when the Convention restructured, changing the MMU into a sub-department of the Mission Organization Department (MOD) which would coordinate mission agencies like the Youth and Students' Ministries. According to the report of the *Analecta*, the reorganization could not grant the autonomy that the group sought due to fears that the MMU might demand an auxiliary status, like the WMU, from the NBC.<sup>64</sup> The dream of the Union was achieved in 2011, when the Nigerian Baptist

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<sup>61</sup>Obieje, *The Global Mission Board*, 19-20.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 20-25.

<sup>63</sup>Femi Okunlola et al., eds., *The NBC at 100, Analecta: The History of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, 1914-2014*, (Ibadan: Publication Department Baptist Press Nigerian, 2014), 63-99.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 65.

Convention granted the Union a quasi-autonomous status, and the union's standing constitution was approved in 2013. The organization had a paid director and executive officers. The MMU currently supervises the ministry of the Royal Ambassadors of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, a group born out of "the vision of the great work started in the United States of America in the year 1908 amongst the brotherhood commission of the Southern Baptist Convention... the organization came into being in Nigeria in 1920 through Southern Baptist Convention missionaries."<sup>65</sup>

Some of the objectives of the MMU included (1) to follow the footsteps of Christ, our Master, (2) to take the whole gospel of Jesus Christ to all who do not know or receive and received him, (3) to help new believers grow, (4) To provide loving and effective care to those who are sick, (5) to form the habit of fellowship with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, (6) to confer and co-operate with other Christian churches and organizations, (7) to co-operate with the NBC in the promotion of the home and international mission program and all other programs of the convention, and (8) To promote Christian Mission through prayer, evangelism, bible study, mission study, personal service and stewardship.<sup>66</sup>

Deacon Mac. N. Onwvuariri a founding member of the then Anambara and Imo (Animo) Baptist Conference, maintains that the Men's Missionary Union is an organization recognized by the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Therefore, the MMU of the then Animo Baptist and now Imo and Emmanuel Conferences is rooted in the national body of the NBC. The group emerged in Igboland immediately after the Nigerian Civil War in 1970, when the eastern part of Nigeria had a common Baptist conference. All the organizational bodies like the WMU, MMU, and Youth were incorporated into the eastern conference. By then, it was known as, the Eastern Baptist Conference with its

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<sup>65</sup>Okunlola, et al., *The NBC at 100*, 65.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 66



headquarters at Port Harcourt.<sup>67</sup> In 1974, when I. B. Nwosu returned from the United States, the ANIMO Baptist Conference was carved out from the Eastern Baptist Conference to coordinate Baptist work in Igboland. At this early stage, the men's group was called the Men and Boy's Organization, comprising of Baptist men and the young boys known as the Royal Ambassadors.<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, Onwuvuariri noted that the earliest field worker of the organization was Emmanuel A. Imoh. As time went on, the NBC changed the nomenclature from Men and Boy's Organization to Men's Missionary Union. Onwuvuariri stressed that the organization existed solely for evangelistic purposes, as revealed in its key memory verse Matthew 28:19. This represented the belief shared among the Baptist men and boys in the organization, that the Great Commission was now their responsibility. Since its formation, the organization had consistently expanded the gospel through the quarterly and yearly programs.<sup>69</sup>

According to the interview, in one of the conferences that emerged from Animo Conference—the Imo Baptist Conference—men voluntarily took on the payment of the salaries of some pastors, especially among some indigent churches that are not able to pay to handle this burden. The union has always encouraged the local church and her growth in mission work, partly through personal evangelism and crusades. The Union has planted and nurtured local Baptist churches. The local church-based unions have also nurtured the young boys within the union in their formative stages of life, by sponsoring the Royal Ambassadors and even sending them to meetings and annual convention.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Mac. N Onwuvuariri, email interview with author, February 7, 2014. Due to lack of any documented evidence of the MMU work in Igboland, this thesis sought help via email from a leading and founding member of the MMU in Southeastern Nigeria, in the person of Deacon Mac. N. Onwuvuariri of the Imo Baptist Conference of the NBC.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

MMU has two major programs. They include: the MMU Emphasis day and the Fathers' Sunday programs. Electoral committee elects' leaders of the union every three years. However, creditable leaders have a chance of a second term, after which they rotate out for new leaders to emerge. The founding leaders of this union include: Evangelist Dr. Joel Akubuiro, Deacon N. Mac. Onwuvuariri, and Deacon O. A. Imo, who now serves as the current chairman for Imo Conference. Other offices of the group include vice chairman, secretary, assistant secretary, treasurer, financial secretary, study chairman, mission chairman, and the patrons. The Union is in conforms to the NBC's MMU covenant and is also self-supportive. Through its cooperative program, the local churches form the base for the funding of the association, the conference, and the Convention. Approximately, 7 percent of the income of the local MMU goes to the Convention union; 7 percent goes to the conference; while 5 percent goes to the association. The remaining 81 percent remains with the local church and is used to run the organization at that level. However, agreed the other three arms can initiate levies or donations and the local church is required to abide.<sup>71</sup>

The difficult history of the Baptist Men ministry in Nigeria began with its inception from the Men and Boys work of the NBC. Because of the resilience and dedication to mission work, they have remained a quasi-autonomous body that proclaims Christ in Nigeria and around the world. In fact, the current president of the All African Baptist Men's Fellowship, Duro Ayairola, is a product of this Nigerian organization. The achievements of the Men's Missionary Union at the National level—and especially those at the state level, in present-day Imo and other state conferences—demand attention. Considering the history of mission help that mainly support pastors and their salaries, it will be useful to explore evangelistic activities that engage them in action and win souls for Christ. The next chapter will examine some of those evangelistic strategies.

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<sup>71</sup>Onwuvuariri, email interview.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVANGELISTIC STRATEGIES FOR THE MEN'S MISSIONARY UNION AMONG SOUTHEASTERN IGBO ETHNIC GROUPS

It is necessary to develop an appropriate evangelistic strategy to target the Igbo ethnic group due to the proliferation of denominations of churches, which claim the gospel but lack biblical foundation. Furthermore, the previous observation made in this thesis, that Igbos are mostly Christians, does not accurately convey the position of Christianity in the area. The actual situation in Igboland shows the majority of the people to be nominal Christians, African Traditional Religion adherents, or atheists. Therefore, Baptist men who seek to present Christ as the true and living savior should consider the following strategies as a guide.

#### **Theological Importance**

Sound doctrine has been the hallmark of the Baptist ministry. Paul admonished Timothy when he stated, “do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15) (ESV). Likewise, Baptist men must divide the word of truth through having basic theological knowledge of what God’s word instructs regarding instilling converts with godly character. By so doing, the men eradicate nominal Christianity that is prevalent in Igboland. Furthermore, this theological importance will prevent the church from losing future generations of Christians. Again, it will equip the area to avoid the secularism

experienced in the Western world, where Christianity was once the focus.

The major theological issue, which must be addressed by the MMU when presenting the gospel in Igboland, is the truth that God revealed himself through Jesus Christ, his only Son. This must be the starting point because of the general understanding of God as a Supreme Being and the Creator, which has long been part of the people's belief. Ashford affirmed this when he stated, "The doctrine of God is central to all of the church's life" and said the church must allow this doctrine "to drive her practice."<sup>1</sup> He believed that such doctrine should include: (1) the teachings about the Triune God who revealed himself in the Scripture (Matt 3:16-17, 28:19), (2) the understanding of God as the creator who brought all things into being, (3) the doctrine that teaches about man and his fallen nature, and (4) the doctrine of salvation which came through his only Son, Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> These doctrines must be presented and emphasized, in southeastern Nigeria.

In "Preserving the Uniqueness of Evangelical Theology" Zacchaeus Apata added other doctrines which he believed evangelical churches in Africa should include: (1) the inerrancy of the Holy Bible, (2) the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus, (3) the substitutionary atonement which comes from Christ, (4) the bodily resurrection of Christ, (5) the belief in Jesus' miracles as authentic, (6) the second coming of Christ, (7) the need to witness to individuals in order for them to accept the salvation from the only Son of God, and (8) the application of these doctrines in such a way that the Bible will speak to individual situations.<sup>3</sup> Charles Hauser suggested the doctrine of hell, which he

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<sup>1</sup>Riley Bruce Ashford, "A Theological Driven Missiology for a Great Commission" in *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God's Mandate in Our Time*, ed. Chuck Lawless and Adam Greenway (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 178-80.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, 182-84.

<sup>3</sup>Olu Zacchaeus Apata, "Preserving the Uniqueness of Evangelical Theology," in *Pedagogy: The Church, Leadership and Theological Education in Africa*, ed. Ademola Ishola, Deji Ayegboyin, and Sayo Oladejo (Ibadan: Baptist Press Nigerian), 168.

observed was lacking in the present-day culture. He stated that “we must, if we are to be faithful to the scripture, affirm that the Bible teaches the future eternal punishment of those who do not accept Christ as their Savior.”<sup>4</sup> It is crucial to emphasize these doctrines in Igboland, in order to dispel the incorrect beliefs currently held, especially pertaining to the person of Christ. Because Catholicism is widespread in this area, it is also important to teach regarding the veneration of Mary. Additionally, teaching on the doctrine of miracles will serve to check the prosperity theology of the Pentecostals, which is spreading rapidly in the Southeastern states.

Continuing, Ashford observed that, through his redemption, man regained God’s image, which has been lost, and such theology must emphasize his supremacy over all things visible and invisible (Col 3:10, 1:15). He cited Ajith Fernando, who stated that “in Christ... the creator of the world has indeed presented the complete solution to the human predicament” (Acts 4:12, Matt 16:18).<sup>5</sup> The gospel of Christ, which solves human predicament, can resolve the religious and traditional inconsistencies of the Igbos. The Igbos, who already recognize the existence of a supreme being, should understand God’s revelation that came through Christ, as well as the supremacy he has over all things, including their belief in spirits and ancestral beings. Consequently, the MMU organization must incorporate these doctrines through Bible study in groups, workshops, leader trainings, emphasis weeks, and Fathers’ Day Sundays. All these meetings must inculcate these doctrinal teachings. Through such exposure, they can present Christ and counter false doctrine from the other groups that hold unbiblical belief.

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<sup>4</sup>Charles Hauser, “Hell: Motivation for Mission?” in *Missions in a New Millennium: Change and Challenges in World Missions*, eds. W. Edward Glenny and William Smallman (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000), 149.

<sup>5</sup>Ashford, “A Theology Driven Missiology,” 182-84.

## **Economic Empowerment**

A gospel-centered strategy for economic empowerment is another method that men's ministry in Igboland can employ. As this research has identified men as the breadwinners and leaders of home, it is necessary that ministries reach them with the gospel. Currently, a majority of men in the southeast are entangled in the cares of life rather than issues of eternity. Jesus' statement, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt 16:26) (NJKV), appropriately describes the situation in the area. Consequently, this passage should be used by the MMU to address the fellow Igbo businessmen who have abandoned their spiritual souls and those of their families in pursuit of daily bread.

Additionally, gospel presentation must follow economic development, such as in the developing cities of Aba, Onisha, and Nnewi. Therefore, the Baptist Men's ministry should target these industrial and commercial towns. Due to the influx of people, the men should use their business opportunities to witness for Christ. Similarly, other administrative cities such as Awka, Owerri, Umuahia, Afikpo, Abakaliki, and Okigwe--likewise deserve to experience the gospel. The rural population of farmers, in addition to the city-dwellers, should also benefit from the MMU ministries. Purposefully targeting business class, government workers, and other social groups, according to their social level in these cities and villages, will ensure the continued spread the gospel in this region.

Such ministries can take the form of what Timothy Keller suggested in his book *Serving a Moment: Doing Balanced Gospel Centered Ministry in Your Cities*. He states that among those targeted citizens in southeastern Nigeria, "there is a need to provide the basic 'means of grace'—prayer, mutual/peer ministry and accountability, learning in community, shepherding oversights—that both fits the time patterns and

addresses the life issues of those in a particular vocation.”<sup>6</sup> These suggested means of grace could create the opportunities for the MMU to organize in the cities, villages, and clans, what will lead to “a frequent one-on three shepherding and discipleship” within the vocations.<sup>7</sup> Keller’s idea is likely to work in Igboland, especially when one considers the connection that the people have in terms of language and interconnectedness between towns and villages.

Another issue, which the MMU must address, is the issue of poverty in the area. According to Sabic Ikotun in his article “The Effect of Growth on Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation,” men can mitigate poverty problems in the cities and in the rural areas.<sup>8</sup> Such alleviation programs, he suggested, can cushion the effects of poverty in Igboland. His suggestions include agricultural food production, shelter, employment opportunities, payment of electricity bills, organization of health care services, and giving scholarships to those who are less privileged in the communities they serve. These alleviation programs should serve as a platform of presenting the gospel.<sup>9</sup> Oluwafemi Adeyemi, in his writings on poverty alleviation in the Old Testament, agrees that poverty alleviation ministry can be a tool for helping the less privileged in society, citing Deuteronomy 15:4-11. He advocates for a solution based alleviation on verses 4-6, which encourage the wealthy to diligently care for one another. As he maintains, this will check the rate of poverty in the land. By so doing, such ministry will yield fruit for the kingdom.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, economic empowerment is an important strategy considering its

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<sup>6</sup>Timothy Keller, *Serving a Moment: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 162-63.

<sup>7</sup>Keller, *Serving a moment*, 162-63.

<sup>8</sup>Sabic Idowu Ikotun, “The Effects of Growth on Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation” in *Religion, Ethics, and Population Development*, ed. Onah A. Odey (Uyo, Nigeria: Nigerian Association for the Study of Religion, 2007), 229.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Oluwafemi O. Adeyemi, “Old Testament Perspective on Poverty Eradication: An Examination of Deuteronomy 15:4-11 in the Nigerian Context,” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 14, no. 2

potential impact on cities and rural area, especially when accompanied by act of grace from the Lord.

### **Social Ministry**

Another important strategy that could be utilized to bring the gospel to the Igbos is a social ministry that will target the underprivileged people. Enuwosa, a lecturer on religious studies in Nigeria, believes that “in African concept as in Paul’s idea, the whole is made up of the parts. The society is formed from the individual family. Individual aims were identified with the objectives of the society. Members were fully integrated and committed to the cause of the community. The personality of the individual melts into his social self.”<sup>11</sup> Utilizing this social structure will go a long way in ministering to the people. Therefore, this thesis suggests the integration of that type of social structure and the use of it to bring families together. This evangelistic strategy will help make the MMU work not only noticed, but also effective in church planting and growth.

In order to achieve this, social engagement is necessary. This could include marriage activities, festivals, feasts, towns meetings, and other events which can transform into gospel presentations. These social activities are already celebrated in the area, and they usually draw people together. Such occasions can serve as a means of reaching the lost. The New Yam festivals in the villages, coronations of leaders, and other programs could incorporate devotional messages, exhortations, and challenges from the Scriptures which would point to the reasons behind such celebrations. These programs should center on what God, through his Son, is teaching the audience, which

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(2009), 111.

<sup>11</sup>J. Enuwosa, “Pauline Concept of the Family in the Context of African Christians,” *EPHA: Ekpoma Journal of Religious Studies* 5, no. 1-2, (June 2003), 42.



will point people toward Christ.

Marriage activities can also be used as an evangelism tool by the Baptist men in the southeastern Nigeria. Through their prominent role in the organization of the ceremony, men have the opportunity to uphold and proclaim their faith. Certain items in the program, such as the presentation of kola-nuts, which is a sign of welcome and serves as a sign of peace and acceptance, and the payment of the bride price by the groom's family, can serve as a chance to express belief in Christ. Through symbolism, the giving of gifts and service among the village events mirrors the ultimate gift given by Christ.

Another social structure, which can empower men's evangelism, is the reframing of Igbo masculinity to reflect God. Their God-given strength can be used to encourage and witness to others. Men can lead the evangelistic moves and participate in all mission activities of the church. The men can also use their wealth to support evangelism. Considering the impact of economic and social strategies in evangelism, the caution that J. D. Payne expressed in his book *Roland Allen: Pioneer of Spontaneous Expansion*, must be noted in this thesis. According to Payne, a missionary must understand that the focus of his ministry is to reveal Christ and proclaim his good-news. Other assignments including conversion, church extension, and social and economic reformation come into perspective when Christ transforms the lives.<sup>12</sup> The argument in this case is that the presentation of the gospel should not be neglected, but must be the driving force even when the platform of such ministry begins with other strategies.

### **Personal Evangelism**

Personal evangelism is another means by which the MMU can reach the lost for Christ. The importance of personal evangelism is evidenced in biblical examples such as the life of Christ, Peter, Paul, and Philip. Christ reached out personally to the

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<sup>12</sup>J. D. Payne, *Roland Allen: Pioneer of Spontaneous Expansion* (Louisville: Amber Walsh Design, 2012), 58.

Samaritan woman (John 4), Levi the tax collector, and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2). Peter reached out and personally ministered to Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:34ff.), while Philip reached out to the travelling Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26ff.). These biblical models can be an avenue for men to learn how to help others practically. While recognizing the importance of discipleship, Zane Pratt, David Sills, and Jeff Walters cite Bill Ogden in *Introduction to Global Missions*, who remarked that “the great tragedy of the world is not that it is unreached but that it is undisciplined.”<sup>13</sup> They went further to acknowledge that “undisciplined people do not understand the full implications of Christianity in their own lives, and, sadly, they are therefore unable to pass the faith along to others.”<sup>14</sup> Pratt and others suggested a discipleship model that consists of personal spiritual disciples, mentoring others like Paul’s did with Timothy (2 Tim 2:2), and making sure these actions blossom into church planting missions as time progresses.<sup>15</sup>

Rick Holland believes there is another possible approach, and that systems, steps, or summaries of how to share the gospel should not institutionalize personal evangelism. He believes that personal evangelism should focus mainly on introducing people to Jesus. In other words, the plan should not “eclipse the person.”<sup>16</sup> He suggested an excellent way of proclaiming and presenting Christ, which he likened to a banner that Peter handed over to his readers in 1 Peter 2; this thesis supports this plan. His suggested teaching on Jesus: The human cornerstone (1 Pet 2:6-7), Jesus: A living Stone (1 Pet 2: 4-5), Jesus a rejected Stone (1 Pet 2:7), Jesus an elected and precious Stone (1 Pet 2:6), and Jesus our resurrection.<sup>17</sup> Holland’s idea of gospel witness is taken from 1 Peter and can

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<sup>13</sup>Zane Pratt, David Sills, and Jeff K. Walters, *Introduction to Global Missions* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 185.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 190-93.

<sup>16</sup>Rick Holland, “Christ the Savior: Evangelism as a Person, not a Plan,” in *Evangelism: How to Share the Gospel Faithfully, John MacArthur’s Pastors Library* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 61.

<sup>17</sup>Holland, “Christ the Savior,” 65-68. Further explanations can be followed on how the author

be transformed into a personal witnessing program. It conveys the whole message that touches on the problem of man, how it was solved, the person who resolved the problem of man (Jesus Christ), and how man can have eternal life through Christ.

In *Christian Mission in the Modern World: Updated and Expanded*, John Stott and Christopher Wright suggest five elements that the MMU can concentrate upon while evangelizing in their area. They believe the following gospel event should be emphasized: (1) things that happen (1 Cor 15:3-5), (2) the authentication of the gospel witnesses or testimonies (Acts 26: 22-23, 3:15, 5:32), (3) the gospel affirmations (Rom 10:9, 14:9 Phil 2:9-10), (4) the gospel promises like forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 3:19), and (5) the gospel demand, that is, what Jesus requires from us today which is repentance (Acts 3:19, 16:31, 17:30).<sup>18</sup> Each of these elements is vital for the presentation of the gospel. Men who study these emphases will be prepared to witness with convincing proof of what salvation means.

Using the ideas of Holland, Stott, and Wright, the Baptist men could use the opportunities presented by their positions as family heads to intentionally disciple their families. This will help them not only build a foundation of faith, but also pass this faith along to the next generation, as the Psalmist maintained when he stated, “I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from our children, telling the generation to come the praises of the LORD” (Ps 78: 2-4 NKJV). The men can involve themselves in a house-to-house personal witnessing program, and distribution of tracts and Bibles.

### **Recreational and Sporting Ministry**

The people of southeastern Nigeria have varieties of recreational and sporting

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applied Peter’s passage in the book.

<sup>18</sup>John Stott and Christopher Wright, *Christian Mission in the Modern World: Updated and Expanded* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 2015), 65-75.

activities that can provide an avenue for gospel presentation. In their book, *Why Cities Matter to God, The Culture, and the Church*, Stephen Um and Justin Buzzard cited Leonardo de Chirico's statement that "there are social idols that capture the life of the city... overarching sinful narrative on which people rely. We have to exegete them. We have to spot them out. We have to capture their core values, their history, their attractions and the shape they have given to the city... we have to grasped spiritually the theological skyline of the city."<sup>19</sup> As mentioned in one of the cultural portraits of the people in the Southeastern part of Nigeria, music and dancing comprise much of the entertainment industry in the area. This could present the opportunity for Christian music and the presentation of Christian dance. Igbo churches have been in the habit of organizing singing competitions in churches; therefore, men should use such occasions as an opportunity for evangelism. While organizing such programs, they must ensure that the program is gospel-focused. This will support Um and Buzzard's vision of gospel-centered and balanced ministration.

Furthermore, sports-- especially soccer and football-- have been a thriving entertainment industry in southeastern Nigeria. The Men's Missionary Union can use this platform of sporting activities to reach both young and old. Evangelists should develop witnessing strategies to use in training camps and league matches, and organize church competitions to attract community members. They could also serve as ushers in the stadiums to pray, distribute tracts, and encourage players and supporters with the word of God. The aim of these opportunities should be "gospel-centered evangelistic and corporate worship," according to Um and Buzzard.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Stephen Um and Justin Buzzard, *Why Cities Matter: To God, the Culture, and the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 107.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 138.

### **House/Cell Group Scheme**

The house/cell group strategy could be another method of evangelizing the Igbo. The Igbo Family Unit system provides a structure for family expansion, and the men who typically lead this system could transform these units into house churches. Using the family setup, the men can form Bible study groups. Two to three families can become nuclei family who will plant a cell group fellowship. Through this means, compounds or hamlets already formed will become a fellowship center. Supporting the idea of using cell or home groups in evangelism, Richie Way—a pastor and cell group specialist in New Zealand and Papua New Guinea—states that “life is in the cells, and growth of the body of Christ depends on the multiplication of its cells.”<sup>21</sup> He observes that people mostly attend Church because “it offers them a Christian support system.”<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, he sees house or cell groups as providing more “fellowship than the regular church setting.”<sup>23</sup>

Way acknowledges that house churches provide an informal and relaxed environment that creates opportunities for free and open discussion among participants. He advocates what he sees as inreach, outreach, and upreach methods of leading a cell group program for the church.<sup>24</sup> Understanding the opportunity of fellowship, a support system, and informal relationship provided by cell churches makes this strategy an important method of evangelism for men.

Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger, in their book *Transformational Groups*, suggested a manifesto to drive the cell group strategy for the MMU. They believed that firstly, a

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<sup>21</sup>Richie Way, “Home Group Ministry Help Your Church to Grow,” accessed February 5, 2018, <http://www.ministrymagazine.or/achive/1992/02/home-group-ministry-helps-your-church-grow>.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

healthy group Bible study can be used as a core belief building instrument to organize a cell group. This idea is based on the activities of the early church in Acts 2:42-47. The second manifesto that the MMU can adopt is presentation of the gospel as “the entire narrative of God’s Word from Genesis to Revelation.”<sup>25</sup> They described the Gospel as “the big story of the Bible delivered in series of smaller stories of people’s lives, then the smaller groups become a great place to learn in the gospel” (Mark 1:1, Acts 20:24, and Revelation 14:6).<sup>26</sup> The third idea Stetzer and Geiger mentioned is missions. They expect that men should see themselves as people who are “sent in all places” where they find themselves, “looking for opportunities to both show and tell the gospel.”<sup>27</sup> According to them, “mission is the destiny of every believer who is experiencing life with Jesus,” and in their opinion, “we need to join Jesus and look for the weary and worn out people” in the world today (Acts 1:8, Matt 9:36).<sup>28</sup> The fourth part of their manifesto is grace. This grace causes the group to live honestly with one another, thereby transforming the group into a grace community. The fifth is the idea that the group exists for God’s glory; this idea aligns with Jesus’ prayer in John 17:21-23.<sup>29</sup>

The idea of recognizing the place of the Bible study, the Gospel, mission, grace and the glory as manifesto will help the men in southeastern Nigeria use cell groups for outreach purposes. These core goals are necessary in order to make the group a God-centered fellowshiping community. In reaching out to the world today, Jack Kuhatschek believes that evangelism must be a team effort. Such teamwork, he believes, requires: (1). a friendship with someone who truly acts like Jesus by listening, caring, serving, and

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<sup>25</sup>Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger, *Transformational Groups* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 22.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 30-33.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

talking openly about his faith in a non-pressuring way, (2). relationship, (3). a “come-as-you-are” learning environment, (4). inviting non-Christians to one’s small group and to the church, and (5). participating with other Christians in a church service.<sup>30</sup> The MMU, must model these habits in their mission endeavors.

### **Prayer/Power Evangelism**

As acknowledged in my chapter 3 regarding the religious and traditional beliefs of the people, there is a need for what Adeyanju sees as reality of power encounter in Africa. He believes that “to indigenize Christian theology in the African continent is to accept the reality of supernatural forces the Africans encounter daily, and from which they seek constant deliverance.”<sup>31</sup> He claims that cultural revivals are increasing in Nigeria, and these massive revivals lead the citizens further away from Christ. Adeyanju then raises the alarm concerning the growing trend and appeal to Christian theologians to assure the people that there is deliverance for body and soul in the finished work of Christ. In other words, he cautions, “We must show how Christian theology can scatter the spiritual and psychological fears of Africans occasioned by diabolical powers.”<sup>32</sup> He then advocates incorporating power encounters into the curriculum of theological education in Nigeria.<sup>33</sup>

Graham A. Cole, while discussing prayer in biblical testimony, highlighted some examples of petitionary prayer in the gospels. They include: Jesus teaching his disciples how to pray (Luke 11:1-4) and the book of Acts, where the early church

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<sup>30</sup>Jack Kuhatschek, *Evangelism: Reaching Out through Relationship* (Grand Rapids: Our Daily Bread Ministries, 2017), 28-30.

<sup>31</sup>James Adeyanju, “Indigenizing Theological Education for Relevant Christian Theology in Africa,” in *Pedagogy: The Church Leadership, and Theological Education in Africa*, ed. Ademola Ishola, Deji Ayegboyin, and Sayo Oladejo (Ibadan: Baptist Press Nigerian, 2009), 154.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

engaged in prayer (Acts 6:1-3). The other significance of prayer mentioned by Cole was that of Paul's desire for the Ephesian. When addressing Timothy, Paul placed prayer as a priority in 1 Timothy 2:1-2.<sup>34</sup> Paul taught Timothy that prayer is important to evangelism. This is because man cannot convert souls to the kingdom. Rather, the role men can play is to ask the Lord of the harvest to send them as laborers to the field, and to pray for the conversion of lost souls. This is similar to Paul's prayer for the Israelites to be saved (Luke 10:2 and Rom 10:1). In *A Man's Guide to the Spiritual Discipline* Patrick Morley advises that an effective way to encourage Christian growth is for the believer to make prayer his first disposition. He contrasted the life of two Israelite kings, Saul and David, on matters of seeking God's direction in prayer. Saul rejected this direction, even when a priest demanded such action from the Lord (1 Sam. 14:36).<sup>35</sup>

Consequently, men should seek God's direction as a priority. While commenting on the importance of miracles and demonstration of God's power, which is witnessed in Paul's ministry, Allen affirmed the provision God has made available for Christians. He states, "We have powers sufficient to assure inquirers of the superiority of Christianity to all heathen religions . . . to illustrate in acts the character of our religion, its salvation and its love if only we will use our powers to reveal the Spirit. One day we shall perhaps recover the early faith in miracles."<sup>36</sup> Recovering this early faith in miracles is necessary in our world, which is turning secular and unresponsive to the gospel.

Adeyanju and Allen's suggestion forms the basis for prayer and power encounter evangelism in Igboland. This is due to the need to address belief in ancestral worship, spirit deities, and the spiritual world through prayers. Therefore, men should be

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<sup>34</sup>Graham A. Cole, *Engaging with the Holy Spirit: Real Questions, Practical Answers* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 54-56.

<sup>35</sup>Patrick Morley, *A Man's Guide to the Spiritual Disciplines: 12 Habits to Strengthen Your Walk with Christ* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 56.

<sup>36</sup>Allen, *Missionary Methods*, 48.



ready to engage in prayer for souls which are still held under the bondage of these beliefs. As Allen observed, the Igbo evangelist must see the gospel presentation as the demonstration of God's power. Rondal Smith observed that, because of worldview differences, a targeted culture may not to some degree understand the message of the gospel that is being introduced. He affirmed that the "Biblical message clearly indicates that Satan has established his own counter-kingdom among humankind, and that all people before they accept Jesus Christ as Messiah Savior sent by God are in rebellion against God and subordinate to Satan's power."<sup>37</sup> He notes two challenges that face missionaries in this situation: the task of dealing with the unbelief of the individual in the culture, and resistance of institutionalized unbelief and behavior.<sup>38</sup> These two challenges are present within the Igbo culture. The belief in spiritual deities, ancestral worship, and veneration are some of the challenges among the people. Constant intercessory prayer and the manifestation of God's power are necessary in order to penetrate the area with the gospel.

In this chapter, the research recognized that theology will play an important role in reaching the Igbos with the gospel. One reason why theology is essential is that it will help eradicate nominal Christianity, thereby producing Christians who are grounded in their beliefs. It also addresses issues of economic empowerment and social ministry by maintaining that the two can improve the situation in Igboland because of the important position of men in the social structure. Regarding personal evangelism, the men should cultivate the practices of mentoring and personal witnessing to family members and those around them. Recreation and sports can be another evangelism method. In these strategies, men should engage in some recreational activities in the area with the sole aim

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<sup>37</sup>Rondal Smith, "Finishing the Task," in *Completing the Task: Reaching the World for Christ*, ed. Edgar J. Elliston and Stephen E. Burris (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1995), 131.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 132.

of presenting the gospel. The house/cell group method of evangelism is also advocated, which will help men lead house churches where fellowship and relationships are built within the clans and hamlets. Finally, this thesis states that prayer and power evangelism will be crucial due to faulty beliefs and Satanic attempts to block the spread of the gospel. God's presence and leadership are strongly needed to equip men for ministry in the Southeastern Nigerian states.

## CHAPTER 6

### HINDRANCES TO EVANGELISTIC STRATEGY IN THE SOUTHEASTERN IGBO ETHNIC GROUP

The following hindrances were recognized in this research concerning evangelizing the Southeastern Igbo People's Group in Nigeria. One noticeable difficulty is the belief that Igbos are Christians and, therefore, evangelistic activities are unnecessary in the area. The domination of the Roman Catholic Church and their doctrinal influence makes conversion difficult, because their teachings mixed traditional culture with Christianity. Closely related is the hindrance posed by hyper-Pentecostalism and their prosperity gospel message.

The hindrance of ancestral veneration by the African Traditional Religion adherents also exists. Many still believe in ancestors and reincarnation. This also leads to the problem of syncretism in the Igboland. The belief in spirit deities creates fear in the adherents. The nonchalant attitude among men regarding participation in evangelistic activities in the church creates limitations as well. Because of their positions as breadwinners, they channel their time and energy toward providing for their families, thereby neglecting God in their lives.

#### **Recommendations**

Following various hindrances to the Gospel presentations in Igboland, I will recommend that for adequate penetration of the Gospel message to all nooks and crannies of southeastern Nigeria, men should present a sound biblical theology, which projects

Christian doctrinal beliefs of the Triune God. Also, the salvific plan that comes from his only Son, Jesus Christ, must be included.

Second, while engaging in the evangelistic ministry in the area, men should explore the personal evangelistic strategy which encourages presentation of the good-news of salvation from Christ. Personal evangelism should include mentorship, discipleship, and one-on-one gospel presentation.

God's mediatory role in Christ and his Supremacy over all things should drive the teaching and presentation of the gospel in this area. This will check the peoples' beliefs in ancestors and spiritual deities, which create fear. Also, proper evangelistic strategies that explore the economic, social, recreational, and sporting lives of the people should be considered. While these platforms are avenues to develop contact with the people, the main objective must be sharing Christ.

In addition, men, through their masculine position and as breadwinners in the home, should use this position to influence the propagation of the Gospel within the framework of the Baptist church organization, the MMU, and finally, prayer/power evangelism should form one of the strategies to reach out, due to the influence of traditional beliefs which Satan may use to oppose the gospel presentation. Therefore, men should view their mission as spiritual warfare against Satan and his agents.

### **Conclusion**

This thesis explored evangelistic strategies that could be employed by the Men's Missionary Union of the Nigerian Baptist Convention in Igboland. This exploration noted that the Igbos live in the five states of southeastern Nigeria, as well as the neighboring states. Ethnographically, the Igbos are the third largest ethnic group in Nigeria, with a population of about thirty to forty million people out of the country's projected 180 million people. Again, it noted that households contain an average of 4.6 people, as in other parts of Nigeria. Regarding religion, Roman Catholicism dominates

the area, although the Protestant and Pentecostal groups are also present.

The thesis observed that bringing the gospel of Christ to the Ibos will require a clear understanding of their historical, cultural, and religious perspectives. It, therefore, traced the origin of the people including their common dialect, that is the Igbo language, the relationship they had with their neighbors that identified them as belonging to the proto-Kwa group, and occupying the area as their ancestral home. Other speculation about their origin leads to the theory of “the lost tribe of Judah.” This is because the people have cultural traits that resemble those of the Jews. In all, lack of proper historical record causes them to be identified as “one of the most unusual peoples of Africa.” The Igbo people group also includes cultures that are recognized in this thesis. They include the Omenani, or the customs of the people, the presentation of the kola-nuts to visitors as a sign of welcome and show of love, music, and dance portraits for entertainment purposes. Their social life consists of family units that usually take the form of nuclear and extended families. Marriage is held in high esteem and is a transitory occasion into social life for matured young men and ladies in the Igbo community. Also, the Igbos relate through their kin’s group, which they call Umunna. They have a strong belief in the supreme God, who is identified as Chukwu the creator of all things. They have a strong belief in spirit deities, the ancestors who the people venerate, and existence of the spirit world.

Another exploration and discovery made in this thesis concentrated on the introduction of Christianity in Igboland. The research discovered that missionaries first began work in the Onisha area, with the Anglican church at the forefront. The “big four” mission groups—which include the Anglicans, Catholics, Methodists, and Baptists—then scrambled for dominance in the area from mid-1800s. It noted that the liberated slaves of Igbo origin played prominent roles in bringing Christianity to the region. The Southern Baptist Convention work, pioneered by veteran missionary Thomas Jefferson Bowen, established a Baptist mission in the Yoruba area of Southwestern Nigeria in 1850. The

Yoruba Association later morphed into the Nigerian Baptist Convention in 1914. Baptist mission work in the Southeastern region was introduced by the efforts of the Buguma Baptist church member, Princewill, who was also a merchant. With the aid of Princewill, a Baptist church was planted at Ihiagwa near Owerri, in central part of Igboland. The mission has expanded with the organizational setups of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. However, this research recognized that the people still appear to be unreached with the gospel, although they claim to be Christians.

Considering the ministry in Igboland, this thesis advocated that a mission organization of the NBC, the Men's Missionary Union, should use the following strategies to entrench the true gospel of Christ, the only Savior, in the area. In order to accomplish this, it suggested that proper theological teaching should be the focus of the group. It maintains that gospel-centered economic empowerment aimed to reach the commercial area as well as the rural dwellers will draw souls to Christ. Furthermore, using social structure as an opportunity can help evangelistic efforts. The work also acknowledged that personal evangelism strategy that will encourage men to witness and mentor people through family system that can later transform to house/cell church can serve as an avenue of evangelizing the area. Lastly, it recognized the importance of prayer and power evangelism, based on the local beliefs regarding spirits and ancestors. These strategies will help fashion the men into God's instruments who will bring the liberating word of Christ to those still held captive by the Devil in area.

APPENDIX  
TABLES AND FIGURES

Table A1. Distribution of population by states and sex<sup>1</sup>

	Total	Male	Female
Abia State	2,845,380	1,430,298	1,415,082
Anambra	4,177,828	2,117,984	2,059,844
Enugu	3,267,837	1,596,042	1,671,795
Imo	3,927,563	1,976,471	1,951,092
Ebonyi	2,176,947	1,064,156	1,112,791
Total	16,395,555	8,184,951	8,210,604
Average Nig. Pop.	140,431,790	71,345,488	69,086,302

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<sup>1</sup>“National Population Commission 2006 Census Figure.” <http://www.population.gov.ng> accessed on 10/20/2016.

Table A2. Distribution of literate population age 6 and above by sex<sup>2</sup>

	Total	Male	Female
Abia	2,089,266	1,075,280	1,013,986
Anambra	3,136,092	1,603,569	1,532,523
Ebonyi	1,153,001	607,913	545,088
Enugu	2,172,486	1,095,655	1,076,831
Imo	2,937,413	1,496,841	1,440,572
Total	11,488,258	587,925,8	560,900,0

Table A3. Population figures (in millions) and growth rate comparison of 1991 and 2006 (South East)<sup>3</sup>

	Population (1991)	Population (2006)	Growth Rate
Abia State	1.91	2.83	2.66 %
Anambra	2.80	4.18	2.71
Ebonyi	1.45	2.17	2.72
Enugu	2.13	3.25	2.86
Imo	2.49	3.93	3.09
Zonal Total	10.78	16.36	2.82

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<sup>2</sup>Raymond Okafor, Ismaila Adeleke, and Athanasius Oparac, "An Appraisal of the Conduct and Provisional Results of the Nigerian Population and Housing Census 2006." American Statistical Associations, accessed November 3, 2016. <http://www.2.stat.org>files>Jsm2007-000561>.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



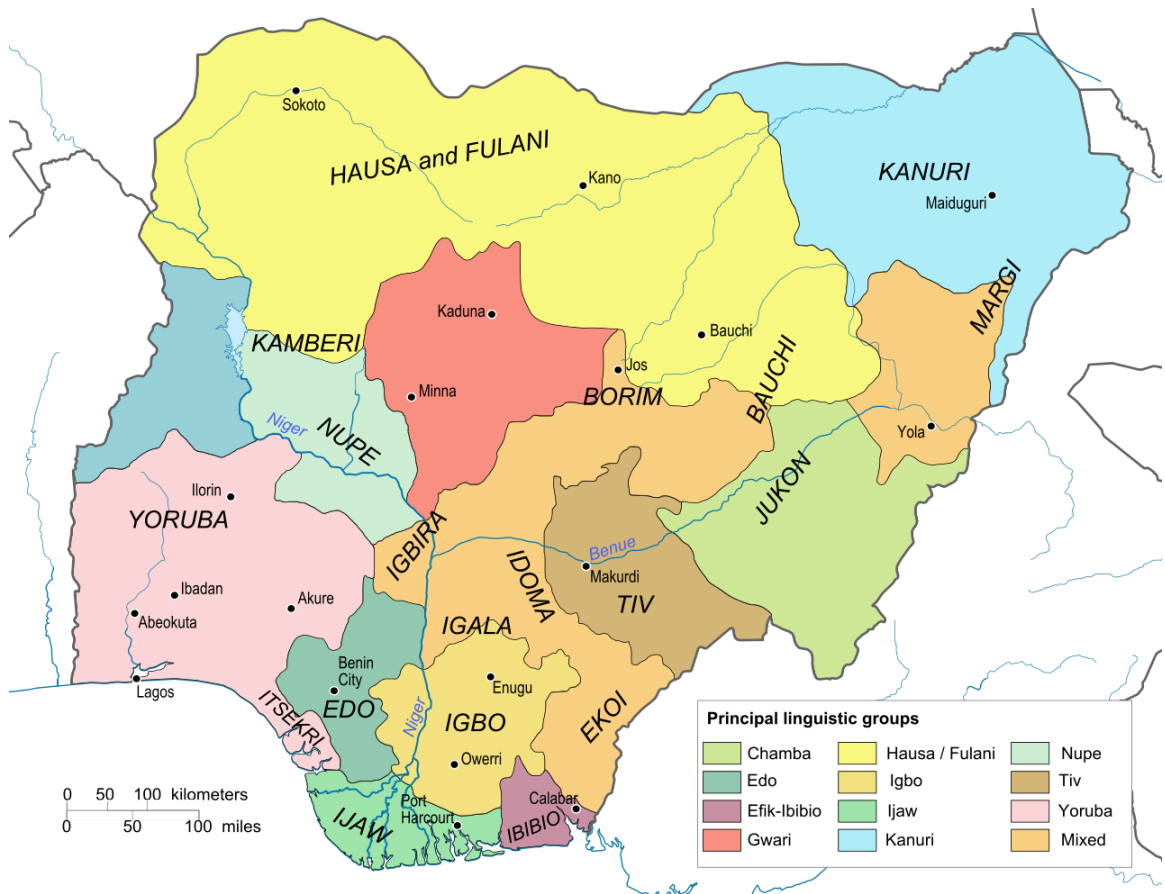


Figure A1. Map of Nigeria showing Igboland and other major ethnic groups

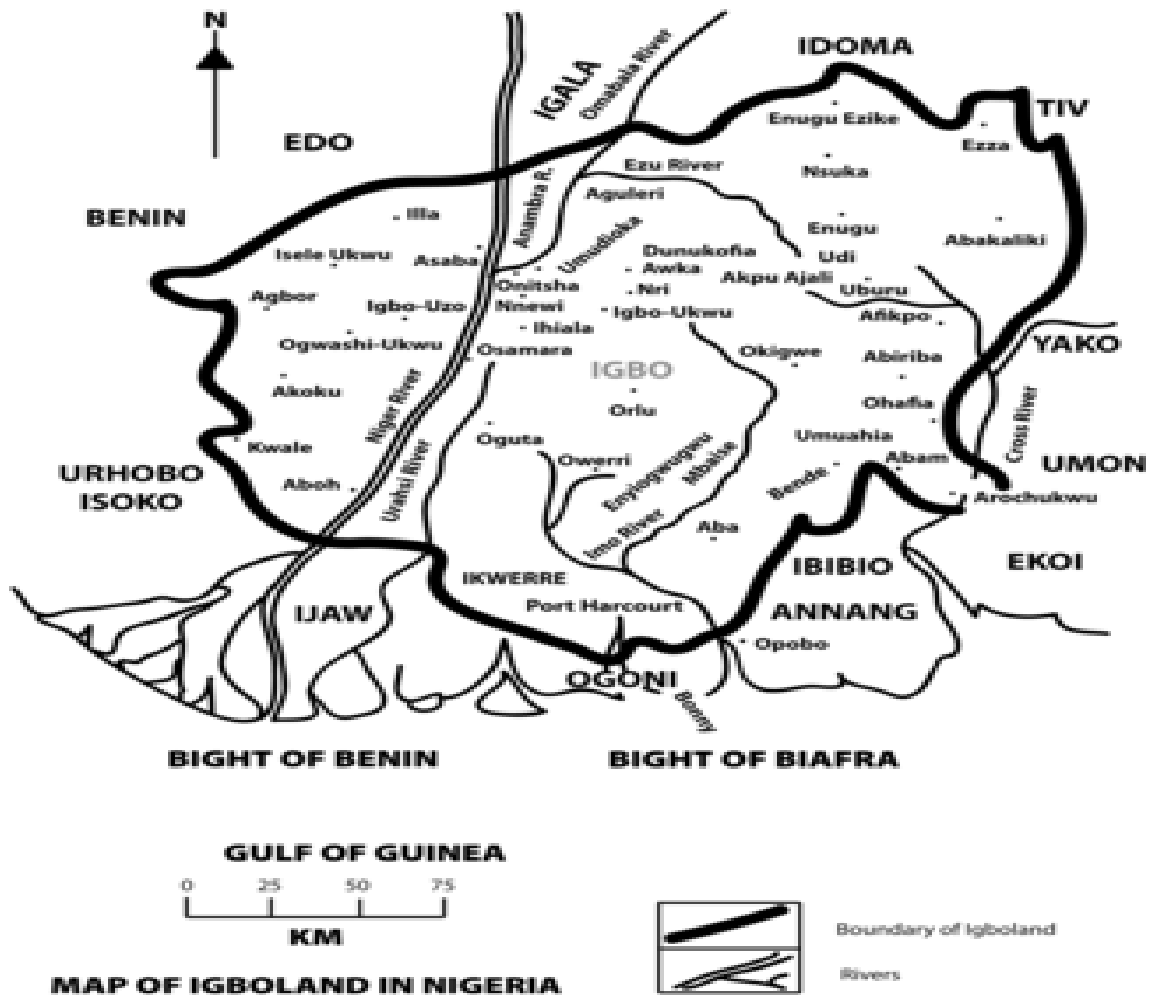


Figure A2. Map of Igboland in Nigeria



Figure A3. Map of Igboland and its position to the Atlantic Ocean

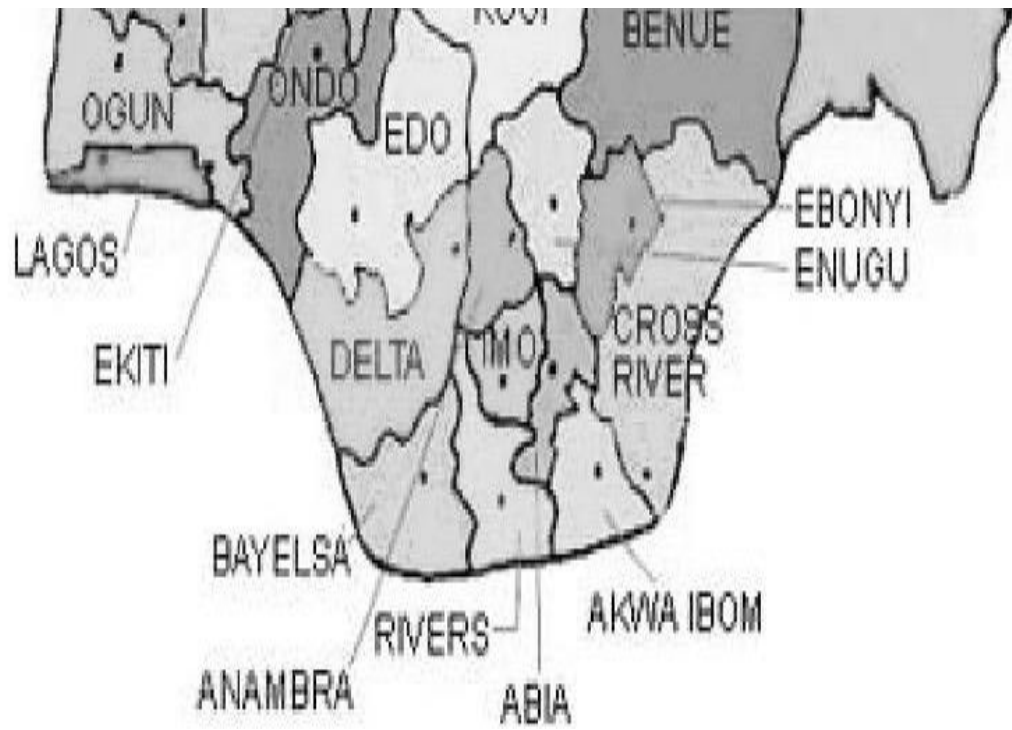


Figure A4. Map of Igboland and five neighboring states

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the evangelical strategy for the Men's Missionary Union in Southeastern Nigeria.

Chapter 1 gives the introduction to the study, which also comprises the background, the statement of the problems, the limitations and delimitation, the literary review and the methodology.

Chapter 2 is a study that views the geography and ethnography of Southeastern Igboland. In this chapter, the geographic location, the ethnographic data and the religion of the people were examined.

Chapter 3 focuses on the historical background of the people of southeastern Nigeria. The areas of interest include: the historical background, cultural portraits, social life, and the religious and traditional beliefs of the people

Chapter 4 looks at the history of missions in Southeast Nigeria. The areas of focus include: Christian Missions in Southeast Nigeria, Baptist Missions in the Southeast Nigeria, the Southern Baptist Missions in Nigeria, the Nigerian Baptist Convention Missions and the Men's Missionary Union in the Southeastern Nigeria.

Chapter 5 explores the Evangelistic Strategy for the Men's Missionary Union in Southeastern Nigeria. The thesis suggests the following strategies for the area: the theological importance of evangelism in Southeastern Nigeria, the economic empowerment, social ministry, personal evangelism, recreational and sporting ministry, house/cell group scheme, and prayer/power evangelism.

Chapter 6 discovers some hindrances to evangelism in the area and then makes some recommendations toward evangelizing the Southeast people of Nigeria.

According to the observation of the thesis, the Southeastern people of Nigeria are assumed to have been Christianized, but the gospel-centered message of Christ is still

lacking in the area. Therefore, this thesis explores possible evangelistic strategies that will galvanize the ministry of the Men's Missionary Union of Baptist Churches in Southeastern Igbo ethnic group in Nigeria. It discovers that the seven evangelistic strategies when applied in the area will help reach the people with the gospel message of Christ.

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