

ARTICLE

Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) and the Challenges of Missionary Diocese

George C. Asadu¹

Email: george.asadu@unn.edu.ng

(Received 30 January 2020; revised 11 November 2021; accepted 16 November 2021; first published online 17 January 2022)

Abstract

For some years now the Anglican Church in Nigeria has been contending with the problems arising from the creation of missionary dioceses. Many retreats for the bishops in the missionary dioceses have been held from late 2000 to date, in an effort to find solutions to the problems, yet the problems have continued unabated. The situation provokes concern and interest in public discourse and intellectual circles. This study examines critically the problems of missionary dioceses and the effects of such problems on the workers and their families therein using a historical approach and both primary and secondary sources. The findings show that some of the missionary dioceses were created with poor funding and facilities as there was no adequate preparation for their creation. The study therefore recommends that the Church of Nigeria should support the missionary dioceses to stabilize.

Keywords: Anglican, communion, challenges, church, diocese, missionary, Nigeria

Introduction

In 1979, the Anglican Church in Nigeria was elevated to the status of a Provincial Church with the name ‘Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)’; a decade after, it adopted the creation of ‘missionary dioceses’ as its strategy for evangelization. It is worthy of note that there are two types of dioceses in the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) namely, ‘fully-fledged dioceses’ and ‘missionary dioceses’. The prefix of ‘missionary’ to a diocese suggests that it is not a fully-fledged diocese and, therefore, not self-supporting and not self-governed. Therefore, the missionary diocese depends on external sources for its funding. It has no constitution but continues to make use of the constitution of the parent diocese from where it was carved out. Its cathedral is not manned by a provost but by a cathedral priest, hence, the bishop is the dean of their cathedral. A missionary diocese does not hold a synod; rather its apex legislative body is called a diocesan council. The decisions of its council are subject to ratification by the primate.

¹George C. Asadu, Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu, Nigeria.

The primary aim of creating such dioceses is for grassroots evangelism. A missionary diocese is a diocese that is created with the understanding that the area in question needs to be evangelized. Therefore, the creation of a missionary diocese is based neither on the numerical nor on the financial strength of the area in question but on the need to reach the populace who live outside the gospel society. Hence, a missionary diocese may be created without having all the necessary or mandated infrastructure of a fully-fledged diocese. For this reason, it is expedient that before the missionary diocese is created, firm arrangements are made for its sustainability. Such an arrangement includes its being sponsored by a diocese, arch-deaconry, church organization or an individual that willingly agrees to do so. This is the best way to overcome potential financial constraints and difficulties.²

While commenting on the nature of the missionary diocese, Adiele remarks that: '[The] Missionary Diocese is a child of circumstance and as such delivered in an abnormal way'.³ Such abnormal deliveries have led to some other abnormalities ranging from poor infrastructure, financial instability, lack of manpower and poor remuneration of workers, causing absolute dependence and inefficiency. Hence, this research sets out to: (1) examine the procedure through which missionary dioceses were created in Nigeria; (2) identify the problems of the missionary dioceses of the Anglican Communion in Nigeria; (3) examine the effects of such problems on the ordained and lay workers and their families; and (4) establish that there are prospects for missionary dioceses in the Church in Nigeria despite the problems. To achieve these aims, a historical method has been adopted, which draws critically on primary and secondary sources, supplemented with oral materials gathered from some of the laity, priests and bishops in the missionary dioceses.

Factors that Led to the Creation of the Missionary Dioceses

The Anglican Church in Nigeria became so committed to discipleship that there was explosion of fire-brand Christians who developed a passion for mission. Consequently, churches were planted in various places. For instance, in 1980 the entire North, which had been a single diocese (Diocese of Northern Nigeria), was split into three dioceses, namely the Dioceses of Kaduna, Kano and Jos. Two needs, meeting the spiritual demands of these teeming worshippers and moving further into the hinterland, necessitated the creation of missionary dioceses.

At that time in the north, priests were scarce and those available were rarely found in the rural churches. A parish could be a whole state. In such situations, people who had been church members for their whole life time might never have seen the bishop. The then Archbishop Peter Akinola lamented the situation: 'Three provinces, 78 Dioceses/78 Bishops, mostly in urban setting with thousands of villages unreached by the gospel of salvation.'⁴ Therefore, there was dire need for

²G.C. Asadu, 'Problems and Prospects of Missionary Diocese of the Anglican Communion in Igboland, unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2017.

³S.N. Adiele, 'The Phenomenon of the Missionary Diocese in the Anglican Communion East of the Niger', in S.N. Adiele, *The Niger Mission Origin, Growth and Impact 1857-1995* (Aba: ISAECO Press, 1996), p. 238.

⁴P.J. Akinola, 'The Church of Nigeria Today', a Key Note Address on a New Vision of the Church of Nigeria presented to the General Synod in Abuja, 2000, p. 4.

proper evangelization of the north. Even in the south, where there have been considerable missionary achievements, there was need for expansion. At its inauguration in 1979, the Anglican Church in Nigeria comprised only six dioceses in the east of the Niger: on the Niger, Niger Delta, Owerri, Enugu, Aba, and in the western part of Igboland Asaba. In the west, there were only seven dioceses: Lagos, Ibadan, Ondo, Benin, Kwara, Ilesha and Egba-Egbado.

A prime motivation for the creation of missionary diocese as a strategy for evangelism is the fact that the Anglican Church is episcopally led and synodically governed. Hence, it does its mission in the context of a diocese. The diocese has a synod as its apex legislative organ and the bishop is its president. The bishop presents varied programmes, missionary proposals and budgets for approval. The creation of archdeacons, parishes and the ordination of priests and deacons are also approved by the synod. The creation of a diocese is meant to increase outreach to the unchurched, as well as an appreciable measure of development.⁵ Additionally, missionary dioceses are intended to function effectively as chaplaincies to the many Anglicans who, as a result of their work, travel to areas where there is no Anglican Church. Bishop Antai in 2015, for example, argued that the Diocese of Uyo was launched because some of the Igbo brethren, particularly apprentices, needed a place of worship as Anglicans to avoid having to journey home every Sunday for service.⁶

The creation of missionary dioceses addressed the historical legacy of the restrictions placed on evangelization of the north (Emirate areas) by Lugard's administration in the colonial period; and the 'Comity Agreement' which forbade the Anglican missionaries from operating in the areas assigned to their sister missionaries from the UK. Ozigbo laments that 'the Colonial administration under Captain Lugard's eagerness to placate the subdued Emirs, did not give the various Christian missions unfettered access to the Northern Province'.⁷ Uba further notes that: 'The ban on preaching in the public places was conceived in the interest of law and order because it was feared that Muslim fanatics might react violently to public preaching by the missionaries.'⁸ The restriction certainly impeded the spread of Anglicanism in Nigeria. It was because of the 'Comity Agreement' that Benue was not evangelized in the 1920s.⁹

The Creation of Missionary Dioceses in Nigeria

In view of this history, and also in response to a global call for primary evangelism worldwide by the Lambeth Conference of 1988, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) began to create missionary dioceses for grassroots evangelism. The

⁵B.C. Diara, A.B. Okoli and B.C. Nche, 'The Evangelical and Developmental Importance of Creation of Anglican Diocese in Igboland', *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 4.18 (2014), pp. 105-12.

⁶A. Antai in an interview with the *TRINICO Magazine*, a publication of Trinity Theological College Umuahia, 2015, p. 35.

⁷I.R.A. Ozigbo, *Igbo Catholicism Onitsha Connections 1907-1984* (Onitsha: Africa Fep Publishers, 1985), p. 32.

⁸C.N. Uba, 'Christian Missionary Penetration of the Nigerian Emirates: The Medical Work Approach', in O.U. Kalu (ed.), *West African Religion, Vol. XX, Nos. 1 and 2* (Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press, 1983), p. 6.

⁹N.N. Inyom, 'Church Planting and Church Growth', a paper presented to the 2008 Church of Nigeria All Anglican Clergy Conference at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2008.

1988 Lambeth Conference's unanimous passage of Resolution 43, proclaiming the 1990s as a decade of Evangelism was further strengthened by the passage of the closely related Resolution 44, which reads:

This Conference: 1. calls for a shift to a dynamic missionary emphasis going beyond care and nurture to proclamation and service and therefore, 2. accepts the challenge this presents to diocesan and local church structures and patterns of worship and ministry and looks to God for fresh movement of the Holy Spirit in prayer, outgoing love and evangelism in obedient to our Lord's commandment.¹⁰

According to Moneke, 'This second resolution challenged every bishop, and through the bishops every diocese to effectively implement the Decade of Evangelism at the local level.'¹¹ Archbishop Nwankiti was one of the African bishops who attended the Lambeth Conference in 1988; his shared experience corroborated Moneke's report thus:

Seventy-three resolutions were passed at the Lambeth Conference. For many of us in Africa, the resolution which called for a 'Decade of Evangelism' in the 1990s was the greatest of them all. This resolution made the closing years of the second millennium a 'Decade of Evangelism' with a renewal and united emphasis on making Christ known to the people of His World. It is a matter of great joy to the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) that one of her illustrious pastors, the Reverend Canon Cyril Okorocho, (later the Bishop of Owerri), was appointed the Director of Evangelism for the entire Communion by the Archbishop George Carey of Canterbury.¹²

The declaration of the Decade of Evangelism pushed the Anglican Church to intensify its effort in soul winning: the gospel of Christ has to be preached as if it has never been preached before or would not be preached again after the year 2000. To this end, the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) adopted the creation of missionary dioceses as a strategy for achieving this task. The motion for the creation of missionary dioceses was supported by the Third Synod of the Church of Nigeria held in Yaba in August 1989. Two far-reaching decisions were made at that Synod. The first was to create at least a diocese in each state no matter the number of the existing churches. The second was to formally start the Decade of Evangelism on 1 January 1990. Adiele noted that:

The technique adopted by the Archbishop was the placement of a Bishop in every State Capital. By implication, it meant constituting every State into a Diocese where none existed. The number of congregation or adherents in

¹⁰1988 Lambeth Conference, <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/resources/document-library/lambeth-conference/1988/resolution-44-evangelism-in-the-anglican-communion.aspx>

¹¹C. Moneke, 'Lambeth '98 Section Reports (Part One)', *Anglicana, Magazine of the Church of Nigeria-Anglican Communion* 2 (1999), p. 18.

¹²B.C. Nwankiti, *The Lambeth Conference and the Growth of the Anglican Communion* (Owerri: Springfield Publishers, 2000), p. 71.

the proposed Dioceses needed has no minimum. He stated that since no Bishop would be comfortable to be a Bishop of one or few churches, that such creation would challenge the Bishop to establish more churches.¹³

This strategy was first tested with the creation of the Abuja Missionary Diocese in November 1989. It was funded by other dioceses in the Province. According to Nwankiti, it thus became the forerunner of the missionary dioceses that were beginning to spring up in the areas hitherto untouched by the Anglican Church. In 1990, ten missionary dioceses were created in the Province of Nigeria.¹⁴ Okubanjo described the action of the Church as the ‘invasion of the Northern Nigeria with the gospel of Christ in 1990’,¹⁵ while Moneke inferred that ‘it was “Operation Blue Belt” (i.e. aggressive evangelism), a determined attack and invasion of the Virgin North and some pockets of abandoned areas of the South East’.¹⁶ Thus, every state capital became a Diocesan Headquarters with a resident bishop. Each of the bishops began their missionary campaign, with zeal and commitment to evangelism.

Within a few years there were outstanding records of successful growth. Some of the Anglicans who joined other denominations in the past because there was no Anglican Church in their localities returned. Gradually, more missionary dioceses sprang up in the Muslim strongholds of northern Nigeria. This was a great impact considering that, in the early colonial period, the north was regarded as an exclusive preserve of Islam, even though most of its populace were not Muslims at all.

Procedure for the Creation of Missionary Dioceses

Usually, the creation of a diocese involved meeting related and sometimes extraneous demands. According to Adiele, ‘Even when the seemingly unending conditionalities were met, the success of the application depended so much on the pleasure of the Diocesan who stood the risk of relinquishing part of his ecclesiastic domain.’¹⁷ The standard operating precondition is that the area to be constituted into a diocese must demonstrate conclusively its potential of being self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. The ability to fulfil all the obligations for both infrastructure and finance must be demonstrated.¹⁸ Adiele observes that in the creation of a diocese the following procedures were applied:

¹³Adiele, ‘The Phenomenon of the Missionary Diocese’, p. 246.

¹⁴B.C. Nwankiti, *The Growth and Development of the Church of Nigeria* (Owerri: Ihem Davis Press, 1996), p. 12.

¹⁵S. Okubanjo, ‘Creation of Missionary Diocese in the Northern Nigeria and South East of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)’, in C.O. Taiwo, *Joseph Abiodun Adtiloye: The Visionary Primate* (Lagos: CSS Limited 1999), p. 118.

¹⁶C. Moneke, ‘Ideato Diocese on the Tripod’, *Anglicana, Magazine of the Church of Nigeria-Anglican Communion* 5.1 (2000), p. 14.

¹⁷Adiele, ‘The Phenomenon of the Missionary Diocese’, p. 237.

¹⁸O.U. Kalu, ‘In the Field: Pattern of Missionary Expansion’, in O.U. Kalu (ed.) *The History of Christianity in West Africa* (Hong Kong: Sing Cheong Printing, 1980).

- i. The initiative for the formation of a new diocese out of an existing one should come from the section of people desiring it through a petition submitted to the Diocesan Board through the Bishop.
- ii. Where the Diocesan Board finds the request reasonable and is of the opinion that a separate Diocese in the area is likely to succeed, then it calls for certain information.
- iii. If the Diocesan Board finds the information supplied satisfactory and provided the petition is backed up by a resolution in favour, the Board sends it up to the Diocesan Synod for consideration.
- iv. If the Diocesan Synod is satisfied that the Diocese sought for is desirable and viable, it will then pass its own resolution, forwarding the request through the Bishop to the Archbishop.
- v. If the Provincial Synod after considering the request and approves it, then the Archbishop will announce its formation.
- vi. The question of a bishop will be determined by the Archbishop's Advisory Committee set up by the Bishop.¹⁹

What the Church of Nigeria did in the creation of missionary diocese was to waive some of these conditions that would not allow for easy creation of diocese. The rigidity in the principles and methods of administration was altered in the 1990s. Without this change, many areas that genuinely deserved episcopal attention might not have it for a long time. Commenting on this innovation Udezo stated that: 'The seemingly unending conditionalities for the creation of diocese were graciously waived, and many concessions in form of sponsorship made in order to nurse to maturity the dioceses that were designated "missionary".'²⁰ It has not been plain sailing. While the creation of missionary dioceses in 1990 was a good move in the right direction, significant problems associated with this new missionary strategy have been felt in the Nigerian Province, to the point that the church is seriously considering alternatives.

Historical Background to the Problems of Missionary Dioceses

When the Primate of Nigeria, Archbishop Adetiloye conceived the idea to create missionary dioceses, he was cautious about the fiscal issues that could mar the project. So, he cautiously raised sponsors for the new missionary dioceses. For instance, churches in his diocese alone bore the financial burden of eight missionary dioceses. The sponsoring churches were properly taught and they aligned themselves with the Primate's efforts to grow the church. According to Adiele:

The sponsoring churches went beyond the statutory provisions in aiding the new dioceses. The case of Uyo is illustrative. Besides the yearly grant, St. Peter's Church Breadfruit Lagos, bought a brand new air conditioned 504 Peugeot

¹⁹Adiele, 'The Phenomenon of the Missionary Diocese', p. 238.

²⁰O.S. Udezo, 'The Church's Service Ministry: Basic Issues in Mission Strategies in the Last Forty Years (1966–2006)', in I.K. Okoye (ed.), *Mission and Evangelism: Theological Essays in Honour of the Most Revd. Maxwell S.C. Aniekwunwa* (Awka: SCOA Heritage System, 2007), p. 68.

Station Wagon car to replace 505 Salon loaned to the bishop by Engineer Timothy Orisakwe.²¹

It is no exaggeration to say that the willingness of the sponsoring churches was one of the reasons the first missionary dioceses succeeded. The ten missionary dioceses have become stabilized and are now fully-fledged dioceses. Table 1 provides the names of the missionary dioceses, bishops and their sponsors.

Unfortunately, after Adetiloye's retirement some missionary dioceses were created without sponsors. They did not have any contingency plan before they were created. The failure of the Church to put in place the needed facilities like capital base, mobility and housing accommodation has now posed a threat to their viability. The matter was exacerbated by the actions of some bishops of the missionary dioceses, who indiscriminately ordained large number of priests, whose stipends the diocese cannot afford.

Proliferation of Missionary Dioceses

The creation of missionary dioceses was indeed so much an amazing success that other dominant areas even in the south started agitating for their own diocese. Archbishop Peter Akinola, who succeeded Adetiloye, was pleased with the developments and moved on to create more. His reasoning was that there were areas that needed to be reached. The bishop hardly visited all the parishes in one year and the souls of the vast majority of members in those unreached areas were not catered for. It was only at ceremonies like confirmation services that some fortunate church members could set their eyes on their bishop. He was also concerned that people in rural areas hardly received the good news because all the bishops were mostly in urban settings with thousands of villages unreached by the gospel of salvation.²² So, he was determined to do something.

He reduced the dioceses he perceived to be vast to a manageable size that would not be too large for a bishop to manage. In defining the size of a diocese, other variables were factored in, such as the area's geographic size and socio-economic status. However, the need to reach the public who had not encountered the gospel society was the primary driving force behind the formation of a missionary diocese, not the area's numerical or financial strength. On 14 March 2007, when Akinola consecrated 23 bishops in Advent Cathedral Church, Abuja, he joyfully declared that the era of ceremonial bishops was over. Thus, he went on creating dioceses in various places in Nigeria. His administration saw the creation of many dioceses. During his ten years in office, 86 dioceses were created (both fully-fledged and missionary dioceses).

Information on the Church Year Calendar depicts that from 2001 to 2005, 22 dioceses were created. These were the Dioceses of Esan and Ika in 2001, Oyo and Okirika in 2003, Ahoada and Ekiti-Oke in 2004. In 2005 alone, he created the following dioceses: Diocese of Kubuwa, Missionary Diocese of Idah, Missionary Diocese of Isuikwuato/Umunneochi, Missionary Diocese of

²¹Adiele, 'The Phenomenon of the Missionary Diocese', p. 249.

²²Akinola, *The Church of Nigeria Today*, p. 4.

Table 1. Names of the missionary dioceses, bishops and their sponsors

Diocese	Bishops	Sponsors
Maiduguri	E. Manni	St Jude's Church Ebute-Metta, Lagos
Uyo	E. Nglas	St Paul's Church, Bread-Fruit, Lagos
Makurdi	J. Iyangema	Holy Trinity Church, Ebute-Ero, Lagos
Yola	C. Efobi	St John's Church, Aroloya, Lagos
Sokoto	J. Fearon	All Saints Church, Yaba, Lagos
Minna	J.Yisa	Archbishop Vining Memorial Church, Ikeja, Lagos
Bauchi	E. Chukwuma	St Peter's Church, Faji, Lagos
Kafanchan	W. Diya	St Peters Church, Idi-Oro, Lagos
Kastina	J. Kwasu	Ondo Diocese
Calabar W.	Ekpirikpo	St John's Church, Odi Olowo, Lagos

Arochukwu, Missionary Diocese of Ikwuano, Missionary Diocese of Ogoni, Missionary Diocese of Badagry, Missionary Diocese of Ogbomoso, Missionary Diocese of Zonkwa, Missionary Diocese of Western Izon, Diocese of Aguata, Mission to Province of Congo (12 in total, of which two were fully-fledged dioceses and ten were missionary dioceses). The Dioceses of Lagos Mainland and Nomadic Mission were created in 2006. The proliferation of missionary dioceses climaxed in the creation of 21 missionary dioceses in 2007: Missionary Diocese of Pankshin, Missionary Diocese Bukuru, Missionary Diocese of Zaria, Missionary Diocese of Kontagora, Missionary Diocese of New Bussa, Missionary Diocese of Omu-Aran, Missionary Diocese of Ajayi Crowther, Missionary Diocese of Oke-Ogun, Missionary Diocese of Ifo, Missionary Diocese of Akoko Edo, Missionary Diocese of Etsako, Missionary Diocese of Ogbaru, Missionary Diocese of Enugu North, Missionary Diocese of Awgu/Aninri, Missionary Diocese of Ikwo, Missionary Diocese of Ngbo, Missionary Diocese of Afikpo, Missionary Diocese of Isiala-Ngwa South, Missionary Diocese of Etche, Diocese of Nike, Diocese of Aba-Ngwa North, Diocese of Isiala-Ngwa, Diocese of Ikwere, Diocese of Egba-West (25 in total, of which 4 were fully-fledged dioceses). This massive creation was possibly reckless.

As if the creation of 21 missionary dioceses in 2007 was not enough of a problem, in the following year, 20 more dioceses were created: the Missionary Diocese of Bari, Missionary Diocese of Langtan, Missionary Diocese of Kwoi, Missionary Diocese of Kutigi, Missionary Diocese of Jebba, Missionary Diocese of Ekiti Kwara, Diocese of Ijumu, Diocese of Okene, Missionary Diocese of Ife East, Missionary Diocese of Awori, Missionary Diocese of Ndokwa, Missionary Diocese of Northern Izon, Missionary Diocese of Ogbia, Missionary Diocese of Ohaji/Egbema, Missionary Diocese of On The Lake, Missionary Diocese of Ihiala, Missionary Diocese of Niger West, Missionary Diocese of Mbamili, Missionary Diocese of Oru and Missionary Diocese of Osun North. Out of these 20, only two were fully-fledged dioceses.

The year 2009 was Akinola's last year in office. In that year he created yet another 23 dioceses: Diocese of Sapele, Diocese of Okigwe, Diocese of Amechi, Diocese of Udi, Missionary Diocese of Eha-Amufu, Missionary Diocese of Zaki Biam, Missionary Diocese of Gboko, Missionary Diocese of Ikara, Missionary Diocese of Ogori-Magongo, Diocese of Ilesa-South West, Missionary Diocese of Ijessha North, Missionary Diocese of Ilaje, Missionary Diocese of Irele-Eseodo, Diocese of Evo, Diocese of Ikeduru, Diocese of Osun North East, Missionary Diocese of Ile-Oluji, Diocese of Doko, Missionary Diocese of Ijessa North East, Missionary Diocese of Ijebu S/West, Missionary Diocese of Igbomina West, Missionary Diocese of Idoani and Missionary Diocese of Trinity (CANA). Of these, only 9 were fully-fledged dioceses while 14 were missionary dioceses. There is no gainsaying the fact that the number of missionary dioceses outweighed the number of the fully-fledged dioceses that Akinola created. The fully-fledged dioceses were drastically reduced by this development as the missionary dioceses were carved out of the former. Even some missionary dioceses were split into two. Unfortunately, Akinola retired after the creation of these dioceses without anticipating the problems his policy had generated.

In 2010, Nicholas Okoh was elected the Primate of Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion). He has made good efforts to sustain the impoverished missionary dioceses, one of which was to demarcate St Matthias' Day as a day for the missionary dioceses in Nigeria. On that day, groups, churches and individuals are encouraged to donate money in support of the missionary dioceses. Nonetheless, the problem persists because of the reasons enumerated below.

Problems of Missionary Dioceses

Inadequate Preparation

There was no adequate preparation for the proliferation of the missionary dioceses. Archbishop Maxwell Anikwenwa, who was the Dean of Church of Nigeria when the missionary diocese proliferated, warned against the problem that could result from creating dioceses, missionary or fully-fledged without adequate planning, but the Church took no heed to his advice. He said: 'I am not against the creation of missionary dioceses, not at all because it is mission of the church. But I believe in preparing a diocese for its takeoff.'²³ He was criticized, but his position has been vindicated by the fact that the problems he envisaged now seriously affect the Church of Nigeria. Even the adoption of St Matthias' Day as a day for the missionary dioceses has not solved the problem. Today many people, including some bishops, have expressed dissatisfaction about the condition of some of the dioceses that were created.

Bishop Eze of Enugu North Missionary Diocese lends credence to Anikwenwa's statement that there was inadequate planning at the national level as well as the local level.²⁴ The failure to have a blueprint for such missionary enterprise was a serious mistake and, indeed, an organizational failure. Evidence abounds of inadequate

²³ Archbishop M.S.C. Anikwenwa, oral interview conducted by O. Adetiloye, *The Theologian Magazine* 15 (2010), p. 11.

²⁴ Bishop Sothenes Eze, oral interview, 2017.

preparation. For instance, in Eha-Amufu Missionary Diocese there was no bishop's house, no vehicle, and no sponsor at the time of inauguration. This problem is not peculiar to missionary dioceses: some fully-fledged dioceses were also established on such poor foundations. Bishop Chukwunonye has also expressed his disappointment regarding the poor conditions of some dioceses: 'The conditions laid down by the Church of Nigeria for the creation of fully-fledged Diocese are: a Bishop's court, a diocesan office, bishop's car and a minimum of 10 million Naira fixed deposit.'²⁵ The only difference between the missionary and fully-fledged is that the fully-fledged diocese should implement these structures themselves, while the missionary dioceses get such resources from sponsors. The bishop continued:

As at the time his Diocese was created [16 July 2008] there was no Bishop's office and what is serving as the Bishop's house is a poorly equipped house borrowed from the Cathedral which is meant for a priest. As for the 10 million Naira fixed deposit, what the Diocese had was an unpaid assessment of 9.6 million naira while the Bishop's car was a 1999 model Toyota Limited jeep bought on credit. The seller constantly harasses me for the balance of 1.4 million owed him on the jeep.²⁶

While Archdeacon Pius Chukwu blames the Local Planning Committee for the problems of the missionary dioceses,²⁷ Bishop Nwaobia differs in his opinion.²⁸ He points to the bishops of the parent dioceses, from where the new dioceses were carved out, who, in his view, should have been the ones to supervise, approve and subsequently release the new diocese: no bishop should have approved the creation of a diocese until it had fulfilled the basic conditions.

Some approaches to the creation of missionary dioceses showed that Akinola's good intention to moderate the size of dioceses was wrongly perceived. Those who felt that the bishops' influences were growing out of proportion supported the creation of missionary dioceses as a means of cutting the size of the Episcopal kingdoms, and so curtailing the tremendous powers of the bishops. Thus, Okeke states:

In 1931, there was only one diocese. Today in the area under review, there are now over thirty dioceses with bishops, some of whom are missionary bishops. The good news is reaching the grassroots; and the era of mighty Episcopal kingdoms is gradually diminishing. It is hopeful that the kingly powers of the bishops would also diminish.²⁹

²⁵G.N. Chukwunonye, 'Synod Presidential Address', at the One Day Synod of the Diocese of Oru held at the Emmanuel Cathedral, Mgbidi, 2009, p. 16.

²⁶Chukwunonye, 'Synod Presidential Address', p. 16.

²⁷Archdeacon Pius Chukwu, oral interview conducted on 17 June 2016.

²⁸Bishop Isaac Nwaobia, oral interview conducted on 17 February 2016.

²⁹D.C. Okeke, 'Gospel on the Niger: A Review of the Niger Mission', in I.K. Okoye (ed.), *Mission and Evangelism: Theological Essays in Honour of the Most Revd. Maxwell S.C. Aniekwunwa* (Awka: SCOA Heritage System, 2007), p. 25.

From the above quotation, it is likely that attempts to reduce the Episcopal power was another reason some clamoured for the proliferation of missionary dioceses in Church of Nigeria.

Economic Problems

Most of the missionary dioceses are in the rural communities, and have no activities for income generation. Money is mostly raised through Sunday offerings and payment of class dues. This kind of fund raising does not yield good results in the rural areas where the majority of the people are subsistence or peasant farmers. Hence, churches in the missionary diocese cannot even take care of the workers' stipends. Unlike industrial societies where there are business ventures in which money circulates at all times of the year, agricultural economies are seasonal. During the farming season, the farmers' physical energy and hard-earned money go into ploughing. Throughout that period their attention is given to farm work and most of them live in the farm. They only come home on Saturday evenings. This affects the circulation of money in the area, and also affects the church's mission. For instance, the wife of the bishop of Enugu North Diocese, Achugonye Eze, described this phenomenon:

Recently we asked one of our church teachers/evangelists who minister in the rural area how much his church makes in a month. He said, between two to five thousand naira (N2000–N5000) depending on the activities. Now tell me, is five thousand enough to pay a church teacher? Not to talk of paying rent for the hall they are using and his accommodation plus other essential expenses.³⁰

Moreover, due to the migration of the people from rural areas to the urban areas, the population of the rural dwellers continues to decrease: the church is also affected by this movement. Those left in the villages are in the age bracket which cannot adequately give the needed financial help which the church needs for its growth. Even when the church embarks on developmental projects, its membership is not the type that can be relied on to bring such projects to completion. Consequently, both the pastor and the members will only be at the mercy of the members living in the city. Some of these members do not come home regularly. This affects both the missionaries and the mission. The posting of clerics in such contexts affects their productivity. They could be zealous and energetic but not have the wherewithal to execute their missionary plans.

Donations are also used to raise money for the churches in the missionary dioceses. The diocese appeals to people to donate money or materials for church development. Money realized from this exercise is usually too meagre for capital projects. The Bishop of Missionary Diocese of Arochukwu/Ohafia, Johnson Onuoha, while presenting his 2009 Synod address talked about the financial constraints of his diocese thus:

³⁰A.C. Eze, 'The Place of Clergy Wives in Rural Church Ministry', *The Theologian Magazine* 15 (2010), p. 60.

There is over-dependence on the membership through donations, offerings and tithes while most rural churches are not able to raise sufficient funds to contribute to the administration and developmental needs of the diocese. As a result of inadequate funds, the clergy use very valuable soul-winning time for fund raising to sustain their churches.³¹

Ezekiel Nnamani opined that missionary dioceses also raise money during the diocesan synods and women conferences. However, the money is not saved, but spent immediately after the synod. After that, fresh plans are made on how to raise funds in the next synod, using the same method that requires churches and individuals to donate money during synods and conferences.³² While discussing the poor state of economy and its effect on church development Bishop Oparajaku advised dioceses to embark on income yielding projects.

Non-availability of Sponsors

The initial plan to fund missionary dioceses through the parent diocese or volunteers was an interventionary measure. It was stymied, however, by the proliferation of missionary dioceses. The missionary dioceses complained about the non-availability of sponsorship, which culminated in scarcity of funds. The Bishop of Missionary Diocese of Eha-Amufu, Daniel Olinya, lamented that his diocese had no sponsor and no capital base for its take-off as a diocese. He expressed his frustration in his diocesan magazine:

Usually every missionary diocese is sponsored by another diocese, church, individual or an organization. The sponsor gives the missionary diocese at least three million naira every year for three years to help the missionary diocese meet some of their immediate needs. But unfortunately, Eha-Amufu Missionary Diocese was not given any sponsor. And nobody made effort or any commitment to help us take off properly. We started with virtually nothing.³³

Similarly, the Bishop of the Diocese On The Lake, Ndidiamaka Oti, also stated:

The rule of the Church of Nigeria states that every missionary Diocese spends three years before graduating to a full-fledged Diocese. Within the three years, the mother Diocese ought to be giving some money to support the baby Diocese until it is weaned. Regrettably, we did not receive any such money, and this was very big challenge to us. Financially we face a very big crunch . . . No money to execute some pressing projects in the Diocese.³⁴

³¹J. Onuoha, 'Presidential Address', delivered at the Synod Session of the Diocesan Synod of Arochukwu/Ohafia, 2009, p. 36.

³²Ezekiel Nnamani, oral interview conducted on 11 November 2015.

³³D.N. Olinya, 'The Divine Project Called Eha-Amufu Missionary Diocese', *The Mission Voice Newsletter: A Publication of the Missionary Diocese of Eha-Amufu*, 2010, p. 2.

³⁴N. Oti, 'Any Clergy without Theological Training Is Quack', *The Theologian Magazine: A Publication of Trinity Theological College, Umuahia*, 4.1 (2015), p. 12.

The Bishop of Isi-Ala Ngwa South Missionary Diocese, Isaac Nwaobia, described his diocese as a wilderness. According to him, when the Diocese of Isi-Ala Ngwa South was inaugurated, it had nothing on the ground. The curate's house where the bishop lived was not even renovated, and the car he was using belonged to his in-law. He went further to explain that a list containing names of 15 families who promised to support his diocese was handed to him at the time he assumed office, but he was perplexed when the said families denied any knowledge about such arrangements. These families were said to have agreed to each contribute ₦200,000 annually in support of the diocese, only for them to back out after the diocese was inaugurated. It was the same experience in Awgu/Aninri Diocese where Archdeacon Okechineke related how Enugu Diocese promised to give ₦3 million annually, for three years to Awgu/Aninri Missionary Diocese but later released only ₦2 million to them and withheld ₦7 million.³⁵ The primate was dismayed that such level of falsehood could be found in the Church of God and therefore put up a measure to curb this irregularity.

Poor Remuneration of Workers

Workers in the missionary dioceses are not paid as and when it is due. They worked hard but were poorly remunerated. The salary payment pattern was deliberately staggered, with some workers receiving salaries in long-drawn arrears, while others receive virtually nothing monthly. It is discouraging what missionaries are paid as stipends for the sterling job they do. As at the time of this investigation, priests in Ikwuano were paid ₦8000 monthly (approximately US\$20) and in Mbamiri, ₦12,000 (approximately US\$30). The stipend varies according to dioceses. Canon Adibe explained that throughout the time he worked in the Diocese of Isikwuato/Umunochi, he never received up to half of his salary. According to him, in 2011 his salary was ₦30,000 monthly (approximately US\$75) but he did not receive that amount. In a month of good financial return, the largest amount he could take home was only ₦12,000 (approximately US\$30). He pointed out that the missionaries were really committed to their work but have very little or nothing at all to live on.³⁶

A priest in the Diocese On The Lake, Oruche, reiterates the need to help the missionaries in the missionary dioceses. He said that in the month of October 2015, he was paid ₦13,000 only (approximately US\$31).³⁷ As he was being interviewed, he was asking a friend to arrange a date to visit him in Lagos; the visit was to source funds.

In Ikwuano Missionary Diocese, it has been the same sad story. Canon Eric Ude, who was the first Synod Secretary of Ikwuano Missionary Diocese, explained that the Diocese started with only four priests in 2005, with no preparation at all for its launch. There was no money to pay the staff. The diocese adopted central payment in which money is pooled together from all the churches within the diocese and equitably distributed to workers at the end of the month. Often, the money

³⁵Archdeacon B. Okechineke, oral interview conducted on 11 January 2017.

³⁶Canon Ben Adibe, oral Interview conducted on 1 September 2015.

³⁷Chkwudi Oruche, oral interview conducted on 11 November 2015.

generated is so meagre that it cannot pay salary. None of the workers received more than ₦12,000 a month (approximately US\$30).³⁸ In the Missionary Diocese of Gboko, there are months the clergy could not get even ₦5000 (approximately US\$12). It is the same story in the Dioceses of Idah and Otukpo.

The Bishop of Ikwuano Diocese, Chigozirim Onyegbule, enumerated the challenges facing his diocese. These included insufficient funds for planting of more churches and remuneration of staff. In his interview with the *Trinicol* reporters, Duru and Izuogu, he stated that: 'There was a time our clergy salary was only two thousand Naira, and we could not even afford that.'³⁹ Arochukwu/Ohafia Missionary Diocese has a similar problem of poor remuneration of workers. Odinaka Okereke was a clergyman of that diocese. In his book entitled *Unstoppable Man*, he revealed the plight of workers in Arochukwu/Ohafia Missionary Diocese where he worked from 2005 to 2008. He asserted that throughout the period he worked there, he was ₦6000 (approximately US\$14) monthly alongside other missionaries, who were married men with children.⁴⁰

The inability of the missionary dioceses to pay their workers has brought untold hardship on the workers and their families. These workers have children they must feed and educate in schools. With little or no stipends coming into their hands, they cannot take care of their family members. Some of their children are thrown out of schools because their parents could not pay their tuition fees.

One heart-breaking experience Okereke shared was that his pregnant wife took ill and was bleeding, so she was admitted in a hospital. The doctor demanded that he deposit funds before treatment would commence, but he could not because workers in that diocese were owed wages for two months. He asked his bishop for a loan, but the bishop told him that the diocese had no fund. His church was not financially buoyant because it was newly planted; eventually his wife lost the pregnancy.⁴¹ The diocese could not assist a cleric whose wife was at the point of death. Indeed, it has not been the best of times for workers in missionary dioceses. They have suffered on a number of issues.

When the affected workers look up to the diocese for help and it does not come, the diocesan is taken to be inconsiderate. However, Bishop Adebola's statement suggests that the bishop might not be hoarding money, but that money was not there for him to dispense. Iwebuka, in his article entitled *Non-Payment of Clergy*, reported that Adebola, the former Bishop of Yewa Diocese, while delivering his sermon at the consecration of bishops at the cathedral of St Jude, Ebute-meta, noted that 'the glamour of the office of a Bishop is alluring but it is only the one who wears the shoes that knows where it is pinching'.⁴² It is indeed not easy for bishops in the missionary dioceses. Bishop Nyitse of Missionary Diocese of Gboko confided to me that there are months he could not get up to ₦50,000 (approximately US\$121) for his stipend.⁴³

³⁸Canon Erick Ude, oral interview conducted on 2 July 2017.

³⁹C. Onyegbule, 'Oral Interview with S. Duru and C. Izuogu', in *Trinicol Magazine: A Publication of the Student Union Government of Trinity Theological Collage, Umuahia* (2014), pp. 25-83.

⁴⁰O. Okereke, *Unstoppable Man* (Port Harcourt: Adeyemi Press, 2015), pp. 77-83.

⁴¹Okereke, oral interview conducted on 12 November 2015.

⁴²J. Iwebuka, 'Non-Payment of Clergy Stipends Worries Primate', *Good Knight Magazine*, 77 (2013), p. 8.

⁴³Bishop Emmanuel Nyitse, oral interview conducted in 2018.

These factors make it difficult for a missionary diocese to stabilize and become self-regulating after its three years of 'nursery', during which it was funded by another diocese, organization or individual. The full blow of the financial burden is felt more by the priests and church teachers, and their children bear the brunt. Speaking on this matter, Bishop Olinya states:

My heart broke when a particular worker was given four hundred Naira as his monthly salary and he began to cry that he has wife and children and that the money would not be enough for them for two days. It was a pathetic situation and my heart bled. In a number of cases we have to give personal money to some of them to at least eat for a few days. Thank God things are changing gradually but we are not yet out of such situations. We still experience it every month. It is very difficult for workers here to get a complete stipend.⁴⁴

Children born in this kind of family grow up to hate their father's profession because they would not want to go through what their father went through. They also hate everything about their church because it did not take care of their father's welfare. Some of them who are zealous for evangelism quit the Anglican Church and join other evangelical churches, while some refuse to go to church at all because their experience about the church is awful. All through their childhood days they never saw love and compassion in the church. When they abandon the church, people who do not know their family background would be saying all sorts of things without knowing the real cause.

The financial inadequacy in missionary dioceses is so alarming that the Primate, Archbishop Okoh, lamented: 'We have also observed with great pain the unacceptable situation of heavy indebtedness of some dioceses to their clergy. A number of dioceses have not been able to pay their clergy entitlements and this has brought enormous hardship on them and their families.' He appealed to the laity who would want to support the church to ensure that the clergy are not owed, to contact him or the Archbishop of Lagos or telephone. He had earlier set up a committee to investigate dioceses that do not pay workers their stipends.⁴⁵ The poor remuneration of workers affects their performance and general behaviour. It could also create a situation where the worker is fraudulent. The worker could easily be irritated if he is hungry. Sowale explained the importance of adequate remuneration:

Remuneration is the means by which an employee is enabled to provide for his own and his dependants' basic needs. It is only when such remuneration is adequate that the employee is likely to be a better, satisfied and more co-operative worker, properly motivated to be more productive in the achievement of the organisation's objective.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Olinya, 'The Divine Project', p. 3.

⁴⁵Archbishop Okoh, address to the General Synod captured by Moneke in *Good Knight Magazine*, 2012, p. 2.

⁴⁶S.O. Sowale, *A Handbook for Church Administration* (Osogbo: Fatiregum, 2011), p. 83.

The fair payment of workers' stipends is an obligation that should not need debate. Aware of the fact, the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) set up a disciplinary committee to tackle dioceses which default in their payment of workers stipends. If nothing else, an inability to pay stipends signifies that genuine growth is in doubt.

Summary

In spite of the numerous problems confronting the missionary dioceses in Nigeria, there is hope for success. Missionary dioceses have prospects in mission/evangelism. The tremendous impact of their involvement in organized mission since their inception speaks loudly of this fact. For instance, in Igboland, each missionary diocese has constituted a mission board. The board plans and executes programmes within their dioceses, including open air crusades, which really provided the church with the opportunity to preach, counsel and win converts. Through proper discipleship, the individual convert also becomes a witness for Christ. Certainly, missionary dioceses have got some things working for them. If other dioceses in the Province synergize with them, this would improve their prospects.

The setting apart of St Matthias' day as a day for assisting the missionary dioceses still offers a prospect for their success. This is a good move to ameliorate problems and help the missionary dioceses. A diocese may get ₦2 million (approximately US \$4860). Though this amount is meagre, it helps them to do one or two projects and at least pay stipends for one or two months, depending on the population of their workforce. Moreover, it also creates awareness that there are needy dioceses in the neighbourhood that require help.

Recommendations

The above analysis of missionary dioceses to date prompts the following recommendations:

- The leadership of the Church of Nigeria must take measures to salvage the situation. The parent dioceses, the ecclesiastical provinces and in fact all those who clamoured for the creation of the missionary dioceses, should take the responsibility for providing and promoting the missionary dioceses until they can stand on their feet. The annual Matthias benefit of ₦2 million to missionary dioceses is a start, but insufficient. Therefore, unity is essential since teamwork at its best results in a synergy that can be extremely fruitful in improving missionaries' living conditions through adequate remuneration and good welfare packages to reduce stress.
- Viable dioceses should willingly select at least one missionary diocese it could partner with for a period of three years, during which the bishop should send priests who are willing to go to the missionary dioceses on secondment. The priest's salary should be paid by the diocese that seconded him for the duration. This will help to increase manpower while simultaneously lowering the diocesan wage expense.

- As things stand, the ecclesiastical provinces have no work to do in terms of the missionary diocese's welfare. Therefore, the primate should entrust the archbishops of the ecclesiastical provinces with the responsibility of supervising missionary dioceses to guarantee that all norms and regulations governing the establishment and operation of missionary dioceses are strictly adhered to. This will make for a more efficient system and guarantees progress that would enable the missionary dioceses to attain the threefold 'selves': self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating.
- Pastors in the mission fields should be given sound training, and refresher courses should be regularly organized for them. Those with the ability should be given scholarship for further studies to keep them abreast of the current theological challenges. Some have interest and ability, but have not been given the opportunity because of lack of funds.
- To attain self-sufficiency missionary dioceses should make investments. Since most of the missionary dioceses are in the rural areas, it is advisable that they should invest more in agriculture and infrastructure. The problem is that venturing into commercial farming will demand much capital, which most of the missionary dioceses do not have. The Church of Nigeria should give them loans or assist them to access loans from the Central Bank of Nigeria approved ₦75 billion loan for agricultural lending.

Conclusion

Motivated by a desire for mission and in response to the Anglican Communion's global call for active evangelism, the Anglican Church in Nigeria founded missionary dioceses without cathedrals and consecrated bishops without bishop's courts. This might be spectacular, but it sparked off more serious concerns that the Church's leadership must address in order to reverse the Church's decline. Though there are now a plethora of churches in every nook and cranny as a result of the development of the Anglican Church in Igboland and Nigeria in general, the understanding of the conditions under which missionaries work, not just to establish these churches but also to survive, is sobering. In the countryside, they live with their family, toiling and occasionally beset by physical and financial difficulties, as well as other unpleasant events. It is upsetting – and challenges the claim to live by the gospel – to learn that some of their city counterparts are riding in exotic automobiles and others are spending millions on edifices and clock towers without providing support to their missionary dioceses' colleagues. This contradicts the concept of team ministry, fellowship and communion.