

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

Acts of conflict and violence occur daily in different parts of the world. This is due to a variety of motives, which include political fanaticism, ethnic hatred, religious extremism and ideological differences. Conflict is perennial and an ingredient towards the actualization of individual and group interests. According to S.A. Ayinla, it is a natural announcement of an impending re-classification of a society with changed characteristics and goals and with new circumstances of survival and continuity¹. Conflict is a universal human experience. Its origin and nature are best explained within the framework of human nature and environment in which man lives². Conflicts and violence are common factors in both secular and sacred institutions. In spite of the fact that the church is believed to be a holy institution ordained by God, she has never at any time outgrown conflicts and violence. This is due to the fact that, the affairs of the church are administered by human beings who are not always perfect or faultless. By 1975, the Warri Diocese, Anglican Communion, had not existed as a corporate Christian entity. The year

¹S.A Ayinla (ed.) *Issues in Political Violence in Nigeria*, Ilorin: Hamson Printers, 2005, p.19.

²O.I. Albert, Tinu Awe *et al* (eds) *Informal Channels for Conflict Resolution in Ibadan, Nigeria*. Ibadan Inter Printer 1992 p.2

witnessed real grassroots mobilization for its creation³. But by the year 2000, the Diocese had existed for over twenty years and had given birth to two other Dioceses, viz; Ughelli and Oleh (Isoko) Dioceses. Before this stage was reached, Warri Diocese had some prospects for growth, and at the same time, had passed through a lot of challenges and prospects. Thus, the period 1975-2000 witnessed great strides in the history of Christianity in the Anglican Diocese of Warri, particularly in the area of evangelism. These developments were in the area of the increased tempo with which the Anglican Adam Preaching Society (A.A.P.S.) was re-doubling her efforts in her evangelization campaigns as well as increased population of the organization. There was also the splitting into more groups within her fold and appointment of leaders to run the affairs of the newly created groups. There was, also, an upsurge in church membership within the church fold, which culminated in the growth of church congregations, stations,

³The Anglican Church in Benin Diocese under Rt. Rev. Agori-Iwe continued to grow throughout the second half of the 1960s and until 1977 when the Bishop retired. In 1966, there were twenty five confirmation services and a total of 1,639 persons were confirmed. Between 1967 and 1968, confirmation services were held at 24 different centres, in which a total of 1,868 persons were confirmed. A new dimension was added to the organization of the Church, through the induction of Diocese Lay Readers. This new set of Lay Readers were to be chosen from among the educated, experienced, and very matured communicant members, who were to be given work to do in the pastoral and teaching ministry of the Church. The number of persons to be baptized and confirmed in the Diocese increased from year to year, especially as a result of the work of lay Evangelists like Cornelius Adam Igbudu in Isoko, Samuel Akita Asaboro in Urhobo and Paul Umale in Benin, who are all leaders of the Anglican Adam preaching Society (A.A.P.S.) whom the Bishop supported and encouraged. S.U. Eriwo, *The Life and Work of Agori-Iwe first Bishop of Benin Diocese (Anglican Communion)* Benin: Uniben Press, pp 90-91. As we reported last year, the confirmation services were not held in 1975, we took all the confirmation services and a total of 3271 persons were confirmed in the Diocese.

Afenmai Archdeaconry 284, Asaba Archdeaconry 902, Benin Archdeaconry 375, St. Matthew's Cathedral 61, Ishan Archdeaconry 210, Isoko Archdeaconry 96, Urhobo Archdeaconry 550. *Ibid* p. 2001

District Church Councils, Archdeaconries and indeed, creation of more Dioceses within the Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion⁴. The great strides could equally be noticed in the area of increase in the number of lay Readers, Lay representation in Church Conferences, Boards and Committees, awareness of members about their roles and responsibilities, as well as their commitment in church activities and administration⁵. These strides, to a very large extent, positively affected the history of Christianity in the Niger Delta region, particularly the Diocese of Warri, Anglican Communion. Within the period under review therefore, the Anglican Church in the Benin Diocese was ripe to give birth to two new Dioceses of Warri and Asaba⁶. This eventually resulted in the selection and election of new Bishops which are always occasions for joy and happy celebrations; but in the case of Warri Diocese, this culminated in a crisis situation. This crisis rocked the entire fabric of the church to its very ancient foundations, and exposed both the church and her leadership to both local and international ridicule. It equally exposed the hidden agenda of a section of the church as well and revealed the churches hierarchy as being worthwhile in upholding the principles of equity, justice and fair-play in the management of human beings and institution.

⁴ Statistical Reports: Number of Church stations 549, number of trained Catechists 43, number of Church agents 203, number of clergymen 80, number of communicants 20,882, number of Baptized adults 18,042, number of Baptized Children 15,010. Total 60,044. *Ibid* p. 199.

⁵ We have been receiving many applications from well-meaning and devoted Christians from all over the Diocese to be made Lay Readers. This is a very good sign. *Ibid* p.210.

⁶ Future of Benin Diocese: During the last Synod we reported that applications have come from Warri and Asaba areas praying the Synod to approve and pass a resolution and recommended same through His Grace, the Archbishop of the Province of West Africa for approval. The Church of the Province of West Africa has approved the creation of the separate Dioceses of Warri and Asaba out of the present Benin Diocese, and has passed this on to the standing committee of the province for implementation. *Ibid*. p. 215

1.1 Statement of Problem

The problems created as a result of the selection, election and rejection of a non-native bishop are what this research is investigating. The crisis, which centred on an ecclesial matter, assumed political, economic, tribal and personality clash dimensions, thus badly denting the image of the church. In religious parlance, one would have thought that the reverse should be the case, but this was not in the case under review. The creation of more Dioceses from the old Benin Diocese, and the modality for the selection and election of Bishops for the created new Dioceses, brought about a conflict in the Anglican Church of the then province of West Africa. This episode snowballed into exposing other deep rooted conflicts. This was so because, while the Episcopal Synod of the then province of West Africa selected and elected indigenes of other Dioceses as their Bishops, they selected and elected a non-indigene for Warri Diocese, which ignited the fire of conflict that befell the Diocese⁷. Before this time, there had been quiet agitations among the people about cases of tribalism, nepotism, victimization, favouritism, injustice, lack of equity and fair-play, language barriers, personality clashes, ethnic domination and authoritarian tendencies on the part of the church authorities and her officials. The crisis therefore brought these issues to the surface and dealt serious blows to the physical, spiritual, social and moral life of the church. All these are highlighted in the body of this work.

⁷ Diocese of Lagos: Rt. Rev.F.O. Segun – Yoruba; Diocese of Niger: Rt Rev. J.A. Onyemelukwe – Igbo; Niger Delta Diocese: Rt. Rev. Y.A. Fubara-Kalabari Stock: Diocese of Ibadan: Rt. Rev. T.O. Olufosoye – Yoruba of Kabba; Diocese of Owerri: Rt. Rev. B.C. Nwakiti-Igbo; Diocese of Benin: Rt. Rev.J.W.I. Idahosa – Benin; Diocese of Ekiti: Rt Rev. J.A. Adetiloye-Yoruba; Diocese of Enugu: Rt Rev. G.N. Otubelu – Igbo; Diocese of Abba: Rt. Rev H.A.I. Afonya-Igbo; Diocese of Kwara: Rt Rev. H. Haruna- kwara; Diocese of Ilesha: Rt Rev. J.A.I. Falope-Yoruba; Diocese of Asaba: Rt Rev. R.N.C. Nwosu-Igbo. S.U. Erivwo, *Warri Diocese Crisis* (ed) Ilorin: Unilorin Press, p. 73 One of the parties led delegations to Lambeth, Sierra Leone, Kenya and circulated their write-ups to all primates of the Anglican Communion to intimate and solicit support of foreign Anglican dignitaries. There have been reported cases of conflicts among the Urhobo, Itsekiri and Ijaw which are the major ethnic groups in Warri. The crisis generated great problems in the Anglican Diocese of Warri, and in the entire province of West Africa, and indeed brought Warri Diocese to the attention of the Anglican World.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This study on the crisis in the Warri Diocese Anglican Communion, 1975-1980, is a critical assessment of the crisis that broke out in Warri Diocese between 1975-1980. With problems already identified, this research therefore aims at examining, analyzing and investigating the nature, causes and attempts initiated at resolving the conflict with a view to determining its implications for the church. The issues involved in this crisis have not been critically examined by scholars. Its completion will be a major contribution to the Anglican historiography. The research definitely creates an awareness among the church, community, political as well as leaders at various levels, about the need to apply and imbibe the principles and practice of conflict management in tackling the myriads of problems that confront them day by day. It also aims at enlightening leaders at all levels that the world of today is changing fast, which therefore, calls for an urgent need to amend the laws, rules, regulations and even government and non-governmental constitutions to reflect democratic principles and practice. The study will equally acquaint church leaders as well as leaders at all levels of the grave consequences which invariably ensue when constituted authorities undermine the expectations of the people or exhibit complete disregard for laid down principles. It will equally tutor leaders at all spheres of life that it is high time they had consultations among those they lead before major decisions are taken. Similarly, it will serve as a guide to tutor leaders that the time is ripe for all selfish tendencies, lack of fair play and injustice to be abandoned in the management of human beings.

1.3 Scope of the Study

Geographically, this study covers the whole Warri and Delta Province, the greater parts of which coincided with the old Warri Archdeaconry in the former Niger Delta Diocese with headquarters at Onitsha, Anambra state. The period covers between 1975 and the year 1980. The year 1975 is very significant for the study because, that year witnessed the mobilization of the

grassroots for the creation of Asaba and Warri Dioceses. Various Parish Church Councils, District Church Councils and Archdeaconry Boards were mobilized towards the submission of applications for the creation of the new Dioceses. For instance, there was a committee known and called “Isoko & Urhobo Archdeaconry Board” which met and wrote an application dated 3rd July, 1975, for the creation of Warri Diocese. This application was submitted to the Diocesan Board of the then Benin Diocese, which met on the 5th July, 1975. The application was carefully studied and critically debated before it was approved, along with that of the Asaba Diocese. Thus, on the 6th July, 1975, the Diocesan Synod held at St. Matthew’s Cathedral Benin City unanimously passed a resolution for the creation of both Dioceses. The Synod further asked the then Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Agori-Iwe, to put the necessary modality and procedure in place for the creation of the Diocese of Asaba and Warri as approved by the Diocesan Synod. Consequently, applications dated 8th July, 1975 for the two new Dioceses were then forwarded by Bishop Agori-Iwe to the provincial Synod of West Africa Province. These applications were approved in 1975 by the Provincial Synod of the Provinces of West Africa. The crisis which erupted as a result of election of a non indigene as a Bishop for Warri Diocese was settled amicably. The crisis actually started in 1977 and was finally resolved on the 25th January, 1980, with a reconciliation service conducted by the Most Rev. T.O Olufosoye at the St. Andrew’s Cathedral, Warri, where the consecration of Rt. Rev. J.O. Dafiewhare as the Bishop of Warri Diocese was regularized. The year 2000 is also very significant to this study because it was the end of the last millennium and also the beginning of the 21st century. It was also a terminal year, which marked the end of the decade of evangelism (1991-2000) as declared by the Lambeth Conference of 1988⁸. The year also witnessed stock taking of the dividends of evangelism in the Anglican Communion, with particular reference to Warri Diocese. Moreover, the year 2000 marked the Silver Jubilee celebration of the creation of Warri Diocese. By the same year, Warri Diocese had

8 “The truth shall make you free” The Lambeth Conference, 1988; *The Reports, Resolutions and Pastoral Letters*, p. 200

already given birth to two Dioceses: Ughelli and Oleh, 1998 and 1999 respectively.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research reviews the historical advent of Christianity in the Niger Delta, the courses which the crisis in Warri Diocese took. Attempts made by both internal and external mediators to resolve the crisis, the theoretical framework of crisis management are equally of great importance to this study. It has also examined and highlighted the activities, actions or lethargy of church leaders, both at the local and international levels and some individuals that played major roles during the period of the crisis.

It significantly evaluates the prospects and failures of both leaders and members of the church to evaluate and articulate their gifts and positions to eradicate self-opinionated, selfish attitude and the spirit of authoritarianism in the affairs of the Church of God. It is equally vital that it will serve as a manual for both Church leaders as well as experts in conflict studies to be consulted for effective leadership and scholastic endeavours. Furthermore, it will help to a reasonable extent, to minimize conflicts and crisis among our communities, the Church, the society and the world in which we live.

1.5 Research Methodology

Collection of data for this research work was based on interview, participant observation and questionnaire administration. Questions were distributed to both clergy and laity who played active roles in the crisis. These three methods have been used in the field work for this research. The fieldwork was however supported by bibliographical research, wherein relevant books, articles in journals, and other related works were considered. The data gathered from the questionnaire were analyzed empirically using the formula:

$$\frac{N}{TN} \times \frac{100}{I}$$

“N” stands for Number of Respondents, TN stands for “Total Number of Respondents” per statement question. All the methods were used complementarily.

1.6 Organization of the Study

The study is organized into six chapters. Chapter One is a general introduction to the study. Chapter Two deals with the review of relevant literature to the study, while Chapter Three looks at Christianity in the Niger Delta with particular reference to Warri area. Chapter Four focuses on the conflict proper and its various dimensions. Chapter Five is on the various attempts and approaches adopted to resolve the crisis. The sixth chapter is a general summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The research is an endeavour to document and evaluate very critically the crisis that bedeviled the Warri Diocese (Anglican Communion) between 1975-1980. To the best of our knowledge, such exercise had not been undertaken. In fact, the area is a virgin ground. Therefore, much of the materials have been based on personal interviews held with the people and data from questionnaire, files and minutes books of meetings held during the period under review. Our personal participation and observation equally formed an integral part of our documentation. However, there are some publications that deal with conflicts, their causes and consequences.

Some of these books are reviewed with the sole aim of identifying what conflict means and its nature, causes and consequences with a view to showing the relationship between the nature, causes and consequences of the Warri Diocesan crisis, between 1975-1980. Some related books that deal with the advent of Christianity in the Niger Delta have also been reviewed in this work.

2.1 Conflict Study

Ojielo, while writing on Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism in his book on *Alternative Dispute Resolution (A.D.R.)*, opines that, we have all been involved in disputes, either of rights, for example, arising out of contract, or of interests, for example, nuisance, divorce, custody, relationships¹ among others. He debunked as untenable and erroneous the popular belief that myriads of disputes can only be resolved by litigation involving adversarial lawyers in a court². This thinking, according to Ojielo, is erroneous because there is an

¹M.O. Ojielo, *Alternative Dispute Resolution*. Lagos: CPA Books, 2001, p. I

²*Ibid*

alternative, which is appropriate dispute resolution processes³.

Ojielo identifies eight reasons why there have been increased interests in A.D.R. These are: first, overloaded court dockets as a result of our society which is generally litigious and people easily resort to court to teach the other party a lesson, stating further that “we look to our courts to resolve disputes, yet we have cultural processes that ought to enable us to resolve these disputes in our informal, individual or group basis”. Second, is the increasing cost of and decreasing satisfaction with litigation, which to the author, have made many companies grown frustrated with the cost of litigation – in money, in personnel, in time, in lost opportunities, and in the negative effects of ongoing business and employee relationships. Third, is the legislation and regulations of the Arbitration and Conciliation Decree of 1988, which was the first major statutory resolution. The decree has provided for domestic and international arbitrations and spelt out comprehensive rules for engaging in arbitration. Fourth, is backlash. Disputants, according to Ojielo, are feeling disenchanted and protesting against expensive lawyers, lawsuits and legal costs which therefore conspire to make litigants to resorting to extra-legal means in resolving their disputes. Societal movement towards more natural and human method of dispute resolution is the fifth reason given by the author for the adoption of A.D.R. options.

Organizations, groups and individuals have grown tired of battering and bashing each other in the name of “peaceful” conflict. Rather, the emphasis is now on communication and working together to informally resolve differences through problem solving. The desire to empower disputants to participate in resolving their own disputes is given as the sixth reason. Increasing interest in flexible dispute resolution is enumerated as the seventh option for adopting A.D.R. mechanism. A.D.R. is a way to introduce flexibility in the dispute resolution process because all conflicts do not require the same mechanism to resolve them. Interest in confidentiality and avoidance of publicity were stated by the author as the eighth rationale for the

³*Ibid*

adoption of A.D.R. formula. To him, organizations and individuals alike are often reluctant to wash their dirty linen in the public. Mediation, he stated, is a discreet process and the results can usually be kept confidential⁴.

Isaac O. Albert, Tinu Awe *et al* reinstating informal channels for conflict resolution in their book *Informal Channels for Conflict Resolution in Ibadan Nigeria*, stated that, conflict is a universal human experience, stating that, its origin and nature are best explained within the framework of human nature and the environment in which man lives. Some human beings are naturally disposed to aggressive behaviours⁵. Highlighting therefore that, aggression as a psychological problem, is aggravated by poverty, fatigue, competition and overcrowding⁶ which according to the authors are the characteristics of urban developments, they however, enumerated competition for jobs, land, housing and other related opportunities as causes of urban conflicts.⁷ According to them, Conflict, whether created by poverty or other factors, can be resolved using two basic approaches: peaceful negotiation or arbitration and force⁸. Commenting on the nature of conflict, Azuonwu⁹ says that, most of the time, the genesis of conflict is gradual. This phase of conflict is covert. Only a conflict or social system consultant can detect it. Situations had risen where individuals were asked when a particular conflict in a community or group started, majority responded in a way which indicated that the onset was sudden, while in the actual sense, the gradual phase broke out undetected probably, due to lack of surveillance or unskillness in conflict diagnosis. This in fact reveals that, there are two basic phases of conflict; (1) gradual phase which is covert and may evolve unnoticed (2) sudden phase, which is overt and

⁴*Ibid*, pp 1-8

⁵Albert O. Isaac, Tinu Awe et al, *Informal Channels for Conflict Resolution in Ibadan, Nigeria*. Ibadan: Intec Printers, 1992, p. 2

⁶*Ibid*

⁷*Ibid*

⁸*Ibid*, p. 3

⁹Azuonwu Goodluck *Understanding Group Dynamics: Effective Tool for Conflict Resolution in Nigeria.* Ibadan: Evi-Coleman Publications, 2002, p.53

can be detected by a majority or all members of a community or group. Azonwu¹⁰ defined conflict as all kinds of antagonistic behaviours, which can become prominent if an individual tries to control the behaviours of another person or a group of persons. On typology of conflict, the author says that, there are basically two types of conflict: intra-personal conflict and inter-group conflict¹¹. Azuonwu¹² opines that, intra-personal conflict exists within an individual. The discord may be on personal issues that there are three types of intra-personal conflicts: conflicting allegiance, choice conflict, and motivational conflict. Conflicting allegiance exists especially when an individual belongs to two or more groups in which he or she occupies a sensitive position. Choice Conflict exists in a situation where an individual or a group of persons are starved of relevant information to enable them choose from a list of alternative solutions to a particular problem. Motivational conflict from a list of alternatives where an intelligent and ambitious staff is promoted to a new position. The staff is told of the high expectations required of him or her on the position by the management. He or she then becomes frightened whether or not he or she could cope with the demands¹³.

Azuonwu sees inter-personal conflict as a type of disagreement that exists between two or more persons in a particular group¹⁴. Inter-group conflict exists between two or more groups. He enumerated eight types of inter-group conflicts as follows: professional conflict, organizational conflict, family conflict, political conflict, religious conflict, communal conflict, ethnic conflict and international conflict¹⁵. Professional conflict occurs between two or more professional groups e.g. nurses and medical doctors, engineers and lawyers, accountants and engineers, farmers and cattle rearers¹⁶. Organizational conflict essentially exists in work environment. The conflict could be between management and technical staff of a particular

¹⁰*Ibid*, p. 54

¹¹*Ibid*, p. 54

¹²*Ibid*

¹³*Ibid*, pp 54-56

¹⁴*Ibid*, p. 56

¹⁵*Ibid*, p. 57

¹⁶*Ibid*

company or institution. Family conflict on the other hand is a discord which occurs between two or more families. The families may or may not exist in the same village or town. Political conflict occurs when an individual or a group of persons utilize unorthodox (unconventional) methods to control or lead a group of persons which are not acceptable to them. The methods may include autocracy, lobbying, concentration of appointments to a few states, local government areas or towns, releasing of false information capable of damaging the personality of one's political opponents, rigging of elections and others. Religious conflict is a discord between two or more religious groups. For example, Christianity and Islam. Communal conflict occurs between two or more communities. Ethnic conflict is a discord which occurs between two or more ethnic groups, while international conflict often results from disagreement, which exists between two or more countries¹⁷. Writing on the causes of communal conflict, Azuonwu¹⁸ also stated lack of communication, lack of understanding, unequal distribution of available resources, false information, drunkenness, anger, stealing, killing (murder), envy, greed, ethnic and religious discrimination, activities of evil forces, power tussle on who becomes the leader in the community, poor administration, inherited hatred and the use of force to introduce change or maintain *status quo* as major causes of communal conflict. He also mentioned misunderstanding, financial misappropriation, poor communication, false doctrine, lack of love, anger, quest for materialism, discrimination, backsliding, adultery/fornication, operation of evil forces and power tussle as possible factors that can conspire to cause religious crisis¹⁹. Family conflict according to this author is caused by lack of respect for one another, communication gap, pride, falsehood, unfaithfulness, overwhelming control of males over the females, lack of finance or misappropriation of available funds in the family, negative roles of the in-laws and evil forces²⁰.

¹⁷*Ibid*, p. 58

¹⁸*Ibid*

¹⁹*Ibid*, pp. 65-66

²⁰*Ibid*, p. 66

The author equally sees the roles of the individuals, families, religious groups, traditional leaders, administrators of the three tiers of government and non governmental organizations as being very vital to the prevention of communal conflict in Nigeria²¹. He also states that, concepts of avoidance, accommodation collaboration, competition and compromise are the basic ingredients for communal conflict management. Peace, forgiveness, understanding, love, tolerance, co-existence, co-operation and dialogue are active vocabularies in conflict management. Stress which results in hypertension, gastric ulcer, mental illnesses, physical injuries to the body, loss of life, epidemic malnutrition, lawlessness, juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancy, poverty, lack of development, loss of property, pollution of land, water and air are also stated as major consequences of communal conflict²². Writing on third-party intervention in community conflicts, Albert²³ says that, a community could be defined as the aggregate of individuals living within a geographical area. A community could refer to both the geographical environment (a village, town, clan, and others) as well as the peculiar people living in it. For a place to merit being recognized as a community, the people must share a common vision for corporate life and shared interests within a geographical location. Albert opines that, conflict is lack of co-operation between the different “blocs” (ideological, ethnic, religious, economic, political, or otherwise) into which members of a particular community have formally or informally divided themselves²⁴. Community conflict, says Albert, often manifests in terms of host-stranger face-offs in which a section of the community tags itself as the host (owners of the community) and some other groups as strangers (that is those who migrated into the community at a date later than the ‘owners’ of the community)²⁵

Looking at conflicts from both negative and positive perspectives, the author stressed

²¹*Ibid*, p. 67

²²*Ibid*, pp72-78

²³I.O. Albert *Introduction to Third-Party Intervention in Community Conflicts Ibadan*: John Archers Publisher, 2001, p.2

²⁴*Ibid*

²⁵*Ibid*

that, there are productive and destructive conflicts. A conflict is said to be positive when it is constructively discussed by the parties and amicable terms for settlement reached. A destructive conflict is usually characterized by the violence whether in its physical, psychological or structural connotation. The conflict manifests as a disorderly show of power. A conflict is said to have become destructive when it exceeds the limits imposed by societal consensus. In a destructive conflict, process of conflict escalation is towards mutual attacks and efforts to destroy each other; there are misjudgments and misperceptions and situational entrapment in which the conflict becomes unduely magnified²⁶.

Examining the causes of community conflict, the book states four factors that are at work in such a conflict. These are competition for inadequate resources, contradicting value systems (religious beliefs, ideological position and general world view) of the interacting parties, psychological needs of groups and individuals and lastly, manipulation of information. The way information is circulated in a community could either cause conflict or build peace²⁷.

Suggesting agencies that intervene in a community conflict, Albert²⁸ emphasised that, government (local, state, federal and foreign), non-governmental organizations (NGO), corporate organizations, religious organizations, academic institutions, the media houses and private citizens can play active roles in resolving community conflict.

Azaiki²⁹ commenting on the strategy for conflict resolution in the Niger Delta, says that, provision of real employment opportunities for the youths, award of contracts to indigenes, award of scholarship to tertiary students, of social amenities and infrastructures, compensation for ecological damage and land acquisition, are the only necessary factors that can douse conflict in the Niger Delta region. Azaiki advocated the convening of a Sovereign National Conference to discuss the collective survival of the Nigerian Federation as undoubtedly a *sine qua non* for

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 3

²⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 4-5

²⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 28-32

²⁹ Steve Azaiki, *Inequalities in Nigerian Politics*, Yenagoa: Treasure communicators, 2003, pp. 155-159

the resolution of the conflicts in the country. Nigeria must adopt all the principles of true federalism for equity and justice to reign supreme. Writing on the dynamics of Ethnic conflicts, Okechukwu Ibeanu & Godwin Onu³⁰ saw Ethnic conflicts as conflicts that emerge from ethnic and sub-ethnic group interactions. Ethnic conflicts, they say, are of varying degrees of intensity, but in many cases, however, they are charged. They emphasized that, groups that are concerned about possible threats to their security from other groups will ask themselves how those groups behaved in comparable circumstances on previous occasions. If the behaviour was hostile, the current response appropriately may also be hostile. To them, ethnic conflict entails a clash of cultures, which pit people whose values are in conflict, who want different things and who have contradictory world views against each other. This, according to the authors, is also relevant in explaining ethnic relations and conflict in Nigeria. For instance, colonialism brought people who would otherwise have existed in their different territories as different countries into one geo-political arrangement. These are people with explicit differences in value systems, language and culture, differing descent, religion, traditional and political systems³¹.

Modernization argument is also articulated as one of the factors that generate ethnic conflict in our society. It is contended that, modernization and increasing urbanization which bring about migration and aggregation of people in the urban centres, act as a catalyst to ethnic conflict. By this, it is argued that, the context of value census, scarcity and uneven development among ethnic groups, occasioned by modernization can engineer conflicts³².

Conflicts can also occur as a result of competition by ethnically different people for economic reason. The insecurity that emerges when actors are unsure of intentions of adversaries can also generate ethnic wars or conflicts³³. Stating the agents that precipitated ethno-religious

³⁰ Okechukwu, Ibeanu & Godwin, Onu *Ethnic groups and conflict in Nigeria* V.2 Ibadan: The Lord Creation Press, 2001, pp. 44-47

³¹ *Ibid* pp 44-45

³² *Ibid* p 45

³³ *Ibid*

conflict in Kaduna State Imobighe³⁴ declared that, conflict conducted in the name of ethno-religious solidarity often destroys the state structure, levels entire development process and unleashes destructive violence, which can threaten the territorial integrity of a country.

The root of the ethno-religious conflict, according to him, could be traced to January, 1986, when the military government took the controversial decision for Nigeria to join the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). He opined further that, the *Jama-atu Nasril Islam* (JNI) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) started vicious and emotional campaigns for and against the country's membership of the OIC. They paraded themselves as representatives of Nigerian Muslims and Christians to use and resist what it tagged the match of Nigeria toward Islamization. Powerful Muslim leaders sponsored demonstrations in favour of joining the Organization and embarked on a huge propaganda campaign.

Thus, the stage was therefore ripe and set to explode into a huge religious conflict. Partisan sections of the media waged a press war, while the chauvinistic *élite* were at each other's throat in a conflict which engulfed the ordinary people. The regime headed by both Christian and Muslim dictators watched as religious hostility and hatred escalated and thus consumed the entire civil society.

The Sharia question which snowballed into a major political confrontation on the 27th October, 1999, in Zamfara State, which was quickly replicated by some other states in the North, such as Kano, Sokoto, Niger, Yobe, Kebbi and Borno and later Kaduna, led to demonstrations and therefore generated a religious conflict³⁵.

Analyzing the survey and assessment of the conflict, the writer states, lack of trust between various ethnic and religious groups as a result of deep-rooted misconception, stereotyping, lack of tolerance, government failure to take action in previous happenings, lack of infrastructure, poverty and fear of socio-cultural domination, media reporting, excruciating

³⁴T.A Imobighe ed. *Civil Society and Ethnic Conflict Management in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Spectrum, 2003, p. 81

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 84

poverty and manipulation of the people by retired military officers to achieve their ambitions, as the major causes of the crisis in Kaduna³⁶. He also stressed the structural imbalance that disfavors certain segment of the population as one of the causes of the crisis. The other reason postulated was the disadvantaged position of Southern Kaduna in terms of political appointments, government patronage and appointment and posting of upper area court judges as other conspirators to the conflict³⁷.

Another book reviewed, is *The Ethnic Pluralism, Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria* written by Onigu Otite³⁸. The book has eight chapters which can be summarized as brief introduction, ethnic group identification, ethnic pluralism, ethnicity, neo-ethnicity, ethnic conflicts, Nigerian multi-ethnic society: problems and strategies of development and lastly, conclusion. The author highlights the causes of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria as follows: disputed territorial claims, the imperatives of culture-bound occupation, scarcity of resources, multiculturalism and strategic use of symbols, nature of our belief systems, the phenomenon of class and class consciousness in our society, the pluralistic nature of our nation, internal colonialism, unintended consequence of political development and lastly, products of external forces³⁹. The author also discussed and analyzed ethnic conflicts in Warri, Ife-Modakeke conflicts, Nupe-Yoruba conflict in Kwara State, JUKUN-TIV conflict, ethnic-occupational conflicts in North-Eastern Nigeria, Yoruba-Hausa conflict in Sagamu, Zango-Kataf conflict in Kaduna State, conflicts in Kano and several other conflicts⁴⁰. But of all the above, it was only the church-crises that were not dealt with. This explains one of the objectives for the study.

Discussing the advent of Christianity in the Niger Delta, Joseph C. Anene and Godfrey

³⁶ *Ibid*, pp 89-90

³⁷ *Ibid*

³⁸ Onigu Otite, *Ethnic Pluralism Ethnicity & Ethic Conflicts in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Fayson Printers, 2000 p. iv

³⁹ *Ibid*, pp 153-164

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, pp 164 – 174

N. Brown⁴¹ stated that, Christianity was introduced into the Niger Delta in two phases. The Niger Delta region, which is the home of the Urhobo, Itsekiri, the Ijaw, the Kalabari, the Ibeno and the Efick people, reputed as one of the centres of the slave trade which provided a lucrative source of wealth for slave traders and European merchants. The region, according to these authors, also became a focal point of commerce after the abolition of the slave trade in 1808, where the local people turned their attention to exploiting hinterland products such as palm products, timber and ivory⁴². The first attempt to introduce Christianity into the region, according to Eriwo⁴³, was through the activities of the Portuguese traders, missionaries and explorers who came into contact with the area in their bid to find a sea route to India in the fifteenth century. This mission was responsible for the planting of Christianity in Warri and Benin.

By about 1477, the first European contacts were made with Benin, and by 1555 Augustinian Monks who were sent by Gaspar Cao, Bishop of the Diocese of São Tomé, visited Warri. It was reported that, these Catholics came across the Urhobo, Ijaw and Itsekiri in the area. One of the Monks, father Francisco, baptized the son of the Olu of Itsekiri with the name Sebastian. When Sebastian became the Itsekiri Monarch, he encouraged the work of the Portuguese missionaries.

To further strengthen the work and growth of Christianity in the region, according to this author, the heir to the throne of the Itsekiri Kingdom, Domingo, was sent by his father, Sebastian to Portugal to be trained for the priesthood and later returned with a white lady as his wife. The child of the marriage, Antonio Domingo, who became the Olu of Itsekiri in 1640 was educated in Christian Theology in Portugal, and like his predecessors, encouraged the spread of

⁴¹ Joseph C. Anene & Godfrey N. Brown, *Africa in the Ninetieth & Twentieth Century*. New York Humanity Press, 1972 pp 275-273 give further details about the structure of the Niger Delta, the slave trade and the trade that replaced the slave trade

⁴² Anene & N. Brown *Ibid*

⁴³ Samuel U. Eriwo, *A history of Christianity in Nigeria The Urhobo, the Isoko and the Itsekiri* Ibadan Daystar Press, 1979 P. 1 states full account of introduction of Christianity into the area.

Christianity among his people⁴⁴. Babalola and Eriwo stated that, the first attempt to propagate Christian faith in the Niger Delta was later met with some resistance and difficulties since there were no indigenous people who were interested in taking up the work of missionary activities. The difficulty of training and providing trained indigenous missionaries, especially priests, coupled with the humid nature of equatorial Africa with its attendant dangerous mosquitoes, the major carriers of malaria parasite, became menacing obstacles to the spread of the Christian faith. The decline of the Portuguese Kingdom in Naval power due to her economic and political problems back home also added impetus to the failure of the first missionary enterprise in the Niger Delta⁴⁵.

Commenting on the failure of the first attempt to introduce Christianity in the Niger Delta, Babalola and Eriwo⁴⁶ contended that, there were also the factors of superstition among the native people about the baptismal rites which they thought would erode their tradition and culture. The participation of some of the Portuguese Priests, missionaries and the use of their vessels in the slave trade also made the first attempt to crumble. Thus, before the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th Century, Roman Catholicism had practically and totally disappeared from the religious map of the Niger Delta. Writing on the second phase of Christianity in the Niger Delta, Eriwo⁴⁷ highlighted that the second attempt to plant Christianity in the soil of Nigeria in general and the Niger Delta in particular was more determined, coherent and co-ordinated. This attempt was spear-headed by protestant Missionaries during the 1857 Niger expedition, which was led by Bishop Ajayi Crowther who, with a great number of missionaries, visited Okwagbe, an Urhobo town on the coast of the Niger tributary and sought to plant the Christian faith in the town. The 1841 & 1854 expeditions, which preceded the 1857 missionary journey, comprised of both African and European missionaries and were heavily

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 2

⁴⁵ E. O. Babalola *Christianity in West Africa* Ibadan: Bangboye & Co. Press, 1988, P. 15-18 Eriwo *Christianity in Nigeria The Urhobo, the Isoko & the Itsekiri Ibid* Tell the story of how the first attempt failed

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

⁴⁷ Eriwo, *op. cit.* p 45 highlights the second attempt at introducing Christianity in the Niger Delta

equipped with quinine, the then major antidote against malaria scourge. It was this attempt that culminated in deep-rooted planting of Christianity in the Niger Delta. It was on this foundation, which was laid by the 1841 & 1854 expeditions that later missionaries built upon. The activities metamorphosed into the establishment of a mission station in Warri in 1894, which Bishop Tugwell, a successor of Bishop Hill, Crowther's successor, visited during his tour of the Niger Delta area to have first hand information about the growth and influence of the Christian faith in the region. After this visit of Herbert Tugwell to the area, he saw the need for the presence of a missionary in the Warri Area to minister to the needs of the European merchants, working in European trading stations, The result was the reluctant secondment of Rev. Henry Proctor, a Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) stationed at Patani to pay occasional visits to Warri Mission Station⁴⁸.

It took a considerable length of time before the indigenes of Urhobo and Itsekiri could be attracted to Christianity. The Non-Deltan people who formed the original nucleus of Christian congregation, were the Sierra Leonean, who were then known as Saro and Yoruba, who were either in the employment of the government or were the work-force of mercantile houses. This group of people embraced Christianity through different denominations Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and just to mention a few. Bishop James Johnson who was consecrated assistant Bishop in 1900, paid a visit to Warri, Sapele & Benin and used the opportunity of this Episcopal visit to minister to this original congregation. Thus, before 1914, Christianity had fully penetrated the hinterland with Warri as the centre having a resident pastor. The first batch of Urhobo converts like Omotsola, Aghoghin, Aganbi, Omofoye, Emuakp, Ogungun, Denedo, Evwaire and Madam Bribrina, (an Ijaw woman) were the instruments used by the missionaries to evangelize the hinterland of the Niger Delta.⁴⁹ By the dawn of the 20th century, therefore, Christianity had been firmly planted and rooted in the Niger Delta with Warri as centre.

⁴⁸Samuel Eriwo *Ibid* p.7 Nabota M. Y. *Adam the Evangelist*, Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1992, p. .6

⁴⁹ Samuel Eriwo *Ibid* p.2

CHAPTER THREE

CHRISTIANITY IN THE NIGER DELTA-WARRI AREA

3.0 Introduction

Christianity is a foreign religion on the continent of Africa. Before Christianity came to the continent, Africans were worshipping God in their own perceived ways. Considering the question of the supernatural, or the supersensible, one is inclined to opine that there is little to choose between Christianity and Islam on the one hand and the traditional religions of Africans on the other. The cosmologies and belief systems of the Bible and the Koran differ very little from those of the typical African traditional religions. They are all geocentric systems with fixed earth and with sun, moon, planets and sears revolving around the earth. The sky is thought of as a great inverted bowl, above which lives God- or the gods!– that created it all¹. Before Christianity was introduced into the continent of Africa, therefore, the Africans were indeed worshipping God whom they believed inhabits the sky above and rules over the affairs of men and that of the entire universe. The Africans cannot therefore be said to be ignorant of God who lives above and rules over nature. Introduction of the Christian religion to West Africa, and Nigeria, was first and foremost spearheaded by the Portuguese Missionaries in the 15th century. For more than a century (1516 to 1668) the Portuguese missionary enterprise was copiously intensified in both Benin and Warri areas. But as time went on, the obstacles of the traditional religion, the problems of language, culture, climate and communication, forced and displaced the Christian religion from circulation. At this time, the Portuguese had more or less a monopoly of movement along the coast of West Africa; and the spreading of Christianity was the chief aim of Portugal's activities overseas, though they attached some measure of importance to commerce because of the support it gave to the missionary work.

In addition to the spread of Christianity and commerce, the Portuguese were seeking to form an alliance with the non-Muslim rulers of Africa against the Muslims of North Africa.

¹. Babalola E. O., *Christianity in West Africa: An Historical Analysis* Ibadan: Book Presentation Press, 1976 p4

There was at that point in time a legend concerning a Christian King of Africa called Prester John, who was at one time identified as the King of Abyssinia, and at another time was said to have been found in West Africa. The Portuguese therefore came to West Africa to establish contact with this legendary Prester John; and to form alliance with him in order to attack the Muslim in North Africa and Western Sudan².

These steps taken by the Portugal were not however ends in themselves, they were indeed means to an end. The major aim of the Portuguese was that of taking the Christian faith to the “Pagans” of West Africa. This brand of Christianity which the Portuguese sought and spread to the West Coast of Africa was the Catholic Variety, developed in the culture and tradition of Western Europe and which in particular, embodied the cultural values of Iberian Peninsula. Conversion, according to the Portuguese, implied the adoption of a particular pattern of daily life. Their aim was to transform great areas of African into faithful but carbon copies of Portugal³. Thus, the missionaries dispatched by the Portuguese rulers arrived the coast of West African and were stationed in her trading stations in Benin, Warri, Elmina and outside West African area in the Island of São Tomé and Angola. The introduction of Roman Catholic Christianity to Warri (Niger Delta Area) by the Portuguese in the 16th Century was of little consequence. For it was sporadic and intermittent since Portuguese priests could not be maintained at Warri for any length of time⁴. The factors that were responsible for the failure of the Portuguese missionary enterprise range from political, economic, social, climatic and cultural variables and these will be exhaustively discussed in the body of this chapter. In the nutshell, the Portuguese attempts to Christianize the people of the West Coast of Africa and the Niger Delta in particular could aptly be described as “futile, feeble, and spasmodic”, an attempt which became indistinguishable from the nefarious trafficking in “living tools” that was to last for over

². *Ibid* p- 6

³. *Ibid* pp 6-7

⁴. Eriwo S.U. *Traditional Religion and Christianity in Nigeria: The Urhobo People*. Ekpoma: Inno Press, 1991 p 109

300 years⁵. The brand of Christianity that laid the solid foundations on which Christianity stands today, was introduced into the West Coast of Africa and Niger Delta to be precise in the 19th century. In 1842, the first batch of Christian missionaries landed at Badagry on their way to Abeokuta. They came in the wake of the liberated slaves returning to Nigeria⁶. These ex-slaves had embraced Christianity during the period of their captivities in Brazil, Cuba and after they were granted freedom there or in Sierra Leone, sponsors were anxious to see the liberated slaves engaged in some useful pursuits such as farming, trade and indeed missionary works. Thomas Fowel Buxton, one of the masterminds of the abolition theory and others, advocated that Africans be returned to their native country where they would all be engaged in agricultural development and evangelism. The combined introduction of the Bible and the plough according to them would usher in light and civilization into the heart of the African continent⁷. Impressed by the Philosophy of Buxton and his abolitionist colleagues, many of the liberated African slaves were then desirous to return home to join their kith and kin. The missionaries and the Sierra Leonean authorities too, after an initial period of hesitation, skepticism and indifference, became enshrined with the idea and thus began a mass and determined movement of the liberated African slaves to their respective communities. It was at the instance of this exodus of the freed slaves to their respective countries, communities, towns and villages that the first batch of missionaries landed at Badagry, which they tried without success to make their base. At this point in time, the place had become so much impoverished because of the loss of its former bustling status as a slave trade depot. Missionaries therefore looked further a field and entered into negotiation with the authorities at Abeokuta, a new town under a dynamic leadership, struggling for survival and seeking access to the sea .The missionaries were admitted in 1846 after some initial hesitation of the Egba Chiefs under the leaderships of Sodeke. On arrival, they

⁵. *Ibid*

⁶. Obaro Ikime (ed) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan: Heineman Publishers, 1980 p.349

⁷. *Ibid*

soon began to paint a rosy picture of Abeokuta as their main gate way into Yorubaland and regions beyond the veritable “sunrise within the tropics”⁸.

The missionary enterprise and efforts of Crowther, Townsend and Gollmen in Abeokuta before long, yielded dividends. On the 5th of February, 1845 the first Christian converts were baptized and schools, church and health centres were built in the area. The return of the emigrants also resulted in the introduction of Christianity into various other Yoruba towns such as Lagos, Ibadan, Ijaiye and some Christian presence in towns and villages as far away as Ede, Iragbiji, Ilorin and other towns in Yorubaland in the second half of the nineteenth century. The group of Christian converts swelled when the emigrant slaves began to arrive in Kalabar, settling mainly on the missionland at Duke town. The Anglican began work in Niger at Abo, and most successfully at Onitsha in 1857, Brass in 1861 and Bonny in 1864. It was during this itinerant movement of the early missionaries that Christianity firmly penetrated the hinterland of the Niger Delta with Warri and Sapele as mission stations. According to the people’s Christian Oral Tradition, “when Samuel Ajayi Crowther visited Okwagbe on the River Niger (during the 1854 or 1857 Niger expenditure) and presented the Christian gospel to the Okwagbe people, it was rejected”. Not until the turn of the Nineteenth century did Christianity really entered and penetrated the Urhobo hinterland, with the liberated slaves who returned from parts of Yorubaland, particularly Owo area where Christianity was first introduced to Ukwokori, Ovu-inland, Eku, and Urhuovie in Avwraka. At about the same time the returnees commenced worshipping in communities at these centres, two congregations also started: one at Warri, the other at Sapele⁹. These were mixed congregations of Yoruba, Gold Coasters and Sierra Leoneans who were in the workforce of mercantile houses in the Niger Delta. They were of various denominational backgrounds such as the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and the Baptist. Thus, it is pertinent to say that the Portuguese Catholic Missionaries were the progenitors, while

⁸. *Ibid* p. 349-350

⁹. Onigu Otite(ed). *The Urhobo People* Ibadan Shanesou Press, 2003. p 445

the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterians and the Baptists were the major mission agents who introduced the Christian religion of various brands to the West Coast of Africa and to the Niger Delta in particular first in the 16th century and lately in the 19th century.

3.1 First Missionary Enterprise in the Niger Delta

As stated earlier, the introduction of Christianity into the Niger Delta was of two phases: the first and second attempts. It is interesting to state that the history of Christianity in Nigeria began with the Niger Delta region in the 15th century. It is not clear why Christianity started with the Niger Delta region. It may be argued that the region offered enormous opportunities and a conducive atmosphere for the Portuguese Christianity explorers and missionaries to propagate, and at the same time carry out European trade. Beyond that, there was also a hidden fortune that the Niger Delta region was holding and harboring deep in her belly: that is a lot of mineral resources which would account for more than ninety percent of Nigerian revenue. That Christianity—word of God - entered into Nigeria through the Niger Delta, a region that is blessed with so much natural resources and providing more than 80 percent of our national revenue, this cannot be said to be anything else but a divine arrangement. To kick-start the missionary enterprise in the Niger Delta Area, the Portuguese sought to spread the Catholic variety, developed in the culture of Western Europe, to the West Coast of Africa. Conversion, according to the Portuguese principles and practices, implied the adoption of a particular pattern of daily life. Their major aim was to transform great areas of the African people into Catholic and carbon copies of Portuguese faithful. Thus, the foundation of the Christian religion in Nigeria was laid when the Portuguese sent Portuguese priests and explorers in their bid to find a sea route to India in the 15th century. Because of the geographical location of Niger Delta Area (Warri Area) the people came into contact with Portuguese priests who accompanied explorers from Portugal. By about 1555, Augustinians visited Warri. They were sent by Gasper Cao, who was the bishop of the Diocese of São Tomé. One of the monks, father Francisco, baptized the son of the *Olu* of

Itsekiri under the name Sebastian¹⁰. It is not very clear why the *Olu's* son was baptized with the name Sebastian. It may well be inferred that the King of Portugal at that point in time was called Sebastian because all the missionary activities were jointly sponsored by the Kings of Portugal and the Church, with exclusive rights to all ecclesiastical appointments and revenues in the newly discovered lands overseas, were vested in the Portuguese rulers. It might also be due to the fact that one of the monks, who might have been the leader of the team, was called Sebastian. Another possible reason why the *Olu's* son was baptized with the name, Sebastian was that the name might have been by divine revelation. Whatever might be the rationale for the name, it is on record that the *Olu's* son was baptized with a name that was not indigenous to the environment of West Coast of Africa in general. When Sebastian later succeeded his father as the *Olu* of the Itsekiri people, he threw the gate open for the Portuguese missionaries to propagate the Christian religion. To authenticate his belief in the new religion, the king allowed his son, Domingo, to be sent to Portugal to be trained for the priesthood. It was hoped that this arrangement would expedite the spread of Christianity to the hinterland since indigenous priests would not suffer the ill effect of the equatorial climatic conditions. Laudable as this plan to train indigenous priests was, Domingo could not live to this high expectation. Instead of qualifying and graduating as a Catholic priest, he ended his ten years' stay in Portugal with marrying a white Portuguese woman, contrary to the laid down stipulations of the Roman Catholic Church regarding the priesthood. Some other attempts made to train local people for the priesthood also met with colossal failure. Indeed, for about a century and a half 1570- 1733, the Itsekiri rulers became well known as professing Christians, but the religion did not spread beyond the court. Even at court its hold was recognized to be shaky. The sacraments were scarcely administered and the people practiced their traditional rites¹¹. The traditional religious festivals and ceremonies soon reasserted themselves at court level and from 1733 onwards, the Itsekiri ruling

¹⁰. Erivwo S.U. *A History of Christianity in Nigeria. The Urhobo, the Isoko and the Itsekiri*: Ibadan. Daystar 1979 p 1.

¹¹. Babalola E.O. *Christianity in West Africa Ibadan*. Book Presentation. 1988 p. 10

family began to turn its attention against Christianity, and this eventually led to a total collapse of the first attempt to introduce the Christian religion to the Niger Delta.

3.2 Decline of the First Missionary Endeavour

Where the missionary work succeeded, some basic factors were inherently responsible. In the same vein, some factors were equally responsible in areas where the missionary enterprise was a complete failure. This was exactly the case in the Niger Delta in the 16th century. The difficulty of providing trained indigenous manpower, particularly priests, became an uphill task for the propagation of Christianity among the Itsekiri people since the crown prince, Domingo who was sent to Europe to train principally for the priesthood could not major up as a result of his decision to marry a Portuguese lady, a practice abhorred by the Roman Catholic doctrine for the office of the priesthood. Significantly, the missionaries tended to underestimate the magnitude of their task. They failed to realize that the religion they intended to introduce among the Niger Delta people was culturally different from that which the established religion of the people had developed. When trade formed the basis of contact between the two cultures, conflict was less frequent than when contact was extended to the sphere of religion which usually resulted in clash of fundamental values¹². The Portuguese on arrival in the Niger Delta, launched assaults upon customs and beliefs of the people which they considered crude and incompatible to the Christian tenets. This state of affairs caused conflict and alienated majority of the people the missionaries had come to convert. The attacks on polygamy, human sacrifices, destruction of images, shrines and secret groves were some of the practices the people could not tolerate to give away. This combined with other factors to force Christianity to its knees.

Another factor that was responsible for the failure of the first attempt was the unfavourable climatic condition. The area was not only too humid for the missionaries but was

¹². *Ibid* p. 15

also the home of dangerous mosquitoes, the major carriers of malaria parasite and sickness. This posed a great impediment to the work of the Christian missionaries. Another imposing limitation was the decline of the Portuguese kingdom in naval power, due principally to her economic and political upheavals facing her back home. This state of her economy made it practically impossible for her to meaningfully support Portuguese priests who were working among the Itsekiris for an early length of time. The Itsekiris among whom the first missionaries worked were very superstitious about the baptismal rites. As a result, they were reluctant to surrender themselves and their children for the ceremony of baptism and other Christian rites. They were also afraid that, their ancestors and divinities would eliminate their children shortly after baptism and administration of Christian rites.

Another factor that contributed to the failure was the involvement of the Portuguese priests and missionaries in the slave trade. Some of the Portuguese priests who came to the Niger Delta from the 16th century onwards came in the gun boats of the slave traders. It was reported that, in order to maintain themselves in the West Equatorial Africa, some of the white missionaries and the Roman Catholic priests participated in the slave trading activities. The Catholic Church did not take any bold and stern steps to stop this act of man's inhumanity to man, but were directly or indirectly involved in the traffic of the Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to the West Indies and America for the purpose of using them as cheap labour in sugar plantations as well as domestic servants. This was one of the ingredients that contributed immensely to the failure of the first attempt at Christianizing the West Coast of Africa and the Niger Delta in particular. Another factor that contributed to the failure of the first attempt was that, the kings of Portugal and the authorities in England sent handfuls of men into countries where they quickly succumbed to various diseases and epidemics. Faced with this circumstance, continuity and stability of personnel, the establishment of solid and coherent institutional and administrative organization which were pre-requisites for achieving success were unattainable in

such circumstances¹³. For instance, Bishoprics often remained vacant for years and the Diocese of Cape Verde in particular was left without a bishop for 30 long years¹⁴. Another serious defect of the first missionary enterprise was the one sided nature of their training programme. There was no effort made to train women as either ministers or auxiliary staff. The result was a conspicuous absence of women's religious order which was in part responsible for the failure of Christianity to make an impression on the women of Africa and thus was unable to win their influence over home life and children which was essential to its success¹⁵.

These explain why the first attempt to introduce Christianity in the Niger Delta was a complete failure, though some impression was made as could be seen in the way and style of regalia the *Olu* of Itsekiri puts on. His regalia portrays the way, system and manner the Catholic reverend fathers dress. It is believed that, this was a carbon copy of the Portuguese missionaries. Among Urhobo in the hinterland, Father Monteleone, a Prefect from São Tomé came in contact with Urhobo in 1689 in his unsuccessful attempt to visit Benin. Certainly, the failure of the first attempt at Christianizing the Niger Delta was a conglomeration of many factors, ranging from lack of trained manpower, clash of culture and traditional values with Christianity, unfavourable climatic conditions, economic and political problems facing Portugal at home which made it practically difficult for her to support any meaningful missionary enterprise overseas, superstitious beliefs of the people of the Niger Delta about the Christian sacrament of baptism, participation of the Portuguese missionaries and priests in the slave trade and the reluctance of the Portuguese crown to send a large number of missionaries to the mission fields, particularly the Niger Delta as well as non inclusion of women in their training and operational programmes. All these conspired and led to the collapse of the first missionary journey in the West Coast of Africa. Before the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century therefore, Roman Catholic brand of Christianity had totally disappeared from the Niger Delta.

¹³. *Ibid* p. 16

¹⁴. *Ibid*

¹⁵. *Ibid* p. 17

3.3 Second Phase of Christian Enterprise in Warri Area- Niger Delta

The first attempt to Christianize the Niger Delta region which was spearheaded by the Catholics through the influence of the Portuguese traders and missionaries, met with abysmal failure. After this major setback, efforts were intensified to plant the Christian faith in the soil of Nigeria and the Niger Delta in particular. This second attempt was more determined and more focused as this was championed by protestant brand of Christian missionaries, who were solely involved in the abolition of the slave trade; a movement that started in Europe in the 18th century. Thus, it was the protestant Christianity that led the way when Christianity was firmly rooted into the Niger Delta during what is commonly known in Church history as the Niger Expedition.

The second missionary endeavour to Nigeria took place in the 19th century and it was marked by the Advent of the first English speaking Christian mission in Badagry in September 1842. Prior to that date, some of the liberated slaves who had settled in Freetown, Sierra Leone had traveled down the coast to Lagos and Badagry for trading purposes. The most numerous group, the Yoruba, began making communal efforts to regain contacts with their homeland. They began forming syndicates to purchase captured slave ships condemned by the Freetown slave courtships that were christened with names like the Wilberforce¹⁶. Some of these people met their relatives while others brought messages back to Freetown from the relatives of those who did not travel. Before long, organized groups of Yoruba in Freetown who were homesick began to move back to their homeland, settling in Lagos and Abeokuta. The Abeokuta settlers were the major agents who were so useful in the acts of trade and commerce, thus making contacts with Freetown in Sierra Leon requesting for missionaries who later spread the Christian religion to the surrounding environments like Ibadan, Ede, Ogbomosho and other Yoruba communities. It was through this channel of Christian communication that the second batch and brand of Christianity entered into the Niger Delta Area.

¹⁶. *Ibid* p. 104

The Niger Expedition

The first shot fired to kick start the exploration of the Niger water way came from the missionary zeal of Thomas Fowell Buxton, a member of the anti-slavery movement in London in the year 1840. Buxton suggested to the British government a scheme for the cultivation and exploration of the interior around the Niger water way in an attempt to turn the minds of the Africa people from slavery to agriculture. He put forward a scheme for a government sponsored expedition of the Niger which would make treaties with the local riverine rulers, in which they would agree to abandon the slave trade and receive compensation in form of legitimate commerce. He advocated that, missionaries and teachers should take the ploughs and hoes into the land and make agriculture flourish¹⁷. He also advocated that agricultural experts would be settled at Lokoja, the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers, to set up a model farm to teach Africans how to grow cotton and other crops and detailed reports would be made of economic prospects, desire for missionaries and languages of the riverine peoples. Buxton in this scheme mixed evangelism with business and commerce. He anticipated the time when these agents of commerce and Christian teachers, missionaries and artisans would encourage the cultivation of crops which would be shipped to Europe and then returned to the area as finished products for sale¹⁸ to the people of the Niger so that the European countries would make economic returns of their labour. Buxton's theory and suggestion was consequently grabbed with both hands and this led to the composition and setting up of the Niger expedition, which was jointly undertaken by the Church Missionary Society and the Base Missionary Society in 1840. The team consisted of three ships, well equipped with all kinds of gadgets for making observation on plants, animals, soil, weather, water and others. There were equally experts and specialists among the group to study these phenomena as well as the political, social economic and cultural aspects of the people. There were as well, missionaries of CMS and BMS denominations who were to explore

¹⁷. *Ibid* p. 106

¹⁸. *Ibid*

the possibility of missionary work, and agricultural experts and government officials who were to sign treaties and establish diplomatic relations on behalf of the British government. This is indeed one of the earliest British strategies to penetrate the interior of Nigeria. The expedition composed a total of 144 Europeans and some Africans. Out of the total of about 150 that went on the trip, many died of malaria scourge and other illnesses.

The expedition went up from the Niger to Lokoja where a model farm was established. At Aboh and Igalla, trade treaties were signed with local Chiefs¹⁹. The problems that confronted the 1840 Niger expeditions did not discourage further exploration of the Niger Delta. The failure and prospects of the 1840 expedition gave rise to the 1841 expedition that penetrated the Niger Delta region of West Equatorial Africa. To a very large extent, it is believed that the Niger Delta area was effectively and deep-rootedly Christianized through the activities of the 1841 Niger expedition which was spear headed and led by Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a linguist and a Yoruba man who was seized during the Yoruba wars in the 1820s and sold to slave traders. Fortunately, he was among the Yoruba freed slaves who landed in Sierra Leone, having been rescued on their way to the New World - the Americas and West Indies.

In Freetown, Samuel Ajayi Crowther attracted the attention and sympathy of a missionary couple, Dr. & Mrs. Davey who adopted him and converted him to the Christian faith in 1925. The couple sent Crowther to school in London and later returned to Freetown first as one of the pioneer students of Fourah Bay College and later, as a school teacher. Crowther became an expert in the classical languages, and in the long run turned these talents to the study of West African languages and the construction of their academic grammars. This great talent motivated Crowther into the translation of the Bible to Yoruba and also wrote *Yoruba-English Dictionary*.

Christian Oral tradition has it that Samuel Ajayi Crowther and his missionary team during the 1841 expedition arrived Okwagbe, an Urhobo town on the Coast of the tributary of

¹⁹. *Ibid*

the Niger River and sought to introduce the Christian religion to the people. This oral tradition has it that Okwagbe people rejected Crowther and his message, which he claimed to have come from God. The people, it is believed, were more interested in trade and commerce than that type of good news which Crowther purported to have come with from above. The Okwagbe people could not understand how a human being could bring a message from God whom they know is so far away in the sky above. To them, Crowther and his message was an imposter and a mere fairy tale. It sounded very strange and unbelievable to them for a man, who is flesh and blood, to have claimed that he was an instrument sent by God to deliver a message to them. Consequently, they displayed apathy to Crowther and his message. The setback which Samuel Ajayi Crowther suffered and many thought would dampen his enthusiasm rather acted as a spring board and catalyst that urged him further. In 1875, about ten years after Crowther was consecrated Bishop on the Niger, he embarked upon another missionary journey of the Niger Delta in company of his biological son, Daderson. Crowther's plan was to establish a mission centre among the Itsekiri. For this purpose, he sought an interview with Olomu, generally acknowledged by that time as Itsekiriland's most influential figure. The interview between the Bishop and Olomu was interesting. Crowther put his case strongly. Apart from the spiritual benefits that would accrue to the Itsekiri on their conversion to Christianity, he pointed to the progress that had taken place in Lagos, Kalabar, Bonny and Brass, where Christianity had secured a firm footing. He particularly emphasized the benefits that the education sponsored by the mission conferred on its recipients. Olomu listened attentively to Crowther's arguments, but refused to accept the Christian faith on behalf of his people²⁰.

If this was a destiny, then it was a bad omen. Today, it is on record that among the tribes in the Niger Delta, the Christian religion has not found its strong footing among the Itsekiri ethnic nationality. This perhaps might be due to the rejection of Crowther's message in the 19th century by the Itsekiri's paramount ruler on behalf of the entire Itsekiri people. The argument of

²⁰. Obaro Ikime. *Merchant Prince of the Niger*. Ibadan Heinemann Books 1968. p 38

Olomu was not anything different from the reaction of many of the Africa rulers to the coming and introduction of Christianity into the continent of Africa. Olomu's rejection of Christianity was premised on the ground that he feared the effects which Christianity would have on the customs and culture of his people. He argued that, once the young generation acquired the European habits that tended to go with Christianity, they would ignore their own indigenous customs and tradition. They would acquire, for instance, the habit of shaking hands with their elders instead of going on their knees in true Itsekiri fashion. As for education, Olomu feared that it would produce a class of indolent youths, unwilling to do any form of manual work²¹. In vain did Bishop Crowther point out that, the European manufactured goods were produced by educated and Christian workers. Crowther also went further to state how security of life and property would be guaranteed if the people embraced Christianity. The issue of jungle justice such as killing and burning of suspected witches and wizards, love of one's neighbour, building of Churches, employment of indigenous people to work in mission stations, establishment of fish and farm settlements, medical centres and free access to European goods and services were well promoted by Crowther to Olomu. The missionary, according to Crowther, would endeavour to deliver the people from the slavery of superstition, disease and ignorance, as well as the evil practices and customs of human sacrifices and the murder or killing of twins. Despite Crowther's eloquent pleas, Olomu turned down the offer on the ground that Christianity would pollute the culture of the Itsekiri people.

3.4 Factors Responsible for the Success of the Second Attempt

There were many factors that conspired to guarantee the success of the second attempt to introduce Christianity in the Niger Delta. The missionaries who came to the West Coast of Africa and indeed Africa as a whole, came with their civilizing policies and programmes. These policies and programmes combined to generate the necessary energy that made for the success of

²¹. *Ibid*

the second phase of Christianizing the Warri Area in particular and Nigeria in general.

When Christianity arrived the West Coast of Africa, it also came with its Western Civilization. This is in the area of Western education. With this, some of the old ways of life of the recipients of Christianity began to disappear. When, in 1807, the British abolished slave trade and slavery in 1833, the British government made sure that their personnel did not participate in the illegal trade.

One other motivation that contributed to the success of the second attempt was the use of native Africans as agents of Christianity. Ajayi Crowther, who was a slave boy rescued from the hands of slave traders, later on rose to the position of a Bishop. Though the consecration of Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther as a Bishop seemed to have been motivated by experimental tendencies, it was an experiment that however later turned out to be a big success to the disappointment of those who played down or even underrated the intelligence of the black and dispersed the 'Negro' race. Crowther gave the necessary leadership to the Niger mission. He uniquely proved that, educated Africans were capable of carrying the gospel successfully to the interior of the so-called 'Continent'²². In actual fact, the contribution of African leaders like Crowther, James Johnson, Rev. John Christopher Tailor²³ (an Ibo ordained in Sierra Leone who perhaps became the first ordained Ibo Anglican priests) among others, made the second advent of Christianity in the Niger Delta a huge success.

As would be expected, the missionary endeavour was a success as a result of the full backing they received from the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.). With the full backing of the C.M.S., Crowther established a chain of mission stations along the Niger right up to the Muslim state of Nupe, staffed entirely by African clergy, most of them trained in Sierra Leone²⁴. This backing, no doubt generated some opposition from some white missionaries. However, Crowther and his team were supported and encouraged by Henry Venn, the CMS secretary.

²². J.A. Omoyajowo, *Makers of the Church in Nigeria* pp.33-34

²³. E.O. Babalola *Christianity in West Africa* p. 113

²⁴. *Ibid*

Though Crowther and several of his clergy were Yorubas, they completely lacked a sense of tribalism, remaining with others as “one in Christ” and dedicating their lives to work among the Itsekiri, Urhobo, Ijay, Igala and Nupe. The management of the Niger Delta Church was seen as a training ground of responsibility in self-government designed through its school to produce a new generation of citizens with wider views and progressive horizons²⁵. This idea of seeing every one as one in Christ added a lot of ingredients to the success of the second missionary journey in the Niger Delta. The success of the second expedition was equally tied to the desire of the British government to learn more about the Niger Country – the Niger Delta. To kick start this desire and zeal, the British authorities sent a team of explorers under the superintendence of one James Richardson in 1850 which started from Tripoli. With him were two Germans, Drs. Heinrich Barth and Adolf Overweg. In 1852, news reached England that Barth and Overweg had crossed the River Tshada (Benue) and were missing. The British government felt it was the same river that was explored by the Lander brothers and others in 1833, and therefore another expedition was quickly put in place led by a British consul for the Bight of Benin, John Beecroft, assisted by a Scottish surgeon, Dr. William Baikie. Their main purpose was to find the missing explorers and possibly locate area for commercial centres along the banks of the Niger²⁶.

This desire, though fired by national and patriotic undertone of locating the missing British nationals, equally combined to add to the success achieved during the second advent of Christianity in the Niger Delta. For a proper and effective co-ordination of the John Beecroft’s assignment, a letter was sent to Samuel Ajayi Crowther at Abeokuta by the C.M.S parent committee in London requesting him to join the expedition along with Simon Jonas, an Igbo man who was a Catechist in Sierra Leone. Crowther left Abeokuta for Fernando Po to await the steamer called “*The Pleiad*” and joined the expedition. When “*The Pleiad*” was approaching the Niger Delta on the 15 June, 1854, the Captain of the ship, John Beecroft, fell sick and died²⁷. The

²⁵. *Ibid* p. 114

²⁶. Akamisoko Duke. *Samuel Ajayi Crowther in the Lokoja Area*. Ibadan Daystar Press. 2002. p.9

²⁷. *Ibid* p. 10

death of Beecroft shocked the entire crew to the very marrow while Crowther who was devastated wrote:

It will be a long time before his place can be supplied by another who will take the same interest in the country and her people as he did²⁸.

Determined to achieve the assignment given to the expedition, William Baikie quickly assumed leadership role and therefore pushed on after they may have overcome the shock and initial sadness of Beecroft's death. The company reached Aboh along the Niger where the people of the town expressed their desire to allocate land for trade and mission work²⁹. They visited several other riverine communities, including Lokoja, where a model farm had been established during the 1841 expedition. At every opportunity, Crowther made sure he went ashore to make friends with village chiefs and tried to arrange for future opening of mission stations. Although the expedition heard rumors about Barth and Overweg, the missing explorers could not be found³⁰. The disappearance of these missionaries was attributed to many reasons. There was the belief that, they might have been eaten up by wild animals and therefore could not be found. Another possible theory was premised on the belief that, they might have been killed by hostile African war-like folks and offered as human sacrifice to divinities. It is also believed that, Berth and Overweg might have been involved in a shipwreck along the Niger and therefore their remains could not be traced. There is yet another belief that they had ship mishap and were eaten by whales. Whatever might be the reason for the disappearance of Berth and Overweg, their death could not discourage further exploration of the Niger Delta, thereby contributing to the success of the second missionary adventure in the Niger Delta. Improved medical science and provision of adequate medical facilities equally contributed to the success of the missionary endeavour. Most of the members of the Niger expedition were Africans who were used to the equatorial climatic conditions as stated already. However, the expedition was equipped with enough

²⁸. *Ibid*

²⁹. *Ibid*

³⁰. *Ibid*

consignment of quinine, the then known major antidote against malaria. With this facility, the white missionaries among the crew were able to withstand any adverse health hazard, and this equally contributed immensely towards the success of the second missionary endeavour. Generally, the missionaries have their teaching and activities tried to salvage the West African society from the slavery of superstition and diseases. Christian teaching by and large had destroyed the superstitions which propped such evil customs and practices as human sacrifice and the murder of twins. The work of Reverend Hope Waddell in Kalabar and Cross River area illustrates this point³¹.

The missionaries equally waged war against diseases among the people, in addition to leading the way in the growth and development of medical services such as the establishment of hospitals, maternity homes, dispensaries and clinics. It is significant to mention that the history of medical services in Nigeria began with Father Conquart who arrived at Abeokuta in 1890. The high rate of mortality which was formerly the great scourge of the then society, decreased appreciably, and disease steadily retreated before the unrelenting assault of missionary medical work³². Culturally, and on the people's social life, the missionaries had tremendous influence on the culture of the Niger Delta, thus paving the way for the success of evangelization among the people. For instance, the European system of marriage and style of dress as well as architecture were introduced and adopted by many inhabitants of the African communities, and all these encouraged them to jettison their traditional way of life and adopted the European system and traditional cultural and social behaviours. Equally important was the way the missionaries have by their teaching and activities helped to a very large extent, bring to an end the endemic inter-tribal or inter-village wars which plagued most of the West African society before the coming of the missionaries. In this way, they contributed to the establishment of a stable and peaceful society in the Niger Delta and in West African in general. A typical example of their influence in

³¹. Onwubiko KBC *History of West Africa. 1800-Present day*. Onitsha African Press. 1973 p. 211

³². *Ibid*

this respect was their success in arranging for the exchange of war-prisoners in the Egba-Dahomey war of 1851³³. The great educational revolution that characterized the operation of the missionary activities in the Niger Delta, added a lot of flavour to the level of achievements that were attained during the second missionary journey to the Niger Delta. The Christian missionaries as a matter of utmost concern regarded education as a major tool as well as an indispensable vehicle of evangelization and so, promoted education to the highest level from the very beginning of their entrance into the West Coast of Africa and indeed the Niger Delta. The first step at setting the vehicle of education in motion was the study and translation of some major languages of the West African society as well as the translation of the Bible into these languages. In Nigeria, for instance, Crowther reduced the Yoruba language to writing and translated several books of the Bible into Yoruba, Nupe, Hausa, Kanuri, Ibo and Efik were also developed by the missionaries by 1880. Most of the above mentioned languages had grammar books and dictionaries, and in this manner, the missionaries were better placed to teach and enlighten their converts on how to read the Bible in their local languages and dialects and through this method, the first crop and class of the first literate group of West African indigenes who contributed immensely to the educational and political upliftment of the West African Society, were produced.

To further promote the study of West African languages, some of the missionaries established printing presses and published newspapers. The Rev. Townsend brought the first printing press to Nigeria in 1852 and started the first Yoruba Newspaper in Nigeria the *Iwe Irohin Yoruba* in 1859³⁴. To develop education in all its ramifications, the missionaries embarked upon the opening and promotion of primary and secondary schools as well as the establishment of training colleges to produce teachers and training of craftsmen. In Nigeria for instance, the work of the missionaries in education was very spectacular. The first grammar

³³. *Ibid*

³⁴. *Ibid* p. 212

school in Nigeria was opened by the CMS in 1859 in Lagos for boys, while the establishment of the first secondary school for girls followed suit also in Lagos in 1868. Methodist boys' high school in 1876 also followed in quick succession, while St. Gregory's College was opened by the Catholics in 1881. Hope Waddell institute in Kalabar was established in 1885 by the Scotland mission. It should be safely stated that, as late as 1942, the missions controlled 99% of Nigerian students who were attending these mission schools³⁵.

It was these schools that produced the first-class West African *élite*, who were groomed, not only in European literary skills, techniques, philosophy and sociology, but also in the European ways of thought and life. This class served the missions usually as teachers, catechists, priests, doctors, and lawyers as well as worked in government and mercantile houses as administrators, clerks and interpreters. It was this class that played a most tremendous role in the social, economic and political development of the West African Society, and thus contributed immensely to the overall success of the second coming of Christianity to the Niger Delta in particular and the West Coast of Africa in general. Another factor that made the missionaries to succeed in their bid to introduce Christianity into the Niger Delta was their intervention into local politics. To do this effectively, they in the 19th century often appealed to their home governments for protection and for the establishment of law and orderly society to guarantee them the safety of carrying out their task of evangelization and civilization. This was why, in 1852, King Kosoko of Lagos was deposed simply because his slave trading activities were inimical to the interests of the missionaries as well as those of European legitimate traders. It is believed that the annexation of Lagos by the British in 1861 was principally due to the intense pressure that the missionaries mounted on the British government to do so.

Nana, the Itsekiri paramount ruler in the 19th century, was attacked, deposed and sent on exile somewhere in the upper Cross River, probably at old Kalabar and a house was provided for

³⁵. *Ibid* p. 213

him, one wife and his eldest son with a monthly allowance of \$10³⁶.

After the fall of Nana in 1894, the removal of the Oba of Benin, Ovonramwen quickly followed suit. In 1896, the year a British Acting Consul Philips decided to visit the Oba of Benin with a view to discuss the situations of trade in the Niger Delta. The period coincided with the traditional Igue festival when the Bini would not receive visitors. The advice given to Philips to put off his proposed visit fell on deaf ears. Philips' decision to go ahead in spite of a well-meaning advice proved very fatal and unfortunate. Philips and his party were ambushed by Benin warriors and murdered in cold blood on their way to Benin in 1896. The British answer was a massive punitive expedition in 1897 which saw the sack of Benin City, the capture of the Oba and his ultimate deportation to old Kalabar. The British thereafter established themselves effectively in Benin and proceeded to organize the subjugation of the outlying areas³⁷. With the removal, deportation and subjugation of most of the powerful Niger Deltan rulers, the coast was clear for the missionaries to propagate the gospel message without much hindrance and molestation. The state of affairs, too, made it quite easy for the British traders who were some time both missionaries and mercantile operators, carried out their legitimate trade and trading activities. The success that was recorded during the second advent of Christianity in the Niger Delta was not achieved as a result of the social, religious, educational and political considerations alone, it equally extended to the economic sphere.

For instance, they showed great interest in the development of agriculture and legitimate trade which they used to supplant the slave trade and raised the living standard of the people. New crops were introduced, plantations set up, and new methods of producing and preparing farm products for export taught³⁸ in schools established by the missionaries. Some of the missionary bodies set up trading companies which were involved in the supply of imported goods to the people at relatively and reasonably cheap prices. For instance, the Royal Niger

³⁶. Obaro Ikime. *Merchant Prince of the Niger-Delta*. Ibadan: Heinemann Press. 1968 p. 105

³⁷. Obaro Ikime (ed) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan Heinemann Books. 1980 p. 279

³⁸. K.B.C. Onwubiko. pp. 214-215

Company. Similarly, the missionaries contributed to the material progress of the West Africa Society by the building of roads, and bridges to open up the hinterland of the Niger Delta for the propagation of the gospel as well as for commerce. They as well introduced new styles of architecture and new style of dressing. It should be noted that, the once fearful *juju* groves that bestrode our villages had now surrendered unconditionally to magnificent ecclesiastical or educational edifices that stood as lasting monuments of missionary enterprise in West Africa³⁹.

3.5 Development and Expansion of the Anglican Church in the Niger Delta

The development and expansion of the Anglican brand of Christianity in the Niger Delta was made possible due largely to the effective Christianization of the area which began in the early years of the 19th century and was as a result of the second attempt to introduce Christianity into the West Equatorial Africa. There were, however, 19th century antecedents sometime between 1841 and 1857 as part of one of the expedition of 1841, 1854 and 1857, there is a Christian oral tradition which states that, Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the first Nigerian to become an Anglican Bishop and of Yoruba ancestry, sought to introduce the Christian faith to the people of Okwagbe, a town along the tributaries of the Niger Delta Creeks. The Okwagbe inhabitants, according to this tradition, could not respond favourably to Crowther's message simply because, they could not understand and conceive how Crowther who is human with flesh and blood could assert and claim to be sent by God, who the people believe inhabits the sky far above, to bring what Crowther termed to be good news from God. Crowther's first attempt, rebuffed by the Okwagbe people, did not stampede him to submission. Thus in 1857, the same Crowther, together with his son, Danderson, who had been ordained into the priesthood, visited Warri area and tried to convert an Itsekiri's most influential leading trader, Olomu to Christianity. Olomu, as has been stated earlier on, turned down the offer on economic, social, political and cultural grounds, despite Ajayi Crowther's eloquent plea. In fact, Olomu reasoned that, Christianity would

³⁹. *Ibid*

pollute the cultural ethos of the Itsekiri people.

The British commercial interests in the Western Niger Delta and the declaration of the Niger Coast protectorate, in 1885 marked the beginning of the British administration of the Niger Delta. To safeguard the British interest in the area, the British foreign office sent out Major Claude Macdonald to the oil River in 1889 as a special commissioner, as well as consul general with supporting staff to inaugurate a new era in the region. Macdonald took up his new assignment in 1891, and one of his first assignments were to tour the entire area and establish vice-consulates in the Western Delta proper, where he established two such vice-consulates; one at Warri and the other at Benin⁴⁰. This sphere of influence of the British administrative canopy was later extended to Sapele by way of establishment of another consulate in Sapele in 1891-1892. The years 1892-93 saw increased British activities in the Niger Delta and by extension, in Urhoboland. In 1892, the vice-consul based in Warri entered into series of treaties with a number of the Niger Deltan settlements such as: Asaba, Tori, Ajeba (Adjeba) Agbassa, Ogonu, Obodo, Ogo, Ogbe-Sobo (Aladja): Such treaties brought the settlements concerned under British protection⁴¹. At the beginning of the 19th century therefore, liberated slaves who returned from parts of Yorubaland, particularly the Owo area, first introduced Christianity to Ukwokori, Ovu-Inland, Eku, and Urhuovie in Avwraaka. At about the same time the returnees commenced worshipping in communities. At these centres, two congregations also started; one at Warri and the other at Sapele⁴². These were the two congregations that formed the nucleus of the Anglican Church in the Niger Delta today. The composition of these two Christian communities in Warri and Sapele were a mixture of mainly Yoruba, Gold Coasters and Saros from Sierra Leone who were working either for the mercantile houses or for government⁴³ as staffers of the consular offices. The Christians came from various denominational backgrounds viz:

⁴⁰. Obaro Ikime (ed) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Heinemann Books. Ibadan, 2001.p 277

⁴¹. Onigu Otite. *The Urhobo People*. Heinemann Books. Ibadan. 2003 p. 46

⁴². *Ibid* p. 445

⁴³. *Ibid* p. 446

Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists and so on.

Sequel to the creation of the Niger Coast protectorate and the subsequent establishment of vice-Consulate at Warri, Benin and Sapele, Captain Harper, was appointed in 1891 as acting consul for Warri District. On assumption of duty, he requested the Church Missionary Society to send a missionary to Warri District. This request by Harper was not favourably considered because Ajayi Crowther before his death on 31st December 1891, had been politely discredited by CMS authorities through a commission of inquiry set up by the C.M.S to investigate allegation of immorality against some junior workers under Crowther, as well as the report from the Niger mission field under Crowther. It was discovered that Bishop Crowther's treatment of the two junior workers of the CMS from the Niger Delta who were accused of misconduct; charged to court in Sierra Leone and found guilty by the British Administration, was not severe enough. The whole question was exaggerated by some CMS puritans from Cambridge, whose report on the incident was unfavourable to Crowther⁴⁴. Crowther became a victim of racial and prejudicial discrimination, and total absence of appreciation of the enormous work he did in the mission field. The shock Crowther received as a result of the manner the case was handled and the dust the episode generated - because the matter went to the British parliament where attempts were made to discredit the work of the C.M.S overseas - might have contributed to the complication in Crowther's health and consequently, his death. Before this episode known to historians as "the Crowther's Crisis"⁴⁵, the British had adopted the theory of Henry Venn's policy of the native Church, where mission fields were hitherto composed of Africans. In reaction to the Crowther's crisis, the CMS changed its practice and began to send white missionaries to the mission fields, including the Niger mission which had exclusively been working as Africans. The C.M.S. regarded Crowther's episcopate as an experiment and also a colossal failure. The action of the C.M.S authorities in humiliating Bishop Ajayi Crowther and

⁴⁴. Eriwo S.U. *History of Christianity in Nigeria*. Daystar. Ibadan, 1979. p. 6

⁴⁵. *Ibid*

relegating the entire work of Crowther and the African clergymen to the background, did not go unchallenged. The reaction of the Niger Delta pastorate Church was swift and direct. The body declared its independence of the C.M.S on the 29th April, 1892. This brought about the breach with the C.M.S.

After the death of Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther in 1891, he was succeeded by Bishop Hill, whose episcopacy was very short. After the ephemeral episcopacy of Hill, Herbert Tugwell was appointed Bishop of the Diocese of West Equatorial Africa, who covered the whole of the West Coast of Africa.

On touring the Western Delta in 1894, Bishop Tugwell saw the need for a missionary at Warri to minister to the European merchants there⁴⁶. Consequently Tugwell requested for a mission; any from Salisbury square in 1898 to be stationed at Warri, but this request was not honored. It was not without difficulty that CMS authorities permitted a missionary, Rev. Henry Proctor, stationed at Patani to pay occasional visits to Warri to attend to the spiritual needs of the Christian community there. Though the C.M.S parent committee was reluctant to grant Tugwell's request for a Church worker at Warri, he once again took on the parent committee on the same subject in 1899, this time arguing that should the CMS not take the advantage of the British conquest of the Benin empire in 1897 to open mission stations in Benin and the neighbouring country, there was the possibility of the local people lapsing into a worse form of idolatry and "paganism"⁴⁷. Tugwell's well laid out, eloquent and persistent plea did not move the CMS authorities to shift ground on her persistent refusal to be drawn into the Benin-Warri mission field, which they contended was not their sole duty and responsibility, but that of the Niger Delta pastorate Church. With this, it became apparent that, Benin and Warri Area, the first area to have contact with Christianity in the West Equatorial African, was treated to the rear position and at the same time denied a better deal in terms of missionary attention.

⁴⁶. *Ibid*

⁴⁷. *Ibid* p. 7

James Johnson and the Anglican Church: As merchants and workers of government establishment from different Christian backgrounds arrived Warri and Sapele, it became increasingly necessary to organize them into a coherent worshipping committee. But it was James Johnson of the Anglican Church who was consecrated an assistant Bishop in his old age in 1900, who properly organized the congregation at Sapele and Warri and gave them their later denominational posture. This organization happened in 1901 (a year after the consecration of James Johnson) when the CMS dispatched Bishop Johnson to the Niger Delta to the discomfiture of his admirers and parishioners at Breadfruit Church, Lagos, many of whom consequently separated from the Anglican Church and formed the African Church⁴⁸. Bishop James Johnson was quite enthusiastic when he came face to face with the Christian adherents. While describing his visit to Warri and Sapele areas, Bishop James Johnson stressed:

The two places I landed in the upper parts of the river were Warri and Sapele, in both, I found some native Christians from both Lagos and Sierra Leone and in the latter place from the Gold Coast also members for the most part of our own Churches and some of them of my own former charge at Lagos⁴⁹.

Having organized these two congregations into proper and coherent worshipping communities, the foundation was then laid for the Christian faith to spread from Sapele and Warri to the hinterland. In short, the new lease of life and energy infused into the centres by James Johnson re-invigorated the zeal of some other men like Messers Omofoye Emuakpo of Ephron, Masima Ebosa of Ughoto, Ogugun of Ohrerhe, Evwaire of Ughelli, and Ejovi Aganbi of Eku, who established Christian worshipping centres at places like Ukwokori, Urhuovie-Avwraaka, Eku, Ohrerhe-Agbarho etc. and through these agents of James Johnson, Christianity was firmly rooted in the Urhobo hinterland. By 1914 when Bishop Tugwell of the west Equatorial Africa visited the area on sightseeing and assessment tour, he actually discovered that,

⁴⁸. Onigu Otite p. 446

⁴⁹. *Ibid*

at least fifteen worshipping congregations each, that were associated with Warri and Sapele centres, were already in full swing.

Through the work of James Johnson and the activities of the Niger Delta pastorate Church under James Johnson, many people who later became Roman Catholic, had previously embraced the Christian faith as Anglicans. The Bishop had neither the money nor men of the right caliber and qualifications to effectively organize the Christian congregation which resulted from his tour of the Western Delta, and consequently, could not provide adequate Christian instructions to the new converts⁵⁰. The result of this was a shift of allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church whose missionaries returned to the area convincing those who changed membership that the Roman Catholic Church was the only catholic Church and that the new converts, were therefore contradicting themselves by repeating the Holy Catholic Church in the Apostles' creed without belonging to the Roman Catholic Church. Some of the men who were associated with James Johnson and who were the carriers and chief progenitors of the Catholic faith in Urhobo hinterland were Mr. Uvietabore Eyube of Igbogidi in Udu clan of Delta State, who equally introduced the Catholic faith in Igbogidi town and many other Udu, Ughievwen, Ughelli and Olomu towns. Mr. Daniel Sadjere, J.E.E. Enaohwo of Ovu town, Peter Iweh of Okurekpo all in Agbon clan and Mr. Obudu of Okwagbe whose son later became a Roman Catholic⁵¹, were all James Johnson's disciples.

Others too who embraced Christianity through James' Johnson and the NDP and later pulled of Anglicanism because they were compelled to learn the catechism in Yoruba before baptism and later joined the African Church, which was introduced into Urhobo land by Rev. Jacob William, were Omofoye, Emuakpo and Aghoghin Omotsola. Aghoghin Omotsola was a key member of St. Luke's Anglican Church Sapele who staged a walkout of the Anglican Communion on allegations of misappropriation of the Church funds, alleged domination of the

⁵⁰. *Ibid*

⁵¹. *Ibid*

Church at Sapele by Yoruba elements, thus leading him to the formation of the Baptist Church in Sapele. Gradually and systematically, the Catholic, African and Baptist Churches also penetrated the Urhobo hinterland and made their denominational demands on the people and won converts into their fold. From the foregoing, it is quite clear that the Anglican Church gave birth to the other denominations that sprang up in the Niger Delta hinterland. As the Church founded under the aegis of the Niger Delta pastorate grew both by leaps and bounds, the various congregations soon felt the need for trained catechists and pastors who would nourish them in the Christian faith. Consequently, Bishop James Johnson secured the services of a trained pastor, Frank Cole, from the Gambia for the St. Andrew's Church, Warri in 1914, while in 1916 the Rev. Ologundudu was seconded probably from Lagos, to St. Luke Sapele. By 1916 both Warri and Sapele had trained ministers to attend to the spiritual needs of the growing Anglican family in the area. However, there was the growing need for trained Urhobo indigenes that could as a matter of urgency, attend and minister effectively to the young Christian community in the area. This teething problem and shortfall could not be immediately met until about 1928 and after about ten years after the death of Bishop James' Johnson.

In 1928, some of the lifelong dreams of Bishop James Johnson were realized. In that year, Agori –Iwe, an Urhobo indigene, who had been sent to train as a catechist at St. Andrew's College Oyo returned. Thus, a first trained indigene of Urhobo was available to minister to the new converts. Agori- Iwe rose through the rank and file of the Anglican hierarchy and became the first Urhobo and indeed the first son of the now Bendel province to become Anglican Bishop. He became the bishop of the then Benin Diocese, which is today the Ecclesiastical Province of Bendel in the Church of Nigeria. His consecration on St. Andrew's Day in St. Andrew's Church, Warri undoubtedly marked a milestone in the spiritual pilgrimage of the Urhobo and the entire Niger Delta people. It is vital to mention here that Mr. Ejovi Aganbi, as stated earlier, who separated from the Anglican Church in 1926 and started the Baptist Church at Eku, equally went to train at Ogbomoso and returned in 1935. Similarly by 1942, the Catholic Church had their first

Urhobo son, Monsignor S. Umurie, ordained as Rev. Father. Thus by the 1940, indigenous priests, pastors and catechists were copiously available for proper and effective organization and instruction of the Urhobo converts.

The work of the translation of parts of the Bible, prayer books and hymn books also received greater emphasis during the period under review. It is however fair to note at this point that, the two world wars (1914-1918) (1939-1945) might have retarded the progressive evangelization of the Niger Delta Area. This may partly account for the unwillingness or inability of the C.M.S to take up the Niger Delta Christianization project and constitute the area into a district under the Niger mission with headquarters at Ohrerhe, an Urhobo town in Agbarho clan which is the first town in the present day Ughelli Diocese that first embraced Christianity, then known and called as Mogba or Okpare, a town near Ughelli as recommended by J.D. Aitkin following his iteration of the area in 1913⁵². It may, however, also been that the C.M.S were treading cautiously because they did not want to interfere unduly in the area under Bishop James Johnson. Again, having given much credit to the missionaries, it is a fact that in respect of Urhoboland, both before and after the first world war, the area was not regarded by C.M.S missionaries in particular, as a primary and priority area of evangelism. That seems to be the only way one can satisfactorily account for the obvious apathy shown by the C.M.S to the work of the propagation of Christianity in the Niger Delta area, which James Johnson with all the limitations in terms of men, money and materials, he wholeheartedly and doggedly carried out, and success visited his endeavour. For instance, when James Johnson first informed the C.M.S of his desire to have Benin as a major mission centre, the C.M.S's reply on the request stated among other things was:

Realizing that one reason for the selection of Benin as a centre is the prospect of mission work developing in that neighbourhood. The committee thinks it well to state that they for their part have not decided a fresh mission enterprise from Benin as a centre⁵³.

⁵². *Ibid* p. 451

⁵³. *Ibid* p. 450

The CMS's disdain and apathy for missionary work in the Niger Delta area could only be explained by the C.M.S themselves. For population, agricultural endowments, commerce and other opportunities, the Niger Delta and indeed Urhobo and Itsekiri hinterlands paraded all these phenomena. Yorubaland and Igboland were therefore the priority areas for the C.M.S attention, though the Niger Delta area was under the Yoruba mission. This state of affairs indeed made Rev. Henry Proctor, based at Patani to complain about this apparent neglect of the mission work in the Niger Delta area. While writing to the C.M.S., Rev. Proctor had accessions to complain as follows:

We get very little if any help at all from the so called Niger mission and I have found it so all along. All of the members of the E.C. (Executive Committee) myself excepted are working amongst Ibos and naturally Ibo work looms largest in their ideas. They know little or nothing of our work or our district, and the secretary cannot find time to visit us and I feel we have little or no sympathy⁵⁴.

With this apparent lack of interest in the mission work in Warri area and acts of reckless abandon displayed openly by the C.M.S, it became crystal clear that the area was treated rather like the Bithynia of the Acts of the Apostles. However, in spite of this disdain, apathy and lack of interest shown by the white missionaries, James Johnson and his African agents doggedly carried out the work of evangelization in the Niger Delta region.

The Present Period

With the attainment of political independence in 1960, the Church in Nigeria and in the Niger Delta in particular was confronted with the ultimate task of relating more effectively than ever before to the Nigerian/African social environment or milieu. Admittedly, it had been the agreed policy of the C.M.S from the beginning to put in place in West Africa, a structure of a native Church, a Church that was self-sustaining, self-propagating and of course self-governing, which was a policy wholeheartedly pursued by the general secretary of the C.M.S, Henry Venn

⁵⁴. *Ibid*

from 1841 to 1871. As stated already, it was for this singular purpose that Samuel Ajayi Crowther was consecrated Bishop in 1864. However, Ajayi Crowther's episcopacy was branded as a failure by the C.M.S authority. According to the verdict of Bishop Stephen Neill, "the entrusting of the mission field entirely to the hands of an African was borne out of enthusiasm which is no substitute for common sense, and once again the doctrinaire principle of Henry Venn proved themselves disastrous when applied to recalcitrant reality⁵⁵. This led to the administration of the West Equatorial Africa by the white missionaries for almost fifty years to set things right, by their own estimation.

The point being made here is that, after Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the leadership and rulership of the Anglican Church in Nigeria and indeed the West Equatorial Africa, reverted entirely to the Europeans- C.M.S. But with the other Churches such as the Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists and so on, the policy adopted from them was entirely European oriented. The missionaries took the lead from the very beginning. After independence however, the policy assumed a different dimension. In fact, there was the need to indigenize the Church, first through the policy of Nigerianization of the personnel, which was quickly followed by the reformation of the liturgy and hymnody, to reflect the African and Nigerian Milieu.

In the Niger Delta, the Urhobo and Itsekiri hinterlands and indeed Warri Area, the Anglican Church was actually yielding good dividends. In actual fact, the policy of Nigerianization of personnel in the Anglican forum yielded a lot of result. In the Niger Delta scene, many young men entered into theological colleges and seminaries to prepare for ordination and the administration of the Anglican Church in the future. Before 1960, there were, apart from Agori-Iwe, only five Warri area Anglican priests: Rev. G.D. Nabofa, ordained in 1947; Rev. J. Emefe, ordained in 1957; Rev. Peter Unurhieri, ordained in 1956, Rev. Enajero Arawore, ordained in 1957; and Rev. John .O. Dafiewhare ordained in 1960, who rose to the position of Bishop of Warri Diocese 1980-1991. After independence, many more priests were

⁵⁵. *Ibid* p. 451

trained and ordained into priesthood who rose to position of leadership in the Anglican Church in Warri Diocese. Those in this category are Rev.J.A. Eterhere, ordained in 1965; V.O.Muoghereh, ordained in 1966 (Bishop of Ughelli Diocese) M.B. Forae 19 66; S.U. Erivwo 1968, D.U. Eferakeya, 1969 and a host of others that followed in the 1979s.

This caliber of trained Anglican ministers rode through the rank and file and assumed the leadership positions of the Anglican Church and uplifted the status of the Church to enviable heights.

What is true of the Anglican Church was equally in vogue in other denominations, notably the Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and indeed the African Church. The stimulus that engineered the Anglicans to send some of their prospective candidates to the seminaries to be trained for the priesthood also propelled other Church denominations in the Niger Delta to train their indigenous sons for effective administration of their respective communions. Along with the indigenization of the personnel who went, even through to a lesser degree, the indigenization of Christianity in terms of liturgy, hymnody and indeed the method of evangelization. Here, the stimulus and the engine power room came from Isokoland through the evangelistic campaigns of Adam Igbudu of Araya the founder of the group popularly known as Anglican Adam's preaching society (A.A.P.S). This group had grown so much as to cut across denominational barriers, although Adam himself and his initial retinue still remained Anglicans. The society has creditably given many of the Churches in the Niger Delta and indeed in Urhobo and Isokolands and beyond, irrespective of their denominations, a new lease of life particularly in lyrical evangelical and liturgical patterns of worship. Their native air and songs accompanied by lively African and indigenous music and dances, in which drums, gongs, bells, guitars, whistles and bottles are freely used, characterize all Christian and social gatherings, such as funerals, Christian festivals, marriage and even political ceremonies.

At present it can be said with a high degree of certainty that Christianity has not only and permanently come to stay, but it has progressed considerably and tremendously in the Warri

area. The present state of affairs is completely different from the earliest time in which Christianity in the Delta area – Warri area could be compared to the seed which fell by the way side, which birds of the air came down and devour. Though there are some hurdles that the people still grapple with, this is indeed the fate of Christianity all over the world. Such hurdles are indeed, not insurmountable.

As the Anglican Church grew through thick and thin in Warri area, there was a crisis that rocked the very foundation of the Church from 1977-1980 in Warri Diocese. It had to do with the appointment of a Yoruba Bishop to the newly created Diocese of Warri. The majority of the indigenes comprising of Urhobo, Isoko, Ijaw and Itsekiri, totally and unequivocally rejected that appointment and were in no mood to accept and accommodate a non-indigene as a bishop and leader of the Church in their land. This crisis is the main focus of this research work.

Many and in fact majority of the Church leaders within the Anglican Communion in Nigeria and indeed the Niger Delta and Urhobo and Isoko in particular, now look up to their sons for the leadership of the Church and obviously resent attempts by the Church hierarchy to impose non-indigenous leaders on their Churches. While uncharitable criticism may present this tendency as evidence of clannishness, other interpretation is both possible and plausible. The desire to have their own people as leaders and elders in the Church is better understood as evidence of growth towards maturity, after all, this was what Henry Venn's policy of native pastorate Church stands for. It was this same policy and spirit that led Nigeria to struggle for nationhood and independence, and which encourages Churches everywhere to head for indigenization policy and programmes. Awareness by any people that they have long accepted Christianity and everybody seems to bear witness to this fact, should therefore not by anyway be treated as babies or infants in the Christian faith, is a thing that should be highly commended rather than condemned. This is actually and evidently the spirit and disposition of the people in the Niger Delta Area today.

Certainly, Anglican Christianity with all its civilization and agencies has penetrated deep in the soil and soul of the Niger Delta religious, social, cultural and even the economic life. However, the indigenization of Christianity needs to go farther and deeper in Warri Area (Warri Diocese) as in other parts of Nigeria in particular and Africa in general, than the stage we have so far attained today. Our liturgy, hymns, songs, lyrics, musical instruments, and dances can still be indigenized and contextualized more than what have been attempted and achieved so far.

As the Anglican Church was developing and expanding through thick and thin in the Delta area, (Warri area) it was confronted with myriads of problems. Apart from the Crowther crisis as highlighted already, there were other issues that reared their ugly heads that resulted to some disagreements.

Bishop James Johnson who was consecrated as an assistant Bishop in 1901 and was saddled with the responsibility of administering the Niger Delta pastorate Church, visited Warri and Sapele and was the chief motivator of the Anglican Christianity in the Niger Delta before his death in 1917. Bishop Johnson, a Yoruba by tribe, made sure that the young congregations at Sapele and Warri were taught the catechism in Yoruba. In the early years, the young congregations both at Sapele and Warri faced a number of difficulties. There was no resident catechist, let alone priests, who could minister to the congregations regularly. The first members were “native foreigners”, that is Africans who were not Delta people. They were neither Itsekiri nor Urhobo, but mostly Saro and Yoruba⁵⁶. Thus, while Bishop Johnson felt that, making use of Yoruba and Saro to evangelize the Itsekiri and Urhobo was the right thing to do, and consequently made it imperative for the young and few converts among the Urhobo, Isoko, Itsekiri to learn the catechism in Yoruba if they were to be admitted and qualified for baptism. The converts however held a contrary view. They would rather prefer to be taught the catechism in English instead of Yoruba language. Because of this policy, Omofoye Emuakpo, one of the

⁵⁶. See Erivwo *op cit* p. 8

earliest converts from Ephron and others, seceded from the NDP in 1916 and joined the African Church, where the minister would not insist on their learning the catechism in Yoruba before baptism⁵⁷.

Significantly, the year 1916 also witnessed another split and of course problems at Sapele. Aghoghin Omatsola, one of the agents and disciples of James Johnson, who had been a key member of St. Luke's Anglican Church in Sapele, led a splinter group out of that Church and started the Baptist Church also in Sapele. Among the reasons given by Omatsola for this action were: (a) alleged mis-appropriation of funds by the Church authorities of St. Luke's and (b) alleged domination of the Church by Yoruba elements⁵⁸. 1916 was not only a year of schisms, it was also a year of persecution of Christians at the hands of the adherents of the indigenous religion. Evidently, by 1916, Christianity had already made so much impact on the Urhobo and Itsekiri that the adherents of the indigenous religion (Christianity) on the pre-Christian way of life, particularly on ancestral worship, embarked on a ruthless persecution of the Christians. The persecutions were more severe in Isoko which was then grouped under Urhobo, than they were among the Urhobo new converts. Among the Urhobo, a lot of havoc was done by the persecutors of the new religion to Christians and their properties. For instance, Churches were burnt or destroyed at Idjerhe near Sapele, Ekrehavwen and Afioferi near Ughelli and elsewhere⁵⁹.

Admittedly, these persecutions were partly invited by the new converts as a result of their attitude towards the indigenous religion. In many cases, the Christians not only vocalized their disrespect for and derision of the indigenous religion in songs, dances and their preaching, but also actually carried out iconoclastic activities. This type of activity at Ephron led the adherents of the traditional religion to sue for justice from the colonial government as early as 1911, and also to lock up Omatoye Emuakpo (leader of the group in Ephron) at Warri until the members of

⁵⁷. *Ibid* pp 9-10

⁵⁸. Onigu Otite *op cit* p. 447

⁵⁹. *Ibid* p. 448

the young Church at Ephron paid a ransom⁶⁰. It must also be stated that, several traditional taboos and sacrileges were broken including: forbidden forest, sacred spots and groves were cleared, desecrated and converted to Churches, rubber plantations taboos, and that the Christians did so with much air of impunity and also ate indigenous and traditional prohibited items of food without any form of reprisal attack from the effected deities or divinities or even from the cults of the ancestors, the Church became popularly known all over Urhoboland as *Orugbegwa*⁶¹ – that which nullifies or defies taboo. Thus 1916 persecutions were consequent upon the increasing fear of the adherents of the traditional religion that their traditional ways of life and culture would be totally and completely eroded if the Christian deluge was not checked and put under control.

Other areas where the Church experienced some crises of survival were the practice which required polygamists to send away all their wives but one if they were to be baptized members of the Church. The converts were equally not expected to pay any form of respect and homage to their ancestors, the cult of which they had cherished from the very day they were born. The converts were also required to refrain from contributing and participating to any kind of traditional and annual festivals and ceremonies that were generally believed to have been connected with the ancestral cults and worship. The new religion too excluded the adherents from taking traditional chieftaincy titles. They could not circumcise their daughters and wards the proper way the Urhobo and Isoko had always believed and done. All these prohibitions had the effect of discouraging Church attendance, though many of the new converts were happy that they were healed or released from their respective bondage that the traditional religion had subjected them. In spite of the ferocity and determination of the persecutors of the Christians and Christianity, the religion grew as a mustard seed and waxed stronger against all odds.

⁶⁰. *Ibid*

⁶¹. *Orugbegwa*: That which defies taboo, the name by which Christianity was known in Urhobo and because Christians could eat all items of food without any form of reprisal from divinities or cults of the ancestor.

3.6 Conclusion

Christianity in the Niger Delta has come a long way. It went through thick and thin and today, the religion is firmly rooted in all facets of the people's life; be it social, political, cultural, religious, economical and even traditional life. The Christian religion which has permeated all facets of the people's life came to Nigeria first and foremost through the Niger Delta on its first entrance into the continent of Africa through the itinerancy of the Portuguese missionaries in the 16th century. The first attempt could not be sustained to yield the desired result because of many factors among which are involvement of the Portuguese missionaries, priests and vessels in the activities of the slave trade. Equally responsible for the failure was lack of commitment and provision of local Personnel as well as unfavourable climatic environment of Africa that generated arbitrary conditions which were unbearable to the missionaries and their message. The uncompromising nature of the indigenous culture and tradition of the people equally accounted for the abysmal failure. The one-sided nature of the training scheme of the missionaries which focused attention mainly on training and sending out of only male missionaries and personnel also contributed immensely to the collapse of the first attempt.

The political, social and economic situations the Portuguese crown was facing back home in Portugal acted tremendously against the success of her missionary activities overseas. The political, social and economic upheavals the government was passing through made it increasingly impossible to sponsor any meaningful venture overseas.

Though the first attempt at christianizing the West Coast of Africa failed, another determined, well laid-out and sustained attempt, was initiated about 300 years after the failure of the first phase.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CRISIS IN WARRI DIOCESE AND ATTEMPTS AT RESOLUTION

4.0 Introduction

From the very beginning of the advent of the Christian religion in the continent of Africa and indeed the West Coast of Africa, particularly the Niger Delta area, there has been one crisis or the other, which from time to time plagued the Christian community in the Niger Delta region. Most of these crises bothered on who controls the administration of the Church at its apex.

From the time of the Episcopacy of Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1864-1890) when Crowther was Bishop of West Equatorial Africa, through the Bishoprics of James Johnson, Bishop of the Diocese on the Niger (1900-1917), M.N.C.O. Scott, Archbishop, Province of West Africa, on whose tenure the crisis under review broke out (1969-1981), T.O. Olufosoye, first Archbishop of the Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion (1979-1988), J.A. Adetiloye (1988-1999) and even to the present day, the Church has been embroiled in one crisis or another.

These conflicts would always arise as a result of the Church's inability to generate the necessary mechanism to satisfy the religious, social and political aspirations of her members. Thus, the crisis under review broke out as a result of the dissatisfaction of a section of the Church in the then province of West Africa, under the leadership of the Most Rev. Moses N.C.O. Scott, the Archbishop of the Province. The majority of the people in a newly created Diocese of Warri felt they were shortchanged in the choice of the Bishop elected for them.

4.1 The White Missionaries and the Principles and Practices of Election of Bishops

The office of a Bishop is central to the government and law of all Anglican Churches which, as a matter of ecclesiastical practice, commonly incorporates expressly in their law a commitment to continue the historic and apostolic ministry of Bishops, Priests and Deacons. Anglican Churches have developed complex legal arrangements both to order and to facilitate Episcopal ministry which consists of the ministry of Primates, Archbishops (or Metropolitans),

Diocesan Bishops and assistant Bishops. Diocesan Bishops particularly, are involved directly or indirectly in all aspects of ecclesiastical life¹. These are pastoral, ministerial, doctrinal, liturgical, governmental and proprietarily. A Bishop is the chief minister of his Diocese.

It is a general rule in the Anglican Communion that once a See (the office of the Bishop) is vacant, a new Bishop has to be elected to fill it. Vacancy occurs usually on death, resignation, completion of the term of office, the attainment of a fixed age, or retirement, incapacitation by reason of illness and by removal from office by reason of commission of an ecclesiastical offence. A Bishop is also elected if a new Diocese is created from an existing one.

During the missionary era, the laid down rules and regulations by which vacant Sees were filled, were by election. For a candidate to be eligible to be elected to the office and work of Bishop in the Church Missionary Society (CMS), such a person must be a priest who had been in holy orders for a fixed number of years. Minimum and maximum age limits were commonly prescribed while it was usual to require candidates to be of complete learning, of sound mind, and of good morals. In several cases, medical examination was mandatory to determine not only the physical but also the mental fitness of the candidate for appointment². It was the general principle of the law governing the C.M.S. Churches that candidates for admission to the office of Diocesan Bishop must be elected to the office. Basically, there are four stages to the election: nomination, voting, confirmation and pronouncement of result. The right to nominate was vested in a wide range of ecclesiastical bodies and persons: In most cases, it was enjoyed by a special nominating body, usually a Diocesan Institution consisting of representatives of the episcopate (other Bishops ministering in the Diocese)³, the clergy and important lay missionary workers living in the area for which a Bishop was to be elected. Most of the time, there were wide range of consultations throughout the Diocese in question, sometimes even with the most local of

¹ Norman Doe, *Canon Law in the Anglican Communion*. New York Oxford University Press p. 103.

² *Ibid* p. 108

³ *Ibid* p. 109

ecclesiastical units within the Diocese. Nominations were submitted to the Archbishop of the Province in which the Diocese is situated and commonly at this stage, the Church's central Episcopal assembly (the house or College of Bishops) may add to the nominations. The next stage of the process was the consideration of the candidate so nominated by an electoral body (or college), usually a provincial or national institution established by the Acts of British Parliament. The underlying assumption was that, all aspects of the elections must be lawfully conducted. The British Law under the Church Missionary Society normally required proceeding at the elections of Bishops to be conducted in a liturgical setting⁴ (service of Holy Communion).

The final and most critical stage of the election of a Bishop during the missionary era was the stage where the British crown played a significant role through the appointment commission. Usually, names were agreed upon and submitted to the crown's appointment commission. This commission finally settled for two names which were submitted to the appropriate Archbishop and the (secular) Prime Minister would nominate one out of the two to the Monarch who enjoyed a power to appoint under secular parliamentary statute (Appointment of Bishops Act 1534)⁵. The candidate so appointed by the British Monarch was then pronounced. Usually, there are valid grounds for objection to the appointment of a Bishop.

A valid objection to the election may be made to the court of confirmation on the grounds that the See (office of the Bishop) was not canonically vacant; the election was informal; the candidate was not of canonical age; the candidate was not of competent learning or of sound faith, or not of good morals, or is otherwise canonically disqualified, or that he is under such liabilities or contracts as not to be a free agent⁶.

The Canon Law demands that, the election and appointment of Bishops allow specific groups of members of the Church to exercise these provisions. It is not opened to all members of the Church or Diocese concerned. In other words, "*Locus standi*" to object is confined to

⁴ *Ibid* pp. 110

⁵ *Ibid* p. 10

⁶ *Ibid* pp. 111

Bishops, or a communicant member of the Church of honest life and good repute; they must make a declaration that they would accept the decision of the court as final". The Metropolitan (head of the Church of England) summoned the Bishops (or their emissaries) to a court of confirmation consisting of the Metropolitan (himself being the president of the court) and all Diocesan Bishops; and the court is assisted *inter alia* by the chancellor (Legal Officer) of the vacant Diocese and some other person learned in Law. A majority is required⁷. In most cases, this was a formality under the British Law because any candidate pronounced by the Monarch was usually accepted by all.

Once the election process was completed, it was invariably a Metropolitan who must take order for the consecration or ordination of the Bishop-elect, after having obtained that person's consent⁸. Consecration of the person so elected was usually by no less than three Bishops, of whom the Archbishop must be one. If the Archbishop is unable to attend, he must appoint a commissary.

Consecration ordinarily took place on Sundays during the period of the missionaries and must be carried out within the preview of the prescribed Liturgical form of the C.M.S, which were effected by laying on of hands by the Bishops present on the candidate being consecrated and the recital of the words of consecration and the invocation of the Holy Spirit.

The consecration was immediately followed by enthronement or installation of the Bishop so consecrated in the Diocese, usually in the Cathedral of the Diocese. The Bishop was obliged to make various undertakings in the form of declaration, promises or oaths. These include: assent to the doctrine, liturgy and discipline of the Church; compliance with the law of the Church; submission to the decisions of ecclesiastical tribunals and other authorities, and allegiance to the Metropolitan. In general, the Bishop was required to give due honour and deference to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the British crown.

⁷ *Ibid* p. 111

⁸ *Ibid* p. 112

4.2 Election of Indigenous Bishops

The first time an indigene of Africa was ever elected Bishop was in the 19th century. This was on 29th June 1864, at the Cathedral of Canterbury on St. Peter's day at 8 O' clock in the morning⁹. This notable African was Samuel Ajayi Crowther, who was consecrated as Bishop of West Africa¹⁰. Before this time, the white dominated the entire office of the Bishop. They erroneously held the view that God has given talents to the whites to be used for the good of the Negroes, who consequently had tremendous respect and honour for the Europeans. They hinged this argument on the fact of sectional jealousies and ethnic and cultural affiliation that had torn the African continent apart during the missionary era. They equally argued that, the Africans and even converts would undermine the authority of an indigenous Bishop no matter the worth of such an African or indigenous Bishop. The election and consecration of the first indigene of African descent by the missionaries was motivated by experimental and second fiddle tendencies.

The general procedure of the Anglican Communion is to follow laid down rules and regulations in the Canon Law in respect of election of Bishops. It should be stressed that at the creation of a Diocese or a vacant See as a result of the retirement of a substantive Bishop, machinery is always put in place to make sure that the Bishopric is filled. One of such methods was to determine the real wishes of the people on the choice of the Bishop they wanted. There was also an advisory committee, a body set up as laid down by the same constitution of the Province in which such Diocese is located, and the committee is usually headed by the Chancellor of the Diocese, which advised the Archbishop on the qualification, qualities and characters they would want such Bishop to possess.

The first African elected as Bishop in the Anglican Communion was Bishop Ajayi Crowther. Ordained on Trinity Sunday in 1843 and priested the following year October, barely

⁹ Akamiso Duke. *Samuel Ajayi Crowther. His Missionary work in Lokoja Area*. Ibadan Oluseyi Press. p. 25

¹⁰ *Ibid*

21 years after his freedom from slavery¹¹, Crowther though was made experimental Bishop, he demonstrated his many abilities and worked tirelessly and was therefore a formidable vessel used by the missionaries for the evangelization of the Niger Delta region and Nigeria in general. Crowther showed himself to be an enterprising and energetic man; he had intelligence and was full of plans¹². When he visited England about 1850, his first visit to Britain after his ordination there, he received an invitation from Palmerstone, the British Prime Minister who learnt a lot from him about Africa, and particularly West Africa. The Queen and her husband also invited Crowther to the Castle of Windsor where he explained, by means of maps, the situation of things in west Africa, especially Abeokuta and Sierra Leone to the royal couple. He in addition recited the Lord's Prayer in Yoruba at the Queen's demand and pleasure. He was further opportuned to address the students of Cambridge College and enjoined them to come and work in Africa. He met once again Sir Henry Luke, the Captain of the ship that brought him to freedom in Freetown. The Captain was happy to see him ordained. Crowther made the best of the visit before returning to Africa in June 1852¹³.

When Crowther returned to the West Coast of Africa after his visit to England, and having been exposed to the tenets and dogma of the Christian religion, and having also acquired basic education and experiences, he gave the necessary leadership and direction to the Niger mission. Crowther stoutly stood up to the challenges that confronted the Africans and uniquely proved and demonstrated that educated and exposed Africans were more than capable of giving true meaning and conveying the gospel successfully to the interior of the so- called "Dark Continent" of Africa. As a result of Crowther's dedication, selfless services, commitment and faithfulness, radical and tremendous changes were visible all over the West Coast of Africa within a very short time. Everybody, both Christian and non-Christian within and outside the

¹¹ Norman Doe, *Canon Law in the Anglican Church*. p. 112

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ *Ibid*

Niger Delta area, was aware of the fact of the developments that called for the supervision of a full-time Bishop. The efficient, relentless and tireless zeal and efforts of Crowther coupled with his faith, courage and tremendous workaholic spirit recommended him for the high office of a Bishop.

Henry Venn, the Church Missionary Society's (CMS) Secretary had seen the problems of the Niger Delta mission and identified Crowther as the only solution. But the question on the lips of every white man was: 'Can anyone among the African clergy be found on whom so great a responsibility, can, with safety be trusted?'¹⁴.

It was now over twenty-one years since Crowther was ordained into the priesthood. He was totally humble, dutiful, sound in doctrinal and biblical exposition, knowledgeable and very consistent and committed in the Church ministry. Indeed, he had firmly laid a solid foundation for a Diocese. Crowther was equally quiet, not ambitious, unassuming, prayerful, unostentatious, had good command of the African's and white man's languages and was well known both in Africa and in England for having the qualities that would qualify him to be appointed as a Bishop. If Crowther was a white missionary with all these qualities and qualifications, he would have risen to the position of a Bishop long before then. The reason of his colour, delayed Crowther's elevation to the Bishopric of the Niger Mission.

With regard to the episcopate, there were two apostles of the Church Missionary Society who worked at cross purposes in respect of Crowther. These missionaries were Henry Venn and Rev. Henry Townsend who were stationed by the Church Missionary Society in Salisbury to report trend of events in the west Coast of Africa to the Church Missionary Society headquarters from time to time. Thus, right from 1851, Venn had started to advocate strongly the advancing of African clergy to the office¹⁵ of Bishop and leadership of the Church. Henry Venn is credited with the idea of originating Nigerian nationalism. He was the Presbyter of St. Paul's London, and

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ *Ibid*

for thirty years, 1842 to 1872, the Secretary of the Church Missionary Society. Singlehandedly and deliberately, he urged Africans to be prepared to assume the leadership of their countries. His love for Africans began in about 1800 at the age of four, at Clapham Common, where he was playmate to African children brought up by Governor Zachary Macaulay of Sierra Leone¹⁶. However, Rev. Henry Townsend embarked upon a counter policy of looking upon the indigenous clergy as misfits and potential rivals¹⁷. Townsend was interested in the Bishopric of the Niger mission. Henry Venn demonstrated his like for African clergy when he proposed that two more indigenous clergy, T.B. Macaulay (a product of Islington Theological Training where Townsend himself was trained) and Thomas King (a product of Fourah Bay College and distinguished Catechist who assisted Crowther in translating the Bible), should be ordained any time the Bishop of Sierra Leone came to Abeokuta. To perpetrate the clandestine activities and running down the African workers, Townsend wrote Venn on October 21st, 1851 expressing his doubt about the ability of black clergy who, he said, would need more years of experience to stabilize their character. He would rather employ them as school masters and Catechists¹⁸. When another proposal to erect an Episcopal See at Abeokuta was made and Crowther was summoned to England for a dialogue, Townsend's doubts and anxiety developed into serious panic. He drafted a petition against the idea and proposal of making Crowther a Bishop and shrewdly obtained the signatures of Hinderer and C.A. Gollmer, who were German nationals opposed to the Episcopal policy of the blacks on doctrinal grounds. In the petition, Townsend contended that no matter the worth of an African to be Bishop, he would lack the respect and influence necessary for such high office. He further maintained that the native themselves accepted and treated their indigenous clergy (Crowther inclusive) as inferior to the whites. He claimed that as a result of sectional jealousies and ethnic affiliation that had torn the country apart, no authority

¹⁶Ayandele E.A. *Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria (1842 – 1914). A Political and Social Analysis*. Longman Press 1966. p. 180

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ *Ibid*

of an indigenous Bishop would be accepted¹⁹ and respected by the converts. He held the erroneous view that God had given talent to the whites to be used for the good of the black who consequently had accorded great respect and honour to the white missionaries. Townsend warned in his letter that this trust should not be relegated or shifted.

Townsend's opposition also stemmed from the letter written by Henry Venn in 1857 to Mr. Labouchere, Secretary for the Colonies, suggesting the need for an African Bishop for Africa. In the letter, Henry mentioned possible African candidates, particularly Samuel Ajayi Crowther as the only one who met all requirements for the office of Bishop. From the moment Venn gave suggestion for the choice of Crowther as a Bishop, he was met with stiff opposition from Revs. Henry Townsend and C.A. Gollmer. Townsend had seen himself as the rightful heir to the office of Bishop, and was out to drag Crowther's name in the mud. To appoint a black Bishop over a white priest was to him unheard of. According to him, "We shall be sinning if we abandon the responsibilities given to us and give it to the blacks"²⁰. Other European missionaries suggested that an African could not have jurisdiction over Europeans without a loss in prestige to the Europeans²¹.

From all indications, it was clear that Townsend was on a collision course and at the same time, was on the verge of frustration, racial perjury and crass jealousy. He was indeed being lured away by the love and booty of office. He was totally disappointed and ashamed when, in 1854, King and Macaulay, two African agents whose career Townsend wanted to destroy, were ordained into the priesthood.

While Townsend was out to assassinate the character of Crowther and other African agents, Henry Venn knew that Crowther cared less for the post, prestige, responsibility, power and prospect of being a Bishop which he (Venn) had in mind for him. Crowther lacked the spirit of bickering and struggle for the post and love for office. In Crowther, Venn saw dependable

¹⁹. *Ibid*

²⁰. *Ibid*

²¹ *Ibid*

spirit of a counselor and remarkable gift and knowledge of human psychology. Crowther had great respect for the missionaries. He saw them as having sacrificed all things for the sake of Africans. The opposition against the election of Crowther soon degenerated into a conflict situation which necessitated the emigrants, who soon realized too that these foreign missionaries were constituting themselves into a force which sooner or later might be very difficult to resist, let alone remove. Consequently, they mounted a strong campaign to resist Townsend. From Sierra Leone to Lagos and Onitsha in the Delta area, the people stood solidly behind Crowther, asserting that any Bishop appointed other than the Rev. Ajayi Crowther would not be a popular choice²² of the entire people of the West Coast of Africa.

Against all odds and campaign of calumny perpetrated by Townsend and his cohorts, Ajayi Crowther was invited to London to attend an urgent and very important meeting in 1864. On arrival in London, he was met by Henry Venn, who announced to him that he, Venn, was recommending him for consecration as Bishop. In response, Crowther declined with all sense of humility, claiming that he was not worthy of such high responsibility and commitment. Crowther was however advised to spend some time quietly and ponder over the issue. When he later returned to Venn, he still did not look convinced. Venn finally assured him that his consecration would symbolize the full development of the Native Africa Church which was trying to be self-supporting and self-propagating²³. Crowther's reactions to the idea of making him a Bishop actually vindicated him and portrayed him as a man who was really qualified for the office of a Bishop. He was meek, humble, disciplined and spirit-filled. Truly, Crowther was humble, dutiful, unassuming, quiet, unostentatious, cared less for the mere honour of office and position, lacking bickering, struggle for power, dependable, a counselor and above all, Crowther was a man who possessed the requisite educational, doctrinal and theological qualifications that made

²² *Ibid*

²³ *Ibid*

him more than qualified for the post of a Bishop.

Re-emphasizing his conviction about Crowther's qualities, Henry Venn appealed passionately to Crowther, "My son, Samuel Ajayi will you deny my last wish before I die?"²⁴ Ajayi shed tears and solemnly accepted the Bishopric of the Niger as the first African to be so honoured²⁵.

Crowther not only protested to Venn, but when he heard about the proposal by the C.M.S. parent committee to make him a Bishop, he himself protested and named Townsend and others instead. He knew his European missionary colleague would not want him as their Bishop and he understood the problems he would face if they were forced to accept him as their Bishop. But Henry Venn, being a visionary man, insisted that they saw those people Crowther had mentioned and knew and appreciated their work before asking Crowther to take the offer of a Bishop. Because Crowther had a strong sense of commitment, respect, duty and loyalty to his mentor, Venn, he had to accept the offer at the end.

In the final analysis, Ajayi Crowther on the 29th June 1864 at the Cathedral of Canterbury, on St. Peter's Day at 8 0' clock in the morning, was consecrated as Bishop of West Africa beyond the British territories. His letter of authority as Bishop reads:

We do by this license, under our Royal signet and sign, manual, authorize and empower you, the said Samuel Ajayi Crowther, to be Bishop of the United Church of England and Ireland in the said countries of West Africa beyond the limits of our dominions.

Bishop James Johnson²⁶

James Johnson: James Johnson was of Ijebu and Ijesha parentage²⁷. He was born in Sierra Leone about 1838. Educated at the Freetown Grammar School and Fourah Bay College, he

²⁴ *Ibid*

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ Isichei Elizabeth. *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present*. SPCK, Oxford University Press 1970. p. 181

tutored in the latter from 1860 to 1863. He became the spokesman for the native Pastorate of Sierra Leone against the opposition of Europeans and was influential in castigating the missionaries as representatives of ‘mistaken benevolence’ whose contact with Coastal Africans was injurious, and his championship of the cause of Native Pastorate made him unpopular with the white missionaries²⁸.

James Johnson’s involvement in the agitation for the indigenization of Christianity led to the creation of the Native Pastorate church in 1861²⁹. He was transferred to Yorubaland in 1874 and placed in charge of the CMS inland mission. He was later removed from the inland missions in deference to white demands and placed in charge of Breadfruit Church in Lagos³⁰.

James Johnson was a thorough breed of African Nationalism and Christianity. He had no political programme divorced from Christianity for Nigeria. The conviction that Christianity and African nationalism were interdependent, and that the former should provide the superstructure for the latter, dominated his thinking throughout his life³¹.

James Johnson was so pious in his ways of life that he enjoyed the unique reputation of being the most genuine Christian in West Africa. For the Sierra Leonians, he was ‘Wonderful Johnson’, for Nigerians, ‘Holy Johnson’ and for Salisbury Square, the ‘Pope’ of Nigeria³². James Johnson’s idea of the inseparableness of African nationalism and Christianity he carved into his motto ‘God and my country’ which was boldly inscribed on his writing sheets to Salisbury Square³³, actually marked him out as an African nationalist and a genuine Christian. The native pastorate, which was for James Johnson ‘the cause of God’ and the ‘cause of the Negro race’, was only half-measure. Native pastorates were to combine and be transformed into an ‘independent African Church’ which would wipe off sectarianism, embrace all African

²⁸*Ibid*

²⁹*Ibid*

³⁰*Ibid*

³¹Ayandele E.A. *Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria (1842 – 1914). A Political and Social Analysis*. Longman Press 1966. p. 186

³²*Ibid* p. 187

³³*Ibid*

Christians and make them all one African whole³⁴. This was indeed to be Pan-Africanism par excellence and the means for the development of a future African existence. It was logical that James Johnson considered that his visualized African church should ultimately evolve a distinctly African Christianity which would incorporate some parts of indigenous religion which bore resemblances to Christianity, adopts the vernacular languages, have its own hymns and liturgy, for the Church of England 'is not our own'. To him, once the African church was established, then a 'Christian nation' would emerge³⁵.

In fact, nationalism was for James Johnson spiritual, and pervaded all things he did both in the church and the state. There was never any question of his rash, of his taking a step he was likely to regret or a stand he would be at loss to defend or explain in rational terms. He had a tremendous capacity for thinking, a thinking derived partly from his literary education, partly from his unique conversion, partly from his experiences in and observation of Sierra Leone, Lagos, Yoruba and Niger Delta societies and partly from his contact with different classes of Europeans. From the earliest time, Johnson's thinking developed into ideas, the latter in turn crystallizing in principles³⁶.

James Johnson always applied his principles to issues and then possessed opinions and finally arrived at judgments that were on several occasions at variance with the European missionaries. One of the ideas which Johnson conceived very early in his career in Sierra Leone, and which he expostulated throughout his life remains alive with us to this day. It is the concept of African personality³⁷.

James Johnson could be described as a man of many parts. He was at all times very popular in every community in which he worked in West Africa. The secret of his popularity is found in his selflessness and championship of the interest of his countrymen³⁸.

³⁴*Ibid*

³⁵*Ibid*

³⁶Ayandele E.A. *Holy Johnson. Pioneer of African Nationalism 1836 – 1917*. Frank Cass & Co. Ltd. 1970. p. 285.

³⁷*Ibid*

³⁸*Ibid* p. 84

James Johnson was a man who was generally rumoured to have been prepared by the Church Missionary Society as Crowther's successor. He was from Sierra Leone, of Nigerian ancestry, and had been connected with the native pastorate in Sierra Leone from where he was transferred to Delta area to establish a similar Native Pastorate. He was all out for African administration in the Church at all levels, knowing fully well that Europeans would never understand sufficiently, the African mind to the extent of converting them in large numbers into the Christian faith. James Johnson was the founder, an advocate and chief motivator of a true African Church with African Christianity. It was through the activities of the Niger Delta pastorate Church under James Johnson that effective Christianization and evangelization of Urhobo and Itsekiri speaking peoples (Niger Delta Area) were properly carried out in the first place. The creek areas of the Delta were claimed by the Niger Pastorate Church and until about 1915, it was this organization, not the Niger mission under the west Equatorial Africa under the supervision of the Diocese of the west Equatorial Africa, that spearheaded the missionary drive in the Niger Delta area. The Churches founded by the Niger Delta Pastorate Church were only regarded as C.M.S. by mere name simply because they remained within the orbit of the Anglican Communion.

The area which came under this Church is jurisdiction extended from Bonny in the East of Owo in Yorubaland. James Johnson was the first Bishop to be assigned to this area. James Johnson was made an assistant Bishop instead of a full-fledged Bishop under the supervision of Bishop Tugwell of the Diocese of West Equatorial Africa with headquarters at Sierra Leone, while James Johnson was to stay in Lagos (St. Paul's Breadfruit) as his headquarters. The idea of making James Johnson an assistant Bishop was not well received by the Africans who had expected that Johnson would succeed Ajayi Crowther or would like to see Johnson made a Bishop rather than an assistant. The Africans saw the grand design of the white missionaries to relegate the black to the background even in their own land. They also saw the jealousy of the

white missionaries against the rising profile of the African clergy and also the fear of the expatriates losing their job, respect and prestige.

From the very beginning, precisely the 29th of April 1892, when a group of rebel African clergymen within the fold of the C.M.S. who disagreed with various aspects of the C.M.S. policy and insisted on the use of Africa clergy and laity in the task of spreading the gospel among Niger Delta people, and founded the Niger Pastorate Church, the Niger Delta Pastorate Church was often handicapped by shortage of personnel, materials and funds and often, when appeals were made to the C.M.S. to come to the aid of Bishop Johnson and his men, response was always very and completely negative.

James Johnson being a man of God who knew his God intimately, refused to join Bethel African Church which was the offshoot of the response among his advocates to the perceived ill-treatment and subjugation that was meted out to him by the missionaries. This group of Johnson's followers broke away from the Anglican Communion and formed the Bethel African Church, Breadfruit, arguing with conviction that this was the kind of Church which James Johnson stood and fought for.

After about five years of dispute and rivalry between the Niger mission – C.M.S. and the Niger Delta Pastorate Church, some settlements were effected through the intervention of Bishop Tugwell. The 'rebels' came back (perhaps with a promise that their grievances would be looked into and rectified) to the Anglican Communion, though they retained their independent organization and continued to use African clergy³⁹. In actual fact, the 'rebels' did not return fully to the C.M.S. fold until after the death of Bishop James Johnson in 1917. This is a pointer to the Africans' growing desire to look after their own affairs in the acts of the Christianization and administration of the Niger Delta Pastorate Church.

To all intents and purposes, the white missionaries were out to use the blacks to play the

³⁹ *Ibid*

role of the second fiddle in the scheme of things even in their own native homeland⁴⁰. They were regarded as second class Christians and were always given a second hand treatment in the overall scheme of things. Thank God for missionaries like Henry Venn who recommended Samuel Ajayi Crowther for the Bishopric status.

4.3 Creation of Warri and Asaba Dioceses

The Dioceses of Warri and Asaba were originally part of the then Diocese of Benin. Benin Diocese was created in 1961, half from what used to be Ondo-Benin Diocese, and the other half from what was then known as Niger Diocese. The pioneer Bishop was the Rt. Rev. Agori-Iwe of blessed memory.

At inception, Benin Diocese was composed of sixteen district Church Councils and three Archdeaconries. The districts were: From around Benin, they were Benin, Afemai, Afuze, Akoko-Edo, Irrua, Sabongida-Ora; from Warri, they were Warri, Ughelli, Uwherun, Agbon, Ughievwen; from Isoko, they were Oleh and Ozoro; and from Asaba, they were Asaba, Ndokwa and Kwale Districts, while Benin, Warri and Asaba were the Archdeaconries⁴¹.

By May 1971, the Diocese had become ten years old and the number of districts had increased to forty-nine, while the archdeaconries were eight in number⁴². In view of this development, and coupled with the desire to bring the administration of the Church nearer to people, as well as to intensify the propagation of the gospel message, there was urgent need for the creation of two new dioceses from the existing one.

Thus, at the Synod of the Diocese held at St. Luke's Anglican Church, Oleh from May 29th to June 3rd 1971, the Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Agori-Iwe drew attention of Synod to the growth the Diocese had witnessed in its ten years of existence and therefore charged the entire delegates on the need to create more Dioceses from the Diocese, putting into account the growth other

⁴⁰Ayandele E.A. *Holy Johnson. Pioneer of African Nationalism 1836 – 1917*. Frank Cass & Co. Ltd. 1970. p. 259.

⁴¹ *Churchmans Calendar 1975*

⁴² *1971 Synod Report*

Dioceses such as Niger and Ondo which were mother Dioceses of Benin had experienced in recent years.

The Bishop's Charge provoked reaction from the delegates. Consequently, a committee comprising the following was put in place to look into the future of the Diocese.

Ven. S.O. Akinluyi	-	Chairman
Chief J.O. Oye	-	Secretary
Rev. Canon A.W. Bovi	-	Afemai Archdeaconry
Mr. F.O. Izegaegbe	-	Afemai Archdeaconry
Chief E. Okoh	-	Asaba Archdeaconry
Mrs. B.U. Kery	-	Asaba Archdeaconry
Chief D.O.I. Ehanire	-	Benin North Archdeaconry
Mr. E.E. Fiofori	-	Benin North Archdeaconry
Mr. D.O. Omoragbon	-	Benin South Archdeaconry
Mr. E.E. Akpata	-	Benin South Archdeaconry
Mr. A.A. Osunbor	-	Ishan Archdeaconry
Mr. P.H. Ebohon	-	Ishan Archdeaconry
Mr. F.M. Vesse	-	Isoko Archdeaconry
Mr. M.M. Itiveh	-	Isoko Archdeaconry
Chief Omoz Oarihe	-	Owan Archdeaconry
My. Lydia Lawal Osula	-	Owan Archdeaconry
Rev. Canon E. Arawore	-	Urhobo Archdeaconry
Mr. J.O. Agadaigho	-	Urhobo Archdeaconry

Terms of reference were:

1. To find out from the various Archdeaconries
 - a. The desirability of dividing the Diocese into more Dioceses.
 - b. Facts and figures as at present

2. To ascertain the capacity and viability of each Diocese.
3. To make recommendation to the Diocesan board⁴³.

Because of the importance and urgency attached to the situation at hand, the committee swung into immediate action and before the next Synod in 1972, the committee's report and recommendations were ready for Synod deliberation. While addressing the Diocesan Synod held from the 27th May to 1st June 1972, the chairman of the committee, Ven. S.O. Akinluyi stated: "The committee met twice in July and September 1971. Our recommendation is that the Diocese be divided into three viz:

- i. Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries to form Warri Diocese with Warri as the headquarters.
- ii. Asaba Archdeaconry to remain as Asaba Diocese with Asaba as headquarters.
- iii. The old Benin Archdeaconry, i.e. Afemai, Benin North, Benin South, Ishan and Owan Archdeaconries to form Benin Diocese with Benin City as its headquarters⁴⁴.

The entire Synod was quite impressed about the report and Akinluyi's committee was applauded for a job well done. The report was therefore penciled down for immediate action.

Like a volcano that was waiting to explode, the Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries quickly organized the membership of the two areas towards the realization of their dreamed Diocese of Warri in the shortest possible future. At the grassroot, a lot of emphasis was galvanized and mobilized towards assuming the new status and responsibility. Consequently, enlightenment campaigns were mounted at Churches, districts and Archdeaconry levels to create the awareness and determination. The implication of all these was the formation of a unified committee whose membership was drawn from Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries Boards with Rev. Canon Arawore and Rev. P.W.D. Egwede as chairman and secretary respectively. As would normally be expected of such high caliber committee, membership went into immediate action and application dated 3rd July 1975, for the creation of Warri Diocese was submitted to

⁴³ Application to the Province of West Africa for the creation of Warri Diocese p. 3

⁴⁴ *Ibid* p. 5.

the Diocesan Synod of Benin Diocese, held at St. Matthew's Cathedral, Benin City. The document was signed by a representative from each of the sixteen districts Church Councils within the Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries. The two Archdeacons of Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries, Ven. B.P. Apena and Ven. J.A.O. Emoefe respectively signed the application.

When asked to state the *rationale* for their desire for the creation of the said Diocese, the response was: "It is not due to any selfish consideration". On the other hand, over the years, from 1908 to the present day, the two component parts have worked side by side together, and have developed in common, a unity of purpose in their Christian mission. The riverine area for instance is common to both Archdeaconries and both have taken their effective evangelization as a challenge. It is realized by both that if as a Diocese, their human and spiritual resources are pulled together, the goal can be more quickly reached"⁴⁵.

From all indications, the primary motivating factor for the agitation for a Diocese of their own was for effective evangelism in the riverine area. The aspiration was quite genuine, after all, that was the commission given to the Church by Jesus Christ. As Warri people were mobilizing their people for their own Diocese, Asaba indigenes too were not in any way sleeping over their own Diocese.

Thus, after the recommendation of Akinluyi's committee for the creation of Warri and Asaba Dioceses was discussed and passed, formal applications for the proposed new Dioceses came to a session of the Synod held at St. Matthew's Cathedral, Benin City in 1975. When the resolution was tabled on the floor of the gathering, Synod was satisfied that the Dioceses being asked for were desirable, and therefore, passed its own resolution in support of the requests.

After the motions to create the three Dioceses from the old Benin Diocese had been passed by the Diocesan Board and Synod, they were in that same year presented by the Bishop through an application dated 8th July, 1975 to the provincial Synod of the Province of West

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

Africa, which met in Lagos University Campus in 1975. The Provincial Synod also passed the motion that Warri and Asaba Dioceses were created in 1977. As time progressed, Rt. Rev. Agori-Iwe retired in 1977, creating room for election of three Bishops for Benin, Warri and Asaba Dioceses. With the retirement of Agori-Iwe, the Venerable J.W.I. Idahosa was elected and consecrated Bishop of Benin Diocese on the 6th August, 1977 while Venerable R.C.N. Nwosu, an Ibo man was elected and consecrated for Asaba Diocese and Very Rev. T.I. Akintayo, a Yoruba man, Provost of Ibadan Diocese was elected and consecrated for Warri Diocese. The election and consecration of T.I. Akintayo for Warri Diocese became a subject of crisis in Warri Diocese as the people of Warri out-rightly rejected Akintayo on the ground that they could not understand why a Benin man was elected for the Binis, an Ibo man for Asaba Diocese which was predominantly an Ibo speaking Diocese while a Yoruba man was elected for a people who were predominantly Urhobo and Isoko speaking peoples. They reasoned that their Bishop would be a stranger among his flocks.

4.4 Election of Bishops for Benin, Warri and Asaba Dioceses

Immediately after the creation of Warri and Asaba Dioceses, Agori-Iwe set up machinery to assist him ascertain the wishes of the people in Warri and Asaba regarding the choices of a Bishop for each of the three Dioceses. This was to guide him later in presenting his nominees to the Episcopal Synod that was to meet in March 1977 to elect Bishops. At the meeting in which Warri and Asaba Dioceses were created, the Provincial Synod decided that two men would be elected and consecrated Bishops for Warri and Asaba respectively in June 1977. This event was to be followed by the inauguration of the Dioceses and enthronement of the Bishops⁴⁶, but a Bishop was not to be elected for Benin same time with Warri and Asaba in June 1977, not until December when Agori-Iwe would retire and Benin Diocese would be canonically vacant. But before March 1977, when the House of Bishops of the Province was to meet for the appointment

⁴⁶ Erivwo S.U. *Warri Diocese Crisis*. Ilorin. Unilorin Press 1984. p. 29

of Bishops, Benin people had gone to Sierra Leone and to Ibadan to demand that their new Bishop be given to them at the same time with Warri and Asaba, so that their new Bishop may not be junior to the Bishops of Warri and Asaba Dioceses.

The Episcopal Synod which met in Ibadan at the Institute of Church and Society from 1st to 4th March, 1977 deliberated on the election of Bishops for the new Dioceses. Before the subject was tabled, one of the Bishops raised an objection. He argued that Bishops could not be elected for Warri, Asaba and Benin without contravening the constitution of the Province which stipulated that a See has to be canonically vacant before a Bishop can be elected and appointed for it⁴⁷.

At this juncture, there was a stalemate. The consequence meant that Bishop Agori-Iwe at this stage had to retire immediately in order to make Benin Diocese canonically vacant or the entire process of electing Bishops for the three Dioceses had to be put on hold till after December 1977 when Agori-Iwe would have retired.

Agori-Iwe was a principled man dedicated to the service of his Master, Jesus Christ; a man who was a champion of the growth of the vineyard of his creator. Aware of the aspirations and expectations of the people of the three Dioceses that made up Benin Diocese, he preferred to retire immediately than to frustrate the desires and aspirations of those he had served as bishop since 1961; after all, he has only nine months to the end of his episcopate.

He therefore wrote to the Archbishop of the Province informing him of his intention to retire from the 20th March, 1977. The wording of the letter which was circulated to all the clergymen in Benin Diocese is quite revealing and speaks volume:

⁴⁷ *Ibid*

Anglican Diocese of Benin
Bishopscourt
Bp: Rt. Rev. Agori-Iwe
C.F.R. M.B.E. J.P.

The Most rev. M.N.C.O. Scott C.B.E. J.P.
Archbishop

P.O. Box 82,
Benin City,
2nd March, 1977.

Your Grace Sir,

My Leave and Retirement

I refer to yesterday's discussion and state here that I will retire on March 20th so that Benin Diocese can be vacant as from that date.

Benin Diocese is prepared to meet my benefits.

Yours Sincerely,

(Signed):
Agori-Iwe
Bishop of Benin⁴⁸

⁴⁸ *Ibid*

It is quite clear from the letter that Agori-Iwe was forced to retire at the time he did to make Benin Diocese canonically vacant. It should also be noted that the Episcopal Synod found itself in a situation which necessitated Agori-Iwe's retirement simply because it had decided to grant the wish and aspiration of the people of Benin that their new Bishop be elected same time with the Bishops of Warri and Asaba. It is equally clear that Agori-Iwe decided to retire in order to avoid a crisis situation. Equally, he did not want to strain the relationship and confidence he had established with the people of Benin and the entire people of the Diocese over the years. Equally important and obvious was the desire to yield to the wishes and aspirations of his people. He had no sit-tight agenda.

Having put in a letter of retirement, the time was therefore ripe for the Episcopal Synod to elect Bishops for Benin, Warri and Asaba Dioceses.

As stated earlier, when the Provincial Synod of the Province of West Africa approved the creation of Warri and Asaba Dioceses, Bishop Agori-Iwe set up machinery which would help him to determine the real wishes of the people. One of such methods was the Archbishop Advisory Committee, a body set up as laid down by the constitution of the Province to advice the House of Bishops on the qualities and characters the people wanted their Bishops to possess. This body was headed by Justice M.A. Aghoghovbia, the Chancellor of the Diocese. Outlining the qualities and characteristics of those who would be Bishops, the committee stated thus:

First, that he must be an indigene (the reason for the insistence on an indigene is obvious. A majority of the Churches in the Diocese are in the hinterland areas and packed full by people who are largely illiterates. For example, out of the 240 Churches in the Diocese, 237 Churches use vernacular in the services. What is more, the area is not lacking in material and men who are capable in giving effective leadership to these Churches). Secondly, that he should be a man of sound learning, preferably a graduate. Thirdly, that he should be a man of prayer and

living faith; and fourthly, that he should be of administrative competence⁴⁹.

As stated earlier, there are set down rules and regulations on the elections of Bishops in the Anglican Communion. Where the procedure and rules are followed through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, conflict and crisis would be avoided.

Usually, the Diocese for which a bishop is to be elected must be canonically vacant. Secondly, there has to be an advisory committee headed by the Chancellor of the Diocese which indicates the qualities and character they want the Bishop to possess. Similarly, the retiring Bishop usually puts machinery in motion to determine the real wishes of the people to which the Bishop is to be given. To forestall a crisis situation, the nominee of the Bishop of the Diocese from which new Diocese is carved is invariably taken seriously. When all these precautions are adhered to, a crisis situation would always be minimized.

Bishop Agori-Iwe having indicated his intention to retire, the coast was then clear for the Episcopal Synod to elect Bishops for Benin, Warri and Asaba Dioceses. While meeting at the Institute of Church Society, Ibadan from 1st to 4th March 1977, the Episcopal Synod presided over by the Most Rev. Moses N.C.O. Scott, Archbishop of West Africa, elected Ven. J.W.I. Idahosa for Benin Diocese, Venerable Roland N.C. Nwosu for Asaba, while Very Rev. T.I. Akintayo was elected for Warri Diocese.

At this College of Bishops' meeting, Bishop Agori-Iwe presented his nominees for each of the three Dioceses of Benin, Warri and Asaba in accordance with the wishes of the people in the areas which he had ascertained. All the nominees which Agori-Iwe presented to the Episcopal Synod were turned down by the Bishops of the Province of West Africa⁵⁰. That this happened seems to suggest that some of the Bishops present at that meeting must have had their own candidates whom they wished and determined to put forward and get elected. Unfortunately, the criteria followed to elect Bishops for Benin and Asaba were not the ones used

⁴⁹ *Ibid* p. 32

⁵⁰ Eriwo S.U. (ed) *Warri Diocese Crisis*. Ilorin. Unilorin Press

for Warri Diocese.

In the case of Benin, the people insisted that their Bishop must be a Bini, that is, from the Benin Kingdom, not from Ora or Ishan which are related ethnic groups that are also within the Diocese⁵¹. The person finally elected and consecrated for the Diocese met the wishes and aspirations of the people of the Diocese.

Similarly, the Bishop elected for Asaba though not from Asaba, but from the Niger Diocese in Anambra State, was an Ibo speaking clergyman. This was in accordance with the choice of the Asaba people, who in the event of not having their own sons, who were properly qualified for the post, opted for a candidate from across the Niger because Asaba Diocese and Niger Diocese are both Ibo speaking areas.

Both in Benin and Asaba, the question of communication which was one of the primary concerns of the people would be solved. Again, the desires and aspirations of the two Dioceses were met by the election of their own sons who understand and speak their languages.

But when it came to Warri Diocese, where over 99% of the population was made up of Urhobo and Isoko who speak two languages closely related to each other and understand each other, the Bishop-elect was a Yoruba. The two other languages spoken by a few indigenes of the Diocese are Ijaw and Itsekiri⁵².

It was possible that Bishop Akintayo had not been to the area before. Not only did he not know the area, he did not speak Urhobo or Isoko, the two main languages spoken in the Diocese. He could also not speak Ijaw and Itsekiri languages, two ethnic groups that constitute 1% of the population of the Diocese. The protesting people of Warri therefore reasoned and affirmed in both words and action that Akintayo was being sent to an area where he was therefore not going to make any meaningful impact on the people he was elected to oversee. This reason and conclusion was completely misplaced. If the white missionaries like Rev. Henry Proctor,

⁵¹ *Ibid* p. 32

⁵² *Ibid*. p. 33

J. Wilson, P.J. Williams, Bishop H. Tugwell, Bishop Hills⁵³ among others could work successfully in West Africa and most especially in the Niger Delta, there is no reason why an African and a Nigerian cannot work successfully in the Warri Diocese. Given his experience and clerical latitude, one is forced to affirm that if given the opportunity, Akintayo would have proven his worth to the admiration of all, even his detractors.

Having found themselves in this situation, the people of Warri, though did not doubt the constitutionality or otherwise of the election of Akintayo for them, were grieved beyond measure that the Bishops of the Province of West Africa should disregard their known and expressed wishes, aspirations and desires which were communicated to them through the appropriate channels, and went ahead to elect a Bishop who would not be in a position to exercise a meaningful leadership role in the indigenization of the Church in the Diocese and life of the people he was elected and consecrated to lead.

The people of Warri were particularly grieved because the point about an indigenous Bishop for Warri Diocese was emphasized in the report of the Archbishop Advisory Committee sent to the House of Bishops. The people knew that they had the men and materials, and besides, the demand was in line with the practice in the Anglican Diocese in Nigeria where all the Ibo Bishops were in the Ibo speaking area, and the Yoruba were in the Yoruba speaking areas.

Instead of doing for Warri people what the House of Bishops did for Benin and Asaba, a practice which they had always done for the Dioceses, they elected for Warri a Yoruba man, T.I. Akintayo, the Provost of the Diocese of Ibadan, whose Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. T.O. Olufosoye, was the secretary to the Episcopal Synod. It was difficult to doubt the fact that the choice of Akintayo for Warri Diocese must have been strongly influenced by this connection. To compound the already charged situation, the announcement of the election of the Bishop for Warri and Asaba was made by Rt. Rev. T.O. Olufosoye on 29th March, 1977 (27 days after the election) at the Diocesan Synod of the Diocese of Ibadan. The names of the Very Rev. T.I.

⁵³Ayandele E.A. *Holy Johnson. Pioneer of African Nationalism 1836 – 1917*. Frank Cass & Co. Ltd. 1970. p. 259.

Akintayo and one other as Bishops elect for Warri and Asaba Dioceses respectively were announced to the gathering. This announcement was carried by the National Broadcasting Corporation (N.B.C.) and in *The Sketch*, the old Western State Government Newspaper on 30th March, 1977⁵⁴.

As soon as the news about the election and announcement of a Yoruba Bishop passed from mouth to mouth in Warri Diocese, the people met, discussed and sent their letter of protest against the election to the Archbishop, the Most Rev. M.N.C.O. Scott on 18th April, 1977 in which they stated very clearly that they would not accept a non-indigene as their Bishop when they had very many of their own men who by all standards were competent and capable to lead them.

4.5 Reactions and Counter Reactions to the Elections

As would be expected, there were reactions and counter reactions to the announcements of Bishops for Benin, Warri and Asaba Dioceses. As for Asaba Diocese, there was no objection of any kind⁵⁵.

As for Benin, the man the Bishops elected was threatened by the Bini, and had to decline⁵⁶. There must have been some underground pressure and current, may be from the Benin people who were determined to have their choice candidate installed as Bishop. Consequently, a fresh election for Benin had to be arranged⁵⁷.

The moment announcement of the result of the Bishop for Benin was made, protest letters reached the Archbishop at Sierra Leone. One of the letters dated 17th June, 1977 headed "Ecclesiastical" and signed by thirty persons raised a point of objection. From the content of the letter, it was obvious that the details of the election result had got into the hands of some persons

⁵⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁵ *Ibid*. p. 82

⁵⁶ *Ibid* p. 31

⁵⁷ *Ibid* p. 80

who were not members of the Episcopal Synod⁵⁸.

The protest letter gave details of the result of the election thus: The Ven. S.O. Akinluyi scored 7 votes and the J.W.I. Idahosa scored 7 votes. There was no casting vote made then at the meeting on that day before it closed: and if there was any casting vote later, then the whole system is questionable, irregular and should be declared null and void⁵⁹.

There was also a Telegram Message sent to the Archbishop in Sierra Leone protesting against the Bishop elect for Benin Diocese. It reads:

Archbishop Scott Bishops court Box 128 Freetown,
In spite of protests, Reverend Idahosa still announced as Bishop-elect twelfth June stop Youth Fellowship Leader threatened with death by Idahosa's people nineteenth June stop Idahosa determined to be Bishop by any evil means his Ogboni supporters committed sin of Simony election maneuvers questionable on capable priests like Uwoghiren left out stop. Stop Idahosa's appointment otherwise divisions press war open conflict may follow. Non Ogboni members of Anglican⁶⁰.

As the time went on, tempers soon cooled down in Benin and Ven. J.W.I. Idahosa was accepted and consecrated alongside others on Saturday 6th August, 1977 and enthroned the following day.

However, as soon as the story of the announcement of the Bishop of Warri passed from mouth to mouth, the people met and sent their first letter of protest by post to the Archbishop of Sierra Leone in which they stated very clearly that neither the man chosen for them nor any other non-indigene would be acceptable to the people of Warri at that point in the history of the Church in the area where they have their own sons who were by all standards competent and qualified to lead them in the Church. They were satisfied that though they have no valid canonical objection against the election of Akintayo as the Bishop of Warri Diocese, they nonetheless have a veritable cause of objection because the Diocese in which Akintayo would

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 82

⁵⁹ *Ibid*

⁶⁰ *Ibid*

preside was made up of over 99% of the Churches located in the rural areas who used vernacular as language of worship. They equally argued that, if they lacked in men and material, they could concede the possibility of importing a Bishop from elsewhere to lead them. But they stressed that the Bishops of the Episcopal Synod knew very well that this was not the case. The people smelt foul play in the process and procedure of the election.

When members of Warri Diocese learnt that all the Bishops of the Province were attending a seminar at Umuahia, a delegation left Warri for Umuahia to meet the Archbishop personally, but was told on arrival that the Archbishop did not attend the seminar⁶¹.

Consequently, a protest letter dated 18th April, 1977 was dispatched to the Archbishop in Sierra Leone. The letter reads:

Isoko/Urhobo Archdeaconries,
(Proposed Warri Diocese),
c/o Chief J.O. Agadaigho,
P.O. Box 52,
Warri.
18th April, 1977.

His Grace,
The Most reverend M.N.C.O. Scott,
Archbishop of West Africa,
Bishopscourt,
P.O. Box 128,
Freetown,
Sierra Leone.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 35

Your Grace,

Bishop-Elect for Warri Diocese

We the undersigned, full communicants of the Anglican Communion, on behalf of ourselves and the entire Archdeaconries (Isoko and Urhobo) comprising the proposed Warri Diocese, bring Your Grace our ill-feelings in connection with the appointment of the Bishop-elect and to request for a quick reversal of the said appointment.

We were surprised to hear from a Radio announcement made sometime towards the end of March, 1977 and to read from page 3 of the *Daily Sketch* of the 30th March, 1977 that one Very Rev. T.I. Akintayo has been appointed the Bishop-elect of Warri Diocese. How this appointment came to pass beats our imagination.

It may interest you to note that some years ago, the present Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries were part of the old Yoruba mission and because the Yoruba regarded the area as a doomed place, they deserted us to our fate. We however, by the grace of God, survived through our own efforts and later joined the Niger Mission. The area was later created as the Warri Archdeaconry of the Diocese of the Niger. When the Benin Diocese was created in 1961, the Warri Archdeaconry became part of the Benin Diocese. The Warri Archdeaconry was split into the Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries in the Benin Diocese. In the forward growth of the two Archdeaconries, it had always been the policy of the authorities to vigorously encourage the indigenization of the Church. This spirit of indigenization had also been the practice of the Church of the Province of West Africa.

In material and human resources, these Archdeaconries have been self-supporting and sustaining. They endeavoured to train and produce Priests, Catechists, and other Church workers who could stand their ground in any circumstance. At the moment, both Archdeaconries have produced about 50 priests. Among these are very experienced Archdeacons, Canons and graduate priests, some of whom were trained overseas. Among them are people with the highest

degree of moral integrity, probity and transparent honesty. It is precisely because of these available local human and material resources that we requested for our own Diocese.

Although by provision of Article IV of Chapter IV of the Constitution of the Province, a Bishop for any Diocese, whether a Diocesan or an assistant Bishop, may be elected or chosen from the bishops or Clergymen of any Diocese in Communion with the Province, yet the trend in the Province had been to choose the Bishop of any Diocese from among the local and or indigenous Priests. For example, all the Ibo Dioceses in the Province were manned by Ibo Bishops, the Niger Delta Diocese by a man from the Rivers State, the Dioceses in Yoruba land were manned by Yoruba Bishops and the former Benin Diocese was manned by a Bishop from the area.

It is also even now a convention or unwritten law of the Province that the views of the local people are taken into very serious consideration in making the final choice of a Bishop. It is precisely because of this that the Bishop of Benin Diocese, Rt. Rev. Agori-Iwe set up the Bishop's Advisory Committee for the selection of the person to be appointed Bishop of Warri Diocese. In the case of the appointment of the Bishops for Warri, Asaba and Benin Dioceses, Your Grace set up the "Archbishop's Advisory Committee" for the selection of the Bishops for Warri, Asaba and Benin Dioceses. This was in consonance with Article IV of Chapter IV of the Constitution. These two committees emphatically and unequivocally recommended that the person to be appointed Bishop of Warri Diocese must be an indigene of the Diocese.

It came to us as a rude shock that in the appointment of the Bishop of the Warri Diocese, no local material was considered suitable enough for the office and the views of the local people, the Bishop's and the Archbishop's selection committees were never taken into consideration. There is no doubt that an indigenous candidate was presented before the Episcopal Synod for approval. If for any reason that candidate was not suitable, one would have expected that you would have been spiritually guided to select one candidate from the over 50 priests available in the new Diocese.

As this was not done, it is obvious that Your Grace was deliberately misled in making this choice, which caused a great dissatisfaction in the Diocese. It is the considered view of the Archdeaconries that the appointment is an imposition which we shall, under no circumstance, accept.

We unequivocally urge Your Grace to take immediate steps to revoke the appointment of the Very Reverend T.I. Akintayo as the Bishop-elect for Warri Diocese. The appointment was very unpopular.

We hereunder submit the names of three possible indigenous candidates for the office of Bishop and humbly but seriously pray Your Grace to appoint the Bishop of the Diocese from among them:

1. Rev. Dr. S.U. Erivwo B.A., Ph.D.
Ibadan Polytechnic, Ibadan.
2. Rev. V.O. Muoghereh BD, Dip. TH. Dip. ED.
Okotie – Eboh College, Sapele
3. Rev. Canon A.W. Bovi B.A. Dip. ED.
Nana College, Warri.

As our Ecclesiastical and impartial father, we hope you will be guided by the Holy Spirit in deliberating over the issue and allow the wishes of the people of the Archdeaconries which comprise Warri Diocese to prevail since the voice of the people is the voice of God.

We are,

Your Children in Christ

Chief J.O. Agadaigho

Member

Provincial Synod Diocesan Synod &
Archbishop's Advisory Committee

S.O. Egube B.Sc. M.A.

Secretary

Bishop's Advisory Committee

Chief I. Ikime BL

Synod Member

Chief J.O. Igrude LLB.

Synod Member

Dr. J.O. Akpojara Ph.D

Synod Member

Chief J. Cousin Mosheshe B.Sc.

Synod Member

Chief J.O. Onokan

Synod Member

Mr. S.U. Otovo

Synod Member”⁶²

From all indications and from the tune of the letter, the Church was in for a protracted crisis. The people of Warri felt cheated and relegated to the background.

However, they took further steps whether the Church authorities would see reasons to rectify the ugly situation. After dispatching their protest letter to the Archbishop, they sent a delegation to meet with the Archbishop at Onitsha on the 30th April, 1977 at the burial of Sir Louis Mbanfo. When they met the Archbishop, Chief J.O. Agadaigho, leader of the delegation put a penetrative question to the Archbishop:

“Your Grace,

So are we like Sodom and Gomorrah, indeed worse than Sodom and Gomorrah? No single righteous person could be found in Warri Diocese competent enough to be Bishop of the people? In the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, five righteous were needed; in our own case, only one is being looked for”⁶³.

The delegation made the analysis of how Christianity had been in the area for over a century and opined that if the House of Bishops had been critical enough and without sentiments

⁶² *Ibid.* pp. 49-52

⁶³ *Ibid* p. 36

and bias, they would have seen one “righteous” man to be appointed Bishop for the people. Why this was not the case was pregnant with a lot of interpretations.

The Archbishop was touched by the plea of the people and promised to look into their matter and try to meet their demands.

He promised to stop and did stop at Benin and discussed the matter with the Archdeacons of Urhobo and Asaba Archdeaconries, the Vicar-General of Benin Diocese and the Chancellor. In the course of the discussion, the Archbishop was informed that tempers were very high beyond melting point in Warri Diocese over the election of a non-indigene as Bishop. Consequently, a committee was put in place to ascertain the degree of dissatisfaction, and to report back to the Archbishop. The delegation was headed by the Registrar of the Province, Justice A. Morgan as Chairman while the Archdeacon of Asaba Archdeaconry Ven. A.O. Ifeadi was Secretary and was scheduled to meet with the aggrieved people of Warri on 4th June, 1977.

For a thorough understanding of the magnitude of the crisis confronting the Church, it is worthwhile to produce the minutes of the meeting of the Archbishop’s delegation with the representatives of the people of Warri Diocese verbatim:

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ARCHBISHOP’S DELEGATION WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PROPOSED WARRI DIOCESE HELD IN ST. ANDREW’S CHURCH, WARRI ON 4TH JUNE, 1977 AT 9 A.M.

1. Opening: the meeting was declared open with prayers said by the Rt. Rev. B.C. Nwankiti, Bishop of Owerri Diocese.

2. Present at the meeting were:

Members of the Archbishop’s delegation

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Justice Adeyinka Morgan | (Chairman) P.O. Box 702, Ibadan. |
| 2. Justice M.A. Aghoghovbia | 18 Esiri Street, Warri. |
| 3. Justice I.O. Aluyi | High Court, Warri. |
| 4. Rev. Canon Dr. N.O. Azinge | Specialist Hospital, Benin City. |

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 5. Ven. E. Arawore | St. Andrew's Vicarage, Warri. |
| 6. Ven. P.W.D. Egwede | St. Luke's Parsonage, P.O. Box 3, Oleh |
| 7. Ven. A.O. Ifeadi | All Saints Parsonage, P.O. box 69,
Asaba (Secretary) |

Also in attendance was the Vicar-General, the Venerable S.O. Akinluyi – P.O. Box 82, Benin City.

Representatives of the proposed Warri Diocese were:

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|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Prince J.O. Cousin Mosheshe | St. Peter's Igbudu – Warri |
| 2. Chief I. Ikime | St. Luke's Church, Oleh – Oleh District |
| 3. Chief Udi Shakarko | St. James' Church, St. James' District,
Benin City. |
| 4. P.A. Oghenekaro | St. Barnabas Church, Ughievwe District |
| 5. G.I. Agbaila | St. James' Church, St. James' District,
Benin City |
| 6. A.G. Athora | St. Paul's Church, Urumede. |
| 7. J.D. Efue | St. Luke's Anglican Church, Oleh District |
| 8. J.C. Okujeni | St. Michael's Anglican Church, Emevor
District |
| 9. B. Efetobor | St. Andrew's Church, Warri |
| 10. Moses Alarese | St. Andrew's Church, Warri |
| 11. S.U. Atovo | St. Mary's Anglican Church, Bethel District |
| 12. J.U. Ekodi | St. Mary's Anglican Church, Bethel District |
| 13. Chief J.A. Oyede | St. Peter's Anglican Church, Okpe-Isoko |
| 14. D.O. Ekpekuro | St. Paul's Anglican Church, Ekuigbo,
Ughelli District |
| 15. Chief & Mrs. E.O. Ebbah | St. Matthias' Eku, Agbon District |

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|-----|---------------------|---|
| 16. | D.D.O. Edjere | St. Andrew's Church, Warri, Warri District |
| 17. | G.M. Esegbu | St. Andrew's Church, Warri, Warri District |
| 18. | G.M. Esegbu | St. Andrew's Church, Warri, Warri District |
| 19. | E.G. Amsaketa | St. Andrew's Church, Warri, Warri District |
| 20. | S.J. Ikpen | Anglican Bishopscourt, Benin City. |
| 21. | Chief I.A. Ikpen | St. Peter's Church, Jeremi District. |
| 22. | R.A. Esiri | St. Luke's Church, Sapele District. |
| 23. | Mrs. H.E. Vese | St. Paul's Anglican Church, Ozoro District. |
| 24. | Chief I.O. Efekomo | St. Andrew's Church, Warri, Warri District. |
| 25. | J.M. Eruteta | St. Andrew's Church, Warri, Warri District. |
| 26. | Chief Porbeni | St. Andrew's Church, Warri, Warri District. |
| 27. | Ifieboh Adjayi | St. Andrew's Church, Warri, Warri District. |
| 28. | G.O. Tebite | St. Andrew's Church, Warri, Warri District. |
| 29. | J.O.I. Idogun | St. Andrew's Anglican Church,
Agbarha-Otor |
| 30. | E. Idise | St. Andrew's Anglican Church,
Agbarha-Otor |
| 31. | D.O. Abraka | St. Andrew's Church, Warri, Warri District. |
| 32. | Chief N.O. Okpobiri | Isoko Church, Sapele. |
| 33. | B.O. Ideh | Warri Anglican Church District. |
| 34. | T.E. Ilepuvi | Warri Anglican Church District. |
| 35. | Mrs. K.E. Agadaigho | Warri Anglican Church District. |
| 36. | Mrs. E. Akpoyowane | Warri Anglican Church District. |
| 37. | Mr. S.O. Imivie | Warri Anglican Church District. |
| 38. | Mrs. P.R. Knox | Warri Anglican Church District. |
| 39. | Madam Anne Wiliky | Warri Anglican Church District. |

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|-----|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 40. | Mrs. Agnes A. Akweyevu | Ughelli Anglican Church District. |
| 41. | J.O. Igrude | St. Andrew's Anglican Church District |
| 42. | Chief J.O. Agadaigho | St. Andrew's Church, Warri. |
| 43. | Mrs. Rewani | St. Andrew's Church, Warri. |
| 44. | Chief S.T. Aminu | St. Andrew's Church, Warri. |
| 45. | Dr. J. Akpojaro | St. Andrew's Church, Warri. |

3. The Ven. S.O. Akinluyi, the Vicar-General for Benin Diocese introduced the members of the Archbishop's delegation to the representatives of Warri Diocese.
4. Justice Adeyinka Morgan, having taken the chair, said that since the last meeting of the Episcopal Synod, so many things had happened. First, he said, we regret the loss by death of an illustrious son of this Province in the person of Late Sir. Louis Mbanefo. He then asked all to stand for two minutes' silence in honour of our late brother, committing him to the care of the Lord.

The Chairman went further to explain that at the last Provincial Synod, a mandate was given for the creation of Asaba and Warri Dioceses. Consequent to this, he went on, the Mother Diocese-Benin Diocese became vacant with the retirement of the Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Agori-Iwe. According to the constitution of the Province, three Bishops were appointed for Benin Diocese and the two proposed Dioceses. And following the appointment, a protest letter together with delegation was sent to the Archbishop from Warri Diocese against the appointment of the Bishop for Warri. The Archbishop therefore appointed this delegation to come and "reason with you to avoid any action which may embarrass the Province.

5. The Rt. Rev. B.C. Nwankiti rose and greeted the members. He said that Justice Morgan as the Registrar of the Province of West Africa, had been duly appointed to Chairman the delegation. He explained that he, the Bishop, was not a member of the delegation. He was only asked to be around for consultation if necessary.

“My Christian friends”, he addressed the members, “Justice Morgan had made a striking point that Warri Diocese is only proposed. Warri Diocese is not yet inaugurated a Diocese. As of now, there is only one Diocese, and that is Benin Diocese. He therefore appealed to the members to allow their hearts to be filled with the spirit of God. For Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God”. After this address, the Bishop withdrew from the meeting.

6. Chief J.O. Agadaigho wanted to know the composition of the delegation now that the Bishop had made it clear that he, the Bishop, was not a member of the delegation. The Chairman replying to this question said that in a letter written by the Archbishop to all delegates, the names of the two Bishops were included. The Archbishop stated that the Vicar-General should be in attendance and that we should appoint a Chairman from among us. But this does involve some legal implications, hence he informed me to Chairman the delegation. According to the constitution, he further explained, the House of Bishops elects Bishops by secret ballot and not by the laity. He stressed that the petition did not challenge and the validity of the procedure adopted in electing Bishops. The delegation has to hear from the representatives of the proposed Warri Diocese and report back to the Bishops. The Bishops cannot take part in this kind of delegation, he said. Justice Aghoghovbia also associated himself with the view expressed by the Chairman.
7. Dr. J. Akpojaro, the chief spokesman for Warri Diocese expressed his hearty welcome to the delegation. He said they were immensely very happy with the caliber of men in the delegation. Equally, he said the representatives of Warri Diocese are not irresponsible bunch of men. He said they are Christians and Communicants of the Church for that matter. They would present their case in a very succinct, clear way.

He referred to the Churchman’s Pamphlet quoted by the Chairman, with particular emphasis on the word “Convention” used by the Chairman. He said all they could understand

from what the Chairman said was that what was done by the Bishops was regular, unless something can be done to the contrary.

In the Churchman's pamphlet quoted above, it must be noted that Samuel Crowther came from Western Equatorial Africa. We said when it became necessary to appoint a Bishop – only Europeans were available, but they found it necessary to fish for Samuel Crowther, and they consecrated him. The area grew and waxed strong. The people started to learn from the missionaries. He said if we follow the history of the development of the Church from the date, the men of the regions had not enough men. There were scattered Dioceses – manned by expatriate Bishops, Archdeacons and Pastors. But the number of our expatriates started to diminish when the regions started to wax strong and local materials were produced.

The political situation covered by the Western Equatorial Africa was also developing. We have The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana (Gold Coast) and Nigeria. He declared that, one by one they secured their independence. But the Church, continued to be under the Church of the Province of Canterbury, he said. Gradually, the Province of West Africa was created. Following the trend of development as at present, we have our own man as the Archbishop of the Province of West Africa. The Province of Nigeria is now being proposed. Very soon, it will be created. We are not going to any other country to fetch the Archbishop, but to Nigeria, he said.

He pointed out that throughout the Federation of Nigeria, the country is now being properly and competently handled by the men of the region. Political expatriates were paid off and our own men became ambassadors etc.

Coming nearer home, he said, Asaba and Warri were carved out from Niger Diocese. Benin was carved out from Ondo Diocese. And these two sections were merged to form Benin Diocese. Following the trend of development, an indigenous Bishop was appointed for them.

Dr. J.O. Akpojaro continuing, cited the present trend of the appointment of Bishops in Nigeria. He said in the Western Diocese, all the Bishops are Yoruba. In the Eastern Dioceses, all the Bishops are indigenes of the area. “Why could not a Yoruba or Ibo man be appointed for the Niger Delta Diocese?”, he said.

He pleaded to erase an erroneous view that they are prejudiced. He said they are merely following the course of events in the course of political or religious revolution, not that Yoruba or Ibo should not be appointed Bishop in Warri. What they are after, he said, was that in the time past, they had not the men; but now they have the men and materials. This being the position, he concluded, it is their humble prayer that a Bishop be appointed for them from Ijaw, Isoko, Itsekiri and Urhobo, that are within the proposed Diocese of Warri. As contained in the preliminary speeches that the Bishops have taken their decision and that Warri Diocese had not been inaugurated, we on our side, he said, had taken our own decision and to abide by it, before ever we sent our delegation to the Archbishop.

8. Rev. Canon Dr. N.O. Azinge, one of the members of the delegation said that the speeches from both sides were anticipated. “Blessed are the peacemakers”, he quoted. He stressed that this matter is a matter of give and take. He humbly appealed for wisdom and loyalty. He pointed out that from the delegation side, it was good to correct the impression that the Dioceses of Warri and Asaba had not been inaugurated. The Dioceses have been approved with or without Bishops, he emphasized. On the side of the representatives of Warri Diocese, you said your decision is irreversible and irrevocable. We must strike a balance, he said.

Now at this stage, three facts are clear and with wisdom and loyalty, a solution may be found

1. We want an indigenous Bishop.
2. An indigene of the choice of the people be appointed.
3. Now that the Bishops had been appointed, how can the issue be handled without putting the Church into ridicule?

9. At this juncture, the chairman invited more speakers.
10. Mrs. E. Rewane revealed to the delegates that there are many ethnic groups in the New Diocese. She said that only two ethnic groups met and wrote this petition. Continuing, she said that all other ethnic groups heartily welcome the new Bishop. As she concluded her statements, there arose much hooting and row.
11. Challenging the last speaker, Mr. J.O. Igrude said that the composition of the New Diocese is not made up of this Warri Township Church alone. The Diocese is made up of two Archdeaonries, Urhobo Archdeaconry with 8 Districts and Isoko Archdeaconry with 12 Districts. The Districts are listed below as follows:

Isoko Archdeaconry

1. Oleh District
2. Owodokpokpo District
3. Aviara District
4. Ozoro District
5. Bethel District
6. Owhe District
7. Ase District
8. Okpe Isoko District
9. Umuolu District
10. Ikpidiama District
11. Patani District
12. Emevor District

Urhobo Archdeaconry

1. Warri District
2. Ughelli District
3. Orogun District
4. Uwherun District
5. Agbon District
6. Jeremi District
7. Sapele District
8. Sapele Christ Church District

Continuing, Mr. J.O. Igrude said that, it is only in Warri District that there may arise some dissentient voice, and that it is the very few Itsekiri members in St. Andrew's Township Church to which the last speaker belonged. All other 19 Districts are Isokos, Urhobos and Ijaws.

He further explained that even in the Warri District, there are other satellite Churches attached to St. Andrew's Township Church to make up the district. These other Churches, he said are Isokos and Urhobos. Also in St. Andrew's Township Church, the Itsekiri ethnic group is in a minority. Concluding, he emphasized that the 19 Districts including 99% of Warri District want an indigenous Bishop for the new Diocese. He tendered a statistical report of the registered members in St. Andrew's Township Church as follows:

St. Andrew's Church, Warri

Statistics of Registered Members 1976

<u>Sections</u>		<u>Communicant</u>	<u>Confirmation</u>	
<u>Catechumen</u>		<u>Total</u>		
	<u>Members</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Members</u>	
Urhobo	368	172	69	609
Isoko	198	133	19	350
Ibo	166	75	9	250
Itsekiri	47	10	-	57
Yoruba	28	15	-	43
English	101	25	2	127

Total No. of Communicants 908, Confirmation 430, Catechumen 99

St. Andrew's Church, Warri

Statistic of Registered Members 1977

<u>Sections</u>		<u>Communicant</u>	<u>Confirmation</u>	
<u>Catechumen</u>		<u>Total</u>		
	<u>Members</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Members</u>	
Urhobo	308	88	18	414
Isoko	163	54	7	224
Ibo	95	98	1	194

Itsekiri	43	5	3	51
Yoruba	11	3	-	14
English	78	15	11	104
	698	263	40	

12. Mr. J.E. Okujeni and Chief Udi Shakarho associated themselves with the demand for an indigenous Bishop to be appointed. Chief Udi Shakarho in expressing his utter dissatisfaction at the appointment of a Yoruba Bishop for Warri Diocese, traced the origin of Christianity in that area. He claimed to be one hundred and one years old. He said that they were originally attached to Yoruba Mission, but events that transpired were sad to remember. The Yoruba Mission provided them with no Catechists, and no Pastors. They did not even make efforts to train any local material, and no development whatsoever. They were completely neglected. These sad circumstances forced them to apply to Lagos to be transferred to the Niger Diocese.

When they were attached to Niger Diocese, Catechists, Pastors and School Teachers were provided for them. Most of the Church and school buildings in that area were either built or initiated by workers from Niger Diocese. The Niger Diocese helped to train their indigenous Catechists, School Teachers and Pastors. He emphasized that it is heart rending to hear that after developing the said area for long neglected and shunned by Yorubas, a Yoruba man should be appointed a Bishop for that area.

13. Mrs. H.E. Vese suggested that, if a Yoruba Bishop is to be accepted, Yoruba Bishops will also be appointed for Asaba and Benin Dioceses.

14. Chief J.O. Mosheshe thanked all the delegates for their onerous task of trying to find a solution to the great problem facing the Province. He noted that the key note in the speeches is how to bring peace to this part of the Province. No. 3 of Dr. N.O. Azinge's speech was what can be done to the Bishop already appointed? To this end, he, Chief J.O. Mosheshe suggested two ways:

1. That the Bishop-elect should wait till the Province of Nigeria takes off, and when a Nigerian is appointed Archbishop, he should fill the vacancy.
 2. That a Diocese be created for him in Yoruba area of Churches.
15. The Chairman in his closing remark said that the delegation had heard every word from the representatives and thus promised to communicate same to the Archbishop. But he appealed to them to please cooperate with the Episcopal Synod in whatever decision they take in order that the Church will continue to grow from strength to strength.

Dr. J. Akpojaro also thanked the Chairman and the entire members of the delegation for patience and readiness to hear their complaints.

At this stage, the Rt. Rev. B.C. Nwankiti was invited in, he then said the closing prayers”⁶⁴.

As soon as the meeting was concluded, the Vicar-General of old Benin Diocese, Ven. S.O. Akinluyi sent a cablegram to the Archbishop intimating him that the people of Warri Diocese maintained that their decision on the rejection of Akintayo as their Bishop was irreversible and irrevocable. The minutes of the meeting was later forwarded to the Archbishop in Freetown⁶⁵.

At this stage, one should have thought that the pendulum was swinging towards resolving the looming crisis. But this was not to be because it was after all these methods and processes had been exhaustively explored that notice of election of Akintayo as Bishop of Warri, dated 12th June, 1977 was sent, in which objections, if any were being asked for. The notice reads:

THE CHURCH OF THE PROVINCE OF WEST AFRICA

Notice of Election

Whereas The Very Rev. Titus Ilori Akintayo Provost St. James’ Cathedral, Ibadan in the Diocese of Ibadan and Province of West Africa has been duly elected Bishop of the Diocese of Warri, if

⁶⁴. *Ibid.* pp. 54-63

⁶⁵. *Ibid.* p. 37

anyone can show cause or just impediment why the said THE VERY REV. TITUS ILORI AKINTAYO should not be consecrated to the Holy Office or translated to this See or can offer any canonical objection to the election or form there, let him signify the same to me in writing, fourteen days from this date Dated this 12th day of June in the year of our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy Seven.

(Signed) _____
Archbishop
Archbishop's Office
Bishopscourt,
P.O. Box 128,
Freetown,
Sierra Leone”⁶⁶.

Having sent a lot of protests individually and collectively to the Archbishop of West Africa, which were equally followed by many delegations to the Archbishop and many of the Bishops and many Church dignitaries without expected solution in sight, the protest, objection and reactions of the people of Warri Diocese went beyond mere rhetoric and empty threat. They were obviously pushed to a brick wall, and so were forced to take the only route to escape this obvious oppressive treatment being meted out to them in the household of God.

In a well attended meeting of the representatives of both Urhobo and Isoko Archdeaconries comprising the Warri Diocese on the 24th July 1977, the people took a resolution to secede from the Province of the Church of West Africa. The resolution to have a break from the Province of West Africa reads:

Now be it resolved and it is hereby resolved by the two Archdeaconries of

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 64

Isoko and Urhobo making up the Diocese of Warri, at a meeting this 24th day of July, 1977 that the said Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries do secede and hereby completely secede from the Church of the Province of West Africa but still remain with the Anglican Communion and Faith. Henceforth, the Archbishop and the Bishops of the Church of the Province of West Africa, their representatives and/or agents shall have no jurisdiction over this Church of Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries. All Church properties of the Church of the Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries which were procured by the sweat, labour and contributions of the people automatically vest on the people who own them. Any person or group of persons who attempt to interfere with or make an unauthorized use of the properties of the Church of the two Archdeaconries shall be deemed trespassers and dealt with as such. The Advisory Committee of the Church of the two Archdeaconries is authorized to run the affairs of the Church until further notice. Moved by Chief Isaac Ikime, supported by Rev. D.W. Eferakeya and was unanimously accepted by all⁶⁷.

The secession letter was hereafter written and a delegation led by Chief J.O. Agadaigho was detailed to proceed to Sierra Leone to personally hand over the document to the Archbishop.

In the secession letter, efforts were not spared of the determination of the people to carry out their threat. When their desired aspiration was not met, they pulled out of the Communion and went further to put in place Advisory Committee and saddled it with the responsibility of running the affairs of the New Diocese. They did not mince words in stating that their action was a direct consequence of the appointment of a Bishop-elect against their wishes and that they had insisted on the election of an indigene of the Diocese as their new Bishop to keep abreast with the convention, practice and trend of things in the Church. They therefore wondered why the Archbishop Scott failed to consider the representation and objection of the people he regarded as his flock and therefore went on to issue instruction for the consecration of the Very Rev. T.I.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 4

Akintayo as Bishop for Warri Diocese.

One often wonders why the Church authorities travelled on this line of action while in the real sense, Church hierarchy considered indigenes of the various Dioceses in Nigeria fit and capable for appointment as Bishops in their various areas, but when it was the turn of the people of Warri to enjoy the same privilege and opportunity, they were fragrantly denied. This appeared to be a double standard in the administration of the Church and at the same time, an attempt to force a bitter pill down the throat of unwilling People of Warri Diocese after they had made several attempts and conveyed their feelings to the Archbishop Scott whom they said promised to heed their feelings in order to bring the lingering crisis to an end. It also beats one's imagination why the Archbishop and the entire House of Bishops should allow the crisis to degenerate to the level of bringing what seemed to be internal matter of the Province of West Africa to the attention of the entire Anglican Communion. It equally beats one's imagination to note that having been advised by the Archbishop of Canterbury to heed the desire of the People of Warri, Archbishop Scott was still adamant to appointing a Bishop of the People's choice. From the very beginning, the Archbishop and the Province should have read the handwriting on the wall and therefore be cautious of their action.

Whatever might be the case, the protesting people of Warri were not prepared to accept a non-indigene as their Bishop. Therefore, they bared the Archbishop, Bishops of the Church of the Province of West Africa, their agents or representatives from having anything to do with the Churches in both Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries. They threatened to deal ruthlessly with any person or group of persons who attempted to interfere with any aspect of the Church life and activities.

To further worsen an already bad situation, the people of Warri threatened to choose their own Bishop and consecrate him for their "go-it-alone" Diocese. An ultimatum was given to Archbishop Scott requesting him for the consecration of an indigenous Bishop for Warri Diocese

before the inauguration of the Province of Nigeria, slated for February 24, 1979⁶⁸.

The church is the body of Christ! Jesus Christ is meek and gentle. Matthew 11:28⁶⁹. For the children of God to have degraded themselves to the level of threat and counter threat does not speak well of an organization whose main purpose is to proclaim Christ to the world.

Following the expiration of the ultimatum given to Archbishop Scott, and having exhausted all possible avenues, mechanism, and efforts without success, the People approached the retired Bishop of Benin Diocese, the Rt. Rev. Agori-Iwe who consecrated and enthroned the Rev. Canon J.O. Dafiewhare as Bishop of Warri Diocese on 3rd March, 1979 at St. Andrew's Church, Okere Road, Warri. This action though went against the laid down principles and practices of the election and consecration of a Bishop in the Anglican Communion, which required that a mandate must be issued for the consecration of a Bishop in the Province of West Africa⁷⁰, the people went on damning any possible consequence that would follow. They did not also mind the fact that they were going against the ethos of the Communion which requires that election, consecration and enthronement of a Bishop must be constitutional and that the consecration of a Bishop must be by at least three Bishops participating in a consecration service of a Bishop⁷¹.

Whatever might be the rationale behind the refusal of Archbishop Scott and his Bishops to yield to all the entreaties from both internal and external perimeters of both the Church and Civil Society left much to be desired. The people of Warri too rose up to the task and so the crisis continued, with both sides mapping out new strategies to ward off the missiles of the opposing party.

The reaction and anger of the people of Warri were not visited on the Archbishop and the Bishops of the Church of the Province of West Africa only, but also on some of the members of

⁶⁸ *Minutes of Meeting* 1st August 1977

⁶⁹ The Holy Bible

⁷⁰ Norman Doe. *Canon Law in the Anglican Communion*. p. 109

⁷¹ *Ibid*

the Clergy in Warri Diocese who they termed to be recalcitrant tested a bitter pill of the people's anger. The ministers, led by Rev. Canon M.M. Okerri, thought about their canonical oath and supported the position of the Church of the Province of West Africa, thereby incurring the wrath of their people. They were asked to vacate their vicarages with immediate effect in order to escape unpleasant consequences that would result. The Divisional Police Officer at Oleh in Isoko as well as the Police Posts at Ozoro and Iluelogbo, all in Isoko were notified in case these Clergymen proved and put up any form of resistance.

Counter Reactions

As the tempo of the protest and resistance against the election of Akintayo for Warri Diocese assumed a no-return dimension, the Church authorities, though very inconsistent in her approach to the peoples' request and demands, were mapping out strategies and tactics to ward off the peoples' aggressive protests.

The first of such counter moves was a delegation led by Justice Adeyinka Morgan. While addressing the people of Warri Diocese on the protest against the election of Akintayo, the Chairman explained: At the last Provincial Synod, a mandate was given for the creation of Asaba and Warri Dioceses. Subsequent to this, the mother Diocese – Benin became vacant with the retirement of the Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Agori-Iwe. According to the constitution of the Province, three Bishops were appointed for Benin Diocese and the two proposed Dioceses. And following the appointment, a protest letter together with delegation was sent to the Archbishop from Warri Diocese against the appointment of the Bishop for Warri. The Archbishop therefore appointed this delegation to come and reason with you to avoid any action which may embarrass the Province⁷². While trying to justify the action of the House of Bishops, Adeyinka stated that according to the constitution of the Province, it is the House of Bishops that elects Bishops by secret ballot and not by the laity. He stressed that the petition did not challenge the validity of the

⁷² *Ibid.* p. 56

Province of the procedure adopted in electing the Bishops⁷³.

Since the Bishops had taken their decision not to heed and listen to the aspiration and desire of the people, the people too had resolved not to accept any Bishop outside their own ethnic jurisdiction.

When the Archbishop's delegation could not make any meaningful impact and head-way on the people to reconsider their opposition to the election of Akintayo, the Archbishop led a delegation of six other Bishops, which yielded no fruits. And further delegation of four other Bishops and the Lay Secretary of the Province, Chief Ade Akomolafe⁷⁴ met with the people but met with the same adamant resistance.

At this juncture, the matter was therefore referred to the Standing Committee of the Provincial Synod for discussion.

Consequently, the Standing Committee rolled out her drum of war to deal with the issue in order to bring the rebellion to submission. The Committee ruled that the Bishop of Benin should take immediate and urgent steps to incorporate the Diocese of Warri as part of Benin Diocese. That the Province should arrange for a Counsel to advise and pursue the case to its logical conclusion, unless Warri withdraws the suit instituted in the Court of Law, and that the fear of Warri intending to proclaim a change-over from the normal Anglican status quo had nothing to bother the Province of West Africa⁷⁵.

With this resolution, the stage was therefore set for a protracted conflict, because from all indications, both parties were quite set for a show of strength, since none of the parties was prepared to shift ground.

Having taken the decision to pursue the litigation to its logical conclusion, the Province decided to engage a competent Counsel outside Bendel state to represent the Province. The

⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 57

⁷⁴ *The West African Churchman's Calendar.* 1977 p. 5

⁷⁵ *op cit* pp. 22-23

Dean, Rt. Rev. B.C. Nwakiti, Bishop of Owerri Diocese and Rt. Rev. F.O. Segun, Bishop of Lagos Diocese were saddled with the responsibility of sourcing for the required Legal Icon to handle this legal battle.

While this scenario was playing out, the Archbishop Scott sent out letters intimating all the Bishops of the programme of consecration of Akintayo, Idahosa and Nwosu for Warri, Benin and Asaba Dioceses respectively. It was this step by the Archbishop that propelled the Warri People to drag the Archbishop and his agents to court. As planned, the consecration of Akintayo, Idahosa and Nwosu took place on Saturday August 6th 1977, but the enthronement planned for Tuesday August 8th could not hold because of the Court Injunction as well as the fear to avoid physical confrontation. From security reports, it was revealed that should the Archbishop and his Bishops brush aside and dare to enter St. Andrew's Church, Warri to enthrone Akintayo as Bishop, they were sure to be attacked by irate and infuriated people of Warri who were prepared to bear the consequences of their action.

The Church having failed to force the people of Warri to accept Akintayo as their Bishop, went further to employ and enlists the service and cooperation of the Military government of the day to force Akintayo on the people. The letter of invitation and information enlisting the cooperation of the government into the crisis situation speaks volume. It reads:

IBADAN ANGLICAN DIOCESE

Bishopscourt,
12 Arigidi St. Bodija Estate
P.O. Box 3075, Mapo,
Ibadan, Nigeria.
West Africa.

The Bishop,
The Rt. Rev. T.O. Olufosoye O.O.N., J.P., S.Th., D.D.
24th July, 1977.

His Excellency,
The Military Governor,
Bendel State,
Benin City,
Nigeria.
Your Excellency,

I am writing as the Secretary of the Episcopal Synod of the Anglican Church of the Province of West Africa. The Province covers the Independent States and the Republics of the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, the Republic of Guinea, Senegal, Cape Verde Islands and the seventeen Dioceses of Nigeria. Our Archbishop, the Most Rev. M.N.C.O. Scott D.D. is based in Sierra Leone. I, as Secretary am the Bishop of Ibadan. There are 23 Dioceses in all, seventeen of which are in Nigeria alone.

Owing to reorganization and growth, Benin Diocese has been divided into three Dioceses namely: Benin, Asaba and Warri. Three Bishops had been duly elected for these Dioceses. Only recently, we received a protest from some people around Warri, that they would not have a non-native as their Bishop. The protesters, it was understood, were mainly from two clans out of six, while the remaining four clans support the action of the Church of the Province. The Itsekiris and the remaining four tribes that form the congregation had written to express their joy and satisfaction at the election.

I am directed by the Church of the Province of West Africa to send Your Excellency a copy of our constitution and to call your kind attention to Chapter IV pages 10-15 which sets out the procedure for the Election and Appointment of Bishops in the Church of the Province of West Africa.

We have gone through the procedure prayerfully and carefully. Each Diocese has a Chancellor that is a Legal Adviser. Our Provincial Legal Adviser was until recently late Sir Louis Mbanefo and our Registrar is the Hon. Mr. Justice Adeyinka Morgan.

I am further directed to communicate to you our future programme as follows:

Thursday	-	August	4	Archbishop arrives Benin; also Bishops outside Nigeria who are attending the Consecration Service.
Friday	-	August	5	Rehearsal of Consecration and Enthronement Services.
Saturday	-	August	6	The Consecration Service at St. Matthew's Cathedral, Benin.
Sunday	-	August	7	Enthronement Service Benin.
Monday	-	August	8	To Warri.
Tuesday	-	August	9	Enthronement: Warri – Move to Asaba in the P.M.
Wednesday	-	August	10	Enthronement: Asaba
Thursday	-	August	11	Move to Benin – Episcopal Synod begins 4p.m. Standing Committee Members arrive Benin.
Friday	-	August	12	and Standing Committee
Saturday	-	August	13	
Sunday	-	August	14	Thanksgiving Service with the ceremony of accepting the Episcopal Diocese of Liberia.

The Archbishop and all the Bishops in West Africa; the Legal Advisers of all the Dioceses and distinguished ladies and gentlemen from all over West Africa will be in your domain from 3rd August, to 15th August, 1977 as stated above.

The Archbishop had kindly asked me to invite your Excellency to please attend the Service of Consecration of the three Bishops of Asaba, Benin and Warri in St. Matthew's Anglican Cathedral on Saturday 6th August, 1977 at 10:00a.m.; and any or all the Enthronement Services if convenient for Your Excellency.

With prayerful good wishes to your Excellency.

Yours Faithfully,

Rt. Reverend T.O. Olufosoye⁷⁶.

As would be expected, the protesting people of Warri also took their case to the government of the day, furnishing her with all the details and reasons why they objected to the election of a non-indigene as their Bishop. A copy of their letter to the government reads:

Isoko/Urhobo Archdeaconries
Diocese of Warri,
c/o Chief J.O. Agadaigho,
P.O. Box 396
Warri.

1st August, 1977.
His Excellency,
The Military Governor,
Bendel State,
Benin City.

Your Excellency,

Our attention has been drawn to the letter of the Rt. Rev. T.O. Olufosoye, the Bishop of Ibadan Diocese dated 24th July, 1977 and addressed to you in connection with the

⁷⁶ *Ibid* pp. 69-71

appointment of the Bishop of the Diocese of Warri. In the letter, His Lordship the Bishop of Ibadan Diocese completely misled you when he stated that he understood that the protesters were mainly from two clans out of six, while the remaining four clans support the action of the Church of the Province. It may interest you to note that there are two Archdeaconries which make up the Diocese of Warri. There are at least 32 clans, namely: Oleh, Owhe, Emevor, Iyede, Olomoro, Ozoro, Ellu, Okpe (Isoko), Irri, Aviara, Oyede, Emede, Igbide, Erohwa-Umeh, Anibeze, Uzere, Okpe (Urhobo), Agbon, Abraka, Jesse, Oghara, Uvwie, Udu, Ughievwen, Oghelle (Ughelli), Ewu, Uwheru, Okparabe. Arawharien, Olomu and Ewreni in the two Archdeaconries which make up the Diocese. These fully endorse the appointment of an indigene Bishop for them. These clans which are completely inhabited by the Urhobo and Isoko tribes have over 99 percent of the Christians or members of the Church of the Diocese of Warri.

Turning to the issue of the Itsekiri tribe mentioned in the letter, it is interesting to note that of the 19 Church Districts which make up the new Diocese of Warri, the Itsekiris are found in only one of the Districts, namely Warri District. Apart from St. Andrew's Church, Warri, where the Itsekiris are found, they are not found in any other Churches in Warri District, namely: St. Peter's Church, Igbudu, Christ Church Effurun, St. Jude's Church, Jeddo, the Churches in Ekpan, Ughoton, Mereje, Egborode, Okwidiemo etc. Even in St. Andrew's Church, Warri, the Itsekiris have only about 50 members out of a total registration of over 3,500 members.

It should be clearly stated that the Diocese is not run on ethnic or tribal basis but on District basis. Whether on tribal or District basis, the Itsekiris constitute a most negligible minority in the Diocese.

It is futile for the Lord Bishop to say that they have followed the constitution of the Church in making the appointment in question. The Church is guided by its constitution, precedence and practices. The convention that the Bishop should be an indigene of the

Diocese has been followed from time to time. Of the 23 Dioceses in the Province, the Bishops are indigenes of their respective Dioceses. For instance, Ibadan Diocese (Yorubaman), Kwara – predominantly Yoruba speaking (Yorubaman), Ilesha (Yorubaman), Egba-Egbado (Yorubaman), Ijebu-Ode (Yorubaman), Lagos (Yorubaman), Ondo (Yorubaman), Ekiti (Yorubaman), Niger Diocese (Iboman), Enugu (Iboman), Owerri (Iboman), Aba (Iboman), Niger Delta Diocese (Rivers-State, a Riversman), Benin Diocese (Bishop-elect, Edoman), Asaba (Bishop-elect, Iboman). In view of the above figures, we are praying the Archbishop to whom we have addressed several petitions, to do to us what he thought fit to do to the other Dioceses by appointing for us an indigene of the Diocese of Warri.

Moreover, the Advisory Committee of the Diocese (from which the Diocese of Warri is to be excised) which is an organ of the Church which is recognized by the Constitution was called upon by the Archbishop to prescribe the qualification required of the person to be appointed the Bishop of the Diocese of Warri. The Advisory Committee recommended that an indigene should be appointed as Bishop of the Diocese. There is no evidence that this recommendation was rejected.

Right Rev. Olufosoye knows very well that he imposed his subordinate, The Very Rev. T.I. Akintayo, a man who has been working under him in Ibadan on the Episcopal Synod as a choice for the Diocese of Warri. Right Rev. Olufosoye should do to others what he expects others to do to him. He should be democratic enough to listen to the voice of the people and not impose an unwanted man on them.

It is an irony that a man of God is calling on the Temporal Power to intervene in simple ecclesiastical disputes and wants to support the use of force in ordaining a Bishop. God forbid this.

Your regime is a corrective one. It was sent to fight imposition and oppression. We do not want oppression and imposition. That being the case, Your Excellency is called

upon to advise Right Rev. Olufosoye to cancel the consecration and enthronement of The Very Rev. Akintayo as the Bishop of the Diocese of Warri.

Yours Faithfully

CHIEF J.O. AGADAIGHO
Chairman Advisory Committee

CHIEF I. IKIME
Synod Delegate

MR. J.M. ERERO
*Member of Diocesan
Planning Committee⁷⁷*

At the end of the day, the government did not show up at the Consecration Service neither did it reply to any of the correspondences. The handwriting on the wall must have been very clear to the government, and so it never wanted to be drawn into what was purely a simple ecclesiastical dispute.

As events were unfolding in quick succession, the Province of Nigeria was carved out from the Province of West Africa on February 24th, 1979, and Rt. Rev. Timothy Olufosoye, the Secretary of the House of Bishops who was accused of masterminding the election of Akintayo

⁷⁷ *Ibid* pp. 72-75

as Bishop of Warri, was elected as the Archbishop of the Church of Nigeria. At this point in time, it was therefore obvious that the people of Warri were not going to have their way.

Most Rev. Timothy Olufosoye, while responding to the development in Warri in his new capacity as the Archbishop of the Province of the Church of Nigeria, threatened to bring the recalcitrant people of Warri to their knees and submission. Speaking with a correspondent of *The Nigerian Tribune*, Ibadan on the Consecration of Dafiewhare by the Rt. Rev. Agori-Iwe as Bishop of Warri Diocese in deviance of what the people perceived as injustice, deprivation and unfair treatment, the Rt. Rev. Timothy Olufosoye said, that “It was wrong for anyone to consecrate a Bishop on a non-existent Diocese; that it was equally wrong for a retired Bishop to consecrate a Bishop. Even when he is active, he has no right to do it; that the choice of the Bishop and the mandate for the consecration was not issued by the Province of Nigeria and West Africa according to its constitution; that the consecration was not according to the constitution of the Anglican Province of Nigeria, and therefore, he would not see how the newly consecrated Bishop and those who accepted him could continue to be members of the Anglican Church and Communion; and that even if the consecration were constitutional, on other points, the consecration of a Bishop by one other Bishop, instead of a minimum of three, makes such consecration irregular and questionable; and that it was the deliberate tradition of the Church from the early times and of the Anglican Church everywhere; that for several good reasons, there shall always be at least three Bishops participating in a consecration. He emphasized that a consecration by one Bishop was not acceptable and that for such to be accepted, there should be extreme circumstances for which approval must be sought from the Primates of the whole Anglican Communion. In this case, however, there were no extreme circumstances, and he therefore concluded that Bishop Agori-Iwe had acted against the order of Anglicanism⁷⁸.

Olufosoye’s position and the resolve of the people of Warri ran at opposite directions, none of the parties was prepared to compromise its position. The people saw very clearly that the

⁷⁸ *Ibid* pp. 72-75

possibility and hope of getting a Bishop of their choice were very slim, because Olufosoye the man they suspected to be the prime motivator of Akintayo's imposition on them as their Bishop, had now become the Archbishop and Primate of the newly inaugurated Church of the Province of Nigeria. However, they resolved to take their destiny in their own hands and believed that with God all things are possible.

4.6 Ethnicity in Warri Diocese

Warri Diocese is inhabited by many ethnic groups. Each ethnic group occupies a distinct and continuous territory, and most of the time are divided into various clans, towns and villages, with their own clan, town and village heads who pilot the religious, social, economic and political affairs of their respective domains.

Warri Diocese is therefore dominated by Urhobo, Isoko, Itsekiri and Ijaw heterogeneous ethnic nationalities. There are other heterogeneous ethnic groups that inhabit Warri Diocese as a result of occupational migration. These are Yoruba, Ibo, Edo and Hausa, who are in the minority. Each of these ethnic groups played great roles in determining the course of the crisis in Warri Diocese.

4.6.1 The Urhobo People

The Urhobo speak the Urhobo language and are the ethnic nationality that is made up of twenty-two sub-cultures of varying sizes. The Urhobo people are the fifth largest tribe in Nigeria⁷⁹. In anthropological terms, the word clan had been wrongly used by earlier writers to describe Urhobo sub-cultural units. In the real sense of the word, these entities can be adequately referred to as Kingdoms or socio-political units, or just by their names, for example, Abraka, Agbarha, Agbarha-Warri, Agbarho, Agbon, Arhavwarien, Ephron-Otor, Ewreni, Ewhu, Idjerhe, Oghara, Ogor, Okere, Okparabe, Okpe, Olomu, Orogun, Udu, Ughelli, Ughievwen, Uvwie and

⁷⁹ Onigu Otite. *The Urhobo People*. p. 15

Uwheru Kingdoms.

Each of these socio-political entities or Kingdoms has their own political machineries of administering their respective domains and consists of persons who claim to be descendants of a founding ancestor to those who, though claiming descent or kinship from various sources, have lived together for so long that they consider themselves one peculiar people, as distinguished from others outside the Urhobo nationality.

Geographically, Urhobo is surrounded by five ethnic groups in the forest zone of the coastal and inland sections of the Niger Delta. On the Northwest lies the Benin who, linguistically, politically, socially and culturally are related to the Urhobo ethnic milieu. To the North are the Ukwanis who share a great deal of cultural and political beliefs with the Urhobo People. On the Northeast lies the Isokos, whose history, culture, tradition, political and linguistic characteristics are closely linked and related to the Urhobo people. To the South are the Ijaws who inhabit the coastal areas of the Niger Delta and with whom the Urhobo have trading and cultural relationship for millennia. Finally, to the West are the Itsekiris who also live in the coastal swamps of the Niger Delta with whom the Urhobo people have shared trading and cultural affinities for many centuries.

It is difficult to understand the nature of Church politics the new Archbishop of Nigeria, Olufofsoye intended to play in the entire episode. There appeared to be a lot of inconsistencies in the whole affair. In the first place, the Archbishop had treated with utmost contempt the recommendation of three separate high-powered committees set up by himself in connection with the selection of a Bishop for Warri. If in the first instance the Archbishop had accepted the recommendation of the committee appointed by himself to advise on the selection of a Bishop for the people of Warri, this ugly crisis would never have arisen at all. Secondly, if he had favourably considered the report of Justice Morgan meditation committee he set up in May 1977, this controversy would not have gone to court. Thirdly, the Archbishop's apparent and uncertain reaction to Justice Aluyi's reconciliation committee's report resulted in Warri people's reaction

of taking their case to the Archbishop of Canterbury. The contemptible attitude of Archbishop Scott to the recommendations of the various committees set up by him at different times for the resolution of the *impasse* could make the people to lose confidence in the leadership of the Church.

Similarly, Olufosoye's description of Warri as a non-existent Diocese in his reaction to the consecration of Dafiewhare by Agori-Iwe, seemed to have aggravated the temper of the people of Warri Diocese. Olufosoye, while making this assertion was aware that during the 1978 Lambeth, the Archbishop Scott brought Akintayo to the Lambeth Conference supposedly to represent Warri Diocese, which, according to Olufosoye, did not yet exist. It is difficult to ascertain what was happening behind the scene which generated what appeared to be inconsistencies on the part of the church authorities in the management of the crisis.

Olufosoye's position might be premised on the letters of the constitution and the Canon Law which states: "A Bishop for any Diocese in this Province, whether a Diocesan or an assistant Bishop, may be elected or chosen from the Bishops or clergy of any Diocese of the Province, or of any other Diocese in communion with the Province"⁸⁰. It also states: "Every Diocesan Bishop of the Church of the Province shall be elected by the Episcopal Synod in accordance with the regulations of the Provincial Synod. Every election and appointment of a Bishop within the Province must receive the final confirmation of the Archbishop of the Province before it can take effect"⁸¹.

To Olufosoye, all the above conditions were absent in the purported election and consecration of Dafiewhare. The question begging for answer is: Does the constitution apply to the people of Warri? Or is it for the entire Province of West Africa? Is the constitution made for man or man for the constitution?

⁸⁰ Norman Doe. *The Canon Law of the Anglican Communion*. p. 109

⁸¹ *Constitution of Province of West Africa*. Ibadan. Ajanlekoko Press. 1970. pp. 10-11

Traditions of Origin of the Urhobo People

There are four main traditions of origins of the Urhobo People of the Niger Delta region.

- i. The Autochthony Tradition:** Traditions among the Urhobo are replete with assertions of original dwellers and owners of their territory. These autochthonous people were believed to be Urhobo, with no known history of migration from anywhere else. They were the aborigines coming from nowhere but living in their territories from time immemorial. This tradition is without any documentary or archaeological evidence, yet it recurs among Urhobo respondents and it may not be brushed aside easily⁸².
- ii. Emigration from an Original Edo Territory:** Urhobo emigrants from their Edo territory consist of two categories: the masses – ordinary people, and the ruling *élite*⁸³. An overwhelming number of Urhobo People claim that they came from Benin. Most of them emphasize that they are not Bini People. The implication is that they were Urhobo People before they left Benin for Urhobo territory. This tradition is found in most of the recorded works about the Urhobo People.
- iii. Ife Connection:** Traditions of Ife Origin are also remembered and recounted by the Urhobo People. However, there is nowhere in Ife traditions of origin whence the Urhobo is mentioned or connected. But these traditions of Ife origin are strongly held, because there are spots pointed to by the Urhobo in Ile-Ife as being the abode from where Urhobo migrated. Admittedly, there are large numbers of Urhobo in and around Ile-Ife, but these are organized more like immigrants than as autochthons.
- iv. Traditions of Origin from Sudan and Egypt:** This tradition of origin links the Urhobo People as having originated from Sudan and Egypt. Though this version of the origin of Urhobo People looks strange, Arawore has stated that Urhobo traditions of origin from the Sudan and Egypt were confirmed by travelers and respondents, among whom a former

⁸² Onigu Otite ed. *The Urhobo People*. Ibadan. Chanson Press. 2002. P. 25

⁸³ *Ibid*

Education Officer in Warri Province, Mr. K.B. Forge, who noticed similarities in the archaeological finds and place names in Egypt and such parts of Urhoboland as Okpara and Ukwokori in Agbon. Arawore then opines that: 'The Urhobo for the first time came from Egypt, left some of their people on the shore of Lake Chad, halted for a while at Ile-Ife, had a permanent abode at Benin, and finally were driven to the swamp of the Niger Delta'⁸⁴.

Whatever might be the true position of things as regards the traditions of origin of the Urhobo, it is quite obvious that the Urhobo People migrated to their present abode at one time or the other in the past in pre-historic time. In the absence of archaeological prehistoric evidence, however, the four traditions of origin of Urhobo People as can be seen above, contain some credible structure. The structure of Urhobo ideas and language as well as their culture and institutional forms suggest historical links between them, their neighbours, particularly the Edo-speaking peoples and other socio-linguistic groups in some yet undefined areas in the Sudan and Egypt. Indeed, the history of the traditions of origin of the Urhobo People points to some place far beyond the Edo or Ile-Ife territories. They actually point to somewhere on the route to Sudan and Egypt. The tentative and limited nature of this assertion must await the confirmatory and corrective future findings by the combined efforts and energy of pre-historians, anthropologists, sociologists and archaeologists.

4.6.2 The Isoko People

The Isoko People are to be found in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria and speak the Isoko language. There are seventeen clans in Isokoland. They are Oleh, Ohwe, Emevor, Iyede, Olomoro, Ozoro, Ellu, Okpe (Isoko), Irri, Aviara, Oyede, Emede, Igbide, Erohwa-Umeh, Anibeze, Uzere and Enhwe.

⁸⁴ Arawore: *History of Christianity in Urhoboland*

Geographically, the Isoko are to be found in the upper Niger Delta area, surrounded to the South by the Ijaw People while on both the North and east are the Aboh People who share a great deal of culture and political beliefs with the Isoko. On the West lies the Urhobo who are closely linked with the Isoko People politically and linguistically.

The Isoko clans of Iyede, Emevor, Owhe, Emede, Aviara, Uzere, Okpe and Ozoro claim a Benin origin. The reasons given for the migrations are the usual ones⁸⁵ of hostility of an Oba in Benin who was a tyrant, and the subjects decided to flee from the wrath of the King to settle in a more conducive environment.

The Isoko clans of Enhwe, Igbide and Umeh are said to be of Igbo origin, the founders having come from the Igbo territory. Erohwa clan, usually regarded by the other Isoko clans as the most senior, inhabits two little villages of Erohwa and Anibeze. Some traditions of origin claim that Erohwa did not originate from anywhere, while some claim that the ancestors were from Ife. There is nothing in the culture, language and tradition of the Erohwa People that have any semblance of the Yoruba cultural value. Rather, the language seems to have some iota of the Edo ingredients. The very name Erohwa would seem to have been derived from an Edo expression of '*Ai ro wa*'⁸⁶ which means "he is not at home", and may portray that the founding fathers of Erohwa felt unsafe in Benin and had to leave their abode in Benin to found their present habitation in Erohwa in Isoko territory.

Whatever might be the true position of things, the Isoko people might have migrated to their present location some centuries ago and speak the Isoko language.

4.6.3 The Itsekiri People

The Itsekiri people inhabit the creeks of the Niger Delta and speak the Itsekiri language which is akin to the Yoruba language, indicating that the Yoruba element in the formative years

⁸⁵ Obaro Ikime (ed) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan. Heinemann Books. 1980. p. 93.

⁸⁶ *Ibid* p. 94

of the Itsekiri Kingdom might have been very high and considerable.

They inhabit the North-Western extremity of the Niger Delta in an area bounded approximately by latitude $5^{\circ} 20'$ and $6^{\circ}N$ and longitudes $5^{\circ} 5'$ and $5^{\circ} 40'$ East. Their neighbours are the Bini to the North, the Ijaw to the South, the Urhobo to the East and the Yoruba of Ondo to the North-west⁸⁷. Most of the area lies within the Mangrove Swamps of the Niger Delta territory.

The Itsekiri traditions of origin tend to say that they migrated from Benin during the reign of Oba Olua about 1473. This tradition states that Olua's heir apparent and Prince, Iginuwa became so unpopular in Benin Kingdom as a consequence of the bad and wicked advice he gave to his father, as a result of which the people revolted that they would not have him to ascend the throne.

When the Oba, Olua got wind of this displeasure and misgiving, he then arranged to send his son to found a separate Kingdom for himself. It was this episode that generated the movement of Iginuwa from Benin, which culminated in the founding of the Itsekiri Kingdom. The title of Olu which the Itsekiri use for their ruler is in fact derived from the name Olua, Iginuwa's father⁸⁸.

4.6.4 The Ijaw People

Another group of people that inhabit the Niger Delta is the Ijaw People, the fourth largest ethnic nationality in Nigeria. They are neighbours to the Itsekiri in the Mangrove belt of the Western Delta and have various traditions of origin. For instance, the Beni, Tarakiri, Kabowei, Kumbowei and the Mein clans have traditions which link them with Benin, though not necessarily as a place of immediate origin. The Tarakiri whose father, Tarakiriowei was from Ondo who lived in Benin, was forced to move away on account of the Oba's hostility. He was

⁸⁷ Obaro Ikime *Merchant Prince of the Niger Delta*. Ibadan. Heinemann Books. 1968. p. 1

⁸⁸ *op cit.* p. 90

said to have settled at some place near the site of Aboh for some time before he migrated to settle at Sagbama, from where he finally moved to settle in its present location of Tarakiri.

The Mien claim Benin as the place of their ultimate origin. The Bini tradition of origin seems to be very interesting as it is the only one which mentions Ijo as the name of a person. According to this tradition, Ijo, the eponymous ancestor, left Benin during one of Benin's many wars and settled somewhere near Aboh area⁸⁹. It stated that Ijo had a son Orumo at Aboh and when Ijo died, Orumo was forced out in consequence of the hostility of the Aboh People and Orumo moved to Torobeni where Orumo gave birth to Iyakiri. Iyakiri later founded a settlement and called it Ibeni on an inaccessible creek, the Kunu Creek. The new settlement was named after Beni, Iyakiri's wife and it is the name that clan has adopted.

The other clans of Operemo, Gbaramatu, Seimbiri and Oporoza trace their origins to the Eastern and Central Delta, to some Ijo group already settled in those areas.

4.6.5 Other Ethnic Minorities

Other ethnic minorities that inhabit the Niger Delta are heterogeneous in nature. They are the Yoruba, Ibo, Edo, Ishan, and even the Hausas. These people who are Christians and work in Warri area, played significant roles in determining the course of the crisis that emerged as a result of the rejection of Bishop Akintayo.

4.7 Social, Political and Religious Perspectives of the Crisis

This crisis ignited as a result of election of a non-indigene as a leader of the Church in Warri Diocese, no doubt had social, political and religious dimensions.

Socially, the crisis created barriers between the Christian families in Warri Diocese. While members of the Church in Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries were very resolute on the rejection of Akintayo as their Bishop, the few Itsekiri and Yoruba elements within the Diocese

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p. 92

thought otherwise. This state of affairs ignited tribal sentiments within the Church. This made many of the Yoruba and Itsekiri members to withdraw their membership of the Anglican Church in Warri Diocese. They reasoned that the Church was no longer one as taught, preached and portrayed by the leaders.

The crisis equally exposed the Church as an organization that was incapable of resolving her own internal misunderstanding. Having failed to resolve the matter in a Christian manner, the disagreement was driven to a civil court. Things were really happening at a very fast speed because some elements among the people of Warri, who referred to themselves as loyalists, misled the authorities of the Church by informing them that only very few uninformed persons from small and parochial tribe were opposed to the choice of Akintayo as Bishop of Warri Diocese. But when it virtually dawned on the Church authorities that the opposition was very strong and it was too late to rescind the election, a decision was taken to go on with the consecration and enthronement of Akintayo as the Bishop of Warri Diocese. In order to forestall any outbreak of violence and to force Akintayo on the People of Warri by all means, the Rt. Rev. T.O. Olufosoye, the then Bishop of Ibadan Diocese who was then the Secretary to the Episcopal Synod of the Province of West Africa used his position and wrote a letter to the military government of the then Bendel State informing the governor, Brig. Samuel Ogbemudia of the planned consecration and inauguration of the Diocese of Warri in the state.

From all indication, the Church was soliciting government assistance, support and protection for the service of enthronement and consecration. When the protesting people of Warri got to know about this, they made their representation to the government and also instituted series of court actions against the inauguration of the Diocese and enthronement of Akintayo as their Bishop. The Church was greatly embarrassed by these court actions and the way the press was publishing the crisis. The Church was further embarrassed when, on the 5th August 1977, a Warri High Court restrained the Province of West Africa from inaugurating the

Diocese of Warri and the enthronement of Right Rev. T.A. Akintayo as the Bishop. The Church became a laughing stock by both local and international observers.

Apart from social stigma and imbalance which the crisis created among the People of God, there were as well political camps here and there. While the Province looked up to the Provincial Archbishop, the Most Rev. M.N.C.O. Scott as the leader of the Church, the People of Warri who thought that they were shortchanged in the whole episode looked up to Chief J.O. Agadaigho as their leader. Even among the Archbishop's party, there were those who felt that the People of Warri were not given equal treatment which was in consonance with what was obtained in other Dioceses of the Province where the practice of indigenization was adopted in the selection of Bishops. Equally overlooked in the case of Warri was the recommendation of a committee set up by the Archbishop himself to advise him on the choice of Bishop the people would want. The choice of the retiring Bishop of Benin, the Rt. Rev. Agori-Iwe, which was set aside by the House of Bishops as against what used to be the principle and convention, spoke volumes. The people of Warri, having exploited all avenues to no avail, knew that there was a political undertone to foist Akintayo on them. They saw very clearly politics of oppression in the whole arrangement and therefore vowed to resist the imposition with the 'weapons' at their disposal⁹⁰.

Religious Undertone

There is no disputing the fact that religious factors played a major role in the entire crisis. It is pertinent to note that religion means different things to different people. There is no consensus of opinion on its meaning, but all major religions of the world share almost the same attributes as defined by the *Lexicon Webster Dictionary*:

Religion is recognition on the part of man, of a controlling super human power entitled to obedience, reference and worship; the feeling or the spiritual attitude of

⁹⁰Minutes of Meeting of 1st August 1979

those recognizing such a controlling power with manifestation of such feeling in conduct, or life, the practice of sacred rites, or observances, or a particular system of faith in, and worship of a Supreme Being⁹¹.

Similarly, religion is seen as a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, persuasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of functionality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. Religion is also seen as the consciousness of one's dependence on the transcendent Being and the tendency to worship Him⁹².

Viewed from the above definitions, the protesting people of Warri saw the conflict as a ploy to undermine their obedience to God whom they believed they own their total allegiance and whom they recognize and worship as a Supreme Being. For them, the crisis was a religious conflict which to them must be fought with all the religious weapons at their disposal.

Similarly, they saw the conflict as an infringement on their right to religious freedom which to them was their inalienable right to reach the supersensible as well as have the freedom to have an input in the choice of a leader to lead them. To them, an imposition of a Bishop on them is tantamount to a garrison kind of organization which runs contrary to the tenets of Christianity.

Similarly, the people know that Christianity demands that you do to others what you expect others to do for you. Thus the entire conflict was governed by this belief of religious aura.

4.8 Conclusion

The Church in West Africa is an off-shoot of the Church of England. In almost all spheres, it is governed by the principles and practices which are handed down from its original

⁹¹ *The Lexicon Webster Dictionary*. U.S.A. Delair Publishing Co. Vol. II. 1983

⁹² Ayinla S.A. (ed) *Issues in Political Violence in Nigeria*. Ilorin. Hamson Printers. 2005. p. 167.

source, which includes the election of Bishops. During the period of missionary enterprise in West Africa, the missionaries elected white missionaries as Bishops for their missionary stations in West Africa and even in the West Indies, based on the dictates of the Canon Law of the Church of England; a situation which required the British Crown to have a greater percentage of input on the choice of Bishops for the entire Church. As the Church was expanding, there arose the much required need for the Church to adapt itself to the local conditions and situations by way of training the indigenous Church Leaders to take over the Leadership of the fast-growing Church. This state of affairs resulted in the election of Bishop Ajayi Crowther, James Johnson, M.N.C.O. Scott, Olufosoye among others to meet local requirements of the Church. In most cases, those elected, very much unlike the appointment of white missionaries who were quite alien to the local environments, met the aspirations of those they were appointed to serve. Those elected for their respective jurisdiction were the indigenes and from within the confines of their Dioceses. Thus as the Church of West African Province expanded into the Niger Delta and beyond, the then Diocese of Benin was ripe to give birth to Warri and Asaba Dioceses. This position of affairs equally resulted in the election of Bishops for the mother Diocese of Benin whose Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Agori-Iwe was due for retirement, and the two new Dioceses of Warri and Asaba. While the indigenes of Benin and Asaba were elected as Bishops for the Dioceses, a Yoruba man was elected Bishop for Warri Diocese. Consequently, this resulted in the rejection of the Bishop by the majority of the indigenous people who were predominantly Urhobo and Isoko ethnic nationalities that constituted more than 95 percent of the population of the Diocese. Though the Urhobo and Isoko People were in the majority, there were other ethnic groups such as Itsekiri, Ijaw and other non-indigenous ethnic groups that comprised the population of the Church in the area. As should be expected, the crisis affected the social, political and religious life of the people. How was the crisis resolved?

To this we now turn.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESOLUTION OF THE CRISIS.

5.0 Introduction

The storm that gathered as a result of the crisis that rocked the Anglican Diocese, after it had taken its full toll on the entire life of the Diocese, started showing obvious signs of recession due to consistent approaches adopted by various facets and segments of the Church in the Province of West Africa and even beyond. The insistence of both parties to stick to their respective positions notwithstanding, the voice of reason prevailed, and what looked intractable began to surrender to the pressure and superior approach of various and diverse interventions. These were the interventions of the House of Bishops, the Bishop of Canterbury, the Clergy and the Laity of the Diocese, the agency of the Law Court and the instrumentality of different individual who were pained that the Church was washing her dirty linen in public.

5.1 The Role of the House of Bishops:

However protracted a leaf stays on the branch of a tree, it must fall to the ground one day. This was actually the case when both parties to the crisis had exhausted their canisters on the battlefield through open confrontation, legal action, setting up of committees and delegations, press war and enlistment of civil and traditional authorities, all to no avail. The Bishops of the Province of West Africa then decided to yield to the request of the people of Warri Diocese, in order to bring the conflict to an end. For instance, on the 8th of August 1977, the Bishops of the Province of West Africa met with a delegation of the People of Warri Diocese headed by Chief J.O. Agadaigho and had what should be called a heart-to-heart discussion and the Bishops under the leadership of Archbishop Scott assured at the close of their dialogue that they would hold an Episcopal Synod to elect an indigene of Warri as a Bishop for them. Chief Agadaigho and those who represented the Diocese of Warri felt satisfied that the crisis was almost over. They all rejoiced and the Archbishop prayed for them and asked them to report back at Benin on Friday

12th August 1977 for official communication of who their Bishop would be. On Friday, 12th August 1977 Agadaigho and others went to Benin for the good news, but were instead asked to return home and wait. They later understood that the House of Bishops had resolved that unless the People of Warri Diocese withdrew the case from court unconditionally and allow the inauguration of the Diocese and enthronement of Akintayo as Bishop of Warri, they would pursue the case legally to its logical conclusion¹. One would have thought that this move had given the needed avenue to bringing the crisis to a final end, but it became obvious that the Bishops were still as bent as ever to force Akintayo on the unwilling people of Warri Diocese, who were asking for their own son as the leader of the Church in their locality, because, according to them, what is good for the goose is equally good for the gander. The people could not understand why the same Bishops who granted the wishes and aspirations of Owerri people in Iboland to have only an Owerri son as their Bishop, the Ekiti in Yorubaland to have their son as a Bishop, and recently a Benin man as the Bishop of Benin Diocese, could subject and intimidate the people of Warri to have a non-indigene as the Bishop of a Diocese where the shepherd would be a stranger, who would be far removed from the main language of the people. How right is this judgment in the Household of God? The inconsistency on the part of the House of Bishops was discovered to have been influenced by a few Itsekiri influential men who threw parties to the Bishops and encouraged them not to relent in their oppressive measures against the people of Warri Diocese who were predominantly Urhobo and Isoko ethnic nationalities. Apparently, the Itsekiri elements had been sending missions to Ibadan to meet the Bishop-elect, and encouraged him and the Bishop of Ibadan that they should disregard the protests of the Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries against the Bishop-elect. Indeed, it was alleged that the Itsekiris influenced the Rt. Rev. T.O. Olufosoye, the Bishop of Ibadan to use his position as the Secretary of the Episcopal Synod and very senior and influential Bishop to get a non-indigene, preferably a

¹. Erivwo, S.U. (ed) *Warri Diocese Crisis*. Ilorin. Unilorin Press. p. 45

Yoruba elected Bishop for Warri Diocese². Linguistically, the Itsekiris are related to the Yoruba race. With the Itsekiri's intrigues, politics, and undercurrent moves notwithstanding, it was obvious that over 99% of the population of the Diocese were opposed to the election of a non-indigene for the flock of Christ in their area. It appeared that the few Itsekiris were out purely for the purpose of creating confusion rather than for the sake of peace and resolution of the conflict. Apart from the above steps taken by the House of Bishops to resolve the impasse, the Archbishop Scott on Wednesday 10th August, 1977, sent Rt. Rev. J.A. Adetiloye, Bishop of Ekiti to Warri to discuss terms of agreement with the aggrieved people of Warri. After their meeting, there was a draft agreement with the following points: That Warri Diocese shall:

1. Withdraw the case from court and either
2. Allow the inauguration of the Diocese and enthronement of Akintayo as Bishop for Warri Diocese until the earliest available opportunity when he would be moved elsewhere, or
3. Allow a committee made up of indigenes to be set up to run the Diocese under the supervision of Bishop Idahosa, the new Bishop of Benin Diocese until February 1978. When the Bishops would meet to consider appointing a Bishop for Warri Diocese from the Warri area³.

When this draft agreement was presented to the protesting people of Warri Diocese, they rejected the second proposal, but accepted the first and third with the following modification: "that the committee of indigenes to be set up for the Diocese until February 1978 should be independent of Benin Diocese, and if need be, be directly supervised by the Archbishop until February when an indigene would be appointed for the Diocese"⁴. The modified agreement was taken by Bishop Adetiloye for ratification by the House of Bishops and the signature of the

² *Minutes of Meeting held on Sunday 24th July, 1977 at Ughelli by the protesting people of Warri.*

³ Eriwo S.U. *Warri Diocese Crisis* p. 47

⁴ *Ibid*

Archbishop. As the people of Warri waited with much hope and aspiration, nothing seemed to have been said or done about the proposed agreement at the meeting of the standing committee of the Province until all the Bishops and delegates left Benin for their respective destinations. It appeared that the terms of the draft agreement did not go down well with some elements in the House of Bishops or again, the authors of the scrip who did not want the people of Warri to have an indigenous Bishop were still very much at work. Though the elements who did not want the people of Warri refused to relent in their effort to frustrate the people of Warri, it appeared that the sickness refused to go away. The Church was sick and an adequate cure was being sought to the ailment. In finding an appropriate solution to the crisis, the Provincial Synod was held in Ibadan from 1st to 3rd November 1978 and the crisis in Warri Diocese was discussed and a decision and position taken. The Rt. Rev. T.O. Olufosoye was directed to write to the Administrator of Warri Diocese to send three names of possible candidates from which the Archbishop will appoint a Bishop for Warri Diocese. At this crucial point, the entire people of Warri were very hopeful and expectant. The Archbishop and the other people of goodwill, who also worked tirelessly to see that the crisis was put behind, left the meeting with much expectation, after all, the Provincial Synod was the highest decision making organ of the Province.

After this Provincial Synod, the Rt. Rev. T.O. Olufosoye, Secretary to the Province (Bishop of Ibadan Diocese) met with the Bishops of Nigeria and resolved not to carry out the decisions and instructions of the Provincial Synod⁵. This action and decision by the Nigerian Bishops must be viewed critically from various angles. One, they must have been influenced by Bishop Olufosoye who was accused of influencing the appointment of Akintayo simply because Akintayo was his Provost and thus, his right hand man and therefore, must have assured him of elevation to the episcopate in whichever guise. Secondly, Olufosoye must have committed himself by way of receiving gifts from few Itsekiri elements in Warri Diocese and therefore

⁵. S.U. Eriwwo, *Warri Diocese Crisis* pp 114 - 116

assured them that a Yoruba man would be appointed Bishop for Warri Diocese⁶. Thirdly, Olufosoye and his Nigerian Bishops who were in the majority in Provincial Synod, who should have used their majority position to their advantage and could not do that on the floor of the Provincial Synod, acted in a way that suggested that the Church was their property and whatever they do, rightly or wrongly, cannot be questioned by anybody⁷.

This action also suggested that the authority of the Archbishop and therefore the Provincial Synod was subject to their whims and caprices. The people of Warri who were therefore in anguish of mind felt that the Church which is said to be ruled and governed by Celestial Powers was now being infiltrated and influenced by the world, and therefore was in danger of being in the private pocket of individuals⁸.

5.2 The Intervention of Canterbury

As stated earlier, the crisis which started as a small spark of fire in Warri which is far away from London, in Europe, attracted the attention of the Archbishop of Canterbury when the people of Warri sent a delegation of two persons comprising S.U. Eriwo and V.O. Muoghereh to intimate the Archbishop of the crisis situation. The delegation was in Britain from 31st August, to 11th September 1977 and delivered a well articulated position of the people of Warri in a paper to the Archbishop. Secondly, they delivered a detailed document about the crisis to the 1978 Lambeth Conference and copied all the Primates of the Anglican Communion who assembled at the University of Kent.

Similarly, a group of Urhobo and Isoko people resident in London, known as Warri Diocesan Association, London, wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury and copied all the Primates who attended the 1978 Lambeth Conference about the Warri Diocesan crisis. The

⁶ Ibid. Interview with Chief J.O. Agadaigho on 11th November, 2003.

⁷ Minutes of Meeting held at Ughelli on Sunday 24th July, 1977.

⁸ A letter written to Archbishop of Canterbury by Warri Diocesan Association, London.

document drew attention of Canterbury to the danger of about 96,000 members who were on the verge of quitting the Anglican Communion as a result of the escalation of the crisis, and therefore solicited the intervention of Canterbury in order to salvage the situation.

The rationale behind this step was informed by the people of Warri who kept to their promise as resolved at a peace meeting initiated by the Archbishop Scott to withdraw the case from the court, while the Archbishop of West Africa carefully tricked the people out and never implemented his own side of the agreement. The people therefore had no alternative other than to appeal to Canterbury for intervention.

5.3 The Role of the Clergy-Dilemma of the Priesthood

In every crisis that erupted in the Church, various segments of the Organization are always deeply involved in ordering the course of the conflict. The Church is made up of the Laity and the Clergy. The clergy being in the forefront of the leadership of the visible Church, therefore, there is no crisis in the Church in which the clergy is left on. They always play a prominent role in such a conflict. The clergy in Warri Diocese was not left out in shaping the course and outcome of the crisis. From the outset, the clergy was polarized. A part was for while a segment was against the rejection of the elected candidate. Those who stood against the imposition did it without fear and favour, while those who thought election was the right thing in the right direction raised their body language to demonstrate their support. They however incurred the wrath of their own people⁹.

Some of the clergy who played outstanding roles in the conflict were, Ven. E. Arawore, Ven. P.W.D. Egwede, Rev. V.O. Muoghereh, Rev. Dr. S.U. Erivwo, Rev. Canon M.M. Okerri, Rev. P.O. Ereh, Rev. R.U.E. Mariere, Rev. J.A.E. Orioma, Rev. J.O. Aruoren, Rev. D.U.A. Eferekega and Rev. F.O. Ogne. Others are Rev.P.O. Unurhieri, Rev. J.A.Eterhere, Rev. M.B. Forae, Rev. T.O. Umukoro, Rev. T.F. Olugna, Rev. J.O.Oghenekaro, Rev. D.O.U. Adube,

⁹ Minutes of Meeting held on 27th August, 1977 at Ughelli

Rev. Okuezuzu, Rev. D.N. Okia, Rev. Ogholi, Rev. Agobe, Rev. M. Orimuo, Rev. Ovuzorie, Rev. Jonathan Amaiyo, Rev. J. Adaghara and Rev. Egwenu. Of the lot, eleven out of the clergy were in total support of the election of Akintayo as the Bishop of Warri Diocese. The other segment of the clergy was in total support of their people. In all the meetings, articles and delegations, the position of this segment of the clergy was very obvious. One of the letters written by one of the clergymen to the Rt. Rev. T.E. Ogbonyomi Bishop of Kaduna on the crisis speaks volumes on the position of this segment of the clergy.

The letter reads:

Dept. of Languages & General Studies

The Polytechnic,

Ibadan.

25th October, 1977.

The Rt. Rev. T.E. Ogbonyomi,

Bishopscourt,

4 Kanta Road,

P.O.Box 72,

Kaduna.

Dear Titus,

I am writing to you as a personal friend. But for the distance between Ibadan and Kaduna I would have come to see you in person to discuss the subject that I am now writing on.

The topic is Warri Diocese Crisis. It seems to me that if the crisis is to be settled on time, and in a way which will bring lasting peace to the Church in Nigeria, there must

be some bishops who will have to stand for the cause of justice and truth. And I have reason to count on you as one who will be able to speak the truth without fear or favour.

The point of the people of Warri Diocese is very simple and clear. A quick look at the Churchman's Calendar reveals that all the bishops in Igboland are Igbo, but it has been the practice, and may continue to be so for some time.

The advantage of having an indigenous bishop is in the fact that he knows the Diocese and the people and can speak their language or languages. We understand that in the three new Dioceses: Benin, Asaba and Warri, the first two had bishops of their choice consecrated for them. In the case of Benin, we understand that the Bini insisted on having a Bini which was why Major Uhumuavbi, from Benin Diocese who was elected had to decline. The Asaba, we understand, preferred to have someone from across the Niger to having somebody from within Asaba Diocese but not an Asaba son proper. These people had their wishes granted. Perhaps they had their wishes granted because they knew how to lobby.

The Urhobo and Isoko who constitute over ninety percent of Warri Diocese had believed, perhaps naively, that the bishops would be so guided by the Holy Spirit as to be just and fair, in their appointment of bishops. They did not and are not insisting on any particular individual or on a person from a particular ethnic group in the Diocese.

All they asked for is that an indigene of the Diocese be appointed their bishop. You may or may not have known the whole truth, and all the steps they took before they declared secession, and found themselves compelled to take a court action to refrain the Archbishop from enthroning Akintayo and inaugurating the Warri Diocese. But the fact is that they were driven to the wall before they took that action without which the province would have forced Akintayo down their throat. To settle this matter, the truth has to be spoken frankly. To adopt the unchristian methods suggested by Dr. Bayo Banjo

in his October 5, letter addressed to the Archbishop of West Africa and copied to all the bishops in Nigeria, will not do.

Let me add, that I have now been told that the people of Warri Diocese suggested my name as a possible candidate they would like to have as their bishop. And it would be easy for anyone to conclude that my stand on this matter is because I am interested in becoming a bishop.

It is certainly not my life's ambition. The people did not consult me before my name was put down the way it was, although they are entitled to believe that I could be their bishop. Some friends have even suggested that I should not come forward in this matter and make my views known, lest I spoil my chance of becoming a bishop in the future. But the way I see it is this: if by obeying my conscience and speaking the truth, I spoil my chance of becoming a bishop, then that is a very GOOD thing to do. All that the Urhobo and Isoko of Warri Diocese are saying, and the whole world would agree on, is this: What is good for the goose is also good for the gander.

Yours very sincerely in the Lord

(Sgd.) Sam U. Erivwo¹⁰

In another letter written and addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury by two members of the clergy of the Diocese, it is quite obvious that majority of the clergy perceived election of a non-indigene as a clear case of injustice and lack of fair play. The said letter is quite revealing:

¹⁰. Erivwo S.U. *Warri Diocese Crisis*. pp. 114-116

Diocesan Office,
P.O. Box 396,
Warri,
Nigeria.
8th September, 1977.

Most Rev. & Rt. Hon. F. Donald Coggan D.D.,
Lambeth Palace,
London SE. 1 7 JU

Your Grace,

Delegation from Warri Diocese

By now you would have seen the document on Warri Diocese crisis with a covering letter which we delivered by hand to your house keeper, Mrs. Margaret Bates, for you on 2nd September, 1977. We are members of a delegation from the Anglican Diocese of Warri who arrived in England on 1st September, 1977. We were sent specifically to meet your Grace over the crisis which arose from the said Diocese in connection with the appointment of a new bishop for her.

When we learnt that your Grace was away in Canada and would not return until about the end of this week, we decided to wait in London until your return. Meanwhile we were privileged to meet the Rt. Rev. J. Howe, the General Secretary of the A.C.C. with whom we discussed the matter.

We called at Lambeth Palace yesterday, Wednesday 7th September where we learnt that you had just returned from Canada, but that you could not see any delegation now particularly since we learnt from the Rev. Canon M. Moore the Archbishop's chaplain in charge of Foreign Relations, that you were fully booked until October. We gave him an oral

resumé of the object of our mission and also handed to him an addendum to the document on the crisis for onward transmission to you.

We do realize how very busy you are and are therefore not too disappointed that we could not see you in person. But we would like to believe that after reading the document and discussing with the A.C.C. General Secretary, your Grace will be able to take any action deemed appropriate in the circumstance. We hope and pray that such action as will be taken will be one which will lead to a peaceful settlement of the crisis. We need only add that from what we members of the delegation know of the feelings of the people of Warri Diocese, their desire to continue in the Anglican Communion, strong and sincere as that desire is, will not stop them from leaving the Communion if in the end they see that as the only conclusion, however painful that conclusion may be.

Yours very sincerely in the Lord,

(Sgd.) Rev. Dr. S.U. Erivwo

(Sgd.) Rev. V.O. Muoghereh¹¹.

In yet another development, a member of the clergy loyal to the cause of the people's agitation met the Bishop of Ibadan, the Rt. Rev. T.O. Olufosoye with whom he discussed the matter for about two hours. When asked by Olufosoye on his advice on the crisis situation, Dr. Erivwo said "that in the circumstance that Bishops should defer the consecration of Akintayo as Bishop for Warri, and try to reach a peaceful settlement with the people."¹² The negative response of Olufosoye equally generated further reaction of Erivwo during the course of the discussion. He reminded Olufosoye that in a crisis of this nature, the bishops should recall the statement of St. Paul that the letter (of the law) kills, and that it is the Spirit which enlivens; That if the Church had all along been appointing Yoruba Bishops for Igbo land and vice versa, the people would have had no grounds whatever to complain; that just as our Lord charged Peter to

¹¹. *Ibid* pp 85 - 86

¹². *Ibid* p 38

feed and tend the flock, so should the Bishop, as the shepherd of God's people feed and tend the sheep; that the good shepherd went after a sheep which strayed away and did not abandon it because it broke the constitution. Erivwo did all he could to contact a number of the Bishops in order that a deferment of the consecration could be obtained, if only for a peaceful settlement to be reached. He drove from Ibadan to Ilesha to see Bishop Falope. When he did not see him, he left a note and referred to his discussion with Olufosoye.¹³ Another letter written by a member of the clergy to some individuals in respect of the lingering crisis was equally a pointer to the fact that the clergy played significant roles in shaping the outcome of the conflict. It states:

My dear Sam,

Just for your information. This is a copy of a letter I sent to Simon, Okupa C.J. Patterson, G.P.B., and Obruché.

When we left London we thought that there was a change of heart on the part of the W.A.Bps. towards the Warri Diocese crisis. I am now sorry to say that we have been greatly deceived.

When, by October, there was no information from the Archbishop of W.A., Warri Diocese sent a delegation of two to him: The Administrator of Warri Diocese was the leader of the delegation: They got to Sierra Leone to discover that the Archbishop had earlier given directives to the Bishop of Ibadan who is the Secretary to the Episcopal Synod, to ask for three names from Warri Diocese out of which one would be chosen Bishop for Warri. The Bishop of Ibadan did nothing to communicate this to the people of Warri Diocese. This Bishop Olufosoye did because he does not want Warri Diocese to see the light of day. The Archbishop in Sierra Leone gave our delegation 26th January, 1979 as a possible date when the new Bishop of Warri would be consecrated. The Archbishop also said he would write a fresh letter to the Bishop of Ibadan and copy the Administrator of Warri Diocese. So the Warri delegates left Sierra Leone for Nigeria in high hopes.

¹³. *Ibid* pp. 38-39

We waited for action and a letter from the Archbishop till the first week of January, 1979 but nothing happened. So, we sent another delegation to Sierra Leone to meet the Archbishop: This delegation was also led by the Administrator. This delegation of three got to Sierra Leone to discover that the Archbishop has now changed his mind not to consecrate a Bishop for Warri, because of pressure from some Nigerian Bishops. The Archbishop was convinced to accept that the Warri Crisis is a domestic affair of Nigeria, and as such the new Province of Nigeria should be created before the crisis is resolved. This has been a plan of those Nigerian Bishops who had boasted to our knowledge that since we rejected a Yoruba Bishop, a Bishop will never be given to us. It is reliably known to us that the three Bishops making things impossible for us are Bishop of Ibadan, Bishop of Owerri, and the new Bishop of Benin.

In an emergency meeting I attended two days ago, I could read from people's mind two possible steps we might take now:

1. To opt out *enmass* for another denomination, or,
2. To get elders of the Church and priests to consecrate our own Bishop. Whichever the case we are almost being pushed out of the Anglican Church. This is sad, but there is no other way open for us.

I read in the January 5th, 1979 issue of the *Church Times* (front page) that the Archbishop of Canterbury will be visiting Nigeria in March. If you can, please do get him informed of the present situation before he comes. The whole situation has led me to have little or no regard for the Nigerian Bishops. I am indeed sorry to bother you again with this problem.

Now that Bishop Olufosoye is Archbishop our hope of getting an Anglican Bishop is very slim: anyway with God all things are possible.

Enclosed is your circular. It will get there too late. It was given to me yesterday 26/1/79

Greetings.

Yours Vincent.¹⁴

¹⁴. *Ibid.* pp. 142-143

Another member of the clergy who preached at the “Consecration” Service of the people’s Bishop did not hide his support for an indigenous Bishop. In the course of the message he said: “Today, the 3rd of March, 1979, must go down in the history of the Anglican Communion as a day when spiritual maturity kissed profusely, the great and difficult endeavours of the Christian Community of the Archdeaconries of Warri area in the quest for a Bishop to shepherd the scattered flock, and a Diocese for over two years. The hurdles has not been easy to scale, having been deeply set in conspiracy, intrigue, self-interest, greed, nepotism, tribalism, deceit, lies, which should not have been associated with the Church of God, especially in this area of evangelism. In this divine service, God is working His purpose out and the Bishop-elect will be consecrated to His own glory, peace, and the blessing of His children. In our moment of joy we should forget the various wounds sustained in the quest but to ever remember the blessings and the grace God struggle lasted-how God could inspire a youth and use him in different expensive measures, to load God’s people to spiritual victory. May God’s name be ever praised”¹⁵. In all the public and private meetings as well as various delegations sent to both overseas and within Nigeria in an attempt to finding amicable solution to the crisis, the clergy did not hide under the canopy of their canonical obedience and ordination oaths to frustrate their people in the course of the struggle.

Another principal clergy-actor who played a major role during the conflict was Ven. E. Arawore who was the Archdeacon of Urhobo Archdeaconry and the Vicar of St. Andrew’s Church Warri. St. Andrew’s was the Church chosen as the Cathedral where the Diocese was to be inaugurated and Akintayo enthroned. This made the position of Ven. E. Arawore to be very delicate in the whole scenario. In spite of his precarious position and situation, he stood firm and solidly behind the people. It was reported that when the news of the threat to forcefully inaugurate Warri Diocese and enthrone Akintayo on the 6th of August, 1977 Ven. Arawore, mobilized the Church members and locked up the entrance gates and doors to the Church to

¹⁵. *Ibid.* pp. 157-158

prevent the Archbishop and his bishops from entering into the Church premises, not minding his oath of canonical obedience. Owing to the threat, background arrangements and contacts which the Archbishop and his men had made, they mobilized and moved Akintayo and his entire household to Warri and accommodated them in an Itsekiri man's house close to Okere prisons¹⁶, a walking distance from St. Andrew's Church, the venue of the proposed Cathedral and service. While all these intrigues were going on, the protesters, it was understood, were in contact with the Law Court which later restrained the Archbishop from inaugurating the Diocese and enthroning Bishop Akintayo¹⁷. It was difficult to understand the stand of the Itsekiris in the whole episode because it was alleged that they were behind the rejection of the three candidates whose names were recommended to the house of Bishops. It was equally appalling if it was true, that the Bishops who had sworn to uphold the sanctity of canonical scriptures could succumb to cheap blackmail, unnecessary pressure and sycophancy. From the statistics made available the Urhobo's were in majority, followed by Isoko, then Ibo, Itsekiris, Yoruba and finally English in St. Andrew's Church Warri.

**ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH WARRI.
STATISTICS OF REGISTERED MEMBERS, 1977.**

Sections	Communicant members	Confirmation members	Catechumen members	Total
Urhobo	308	88	18	414
Isoko	163	54	7	224
Ibo	95	98	1	194
Itsekiri	43	5	3	51
Yoruba	11	3	-	14
English	78	15	11	104
	698	163	40	

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¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷ The Nigerian Observer, Saturday July 30, 1977. p. 16 (back page).

¹⁸ *Ibid*. p. 62

In every crisis, there are always parties at every stage. Though majority of the clergy were against the election of a non-indigene, for the Diocese, a number of the clergy because of the unknown and their canonical obedience decided to take side with the Church authorities. Those in this camp were therefore regarded as black sheep, mercenaries and *persona-non-grata*¹⁹. Consequently, they incurred the wrath of their own people and were brutally dealt with. The issue of their alleged nonchalant attitude was extensively discussed and decision taken to ask them to vacate their Churches' vicarages with immediate effect. A letter was addressed to the Divisional police officer at Oleh and the police posts at Ozoro and Iluelogbo informing them of the decision taken in case the situation might degenerate to police action. Chiefs I. Ikime, F. Ovie-Toje, P. Ogholie and J.M. Erero were therefore appointed to carry a letter to the police officer and posts listed above.²⁰

This decision was later followed by a drastic measure when the people discovered that the clergy were recalcitrant to the order given to them. They were relieved of their posts with immediate effect. They were Ven. P.W.D. Egwede, Archdeacon of Isoko, Rev. D.O.U. Adube Superintending Vicar of Owodokpokpo Church district, Rev. Okwezuzu (Aviara), Rev. D.N. Okia (Ozoro), Rev. Ogholi (Iluelogbo) and Rev. Agobe (Bethel). Others are: Rev. Orimuo of Uzere, Rev. Ovuzourie of Emede, Rev. Jonathan Amaiyo of Ikipidama, Rev. Adaghara of Emevor and Rev. Egwenu of Umoru Church District.

Their termination took effect from 1st September 1977 according to a notice signed by the Administrator of the Warri Diocese, Chief J.O. Agadaigho. The circular terminating their appointment reads in full: "Dear pastor, you are aware that the Anglican Churches of Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries- the Warri Diocese, declared their independence from the Church of the province of West Africa on Sunday, the 24th day of July, 1977. Since you have taken a stand that is diametrically opposed to that of the said Churches, your appointment is hereby terminated

¹⁹ Minutes of Meeting of Diocesan Board and Finance on Saturday 27th August 1977 at Ughelli.

²⁰ Interview with Ven. M.E. Orimo on 16th October 2001, interview with Chief I. Ikime on 3rd March, 2004.

with immediate effect. You are also to leave the premises of the Church immediately and hand over from the date of this letter, all property of the Church in your possession to the parochial Church committee of your former Church. You should call at the appropriate district official to collect your pay up to date including one month's salary in lieu of notice."²¹

The letters to the affected clergy men were automatically followed by a mob action which culminated in physical attack and throwing out of their property out of their vicarages. They escaped to Benin where the Bishop of Benin the Rt. Rev. J.W.I. Idahosa made arrangement for their accommodation and financial assistance.²² The affected clergymen must have obeyed their oath of canonical obedience as well as their conscience thereby damning the consequences of their actions. For the people whom they had served to unleash such great amount of mayhem on their Pastors and their own brothers amounted to a disservice to them.

5.4 The Role of the Court of Law

The court, it is said, is the last hope of the oppressed, the common man and the victimized. In every misunderstanding that crops up in the household of God, it is always believed that men of God would always settle their differences amicably. In this particular conflict, because of vested interests, and pride, all the efforts, time, resources and energy expended in order to resolve the lingering crisis ended in a fiasco. Consequently the people of God dragged themselves to the civil court to arbitrate in a matter which the Church has exclusive right to determine.

From the outset of the crisis, it was obvious from the findings of the panels and committees set up by the Church authorities to look into the possibility of resolving the conflict that over 99 percent of the population were against the election of a non-indigene²³. Similarly,

²¹. *The Nigerian Observer*, Friday September 9, 1977 p.16.

²². S.U. Eriwo. Warri p.110

²³ Report of Committee of Enquiry set up by the Archbishop of West Africa to look into the protest of the people of Warri Diocese, 4th June, 1977. Report to the Diocesan Synod of Warri Diocese, 3rd February 1979.

out of the 240 Churches in the Diocese which were constituted into 19 districts, 18 districts rejected the Bishop-elect. In the 19th district, which was a single Church, St. Andrew's Warri, more than 99 percent was also against the elected candidate. In spite every obvious effort to secure deferment of the consecration of Akintayo and seek for a peaceful solution to the problem at hand, Archbishop Scott and other Bishops were bent on going ahead. On 8th July 1977, Scott sent letters to all the Bishops in Nigeria saying that he had discovered that only few persons whose cousins were not made Bishops were making trouble in Warri Diocese. He therefore enjoined the Bishops to proceed to Benin for the planned consecration and later to Warri for the enthronement of Akintayo. Archbishop Scott, as a leader whose head was 'wearing this big crown' of such a huge crisis, no doubt, must have been getting privileged information of happenings in Warri from his agents who were the Bishops, such as Olufosoye, Idahosa, Segun, Nwakiti among others. Consequent upon this, the Archbishop and his Bishops chose to carry out the consecration and enthronement as planned. The people of Warri Diocese on their part on getting the wind of this decided to drag the Archbishop and the entire province to Court to restrain them from forcing Akintayo on them²⁴.

Chief Agadaigho, Mosheshe, and Edjere acting on behalf of St. Andrews Church and the Urhobo and Isoko Archdeaconries particularly on behalf of the Laity but with the support of the bulk of the clergy, filed a Court action in Warri High Court, urging the judge to:

- (i) Restrain Archbishop Scott from consecrating Akintayo as Bishop of Warri.
- (ii) Restrain Archbishop Scott from inaugurating Warri Diocese.
- (iii) Restrain Archbishop Scott from enthroning Akintayo as Bishop of Warri at St. Andrew's Church, Warri on 9th August, 1977 or at any other place or time.
- (iv) Bar the Archbishop, Bishops and other agents of the Church of the province of West Africa from entering St. Andrew's Church and using any of the property of that Church

²⁴. S.U. Erivwo. *Warri Diocese Crisis*. p.13

or of any other Church in the Diocese²⁵. Against all odds, Archbishop Scott went ahead to have Akintayo consecrated in Benin as he could not enthrone him in Warri. The writ of summons issued and taken by bailiffs to Benin to serve Scott and Akintayo could not be delivered because they were said to have locked themselves up to evade being dragged to appear in court to defend their actions. Because it was not possible to serve the Archbishop and his men wrote the Writ of Summons, the people of Warri filed an *ex-parte* motion in court. This was heard and the judge ruled, giving an interim injunction barring Archbishop Scott and his agents from St. Andrew's Church, Warri and preventing them from inaugurating Warri Diocese and enthroning Akintayo there or anywhere else until the determination of the case preferred against him²⁶. Hearing was however fixed for Monday, 8th August, 1977. When both parties appeared in Court, they were advised to endeavour to settle the matter out of Court. The judge adjourned the case till 4th October 1977.

The news of the Court injunction restraining the Church authorities was widely published within and outside Warri. For instance, the *Sunday observer* 7th August 1977 front page had this to say:

“Bishop Barred from entering Church. A Warri High Court has restrained the Anglican Archbishop of the Province of West Africa, Most Rev. M.N.C.O. Scott, the new bishop of Warri Diocese and their servants and agents from entering the St. Andrew's Church building Warri and its premises until the civil action pending against them in the court was disposed off. Venerable Enajero Arawore was also restrained by the Court order. The order, given by Mr. Justice J.W.A Ohiwere followed an *ex-parte* motion by members of the parochial Church committee of the Saint Andrew's Church Warri for an interim injunction restraining Archbishop Scott from enthroning Very Reverend Akintayo as the Bishop of Warri Diocese. Mr. Justice

²⁵. *Ibid.* pp 42 – 43.

²⁶. *Ibid.* p 44.

Ohiwere, however, refused an application to restrain the defendants from consecrating Very Reverend Akintayo as the Bishop of Warri Diocese²⁷. While ruling in the original summons, Justice Ohiwere appealed to all parties to settle the issue out of court. He declared: “This is something that affects the Church and all is for God. Everything we do, we are children of God. We should not wash our dirty linen on the streets. This is just a disagreement. We have had enough of this. If we only have open mind, I think something could come out of the peace meeting. Everything should be done to settle this matter out of court. Very many interests are coming into this matter, so you can see that it is an exclusive matter”²⁸.

When both parties finally appeared in court on Monday 8 August 1977, they were advised to try to settle the matter outside the court: a move which came from the Archbishop’s Party²⁹. The judge then adjourned the case till 4th October 1977 and advised that if the crisis was to be settled out of court, both parties should have and manifest the spirit of give-and-take without which a meaningful settlement naturally acceptable to both parties would be difficult to achieve³⁰.

Though the parties involved in the crisis could not shift their original ground due to immense pressure from both within and without, the court from the look of things played a significant role in shaping the course and outcome of the crisis.

5.5 The Role of the Laity

The laity makes up the bulk of the Church congregation in a synod setting. These are communicants of the age of 18 years and above. Such people are either elected or nominated to attend the synod as stipulated by the Diocesan constitution. By convention, a synod is divided

²⁷*Sunday Observer* August 7, 1977. p. 1

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 16

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 44

³⁰ *Ibid*

into three houses i.e. The House of Bishop which comprises the Bishops alone, the House of Clergy comprising all the Priests and Deacons of the Diocese, and the House of Laity. In all matters that affect the Church, the Laity is always in the majority, though the main ingredients of and organ of administration of the Church rest on the shoulders of the houses of the Bishop and the Clergy.

When, in 1977, the crisis under review broke out in Warri Diocese, the laity played a significant role in the entire episode. In actual fact, those outside the purview of the synod also joined hands in one way or the other in shaping the outcome of the conflict. These were people who lived within and outside the Diocese. Some were resident in Benin, Ibadan, Lagos, Kano, Kaduna, Enugu and overseas. They were very firm and tenacious in their opposition to the election of a non-indigene as a Bishop for Warri Diocese.

Some of these major actors and arrowheads as stated in chapter four are Chief J.O. Agadaigho, Chief J.O. C. Mosheshe, Mr. S.O. Egube, Chief I. Ikime, Chief J.O. Igbrude, Dr. J.O. Akpojaro, Chief J.O. Onokan, Mr. S.U. Otovo, Chief Udi Shakarho, P.A. Oghenekaro, G.I. Agbaila, A.G. Athora, J.D. Efue, J.C. Okujeni, B. Efetobor, J.U. Ekodi, Chief J.A. Oyede, D.O. Ekpekuro, Chief E.O. Ebbah and D.D. Edjere. Others are: J.E. Oboba, G.M. Esegbu, E.G. Amraketa, S.J. Ikpen, Chief I.A. Ikpen, R.A. Esiri, Mrs. H.E. Vese, Chief, I.O. Efekemo, J.M. Erutete, Chief Porbeni, Ifieboh Adjayi and a host of others resident within Warri Diocese.

Those resident in Ibadan who felt challenged and took up the issue with the Church authorities include: Prof. Obaro Ikime, Mr. M.Y. Nabofa, Dr. P.P. Ekeh, Dr. Akpokodje and Dr. Ose Onibere. In their bid to find amicable solution to the crisis, the indigenes of the Diocese resident in Ibadan sent a delegation to the Rt. Rev. Olufosoye with a view to arresting the awkward situation. They wrote:

My Lord,

Let me on behalf of the delegation here present thank you very much indeed for granting us audience at such short notice. The delegation is made up of:

Professor O. Ikime, Dr. P.P. Ekeh, Dr. Akpokodje, Dr. Ose Oniberie, and Mr. N.Y. Nabofa. We are all members of the Anglican Church resident in Ibadan, who are indigenes of the Warri Diocese of that Church. We have come to exchange views with your Lordship on the current problem of the Church in the Warri Diocese. We all know that the present crisis has arisen over the choice of a new Bishop for the newly created Diocese of Warri. The peoples of the Diocese are insisting on their Bishop being an indigene. Seen from the point of view of the universality of the Church, it is easy to condemn such a stand. Yet, we know that the universality has only been meaningful in terms of the basic doctrines of the Church. Because the Church has always existed within a political situation, it has never been possible for it to be completely, or even largely, removed from the politics of the geo-political unit in which it has found itself. In other words, the cry for indigenization in terms of personnel and liturgy and so on, is in itself a function of the history of the Church. Hence it is not easy to take the view that those who insist that their Bishop should be an indigene are being unprogressive or parochial. The fact of the situation is that current trends within the Church clearly indicate that this is the practice in the majority of the Dioceses of the Anglican Church. Whether or not this practice is healthy and should be continued within the context of the Church in Nigeria, is a matter for the Church to examine in the future. The present crisis has to be handled within the context of the present practice.

As we see it, the present crisis has resolved itself into two polarities. On the one hand, there is the constituted authority of the Anglican Church which has

taken a decision about who shall be the Bishop of Warri and when that Bishop shall be enthroned. On the other hand, are the people of the Diocese the Bishop is supposed to serve, who have rejected the choice of Bishop and have announced secession from the Anglican Church in Nigeria. The fact that the two parties have taken such clear but diametrically opposed stands make a solution to the problem even more difficult to achieve. The people of the Diocese would hate to go back on their words, especially as these words have received wide publicity. It is our view that so long as both parties take these positions, there can be no resolution of the crisis. In our view, what is needed in the situation is the re-opening of dialogue between the two parties involved. Such dialogues would, however, have little meaning if, in the meantime, the Bishop, the appointment of whom has led to the impasse, is consecrated Bishop of Warri. The burden of our plea, therefore, is that Your Lordship should use your good offices and influence with your colleagues and the Archbishop of West to secure a deferment of the consecration already announced for Saturday, August 6, 1977.

We would like to assure Your Lordship that in making this request, we are not at all questioning the constitutionality of the decision already taken. We are prepared to assume that the Bishops in-council-assembled paid due regard to the opinions and preferences expressed by the Advisory Committee set up to advise their Lordships about the qualities, etc., the people of the Diocese would like to see in their Bishop. We would like to assume that the recommendations of the retired Bishop of Benin were given due weight in the deliberations which ended with the appointment of the now controversial Bishop elect of Warri. We take the view that the issue as of now is not so much the constitutionality of the appointment of the Bishop, as whether in the given situation, that Bishop can, in fact, carry out the duties of his office were he to be consecrated and duly installed.

There is also the question of whether it is in the interest of the Churches in the Warri Diocese to secede from the Anglican Church of Nigeria.

It is against this background that we feel called upon to press on Your Lordship the possibility of causing the consecration to be deferred.

Our suggestion is that such a deferment should be immediately followed by the setting up of a peace mission so composed as to compel respect and acceptability by the two parties to the dispute.

In our view, the present situation is one which calls for maturity of judgment and a spirit of give-and-take. Whatever positions have been taken by the respective parties, we call on both sides to think again in the name of the Lord we all serve, and for the good of His Church.

Signed _____
Professor O. Ikime³¹

In another development, a member of the Church, also resident in Ibadan, addressed a letter to the *Church Times, London* on the crisis. He states in the said letter:

Three persons – Ven. R.N.C. Nwosu, Ven. J.W.I. Idahosa, and the Very Rev. T.I. Akintayo – whose pictures appeared in the *Church Times* issue of 2nd September, 1977 p. 3 without comment were consecrated Bishops in the Church of the Province of West Africa on 6th August, 1977 in Benin City. Of the three persons consecrated Bishops, Nwosu who is an Igbo was enthroned Bishop of Asaba Diocese which is an Igbo speaking section of Bendel State of Nigeria, Idahosa of Benin, was enthroned Bishop of Benin Diocese. The Rt. Rev. T.I. Akintayo who was brought from Ibadan in Yorubaland could however not be enthroned as Bishop of Warri Diocese because a vast majority of the people of Warri Diocese protested against his election right from the time they first heard of it through the radio and the press. The ground on which

³¹ *Ibid.* pp. 65-67

they protested and are still protesting is that Akintayo is not an indigene of the Diocese and therefore was not likely to be as effective in the exercise of his ministry as would a Bishop who is from the Diocese and understands the people of the Diocese.

Those who are protesting:-

The Urhobo, Isoko and Ijaw – constitute over 99 percent of the Diocese. But in spite of their very strong objections supported by their claim that they have qualified people, and their argument that it had been “the convention, practice, and trend in the country” to appoint indigenes of the various Dioceses in the country as Bishops in their own areas, the Bishops of the Province went ahead with the consecration of Akintayo on the ground that the objections were not canonical, and that the election was constitutional. The Warri Diocese members, on believing that they had been driven to the wall, and that they had taken all the constitutional steps open to them to seek redress in vain, declared Secession from the Church of the Province of West Africa on 24th July, 1977. When, in spite of all this, the Bishops of the Province went ahead with the consecration of Akintayo, and were determined to enthrone him as Bishop of Warri, the members of the said Diocese got a Court ruling to restrain the Archbishop of the Province of West Africa from inaugurating the Diocese, and enthroning Akintayo as Bishop of Warri Diocese. The present writer understands that they are now calling on the rest of the Anglican Communion to come to their aid. For in their instrument of secession they made it clear that they had no intention of leaving the Anglican Communion. The Anglican Diocese of Warri is located at the Western side of the Niger Delta, and has common boundaries with Benin Diocese and with Asaba Diocese. Before 1961, it was part of the old Niger Diocese. It is made up of two Archdeaconries (Urhobo and Isoko Archdeaconries), 19 districts, and about

fifty Clergymen some of whom have been in the ministry for over twenty years! It is with fear and trembling that this writer, a lay man, suggests that the Bishops of the Province of West Africa may wish to consider whether or not it is always right to insist and stand on the constitution. Is it not perhaps true that while it may be lawful for them to do so, it may not necessarily always be according to the mind and in fulfillment of the law of Christ?

(Sgd.) M.Y. Nabofa
Dept. of Rel. Studies,
University of Ibadan,
IBADAN.³²

The letter of objection to the election of Akintayo as Bishop of Warri Diocese was written by the lay members of the Diocese. This states clearly the ground to their objection of a Bishop other than an indigene of the area. It states:

ELECTION OF THE
VERY REV. TITUS ILORI AKINTAYO
AS BISHOP OF WARRI DIOCESE
NOTICE OF OBJECTION BY OVER 99.9% OF THE MEMBERS OF
WARRI DIOCESE

We the undersigned, for ourselves and on behalf of over 99.9% of all the members of the Warri Diocese made up of the Isoko and the Urhobo Archdeaconries do hereby give NOTICE to His Grace the Archbishop of West Africa and to the Church of the Province of West Africa that we totally and unequivocally object to THE VERY REV. TITUS ILORI AKINTAYO as Bishop of the new Diocese of Warri on the ground that he is both unsuitable and totally

³² *Ibid.* pp. 112-113

unacceptable to the people of the Warri Diocese.

We object to ANY PERSON be he a Japanese, English, French, Russian, Hausa, Ibo or Yoruba. We do not object to Very Rev. Titus Ilori Akintayo as a person or as Yoruba but because he belongs to a class of persons not from the Warri Diocese.

A Bishop acceptable to Warri Diocese must be an indigene of the Warri Diocese. Therefore he must be either an Ijaw or Isoko or Itsekiri or Urhobo which groups make up the new Diocese. We have the men and material to occupy this position and need no outsider.

We are being granted religious autonomy and it should not be hedged around by imposing on us a non native of the Diocese. The trend both in the political and ecclesiastical evolution in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular agrees with our demand.

Warri Diocese made their stand clear on this issue as soon as the “imposed” Bishop-elect was announced. A petition dated 18th April, 1977 was quickly dispatched to His Grace rejecting unequivocally any Bishop not a native of the Diocese. A duly signed copy of the said protest is attached herewith to refresh your memory.

The Diocese further made their stand clear to a Delegation of the Archbishop of West Africa and chairmaned by the Hon. Justice Morgan, dated 4th June 1977.

It will be a futile exercise of power if the popular wishes of the people of Warri Diocese are ignored and the new Bishop is imposed on them.

We will neither receive nor welcome the imposed Bishop and we will not co-operate, sustain, maintain nor cater for his comfort.

And unless our humble appeal that a candidate, who is an indigene of the Diocese, be appointed Bishop of the Diocese, the issue may escalate and deteriorate to the knowledge of the world by the press and the radio and/or television.

We are:

Signed

1 CHIEF J. O. AGADAIGHO
*Member, Provincial Synod,
Diocesan Synod and Archbishop
Advisory Committee*

2 PRINCE J. COUSIN MOSHESHE
B. Sc. (ECONS)
*Communicant Member of the
Diocesan and Synod Member.*

CHIEF J.O. IGBRUDE
BL., LLB., (HON)., BARRISTER-AT-LAW
Communicant & Synod Member

DR. J.O. AKPOJARO
BL., LLB., (LOND) BARRISTER-AT-LAW
Communicant & Synod Member

cc: Ven. S.O. Akinluyi
Vicar General,
Anglican Diocese of Benin,
Bishopscourt,
P.O. Box 82,
Benin City³³.

³³ *Ibid.* pp. 76-78

Other members of the Church resident outside Nigeria equally played major roles during the course of the crisis. Those based in London wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury with a view to finding amicable solution to the problem. The letter states:

The Most Rev. & Honourable,
Dr. Donald Coggan,
Archbishop of Canterbury,
Lambeth Conference,
University of Kent,
Canterbury, Kent.

Your Grace,

Warri Diocesan Crisis

Warri Diocesan Crisis has escalated. It is now certain that about 95,000 members out of the 96,000 have decided that they would quit the Anglican Communion if that is the only alternative to accepting Bishop Akintayo as their Bishop.

Despite all the protests from Warri Diocese, the Bishops of West Africa who are predominantly Yoruba appear determined to force a Yoruba Bishop on a people who have rejected him, and requested to be treated fairly and given a Bishop from among their own people as is the case in all other Dioceses in Nigeria.

The people of Warri Diocese cherish their membership of the Anglican Communion, but if Episcopal structure of that Communion is to be used, as is at present the case in West Africa, to oppress and deny them what other members of

the Communion in Nigeria are enjoying namely, an indigenous Bishop, then they would rather painfully leave the Communion.

The fact of the oppression is clear. The painful decision to leave the Communion is not an idle threat. The situation can only be saved if the Bishops now assembled in the Lambeth Conference take urgent steps to resolve the crisis. We are appealing to your Grace and the Anglican Metropolitans to come to our rescue because although we have expected Archbishop M.N.C.O. Scott to settle the matter long before now, events have suggested that he is either unwilling or unable to effect a settlement of the crisis. We write out of the anguish of our hearts.

Had the Bishops of West Africa applied the golden rule “Do unto others as you would that they do unto you”, the crisis would not have arisen at all. Since the crisis has arisen, the recommendations of the several Mediation Committees set up by the Archbishop himself to resolve it have been rejected by him.

Significantly, the Archbishop’s letter to Warri Diocese after the last Mediation Committee, a copy of which the Administrator of Warri Diocese has sent to us, has provided no solution. Even now the Archbishop has brought Bishop Akintayo to the Lambeth Conference supposedly to represent Warri Diocese, which, according to him, does not yet exist. Kindly use all the means in your power to resolve the crisis before the Bishops from Nigeria return from the Lambeth Conference.

A high-powered delegation from Warri Diocese arriving before the weekend desperately desires to have an audience with your Grace on this burning issue.

Please give us an urgent appointment.

We are,

Your oppressed Children-in-Christ,
(Sgd.) S, C, OKUPA – SECRETARY
WARRI DIOCESAN (LONDON) ASSOCIATION³⁴

In all these, the Church authorities were adamant to all the moves and objections. Thus the crisis was prolonged due to the resilience of both parties.

5.6 Final Resolution

Crises and indeed conflicts are as old as humanity. Wherever people live due to varied nature of man, there is bound to be one conflict or the other. Anything that has a beginning must have an end, and so was the crisis that bedeviled the Diocese of Warri. Though the parties had washed their dirty linens in the public and had dragged the name of God to disrepute, commonsense mechanism prevailed at the end of the day. The dispute was resolved when the parties allowed reason to prevail over self and authoritarian tendencies.

The events that precipitated the final resolution happened one after the other. When the people of Warri discovered that the Church authorities had flatly refused to yield to their demand due to immense pressures from Olufosoye and the few Itsekiri elements who had vowed to have Akintayo as Bishop of Warri by all means, the people had their Bishop illegally and unconstitutionally consecrated and enthroned in St. Andrew's Cathedral Warri. The ceremony was performed by the retired Bishop of Benin, the Rt. Rev. Agori Iwe. The news of this consecration was widely circulated and sent shock waves down the spine of the Church authorities. Reacting to the development, Olufosoye, who had become the Archbishop of the Church of Nigeria, said: "The consecration is not according to the constitution of the Anglican province of Nigeria, and, therefore, I cannot see how the newly consecrated bishop and those who accept him can continue to be members of the Anglican Church and communion, whatever they may call themselves and the Bishop is not a member of the synod. Even if the consecration were constitutional on other points, the consecration of a bishop by one other bishop, instead of a

³⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 128-129

minimum of three, makes such consecration irregular and questionable. It is the deliberate tradition of the Church from early times and of the Anglican Church everywhere that for several good reasons there shall always be at least three bishops participating in a consecration. I would consider a consecration by one bishop not acceptable. For any such consecration to be accepted, because of extreme circumstance, I would think approval must be sought from the primates of the whole Anglican Communion. In this case, however, there were no extreme circumstances. Bishop Agori Iwe had acted against the order of Anglicanism.”³⁵

The constitution which Bishop Agori-Iwe swore to uphold particularly in Canon VI and article IV in respect of the election and consecration of a Bishop stipulates that for several good reasons, there shall always be at least three Bishops participating in a consecration³⁶.

Similarly, the Canon Law of the Anglican Communion states: It is a general principle of the Anglican Canon Law that candidates for admission to the office of Diocesan Bishop must be elected to that office. There are four stages to election: nomination, voting, confirmation and pronouncement of the result³⁷. Was Agori-Iwe not aware of these provisions in the Canon Law and constitution which he vowed to uphold? For Bishop Agori-Iwe to have undertaken to singlehandedly consecrate a Bishop without going through the constitutional and procedure made the whole process very irregular and out of tune with Anglican tenets. This was one of the reasons why Olufosoye, the Archbishop of Nigeria with all the Bishops of the Church of Nigeria in attendance, had to regularize this consecration on the 25th of January 1980, an event which brought the crisis to an end and reconciled Warri Diocese to the entire Church of Nigeria and the Anglican Communion.

In spite of the opposition and campaign of calumny mounted against the consecration of the new bishop and the threat of being a local Bishop without the recognition of the entire Anglican world, the Bishop received a very loud ovation and wide acceptance wherever he went

³⁵. *Ibid.* p. 163

³⁶The Constitution of the Province of Nigeria. p. 44

³⁷Norman Doe. *Canon Law in the Anglican Communion*. p. 109

among the people of Warri Diocese. This episode made the Church authorities to have a rethink and therefore sought for avenues to resolve the conflict amicably. These moves were precipitated by some external pressures. The Archbishop of Canterbury also felt embarrassed by the attitude of Scott and his Bishops over their lack of sensitivity to the overall interest of the Church. He equally felt that his authorities were being undermined by the new Archbishop of the province of Nigeria, the Most Rev. Olufosoye. It became very clear to him that Olufosoye was actually the arrow-head who precipitated and manipulated the entire process of the election as was alleged by the aggrieved people of Warri Diocese³⁸.

³⁸. A letter dated 26th January, 1979 by Vincent on Warri Diocese Crisis.

My Dear Sam, Just for your information. This is a copy of a letter I sent to Simon, Okupa C.J. Patterson, G.P.B., and Obruché. When we left London we thought that there was a change of heart on the part of the W.A. Bps. towards the Warri Diocese crisis. I am now sorry to say that we have been greatly deceived. When by October, there was no information from the Archbishop of W, A., Warri Diocese sent a delegation of two to him: The Administrator of Warri Diocese was the leader of the delegation: They got to Sierra Leone to discover that the Archbishop had earlier given directives to the Bishop of Ibadan who is the Secretary to the Episcopal Synod to ask for three names from Warri Diocese out of which one will be chosen Bishop for Warri. The Bishop of Ibadan did nothing to communicate this to the people of Warri Diocese. This Bishop Olufosoye did because he does not want Warri Diocese to see the light of day. The Archbishop in Sierra Leone gave our delegation 26th January, 1979 as a possible date when the new Bishop of Warri would be consecrated. The Archbishop also said he would write a fresh letter to the Bishop of Ibadan and copy the Administrator of Warri Diocese. So the Warri delegates left Sierra Leone for Nigeria in high hopes. We waited for action and a letter from the Archbishop till the first week of January, 1979 but nothing happened. So, we sent another delegation to Sierra Leone to meet the Archbishop: This delegation was also led by the Administrator. This delegation of three got to Sierra Leone to discover that the Archbishop has now changed his mind not to consecrate a Bishop for Warri, because of pressure from some Nigerian Bishops. The Archbishop was convinced to accept that the Warri Crisis is a domestic affair of Nigeria, and as such the new Province of Nigeria should be created before the crisis is resolved. This has been a plan of those Nigerian Bishops who had boasted to our knowledge that since we rejected a Yoruba Bishop, a Bishop will never be given to us. It is reliably known to us that the three Bishops making things impossible for us are – Bishop of Ibadan, Bishop of Owerri, and the new Bishop of Benin. In an emergency meeting I attended two days ago, I could read from peoples mind, two possible steps we might take now; 1. To opt out en-mass for another denomination or, 2. To get elders of the church and Priests to consecrate our own Bishop. Whichever the case, we are almost being pushed out of the Anglican Church. This is sad, but there is no other way open for us. I read in the January 5th 1979 issue of the Church Times (front page) that the Archbishop of Canterbury will be visiting Nigeria in March. If you can, please do get him informed of the present situation before he comes. The whole situation has led me to have little or no regard for the Nigerian Bishops. I am indeed sorry to bother you again with this problem. Now that Bishop Olufosoye is Archbishop, our hope of getting an Anglican Bishop is very slim: Anyway, with God all things are possible. Enclosed is your circular. It will get there too late. It was given to me yesterday 26/1/79. Greetings. Yours Vincent

Some Bishops of the newly created province of Nigeria also played significant roles towards bringing the crisis to an end. Rt. Rev. J.A. Adetiloye, while reacting to the debate on the way forward in the embarrassing situation in one of the Bishop's meetings, said: "I told you to give them their Bishop, but you did not listen"³⁹. Some of the Bishops confided on Chief J.O. Agadaigho that some Nigerian Bishops were instrumental to the delay in resolving the crisis, and that the people of Warri should soft pedal, that they were ready to compromise.

In another development, there was a meeting of Christian Association of Nigeria in Jos where Chief J.O. Agadaigho and Rt. Rev. F.O. Segun of the Diocese of Lagos met and Bishop Segun appealed to Agadaigho for understanding. He assured Agadaigho further that all Bishops would go to Warri to regularize the consecration of Dafiewhare and that he would speak to Olufosoye⁴⁰. He promised to take Agadaigho and Dafiewhare to Ibadan to meet with Archbishop Olufosoye.

When Chief J.O. Agadaigho arrived home, this good news was relayed to Dafiewhare. They made their journey to Lagos and met with Bishops Segun and Adetiloye who received them with warm embrace. They eventually left for Ibadan and met with Archbishop Olufosoye who received them with open hands and heart. What followed was the celebration of the Holy Communion at the Bishop's Chapel, Bodija, Ibadan. At this most important meeting, 25th January, 1980 was fixed to re-consecrate or regularize the consecration of Dafiewhare as the Bishop of Warri Diocese.

The Warri Diocese crisis came to an amicable end in January, 1980 when the new Archbishop of Nigeria, the Most Rev. J.O. Olufosoye and all the Bishops of the Church of Nigeria, agreed to put the bitter experiences and their pride behind and consecrated or re-consecrated the Rt. Rev. J.O. Dafiewhare on the feast of the conversion of St. Paul, 25th January, 1980. What happened that day brought to an end the lingering crisis that rocked the very

³⁹ S.U. Eriwo. *Warri Diocese Crisis*. pp. 142-143

⁴⁰ *Synod Report 3rd Febru, 1979*.

foundations of the Church for a period of three years and thus reconciled Warri Diocese and its people to the entire Province of the Church of Nigeria to the joy and happiness of the whole Church.

CHAPTER SIX

GENERAL SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

From our study so far, it is evident that the Warri Diocese crisis was caused by the election of a non-indigenous Bishop for the Diocese, a situation which resulted in the rejection of the Bishop by over ninety percent of the population of the people, over whom the Bishop was elected to shepherd¹. As the study reveals, various attempts were made to solve the problem within the confines of the Church, but this was not to be. When the Church authorities tried to use her big stick of constitutional intrigues to suppress the people's agitation for justice, equity and fair play, they had no other avenue left rather, they secured court injunction to prevent Archbishop Scott and the Church of the Province of West Africa from enthroning Akintayo as Bishop of Warri Diocese, though he was duly consecrated at a ceremony in Benin. This state of affairs made the crisis to drag on until it landed at the feet of the head of the Communion, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who advised the Archbishop of the Province of West, Scott to listen to the voice of the People of Warri Diocese. When the People of Warri perceived that they would not get their desire and aspiration met, they went on to declare a secession from the Church of the Province of West Africa and eventually defiantly and unconstitutionally "consecrated" their own Bishop. This action attracted a huge amount of threat and intimidation from the Church authorities², but they were already used to such threats, and so they decided to face the responsibilities of the new dispensation.

¹ Church Times, August 18, 1978. p. 3; Synod Report 3rd February, 1979.

² Nigerian Tribune April 29, 1979 (back page)

6.1 Data Analysis and Discussion

Questionnaire Results

Conflicts Prevention, Menace and Resolution: The Warri Diocese (Anglican Communion)

Experience. 1975 – 2000

Section A: Respondents Personal Data

1. Age Distribution

VARIABLES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	FREQUENCY (%)
18-40	54	11.43
41-60	277	59.05
Above 60	139	29.52
Total	470	100%

2. Sex Distribution

VARIABLES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	FREQUENCY (%)
Males	416	88.6
Female	54	11.4
Total	470	100%

3. Duration in the Church

VARIABLES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	FREQUENCY (%)
Below 30	45	9.5
30-50	262	55.7
Above 50	164	34.8
Total	470	100%

4. Status in the Church

VARIABLES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	FREQUENCY (%)
Ministers	118	26.24
Officers	61	12.7
Members	291	61.9
Total	470	100%

SECTION B

RESPONDENTS REACTION TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

KEYS: A – Yes N – NoA – All of the above

S/N	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	Y	N	A	TOTAL
1.	Is it possible for the Church to have crisis?	470			470 100%
2.	Which are the possible areas where the church is likely to have crisis?	23 4.76	23 4.76	423 90.5	470 100%
3.	Was there any form of crisis in the early Church?	437 92.9	33 7.14		470 100%
4.	Were they handled to the satisfaction of all?	416 88.6	54 11.43		470 100%
5.	If there are conflicts in the church, can they be resolved?	470 100%			210 100%
6.	If there are conflicts in the church, is this indication the church has failed?		470 100%		470 100%
7.	What are the ways by which the church can manage her crisis?	63 13.33	130 27.62	277 59.05	470 100%

8.	What are the major causes of the crisis?	174 37.14	242 51.43	54 11.43	210 100%
9.	What is the justification of the action of the House of Bishops in the election of a non-indigene for Warri Diocese	443 94.29	27		470 100%
10.	Was there any way by which the crisis would have been prevented?	210 100%			470 100%
11.	If Justice, equity and fair play were applied, do you think the crisis would have occurred?	11 2.38	459 97.62		470 100%
12.	How do you assess the majority of the people who rejected Akintayo as Bishop of Warri Diocese?	376 80	65 13.81	29 6.19	210 100%
13.	Do you think the advice given to Scott to appoint an indigene as Bishop of Warri Diocese is in the right direction?	446 94.76	24 5.24		100%
14.	Does the Reconciliation Service held 25th January 1980 and the re-consecration of an indigenous Bishop help to bring the crisis to an end?	470 100%			470 100%

Data Discussion

Out of the total 470 respondents, all agreed that the Church, though a spiritual institution, is composed of human beings, and so, is prone to conflicts. Afterall, even angels fell when faced with the same temptation. The Church being a composition of people from different backgrounds is therefore bound to have crises in areas of appointment of leaders, doctrinal matters, administration and above all, personality clashes. Since the inception of the Church, there has been one conflict or the other. This was the assertion of more than 90 percent of the respondents. Indeed this is true of any institution be it man-made or not. When such a crisis is resolved, it is

not to the interest of the generality of the population. Some will frown at the *modus operandi* of arriving at the solution to such problem, while others who are favoured would usually applaud such outcome. All respondents agreed that conflicts in the Church and indeed in every organization can be resolved. Similarly, all are in agreement that crisis in the Church is never a signal that the Church as an institution has failed. The Church, according to varied reactions from the respondents, should adopt a combination of factors in resolving her crisis, most importantly the Donatist Concept of crisis management, which states that if crisis is not properly managed, it could lead to schism.

On the causes of the crisis, majority saw it as a case of injustice, lack of equity and fair play done to the people of Warri Diocese in the choice of a Bishop for them. I whole heartedly agree with this view simply on the ground that if the Church has to be what it ought to be, there has to be justice, equity and fair play. In choosing a Bishop for the people, the House of Bishops would apply the golden rule, which states that: “do to others what you would have them do to you”³. If the church authorities had all along been appointing Bishops on ethnic considerations, the same principle should have been applied in the case of Warri Diocese. The Church authority should have known that they were stirring the hornet’s nest when they were appointing a non-indigene for a Diocese which was predominantly heterogeneous. In view of this, therefore, though the Bishops claimed to have applied the constitutional provisions of the Church in electing Bishop Akintayo, this assertion fell below expectation. If they had listened more to the voices of the Holy Spirit and their conscience, the crisis would have been avoided. It was possible to avert this crisis, but the fact that there were vested interests, some individuals failed or refused to read between the lines.

Though some respondents saw the crisis as an act of disobedience to a constituted authority, it is obvious from the opinion of the majority of the respondents who saw the crisis as a case of standing for the truth and defending it to the letter. It was in the light of this that the

³ Matthew 7:12

advice given to Archbishop Scott by the Archbishop of Canterbury to heed and listen to the agitation and wishes of the People of Warri Diocese can be effectively anchored. Thus, the reconciliation service held on the 25th of January 1980 served as an effective balm that calmed down the agitation of the people of Warri for justice and fair play.

6.2 Critical Evaluation of the Study

Nineteen Seventy Five (1975) signaled the approval by the Provincial Synod of the Province of West Africa, applications for the creation of the Dioceses of Warri and Asaba from Benin Diocese. In other words, there were to be three Dioceses where before then, was only one Diocese. This development was indeed a clear evidence of growth of the Church in that particular region, for there were laid down criteria for the creation of Dioceses in the Provincial Constitution.

In 1977, two new Dioceses of Warri and Asaba were created. These having been created, Bishops had to be elected for them by the Episcopal Synod of the Church presided over by Archbishop Scott. At that Episcopal Synod, the Very Rev. T. I. Akintayo, then Provost of St. James' Cathedral, Ibadan, was elected Bishop of Warri and because this was out of tune with the convention of the National Anglican Church in Nigeria as regards the election and consecration of Bishops, the people of Warri went on to choose their own Bishop in person of Dafiewhare, against the ethos of the Anglican Communion. The stance of Most Rev. Timothy Olufosoye and those opposed to appointment of Dafiewhare notwithstanding, Bishop J.O. Dafiewhare continued unperturbed to minister to the People of Warri Diocese. Everywhere he went, there were overwhelming loud ovation, support and acceptance by the people.

The situation that later arose in the new province of Nigeria became so compelling that both sides saw obvious reasons why steps should be taken to effect reconciliation. The Anglican Church of the Province of Nigeria finally decided to accept the Rt. Rev. J.O. Dafiewhare, the candidate and choice of the People of Warri Diocese. The People of Warri Diocese, on their own

part, agreed to have their Bishop re-consecrated by all the Bishops of the new Province of Nigeria in line with the practice and tradition of the Anglican Communion. With this, the crisis was at last, resolved.

What really generated the crisis? The people of the Diocese of Warri wanted their Bishop to be an indigene of the Diocese who knew the people and the terrain, and who could minister to them in their own language. Akintayo who was elected for Warri was a Yoruba who had never lived in the area and most sincerely could not speak any of the languages of the people he was elected to shepherd. Definitely he was going to minister to the majority of the people who reside in the rural areas, if accepted, through intermediaries or interpreters. He was rejected because the people hinged the argument on the indigenization policy which the church authorities had pursued all along in the management of the church. But the people of Warri were accused and branded of ethnicity and tribalism. Now, was this description and accusation justified? Were the people wrong in demanding for a Bishop who could minister to them in their own language? Were they wrong to demand for justice, equity and fair play? Should the authorities of the Church of the Province of West Africa not do to the People of Warri what they had always done to the Yoruba, Ibo, and Benin People in respect of elections of Bishops for these areas?

Undoubtedly, during that period and even till date, thanksgiving, wedding, funeral, birthday, and even Sunday Services were conducted in Yoruba Language in Yoruba area and in Ibo Language in Ibo area, both being the languages of the people respectively. Nobody dared to ask why this was the case. Clearly, this was what indigenization of the Church was all about. Yet the People of Warri were accused of ethnicism and tribalism. Those who belonged to this school of thought argued that the Church is God's Church, and it is universal and has one foundation. This is indeed very true, but then, why did the European Ministers have to leave West Africa and finally Nigeria? Why was the Province of Nigeria created out of the Province of West Africa even while the crisis was still on? What has actually happened to the Church Universal? Why were all the Bishops in Iboland Ibos? Why were all the Bishops in Yorubaland Yorubas? Why

did the Episcopal Synod choose a Bini for Benin Diocese? Why was a Yoruba man chosen for Warri Diocese? Why was Warri the only Diocese where the Universal Principle was to be operative? Was the Constitution which the Bishops argued that they followed in electing Akintayo for Warri Diocese, only operational for Warri Diocese?

It must be said at least that the Bishops who were assembled in their conclave to elect Bishops for Warri, Benin and Asaba Dioceses, and having elected indigenes of Benin and Asaba respectively, but went on to elect a non-indigene for Warri, precipitated a crisis situation. Again, it clearly shows that they undermined the people and disregarded the competence and capability of the Advisory Committee set up by the Archbishop himself to advise him on the choice of candidates the People of Warri would want as their Bishop. Their decision to elect Akintayo was tantamount to a refusal to accept that there were qualified clergymen in Warri Diocese to occupy the position of Bishop. But the Constitution by which Archbishop Scott and his Bishops swore so often during the crisis to have followed, laid down in clear terms these qualifications, and by this constitution, there were numerous candidates of Warri Diocese Origin who were qualified to be elected. It was therefore an act of injustice and a slap on the face of the People of Warri to have been rejected and subjected to that kind of treatment in a Church where the leaders preach equality of the human race. Similarly, to have sought all possible means to force Akintayo on the unwilling People of Warri amounted to working against the spirit of indigenization of Christianity which was one of the reasons why the white missionaries had to quit the stage during the period under review. For the church to have deployed much time much time and resources to set up committees and at the end the work of such committees would be disregarded amounted to wasteful ventures. Church leaders should be prudent in the management of resources.

As could be seen, the Church authorities argued that objection of the People of Warri to the election of Akintayo was not Canonical and so, could not be entertained. Archbishop Scott and his Bishops opined that, they did everything in accordance with the constitution in respect of

the election of Akintayo for Warri Diocese. This of course might be true. But had Archbishop Scott and the entire Episcopal Synod forgotten that the Lord of the Church Himself, Jesus Christ, broke the law of the Sabbath and when confronted, He reminded His accusers that man was not made for the Sabbath but the Sabbath for man? If the Bishops had toed the line of Jesus in dealing with the thorny issue instead of toeing the path of crisis the disagreement would have been averted. They should have known that the decision they were taking would spark a crisis situation. Besides, the issue on ground was a clear case of justice, fair play and equity. Putting into account the practice and convention of electing indigenous Bishops for their respective Dioceses was a policy the Church had pursued for a long time. Would the Church of God condone injustice and oppression using the constitution of the Church as a cover up? This should not be the case. There was the claim during the crisis that the choice of Akintayo was guided by the Holy Spirit. The Church must separate her personal interest and choice from the voice and choice of the Holy Spirit. We must allow ourselves to be properly guided by the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit was allowed to lead at that election, the crisis would have been averted. We all pray that the Holy Spirit should direct and rule our hearts in all things we do. What happens when we harden our hearts against the dictates and choice of the Holy Spirit? God in His infinite wisdom allows us to use our freewill. It is difficult to believe that the Holy Spirit would direct that a Bishop be elected for a Bishopric where His children would bring God's name to disrepute.

Both sides claimed that they were guided by the Holy Spirit. The Bishops, guided by the Holy Spirit made a choice that generated a crisis. The People of Warri, on the other hand, guided by the same Holy Spirit, rejected the choice of the Bishops and went to court to stop the inauguration and enthronement of Akintayo.

Clearly, there were many unchristian acts during the crisis. The court case, the people of Isoko Archdeaconry who threw out the property of their Pastors on the streets, men who had served them for years because they were Pro-Akintayo, the names calling, the act of consecrating

a Bishop without reference to Anglican tenets - all these are acts that surely must grieve God Almighty. May God forgive His erring children.

We thank God that He found a way out of the mess into which His people had thrown the Church. May the Church on earth never again grieve God to the marrow.

6.3 Post Conflict Stress, Strain and Strength

The crisis undoubtedly imposed a lot of stress and strain on the Spiritual human and financial resources of both the Diocese of Warri and the Province of West Africa. The re-consecration of Bishop J.O. Dafiewhare on the 25th day of January 1980 did not totally erase the debris of hostilities the crisis had created for a period of over three years. The authorities of both the Diocese of Warri and the new Church of Nigeria had to spend time and resources to build bridges of relationship and reconciliation. There had to be demonstration on both parties of the sincerity of purpose to the need to move the church forward.

Though bedeviled by the crisis, the Diocese of Warri has moved in leaps and bounds. In every crisis that has ever emerged in the church, it has always served as impetus for growth. The growth witnessed by the two Archdeaconries of Isoko and Urhobo that constituted the Diocese of Warri during and after the crisis was tremendous. Isoko Archdeaconry, in the spirit of the new development, became too large for one Archdeacon to administer. It thus gave birth to a new Archdeaconry of Ozoro. Consequently, more districts were created to accommodate the new wave of growth. They are: Oleh, Owodokpokpo, Aviara, Ase, Ikpidiama, Patani and Bethel in Oleh Archdeaconry, while in Ozoro Archdeaconry, Ozoro, Owhe, Emevor, Okpe and Lagos – Iyede districts were created.

Similarly, Urhobo Archdeaconry was split into Sapele and Ughelli Archdeaconries with Warri, Sapele, Agbon, Orogun, Ughelli, Ughievwen, Agbarha and Uwheru districts respectively.

In terms of population, the Diocese paraded a total number of 108,000 membership as against 96,000 as at the time the crisis started in 1977. Above all, the crisis which started when

the Diocese was under the Province of West Africa, had, by the time the crisis ended, seen the Church of the Province of Nigeria emerge. The Church grows in times of conflicts.

6.4 Research Findings and Limitations

During the course of gathering data for this work, a lot of things were discovered that transpired in the course of the conflict. We discovered in the first instance that the people of Warri illegally and unconstitutionally appointed their own native Bishop. This means that they acted out of their own personal grievances or 'righteous anger'. This does not mean that God's purpose was being served. God is the God of order.

As could be seen, Akintayo was not given the opportunity to serve the people he was elected to shepherd. If he was given the chance, he would have proven his detractors wrong, given his years of experience. Afterall, Ajayi Crowther, James Johnson and other missionaries who were not indigenes of the Niger Delta succeeded in their missionary works in the Niger Delta area. However, Akintayo was moved to Egba in Yoruba land.

It was equally revealed that Agori-Iwe consecrated Dafiewhare, acting alone. It must be highlighted that the act of the Consecration of a priest by a bishop acting alone and without canonical authority, is irregular and unacceptable. The church should always recognize and adhere to the constitution and canons of the Anglican Communion in all matters affecting it. Bishop Agori-Iwe, acting alone in the Consecration of Dafiewhare, had created a bad precedence.

Similarly, the issue of convention and consistency which was brushed aside by the church authorities should always be paramount in the minds of church leaders. Members of the church resorted to open confrontation. We should not resort to resolving church disagreement by fighting on the streets.

Secession was one of the weapons used by the aggrieved people of Warri during the crisis. Clearly, this is not the only way out of any intractable problem. Afterall, the disciples of

Jesus did not secede from the boat when they were struck by a crisis in Mark 4:35-40, rather, they approached Jesus for solution. How many times did the people of Warri pray to God to come to their rescue? The Law court should not be the proper arbiter to arbitrate in church disagreement, rather, the church should resolve her own matters within the orbit of the system.

It was obvious that the church had men of adequate intellectual stature who could stand out against any challenge. In actual fact, these men's capacity and capabilities would have been utilized to resolve the differences but the church resorted to the show of shame.

We discovered that majority of the clergy acted against their ordination oaths. The clergy who had disobeyed their canonical oath should be aware that oath taken at ordination should always be adhered to.

It was also revealed that there were a lot of inconsistencies on the part of the church authorities in the management of the crisis.

It was equally discovered that some clergy were manhandled and their property thrown out of their parsonages during the period of the conflict. This is sacrilege and barbarianism! Children of God should refrain from barbaric actions when offended.

Limitations

In the course of the research, we encountered some major obstacles which inhibited the process of data gathering. These were the difficulties of getting the true position of things from some of the principal actors on the side of the church authorities.

Because of the nature of the topic, we were not given access to some vital documents. For instance, the minutes book of the Episcopal meeting held on 2nd March 1977 where bishop Akintayo was elected. Similarly, the minutes of the meeting where all the bishops met in Benin on 17th August 1977 were not accessible. We discovered that documents such as this, are treated by the church authorities as classified documents that should not be revealed to the ordinary people except the bishops. Again, many of the bishops interviewed, for instance Adetiloye,

Nwakiti, Muoghereh etc. would not answer some particular questions, such as: “what happened at the house of bishops at the election of Akintayo?, Were there bishops, who advised the archbishop of West Africa to grant the request of the people of Warri Diocese?” Such questions would not be answered. It appeared as if there were some oaths of secrecy.

There were also the obstacles of travelling to Sierra Leone, Ibadan, Benin etc. to get some vital documents and information, but such endeavours were met with failure.

The web of secrecy that was built around such documents and information appalled us a great deal. Such papers and information were regarded as being in existence in the imagination of the researcher.

6.5 Summary of Chapters

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Several works of scholars principally relevant to this study were reviewed in chapter two of this research. These include Ojielo, Albert O. Issac, Tinu Awe, Azuonwu, Azaiki, Okechukwu Ibeanu, Godwin Onu, Onigu Otite, Joseph C. Anene, Godfrey N. Brown, Samuel U. Erivwo, E.O. Babalola, Imobighe T.A., and Nabofa M.Y. A critical review of each of these materials reveals that while all these Scholars have actually made appreciable contributions to the study of advent of Christianity in the Niger Delta and the principles and practices of crisis management as well as to the factors that generated the Warri Diocese crisis. Yet none has truly made an in-depth study of the Warri Diocese crisis. This therefore validates the importance and significance of this research topic in academic study most especially in the field of Church history.

Chapter Three: Christianity in the Niger-Delta Warri Area

In all, it was discovered that Christianity is a foreign religion that came to the continent of Africa and met the people worshipping God in their own perceived ways of the supersensible. Similarly, it was discovered that the brand of Christianity that came to West Africa and Nigeria

in particular, was highly Europeanized and it entered into the Niger Delta through two phases. The first phase was in the 15th century, which was spearheaded by the Portuguese Catholic Missionaries. As time progressed, a number of factors conspired and forced Christianity to disappear from the region. Some of these factors were, the difficulty of providing trained indigenous manpower particularly priests, the unfavourable climatic condition, limitations imposed as a result of decline of the Portuguese naval power, economic and political powers, the superstitious beliefs attached to the baptismal rites by the recipients of the gospel, involvement of the Portuguese explorers and missionaries in the activities of the slave trade and the prevalence of diseases and epidemics in the areas where the missionaries had to work. Other inhibiting factors that confronted the growth of Christianity were one-sided nature of the training programmes of the missionaries, which tended to overlook the training of women as either ministers or auxiliary staff, to attend to specific cases of women who had some sicknesses such as menstrual pains, breast cancer, private part rashes etc., as well as the clash of culture and traditional values with Christianity. All these factors worked hand-in-hand and forced the first attempt to Christianize the Delta area to its knees.

The 19th century witnessed the emergence of the second phase of Christianity with a well co-ordinated and determined effort to plant the religion on the soil of West Africa, was spearheaded by the abolitionist agents, who came to Badagry in about 1840 and therefore championed the move that was solely responsible for the deep-rooted Christianization of the Niger Delta under the leadership of Samuel Ajayi Crowther. Though there were some setbacks such as climatic conditions, health hazards, hostility of the local Chiefs and people, they were able to surmount such obstacles. Factors that worked for the success of this phase of Christianity were grouped under: social, religious, economic, political and cultural perspectives. There were also roles played by the application or employment of local agents who were solely responsible for the introduction of the Christian religion in the Niger Delta; Samuel Ajayi Crowther, James Johnson, Onofoye Emuakpo and Agoghiri Omatsola, to mention but a few, were some of the

African agents used for this purpose. The Christian religion today has surmounted all obstacles and has practically and principally permeated all facets of the African Society, essentially Nigeria and Warri area in particular. However, there is still more to be done to improve the spiritual growth of the people. Educated Africans were capable of carrying the gospel successfully to the interior of the so-called Dark Continent of Africa.

Chapter Four: The Crisis in Warri Diocese and Attempts at Resolution

The Church in West Africa is an off-shoot of the Church of England, which in all spheres, was governed by the principles and practices handed down from its original source. One of these tenets was the methods of elections of Bishops. During the missionary era, Europeans were elected as Bishops to administer missionary stations in West Africa and the West Indies using the legal requirements of the Canon Law. But as the Church grew by leaps and bounds, the need therefore arose for the Church institution to adapt herself to local conditions and situation by way of training local agents to take over the leadership of the fast-growing Church from the retreating white missionaries. This swung the flood-gate open and gave rise to the elections of Africans such as Bishops Samuel Ajayi Crowther, James Moses Scott, Timothy Olufosoye, Joseph Adetiloye among others to meet indigenization policy and local requirements of the Church. Those elected in most cases, unlike the appointment of white Bishops who were quite alien to their work environments, those elected for their respective Bishopric, were the indigenes of that particular environment. As a Church of the Province of West Africa expanded into the Niger Delta, the need arose for Benin Diocese to give birth to more “children”. It thus happened that Warri and Asaba Dioceses emerged from this development. Consequent upon this, therefore, there was compelling need to elect Bishops to man the Dioceses. Again the Bishop of Benin retired and the See became vacant. At the elections for the three Dioceses, indigenes of Asaba and Benin were elected respectively as Bishops while a non indigene was elected for Warri Diocese. The people of Warri Diocese who were predominantly Urhobo and Isoko ethnic

nationalists with a very close linguistic affinity, smelt a foul play in the whole episode and therefore rejected a Yoruba man elected for them. In response to this development, there were threats and intimidation from the Church authorities headed by Archbishop Moses Scott. At the end, however, the voice of reason and dialogue prevailed. Though the Diocese of Warri was principally composed of the Urhobo and Isoko people, there were other minority tribal ethnic nationalities. These were the Itsekiri, Ijaw and other non-indigenous tribes. The crisis affected the social, political, economic and religious life of the entire Christian Community in Warri Diocese.

Chapter Five: Resolution of the Crisis

In every conflict, there are always stakeholders whose actions and inactions usually contribute in one way or the other to the longevity or otherwise of the crisis. Similarly, they dissipate their energy and resources to bring such a conflict to an end. This was the nature of the crisis which erupted in Warri Diocese as a fall out of rejection of a non-indigene of the area elected as the Bishop. The people insisted that they be treated the way other areas in the Church of the Province of West Africa were being given Bishops of their own ethnic backgrounds – those who knew their people and who could minister to them in their own languages. In order to find a lasting solution to the *impasse*, the Warri people engaged the authorities of the Church of the Province of West Africa in a lingering crisis until the matter reached the apex body of the Anglican Communion, Lambeth Conference and the Archbishop of Canterbury in particular. At the Lambeth Conference, the case of Warri Diocese was heard. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Donald Coggan, chairman of the Communion worldwide, finally advised Archbishop Moses Scott and his West African Bishops that “an indigene of the choice of the people of Warri be consecrated for them as Bishop before December, 1979”. Archbishop Scott was definitely told to carry out that order as soon as he got back to West Africa from the Lambeth Conference. He consented to do so. This advice and agreements notwithstanding, Archbishop Scott and his

Bishops reneged in carrying out the tenets of the agreement; and this made both parties to use many unchristian acts and thoughts which added to the longevity of the crisis. These include court actions, press “war” on the pages of newspapers and the use of police and government apparatus to intimidate opponents. However, God charted a course out of the crisis and the mess into which His children had allowed themselves to be driven. The Bishops and the aggrieved people of Warri toiled day and night to bring the crisis to an end. Archbishop of Canterbury did not stop at giving advice alone. He demonstrated his fatherly and leadership qualities when he discovered that his advice and directives were not implemented. He therefore visited Nigeria in August 1978 to address the deteriorating crisis situation. It was at this point that Scott and his Bishop colleagues seemed to have seen reason to yield to the demand and wishes of the people of Warri Diocese.

The clergy of the Diocese of Warri was torn into camps, those for and those against, while others were seated on the fence. They contributed immensely in shaping the course of the crisis. The Law Court as seen from the very beginning equally played a dominant role. The Court restrained the Archbishop and the Church from inaugurating Warri Diocese and enthroning Bishop Akintayo as the Bishop of Warri, a situation which should have resulted in anarchy. The Laity, the largest group of people in the Church, supplied a lot of the needed impetus to ordering the outcome of the crisis. The laity used clergy while the clergy equally engaged the laity to their own respective advantages as tools. Without these parties the crisis would not have lasted for a day. The crisis which started as a result of the rejection of a non-indigenous Bishop for the people of Warri Diocese came to a happy end when the authorities of the Church retraced her steps and had a Bishop of the people’s choice consecrated and enthroned for them.

6.6 Recommendations

As the study has so far revealed, the crisis which engulfed the entire Province of West Africa as a result of the rejection of a Bishop elected for the Diocese of Warri on the ground that

the elected Bishop was a non-indigene of the Diocese. The action of the people was premised on the ground that the advice of the advisory committee constituted by the Church authorities to advise them on the choice of a Bishop the people would need was thrown away, thereby jettisoning the golden rule of 'do to your neighbour what you would want him to do unto you', in which case, while the house of Bishops elected indigenous Bishops for all other Dioceses in Nigeria, they rejected all the qualified clergy in Warri Diocese and attempted without success to force on the people, a Bishop who could not minister meaningfully to his flock . The actions and reactions of both parties threw the household of God into confusion for a period of about three years. The crisis came to a happy end after the Church authorities yielded to the wishers of the people of Warri Diocese.

While it is true that the Church has its constitution which governs every aspect of her life, it is said that the constitution is made for man and not man for the constitution. As was highlighted, the Church authorities having gone against the tenets of justice and equity, argued that they acted according to the spirit of the constitution of the Church and that, the objection of the people to Akintayo's election was not canonical and could not therefore be entertained. I wish to recommend that the authorities of the Church should always learn from the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, who broke the Law of the Sabbath and when questioned reminded His questioners that the Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath. The Church should follow Jesus' example and always say "The constitution is made for man not man for the constitution". We should not by this apply jungle justice in the administration of the church, rather, we should be shrewd managers of the things of God so that whatever actions we take will impact grace to the world around us.

Similarly, I wish to recommend that the Church should give the issue of justice and equity a pride of place in all that she does. What is good for the goose is equally good for the gander. The Church should move with time. In this connection, I wish to recommend that the constitution of the Church as regards the election of Bishops should be so restructured to reflect

greater input by the Clergy and people of the Diocese for which a Bishop is to be elected. This will reduce to the barest minimum the case of rejections and objections.

It is said that advice is not force. Why should the Church deploy so much energy in setting up an advisory committee if it would not heed its advice? The authorities of the Church should humble herself and adhere at least very strictly to the advice of the Bishop's advisory committee in order to reduce tension and a crisis situation. The Church to have washed her dirty linen in public is very embarrassing and disgraceful indeed. The Church should resolve her differences within the ambits of the Church circle. Again, leaders and followers should adopt the attitude of Christ. In this way, the Church will be free of rancour, personality clashes and conflicts.

The Church authorities should always be sensitive to the importance of convention and ethnic sensitivity in the appointment of her leaders. They should always remember the indigenization policy of Crowther and James Johnson. Similarly, the question of politicizing the appointment of Church leaders is very dangerous and unchristian. It can launch the Church into a protracted crisis.

The Church is an organized society which is governed by rules and regulations. For members of the church to arbitrarily do things against the laid down ethos of the church is tantamount to dragging the good name of the church in the mud. Both the lay and the clergy should learn to be orderly in their response to perceived injustice.

Finally, Church leaders should endeavour to eradicate all self opinionated attitude and the spirit of authoritarianism in order that they may win the hearts and confidence of their followers. Leaders too should always obey orders from their superiors. Followers as well should learn to believe and trust their leaders, this way, crises and schisms will be drastically reduced.

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2.	Rt. Rev. V.O. Muoghereh	Bishopscourt, Ughelli	63	27/10/03
3.	Very Rev. S.U. Erivwo	St. Andrew's Cathedral, Warri.	64	28/10/03
4.	Chief J.O. Agadaigbho	Ozoro – Delta State	70	10/11/03
5.	Most Rev. B.C. Nwankiti	Cathedral of Good Shepherd, Owerri	71	12/11/03
6.	Sir (Barr) J.O. Igbrude	Water Resource Road, Effurun	70	20/11/03
7.	Justice M.A. Aghoghovbia	St. Andrew's Cathedral, Warri.	76	26/11/03
8.	Ven. J.O. Aruoren	Agori-Iwe Memorial Anglican Church, Ughelli	68	28/11/03
9.	Mrs. R.E. Dafiewhare	All Saints Cathedral, Ughelli	66	10/12/03
10.	Mr. D.O. Edjere	St. Matthew's Church, Olomu	73	26/12/03
11.	Ven. M.E. Orimuo	Oleh	65	16/10/01
12.	Sir. R.A. Esiri	St. Luke's Anglican Church, Sapele	70	18/01/04
13.	Dr. M.Y. Nabofa	University of Ibadan	60	24/02/04
14.	Chief I. Ikime	Oleh, Delta State	73	03/03/04
15.	Rt. Rev. T.I. Akintayo	Ondo	81	15/04/05
16.	Dr. C.O. Agori-Iwe	Agori-Iwe Memorial Hospital, Ughelli	59	19/05/04
17.	Mrs. R. Rewane	Esisi Road, Warri.	76	20/06/04
18.	Mr. Jabin Oyibokure	St. Thomas Anglican Church, Uwheru	60	22/06/04
19.	Nathaniel Ovie	St. Thomas Anglican Church, Uwheru	58	27/06/04
20.	Chief J.A. Oyede	Okpe-Isoko	73	29/06/04

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APPENDIX I
QUESTIONNAIRE

St. James' Anglican Church,
29, Ojabugbe Street,
Warri,
Delta State.
18th August, 2004.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Peace, joy and mercy be upon you in Jesus' most precious name. Amen.

I am undertaking the study of the crisis that have rocked Warri Diocese, Anglican Communion. This research is being conducted under the supervision of the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, leading to the award of Ph.D. In view of this study, therefore, I solicit your esteemed assistance as _____. I appeal that you feel free to answer the questions to the best of your knowledge and ability. Your information will be treated with strict confidentiality. This is the reason why your name is obviously not required.

Thanks for your esteemed co-operation.

My love in the Lord Jesus,

VEN. R.O. ARHAWHO

DISTRIBUTION

Questionnaire will be distributed to:

1. Bishops of the Church past and present.
2. Legal personnel of the Diocese past and present.
3. Some elected opinion leaders of the Diocese past and present
4. Diocesan Board members past and present
5. Some senior ministers both retired and serving
6. Leaders of some organizations, such as AYF, AFPS, EFAC, AAPS etc.

APPENDIX II

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR A RESEARCH ON: THE CRISIS IN WARRI DIOCESE,
ANGLICAN COMMUNION, 1975 – 2000 AD FOR THE PURPOSE OF A DOCTORAL
THESIS**

INTRODUCTION

The following questions are to be answered to the best of your knowledge. All information given shall be treated confidentially. Your anonymity is guaranteed.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Age 18-40 41-40 Above 61
2. Sex Male Female
3. Educational Qualification:
Primary School SSCE OND/NCE
HND/FIRST DEGREE Others (specify) _____
4. Tribe _____
5. Diocese _____
6. Years of Church Membership _____
7. Status in Church: Not Baptized Baptized
Communicant Others (specify) _____
8. Group in Church: Mothers' Union Women's Guild
AYF AAPS EFAC Others

SECTION B

1. Do you think that it is possible for the Church to experience crisis?

Yes No

2. List some areas in which the Church is likely to face conflict

3. Were there conflicts in the primitive Church?

Yes No

4. If yes how were they handled?

5. If conflicts arise in our Churches, do you believe that such conflicts can be resolved?

Yes No

6. If there are conflicts in a Church, is it an indication that the Church has failed?

Yes No

(b) Comment

7. Suggest some ways in which the Church can manage its crisis today.

8. What in your view were the major causes of the Warri crisis?

9. Do you think the action of the Episcopal Synod in the election, confirmation and consecration of non-indigenous Bishop (Rt. Rev. T.I. Akintayo) in August 6th, 1997 for Warri Diocese was justified?

Yes No

(b) Give reasons for your answer

10. Would it have been possible for the Warri crisis to be prevented?

Yes No

(b) If yes, how? _____

11. If there were a free flow of information, fair play and justice, do you think a non-indigene would have been elected, confirmed and consecrated as Bishop for Warri Diocese?

Yes No

12. What, in your opinion, would have been the reaction of the Episcopal Synod when they became aware of the true tribal and ethnic composition of Warri Diocese?

13. How would you assess the action taken by the Urohobos/Isokos in rejecting the non-indigenous Bishop?

14. Was the action of the Lambeth Conference (8th August 1977) advising the Archbishop of the Province of West Africa to appoint an indigenous Bishop for Warri Diocese a right step in the right direction? Yes No

(b) Give reasons for your answer _____

15. Do you think the crisis would have been prevented if the Bishops had adhered to the advice of the advisory committee? Yes No

16. Is it proper for the Church members to oppose a decision exclusively taken by their leaders? Yes No

(b) Give reasons for your position _____

17. List some of the effects which the Church suffered from the crisis:

18. What role did personal, economic and ethnic interests play in engineering the crisis?

19. Should police intimidation and malicious propaganda be used as weapons in crisis situation in the Church? Yes No

(b) Give reasons for your response: _____

20. Were the Church authorities weak t have accepted the people's choice of a Bishop?

Yes No

State reason(s) for your answer _____

21. Suggest some ways by which the crisis would have been prevented

22. List some of the consequences of the crisis

23. How would you assess the role played by the Clergy in the crisis

24. Do you think those who sought the help of the Court in the crisis were right?

Yes No

Give reasons: _____

25. Mention some moves you know that led to the final resolution of the crisis

(a) Internal Moves: _____

(b) External Moves: _____

26. Are you sure that the crisis has been resolved completely?

Yes No

If No give reasons: _____

27. Did the reconciliation service held in 1980 after the consecration (re-consecration) of the indigenous Bishop succeed in calming the nerves of the people of Warri Diocese?

Yes No

APPENDIX III

- 12 -

The Secretary,
Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconry Boards,
c/o St. Andrew's Vicarage,
10. Box 52,
WARRI.

3rd July 1975

To:
The Diocesan Board of the
Anglican Diocese of Benin
Holden at St. Matthew's Cathedral,
Benin City on 5th July 1975.

The Diocesan Bishop of Benin,
Bishop's Court,
P.O. Box 82, Benin City.

Thro'
The Secretary,
Diocesan Board,
Anglican Diocese of Benin.

APPLICATION FOR THE CREATION OF NEW DIOCESE OF WARRI
OUT OF THE PRESENT ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF BENIN
IN THE CHURCH OF THE PROVINCE OF WEST AFRICA

At the final meeting of the Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconry Boards held recently, I was directed to submit this humble application through you to the Diocesan Board and to the Diocesan Bishop of Benin, for the creation of a separate Diocese to be known and called the Anglican Diocese of Warri, being carved out from the present Anglican Diocese of Benin.

This is in accordance with page 69 of the Synod Report of the Anglican Diocese of Benin held at St. Matthew's Cathedral Benin City on May 27th to June 1st 1972, in which the Chairman of the Planning Committee, Venerable S.O. Akinluyi reported that the Committee met twice in July and September 1971 and recommended that the Diocese be divided into three:-

- (i) Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries to form Warri Diocese with Warri as the headquarters.
- (ii) Asaba Archdeaconry to form Asaba Diocese with Asaba as headquarters.
- (iii) The Old Benin Archdeaconry, comprising Afema, Benin North, Benin South, Ishan and Owan Archdeaconries to remain as Benin Diocese with Benin City as its headquarters.

This application is the expressed wish of the entire members of all the Churches in the two Archdeaconries of the Proposed Diocese and we therefore pray the Diocesan Bishop and the Diocesan Board to give consent to our humble request. We promise to maintain the unity of spirit with the Church of Christ in general and pledge our loyalty and continued co-operation with the Mother Diocese.

(See Next Page - For Signatories)

SIGNED FOR AND ON BEHALF OF ISOKO AND URHOBO ARCHDEACONS

ISOKO ARCHDEACONS

[Signature]
Chief E. O. Odhono
(.....)
OLEH DISTRICT

[Signature]
Alfred Asiafa
(.....)
OZORO DISTRICT

[Signature]
J. E. Ifeode
(.....)
OWEE DISTRICT

[Signature]
George Agbemeh
(.....)
AVIARA DISTRICT

[Signature]
J. O. Oniobo
(.....)
IBIBEL DISTRICT

[Signature]
Chief J. A. Oyede
(.....)
OKPE DISTRICT

[Signature]
A. O. Ede
(.....)
URUOLU DISTRICT

[Signature]
Chief W. F. Oki
(.....)
PATANI DISTRICT

[Signature]
P. E. Anayo
(.....)
ASE DISTRICT

[Signature]
(Ven. E. P. Apena)
ARCHDEACON OF ISOKO

URHOBO ARCHDEACONS

[Signature]
Chief J. O. Agadaigho
(.....)
WARRI DISTRICT

[Signature]
E. Misio
(.....)
UGHELLI DISTRICT

[Signature]
Chief U. O. Unokun
(.....)
SAPETE DISTRICT

[Signature]
J. O. Hotitiri
(.....)
AGBON DISTRICT

[Signature]
P. A. Oghenekaro
(.....)
JEREHI DISTRICT

[Signature]
J. O. Oyiokaro
(.....)
UWHERUM DISTRICT

[Signature]
Rev. P. O. Umahior
(.....)
OKULAMA/OKPARABE DISTRICT
(RIVERINE MISSION)

(Rev. F. W. D. Ekwede)
SECRETARY

[Signature]
(Ven. E. Anuworo)
ARCHDEACON OF URHOBO

APPENDIX IV

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF BENIN

Bishopscourt,
P.O. Box 82,
Benin City.

8th July, 1975

Through The Archbishop,
Church of the Province of
West Africa,

To The Provincial Synod of
The Church of the Province
of West Africa.

A Request for Formation of Two New Dioceses out of the Present Anglican Diocese of Benin

Whereas a request was made through the Diocesan Board to the Synod of Benin Diocese in 1971, and whereas the Synod in 1971 appointed a sub-committee to look into the possibility of dividing the Diocese into three; And whereas that Committee reported back to the Synod in 1972 as follows: "That the Diocese be divided into three vis:

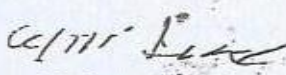
- (i) Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries to form Warri Diocese with Warri as the Headquarters;
- (ii) Asaba Archdeaconry to remain as Asaba Diocese with Asaba as the headquarters;
- (iii) The Old Benin Archdeaconry, i.e. Afenmai, Benin North, Benin South, Ishan and Owan Archdeaconries to form Benin Diocese having Benin City as its headquarters."

And now Isoko and Urhobo Archdeaconries on one hand and Asaba Archdeaconry on the other have submitted petitions to the Diocesan Board requesting the formation of Warri Diocese and Asaba Diocese respectively; And whereas the Diocesan Board has found all informations supplied satisfactory that two separate Dioceses of Warri and Asaba if created will make for progress and has therefore passed a resolution in favour of both new Dioceses to the Diocesan Synod. And whereas the Diocesan Synod holden on July 5th to July 10th 1975 is satisfied that the Dioceses being asked for are desirable, has passed its own resolution supporting the request, and has asked We Rt. Rev. Agori Iwe Diocesan kindly to see them carved out.

We Rt. Rev. Agori Iwe, Bishop of Benin hereby submit this request through His Grace, the Archbishop of the Church of the Province of West Africa to the Provincial Synod of the Church of the Province of West Africa with the necessary informations supplied by the two sections and pray His Grace the Archbishop and the Provincial Synod to kindly see the two new Dioceses carved out of the present Anglican Diocese of Benin.

We hope, your Grace, Sir, that this will meet with your kind approval.

AI/SOO*

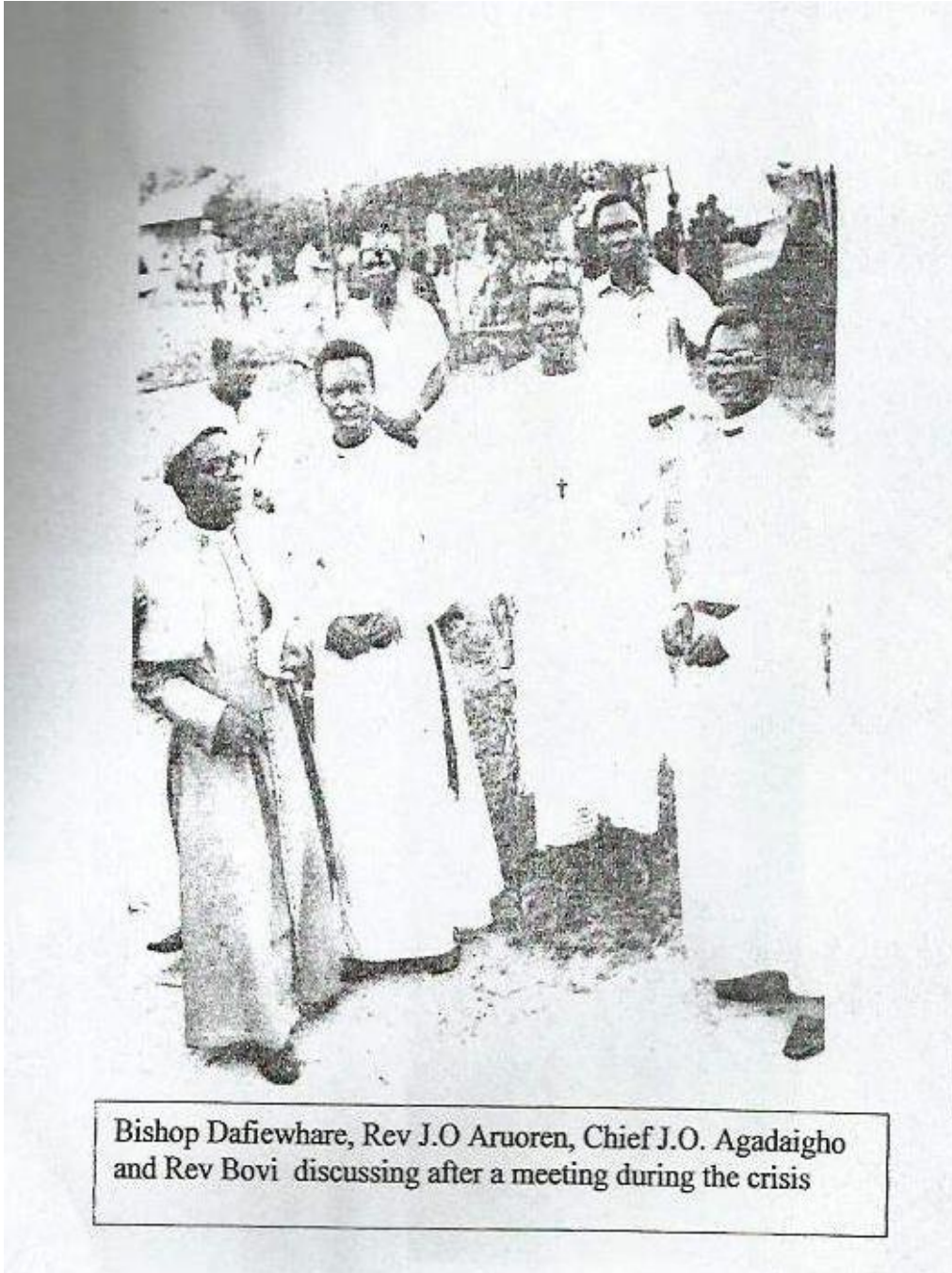

Bishop of Benin

APPENDIX V



ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH BUILDING, WARRI

APPENDIX VI



Bishop Dafiewhare, Rev J.O Aruoren, Chief J.O. Agadaigho and Rev Bovi discussing after a meeting during the crisis

APPENDIX VII



Rt Rev. Agori Iwe who consecrated Rev. Canon J.O. Dafiewhare as Bishop of Warri Diocese.

APPENDIX VIII

A LETTER BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF WEST AFRICA TO ALL BISHOPS IN RESPECT OF THE CRISIS.

THE CHURCH OF THE PROVINCE OF WEST AFRICA

Tel. 50555

Bishopscourt,
P. O. Box 128,
Freetown, Sierra Leone.
26th May, 1978

From: The Archbishop of the Church of the Province of West Africa:

To: The Church Members of the proposed Diocese of Warri.

I send you my greeting in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour who is the Head of the Church and to whom be all honour and glory for ever and ever.

When the news reached me that there has been a change of heart that those who had seceded and taken the Church of the Province to Court had withdrawn their case and had surrendered their secession in so much that they are once again prepared to work with their fellow christians I was filled with joy and gave thanks to God who alone can order our wills to his praise.

Since the secession has been withdrawn there is one thing we must do almost at once and that is to demonstrate our "togetherness" to the rest of the Anglican world. The gesture will lead all to take such steps of good will, namely, to bind up what is broken, to seek that which was lost and to the best of our ability restore what has been destroyed, and with our faith in God endeavour to do the right.

The Lambeth Conference is at hand and every effort is being made for the Bishops to attend. It is an exercise by which we as a Province can bring together our resources in the interest of the Province as a whole. In

this connection I dare say it will be practical demonstration that all of you should make a worthy financial contribution towards the expenses involved for the Conference because one thing you will wish to share in the benefits resulting from the Lambeth Conference. By this gesture, it will be seen that as a Province all of us are willing to participate in this great fellowship of Bishops which is peculiar to the Anglican World and in a befitting manner where money is involved.

The position has been made clear that each Province/Diocese should endeavour to bear its financial burden, as Grants-in-Aid are very limited and even then only to special cases. With this in mind I ought to call your attention that you are not left behind in this but rather that you show your magnanimity in this issue as well.

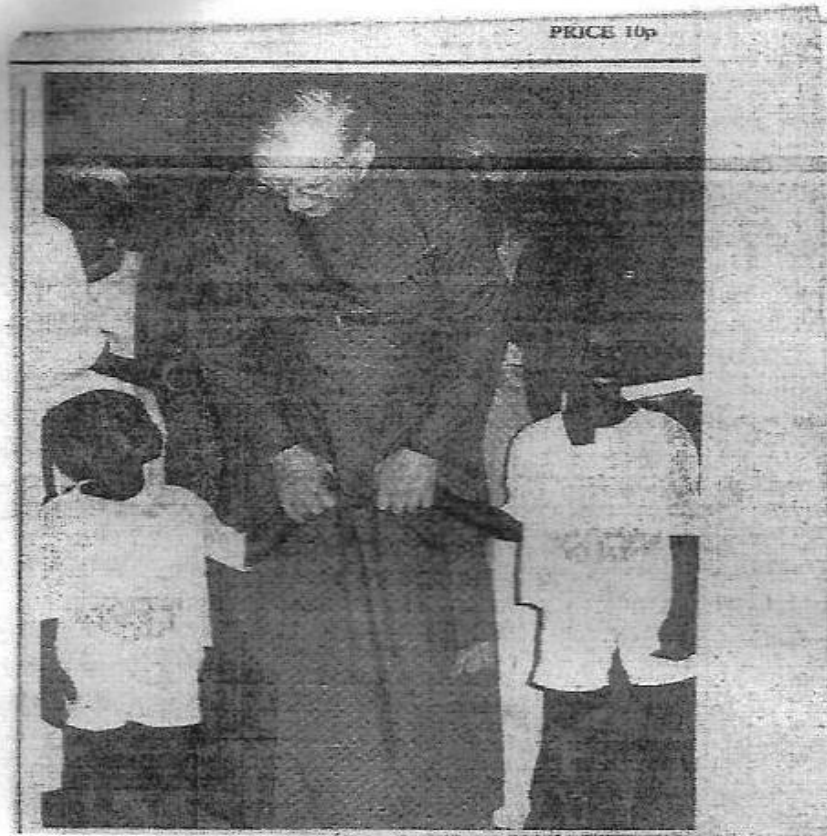
The Bishop of Benin has planned to take the Confirmation services for those candidates who had been prepared. This is a worthy move to keep the work of the church going. Our duty to God is our principal concern - we must seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all other things shall be added. Suffice it for the time being that Bishop Idahosa of Benin will continue to exercise his Episcopal Ministry over Warri. After Lambeth the Province will take the next best step to inaugurate the Warri Diocese.

Brethren, let us strive to uphold our membership in the church - which is the mystical body of Christ - then as true branches attached to the true vine we shall bear fruit to the glory of God.

The Church is God's Church through which we show our allegiance to him and not to man. This being so let us strive, as Paul said, that every thing may be done decently and in order.

**The Peace of the Lord be with you all,
Yours sincerely,
Archbishop.
Copied to the Bishops of the Province.**

APPENDIX IX



The Archbishop of Canterbury, Donald Coggan Relating with children during his visit to West Africa, in March 1979 in his efforts to find a solution to the crisis.

APPENDIX X

