

**Mission as humanisation in the life and work of Bishop Joseph Shanahan:
A theological evaluation of an intercultural encounter in South-East Nigeria**

By

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The predilection of humanity to replace the core essentiality of its existence with a peripheral worldview is plausible. This might be due to the dearth of humanistic virtues in Christendom today, resulting from individualistic and pluralistic views on religion and religious practices. Mission barely measures up to the growing obligations of all people in the interdependent world of today. Humanisation and mission assume to be redeemable tools to reinstate the dignity and central essence of humanity, whereas pluralism and science have perverted many souls. As a result, a detailed investigation of early mission that engaged in the practice of humanisation will be carried out, particularly in the south-east of Nigeria, which will be effective to re-strategize the intent of mission in the church today. The early missions in South-East Nigeria are majorly the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) and the Church Missionary Society (CMS). These missionaries, within themselves and within their environment, encountered much conflict and challenges, but were never deterred by these. The missionary works of Bishop Joseph Shanahan provided an example to be emulated, particularly his extraordinary approach to dealing with socio-cultural and political factors, which impacted the lives of the Igbo people till date. The foundation laid by Bishop Shanahan is a lasting legacy for the fervent practice of the Christian faith and vocation in Igboland compared to communities within and outside Nigeria.

This study adopts a qualitative methodology based on archival sources and other secondary data, including journal articles, magazines, book chapters, conference or seminar papers, newspapers, Internet material, and other relevant works. This research evaluates mission as humanisation with a focus on the missionary life and works of Bishop Shanahan. This is done by reviewing literature on: humanisation and mission, and on the socio-cultural and religious factors that provoked both resilience and acceptance of Christianity in Igboland; the methods and approaches adopted by the CMS and RCM in their mission, with a special focus on Bishop Shanahan's mission; and the foundation laid by Bishop Shanahan in Igboland that sustained Catholicism and missionary growth in the region. Finally the impact of the works of the early missionaries (Shanahan in particular) in the contemporary church is also examined.

This study proves that Bishop Shanahan's innate and humanising qualities in mission expedited the conversion to Catholicism and domination of Catholics in Igboland. These approaches and qualities include education, the value of children and women, language learning and indigenization of vocation. Moreover, this study establishes that the contemporary church replicates respect for human dignity and humanisation, as found in the early missions, though it needs to integrate more of Bishop Shanahan's humanising virtues. This research recommends further field studies in the area where Shanahan worked (Igboland) to validate its findings. Additionally, access to data on the early mission — as literature largely concentrated on the RCM strategies and successes — will help to elaborate on other strategies used by the early CMS.

OPSOMMING

Die voorliefde van die mensdom om die noodsaaklikheid van die kern van sy bestaan te vervang met ‘n wêreld siening, is aanvaarbaar en geloofwaardig. Dit kan toegeskryf word aan die tekorte van persoonlike waardes en reinheid in hul Christelike opvatting vandag, wat ‘n direkte gevolg is van individualistiese en die meerderheidsiening oor hul godsdiens en godsdiense praktyke.

Sending, kan nie vergelyk word met die verpligte van die mens in die al hoe kleiner wordende en interafhanklike wêreld van vandag nie. Daar word algemeen aanvaar dat menslikheid en sending, die gereedskap is om die waardigheid van die mens se siel deur sy Maker, te herstel, wat deur die wetenskap en ingewikkeld meervoudigheid, verdraai word.

Die gevolg is ‘n volledige ondersoek na die vroeë sending en die uitwerking op menslike praktyke veral in suidoos Nigerië, wat effektief aangewend word in die bereiking van die sending in die huidige kerk.

Vroeë sending in suidoos Nigerië was grootliks die Rooms Katolieke Sending (RKS) en die Kerk Sending Gemeenskap (KSG). Hierdie sendelinge, binne hulself, en in hul omgewing, het baie konflikte en teenkanting teëgekom, maar dit het hulle nie afgeskrik nie. Die uitstekende sending werk van veral Biskop Joseph Shanahan, was navolgings waardig. Sy buitengewone benadering van die sosio-kulturele en politieke faktore het groot invloed gehad op die lewens van die Igbo mense, selfs tot en met vandag toe. Biskop Shanahan se nalatenskap op die vurige praktyk van die Christen geloof en roeping in Igbo land vergelyk goed met ander stamme en inheemse gemeenskappe binne en buite Nigerië.

Die metodes en studies is gabasseer verskeie literêre bronne en argivale berigte asook sekondere data insluitend joernaal artikels, tydskrifte, konferensies en argivale dokumente asook koerante. Hierdie navorsing evalueer sendingwerk met die klem op die lewe en werke van Biskop Shanahan. Dit was gedoen deur hersiene literatuur aangaande sosio-kulturele en godsdiestige faktore oor die groeiende aanvaarding van Christendom in

Igbo-land. Laastens, was die impak van werke van die vroeë sendelinge in die kerk ondersoek.

Hierdie studie poog om te bewys dat Biskop Shanahan deur middel van sy ingebore menslike eienskappe die proses van omskakeling na Katolisisme help versnel het.

Hierdie benadering en eienskappe behels die opvoeding, waarde van vroue en kinders, aanleer van taal en die inheems wording en uitbou van 'n roeping. Ook poog die studie om vas te stel dat die kontemporêre kerk by herhaling die respek van menswaardigheid wat deur Bishop Shanahan se reinheids- deugde in sy sending oorgedra was, uit tebeeld. Hierdie navorsing beval aan dat veldwerk uitgevoer moet word waar Shanahan werksaam was sodat dit tot geldige bevindinge bekragtig kan word.

Addisionele en meer direkte toegang tot inligting en argief material aangaande die vroeë sending sal- soos literatuur- fokus op RKS strategieë en suksesse - en lig werp om die uitbreiding van strategieë in die vroeë KSG te belig.

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DEDICATION

TO THE NEVER-FAILING PROVIDENCE OF GOD!

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LIST OF ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

AD	<i>Ad Gentes Divinitus</i>
AG	<i>Ad Gentes</i>
C.S.Sp	Congregatio Sancti Spiritus
Cf.	Conferre – latin
CMS	Church Mission Society
CST	Catholic Social Teaching
DV	Dei Verbum
FCT	Federal Capital of Nigeria
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes.</i>
IHRC	International Human Rights Commission
IMC	International Missionary Council
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
PMS	Pontifical Mission Society
RC	Roman Catholic
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
RCM	Roman Catholic Mission
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i>
SIM	Sudan Interior Mission
SMA	Societas Missionum ad Afros (Society of African Missions)
SUM	Sudan United Mission
WCC	World Council of Churches

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

This chapter provides an overview of the whole thesis. It presents the background of the study, beginning with an account of the advent of the early missionaries to Nigeria (Igboland in particular) to the prominence of Shanahan, as the focal point of the study. In addition, the research questions, aims and objectives, and the scope of the study are also presented. Herein, I also describe the research methodology and design, and the limitations of the study, as a directional guide for achieving the purpose of the study which, given the example of Shanahan, is to foreground the idea of mission as something that goes beyond soul winning to inclusivity in the form of humanisation.

The early missionaries that arrived on the west coast of Africa encountered a myriad of difficulties that tried the doggedness of their human spirit (Burridge, 2011:3). These missionaries encountered challenges that frustrated the continuity of their mission. Some of the diverse problems they had to contend with included the harsh reality of mosquito bites, customs contradicting their own practices, and an adverse tropical climate. Although there were no detailed records of their travails and triumphs, Christians today, however, relish the benefits of the sacrifices of these missionaries. The missionaries persevered even though most became sick and died. Joseph Shanahan was among the French Holy Ghost Fathers, the second group of missionaries that arrived in Nigeria, and worked between 1871-1943. He was an Irish man, revered as an Igbo apostle, whose spirit was outstanding with a genuine concern for saving mankind (Njoku, 2014:28). This research, while explicating acts of humanisation as a contributing factor to the success of mission, will particularly analyse the place of Joseph Shanahan in mission as humanisation.

The history of missionaries in Nigeria began with the coming of the Augustinian monks who visited the City of Benin and Warri in the 15th Century (Okpanachi, 2013:23). After the withdrawal of the Augustinians, the Franciscan monks arrived from Sao Tome to Warri in 1593. By 1900, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) was indeed the most

established mission. In 1846 and 1857, they established a mission in Calabar and Onitsha, respectively, and for a long time remained the dominant mission in the South-East of Nigeria before the advent of the Holy Ghost Fathers.

In the 19th century, Samuel Ajayi Crowther, an ex-slave from Yoruba land (Western Nigeria) as well as a catechist in Sierra Leone, accompanied two German missionaries including Reverend J.F. Schone to the Niger Delta to institute the Niger Mission in 1841 (Dike 1962:1). Father Carlo Zappa, a member of the Society of African Missions (Societas Missionum ad Afros - SMA), founded the Western Mission in 1886 (Okpanachi 2013:25). Later in the century, other missionary groups like the Qua (Kwa) Iboe Mission, the Methodists, the Baptists, and the Holy Ghost Fathers (Roman Catholics) came into existence.

All these groups faced a common challenge—the resistance of the new religion due to the perceived subversion of the African religion. Again, the imposition of the White man in local affairs stirred a strong dislike for them, regardless of their work—business, administration or mission. According to one of the missionaries, indigenous hostility made the country inaccessible (Ekechi, 1972:171). However, the Holy Ghost Fathers, particularly Bishop Shanahan, showed extraordinary zeal as a missionary. They persevered and finally gained the people's acceptance. Their early work started with the Igbos in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria, a region greatly affected by slavery and the slave trade.

Mission by the Holy Ghost Fathers started in December 1885, with the first French Holy Ghost Fathers, Monsignor Leone Lejeune and Father (Fr.) Joseph Lutz, who came to Onitsha, a city located in South-East Nigeria (Njoku, 2014:31). Over the years, the British colonial forces constantly frustrated the missionary works within this territory. When the Holy Ghost Fathers came to Onitsha, there was commotion and resistance, especially within the Protestant circles. Ekechi (2002:217) referred to this frustration when he wrote:

By the time the Catholics arrived, the Protestants had enjoyed the ‘prestige of priority’, a head start position that made them very influential in the area they had settled. Not until after 1900, various Christian missionary agents completely invaded the Eastern Nigeria. The Roman Catholics, of course, played a significant role in this post-1900 mass movement.

At that time, the need for missionaries with indomitable spirits to withstand the pressure in terms of abnegation and abhorrence from Nigerians, especially the Igbo communities, was imperative. Bishop Shanahan was not the first missionary in Nigeria or in the metropolis of Onitsha, but he is chosen for this study due to the unique impact and affection he fostered in the hearts of the Igbo people. He utilised every strategy that I analyse as humanisation in his mission. As articulated by Uzo (1988:143), Bishop Joseph Shanahan was:

...very outstanding among these early missionaries. Shanahan brought fresh ideas to the missionary scene when he became the Prefect Apostolic in 1905. He declared that school should be for all, for the slaves, the freeborn and for boys and girls. With the schools, he aimed at wiping away ignorance, disease, superstition and slavery. Above all, to Christianise and evangelise the people.

Humanisation, an act strongly practised by Shanahan in the mission, demonstrated the inextricable connection between values of life and humanisation. Many that described Bishop Joseph Shanahan portrayed him as humble, dedicated, subservient, and committed to saving mankind through humanisation vis-à-vis respect for human dignity (Jordan, 1949:476). This accounted for his acceptance of Igbo traditional religion without condemning it, and it accounts for the success attributable to his mission.

However, the contact between African and Western religions sparked a strong culture shock on both sides during the early years of mission. Cross-cultural religious encounters generally incited resilience, rejection and conversion, as well as enculturation and selective acculturation, which was mostly the case in South-East Nigeria (Lindenfeld, 2005:327). This cultural oppression and suppression ignited hostility against the early missionaries, and that made their mission work very difficult in South-East Nigeria. Despite the indifference of the local people, Christianity was finally firmly established in the Igbo communities. The positive impact of the early missionaries is strongly felt in the contemporary church and mission in this area of Nigeria.

This study, therefore, aims to evaluate the life and mission work of Bishop Joseph Shanahan, focusing specially on the theoretical framework of humanisation and interculturality. This will be accomplished by analysing the intercultural encounter between Western religion and traditional religion in South-Eastern Nigeria. By viewing

mission as humanisation, the study follows the current understanding of mission that transcends the reductionist view of mission as merely conversion for salvation. It reviews Shanahan's mission in the light of humanisation, which hitherto has not been engaged academically, and thus it contests the postcolonial generalization of all missionaries as synonyms of African subjugation and oppression. By analysing the missionary life and work of Bishop Shanahan in South-East Nigeria as a contributing factor to the contemporary religious state of the region, this study foregrounds the lasting nature of mission when undertaken as humanisation.

1.2 Research aims and objectives

The current perception of "missionaries" as an aspect of the West that narrates Africans as undermining today's postcolonial discourse negates the good example set by some of the early missionaries and their deeds that contributed to the life of Christianity today. Moreover, the controversy surrounding the doctrines and missions in contemporary Christendom creates the need to review the works and spirit of the early missionaries in terms of spreading the gospel, humanisation and interculturality. The increasing number of young people willing to serve Christ in South-East Nigeria when compared with the struggle to encourage mission vocations in South Africa and worldwide speaks volumes about the foundation of their faith. Presently, mission all over the world is sustained mostly by priests and religious people from South-East Nigeria. This points to the depth of Christianity planted by early missionaries in this region. It is, therefore, imperative to understand the works of Shanahan and other missionaries that have sustained the zeal of Igbo (by extension Nigerian) youth until today to embrace the vocation and mission with greater parental consent.

Therefore, this study precisely aims to evaluate and highlight the extent to which the life and work of Shanahan shaped and still shapes the life of priests as well as most Christian practices of missionaries in Nigeria (Igboland) in the 1800s, and onwards. It examines the broad aspect of mission as humanisation in the life and work of Shanahan in order to achieve the following:

- 1) To highlight Igbo traditional religious beliefs, and social and political factors in relation to their resilience and acceptance of the gospel.

- 2) To evaluate the different methods/approaches adopted by the early missionaries to Christianise Igboland with a specific focus on the works of Bishop Joseph Shanahan and the significant impact he had on the Igbo people.
- 3) To analyse the foundation laid by Bishop Joseph Shanahan, which to date sustains the strong Christian lives of the Igbo people in comparison to other regions in the world.
- 4) To analyse the impressions of the early missionaries in maintaining human dignity via humanisation and vocation call in Christendom today.

1.3 Research questions

In formulating the research questions, the availability of answers is necessary. In other words, these social inquiries are carefully phrased into research questions in such a way that the likelihood of obtaining valid results will be achieved. These few questions, therefore, are essential for a better understanding of this topic and for clarity. The research questions posed in this study are therefore as follows:

- How is humanisation in mission exemplified in the life and missionary work of Bishop Joseph Shanahan?
- Based on the historical and archival evidence, were there challenges resulting from respect or neglect of human dignity in the early era of mission?
- Is there a link between human dignity, humanisation and praxis of mission in the contemporary Roman Catholic mission discourse?
- Is respect for human dignity in relation to humanisation found in the contemporary church?

1.4 Scope of the study

The scope of this study is divided into two categories: a discussion that focuses on the broader context of the study and one that has a much narrower focus. In terms of the former, this study investigates early missionary work in Nigeria, and in terms of the latter, it hones in on the life and missionary work of Bishop Joseph Shanahan, an early missionary in Igboland. Theoretically, the study frames its analysis around the concept

and understanding of humanisation as a missionary strategy that involves the human person both in his/her totality and also as a soul to be won.

1.4.1. The broader context of the study

Nigeria is located within the equator and Tropic of Cancer, and is geographically situated in West Africa. The population is approximately 170,123,740 (2012 estimate), with an area of 923,768 square kilometres¹. Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa, having in itself thirty-six states and a Federal Capital Territory (FCT) (Figure 1 Map of Nigeria showing the six geopolitical zones

) (Badru, 1998:2). Nigeria is bordered by the Republic of Benin on the west, Cameroon and Chad on the east, Niger on the north, and the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean (cf. Figure 1). There are six distinct geopolitical regions in Nigeria, namely: North-East, North-West, North-Central, South-East, South-West and South-East (cf. Figure 1).

Southern Nigeria is split into Western and Eastern regions, with the Yoruba and Edos in the west, and the Igbo, Efik, and others in the east. Unlike the Western region, the Eastern region had no central administrative, political and legal systems defined by traditions. The European traders invaded these regions in the fifteenth century through the early trading between the Portuguese and the kingdoms of Benin and Warri on the West coast. In the 17th Century, the western region was called the Slave Coast due to the slave trade that started there initiated by European traders. Until British colonialism in the 19th century, this trade gave rise to instability, inter-tribal wars, and a dearth of population in these regions. During the slave trade, Onitsha and Arochukwu in Igboland developed into powerful trade cities just like Calabar in Cross River. It was in the 18th century that Christianity got introduced to the eastern region, and it spread faster than in any other region in Nigeria, followed by the Middle Belt.

Northern Nigeria is divided into two broad ethnic groups and regions: the Northern and Southern region. The former comprising the Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri of the old Bornu, predominantly Muslim groups, while the latter, also known as the Middle Belt, is composed of over 250 tribal groups localized in Southern Kaduna, Plateau, Adamawa,

¹ Viewed from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html> [Accessed: 2015 08 16].

Benue and Bauchi (cf. Figure 1) and are largely made up of traditional and non-Muslim groups. The Northern region came under Arab influence, especially during the slave trade era, around the same time of European influence in Southern Nigeria. The Arab and European slave traders raided the Middle Belt. Slave raiding and slave trading, as well as warfare over territories prior to the British trade in 1900, characterised the relationship between these two regions. Christianity entered the West Coast of Africa where slave trading and slave raiding prevailed.

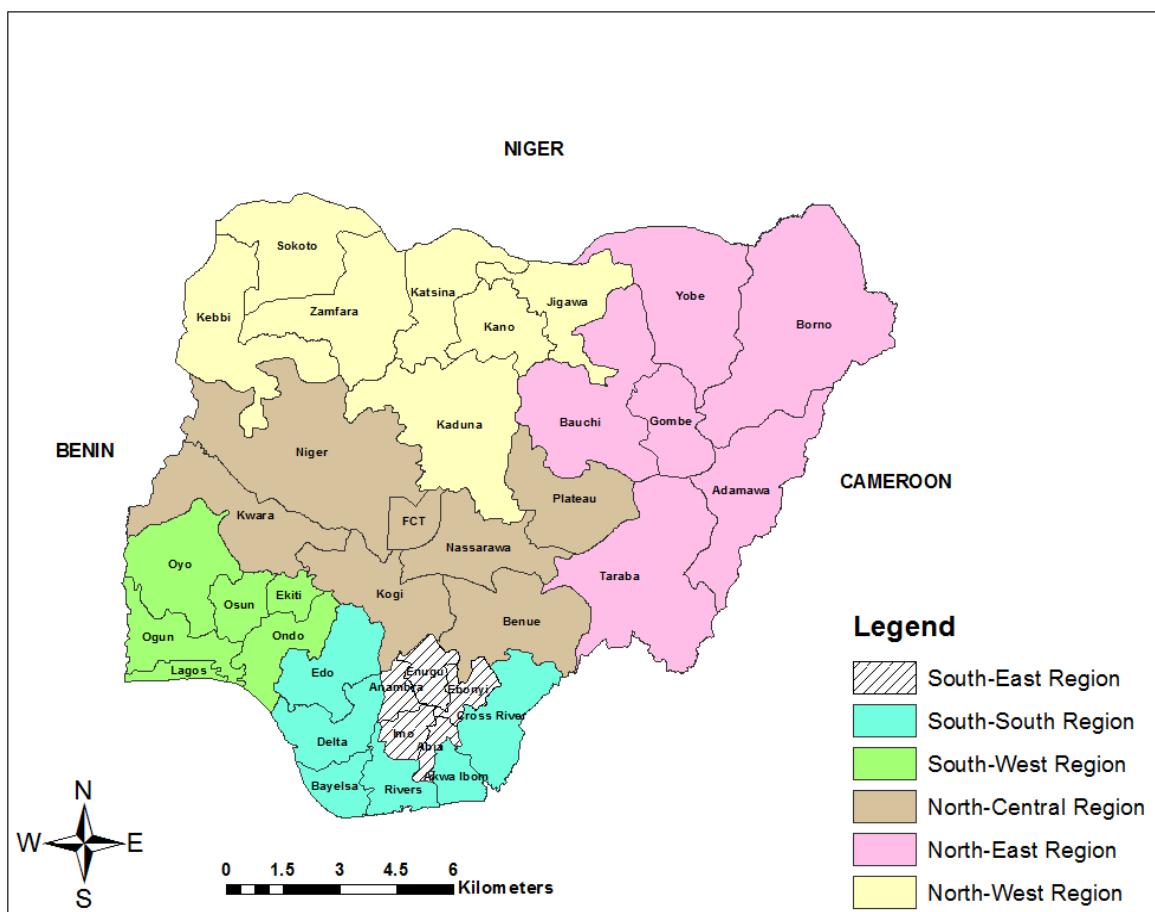


Figure 1 Map of Nigeria showing the six geopolitical zones

1.4.2. The narrow context of the study

The group selected for this study is called the Igbo people. They are indigenes of the states located in South-East Nigeria, namely, Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States (Figure 2). Sharing the same geographical location with them are the people of Akwa-Ibom, Delta, Cross River and Rivers States (Figure 2). They also share boundaries with “the Igala and Idoma on the North, the Ijaw and the Ogoni on the South, the Yako

and the Ibibio on the Eastern boundary and the Benin and Warri on the West” (Agwaraonye 2011:77).

Igbos are the largest group of people living in South-East Nigeria. Nzomiuw (1999:1) affirmed that the Igbo are one of the most populous ethnic groups in Africa. The total land area of Igboland is about 15,800 square miles (about 41,000 square kilometres) comprising four different areas: the low-lying deltas and riverbank areas, heavily inundated during the rainy season, the very fertile, high plain central belt, and the Udi highlands, the only coal-mining area in West Africa. There are five major states in Igboland (cf. Figure 1). Linguistic, political, ritual, economic, social, and cultural characteristics of the Igbo people distinguish them from the other tribes in Nigeria.

Even though the Igbo people live in separate clusters, they only speak one language— Igbo Language. However, there are dialectical differences as one moves from south to north and east to west of the area. The Igbo societies, prior to the colonial era, had similar religious, social and political institutions. They lived as self-sufficient groups, unevenly secluded from each other, with each group comprising nearly 5000 people.

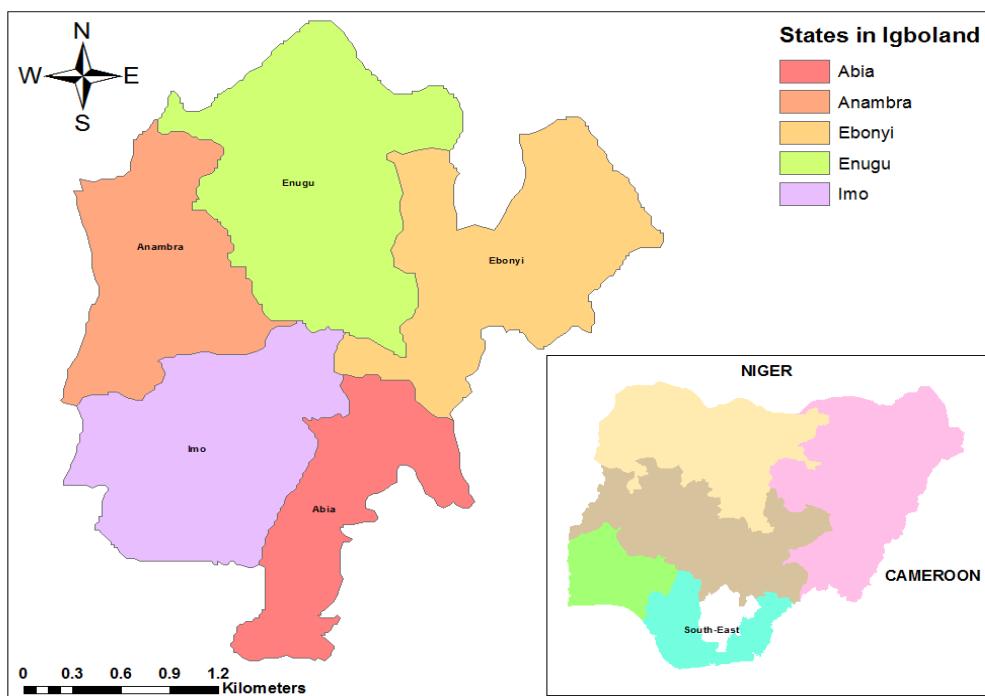


Figure 2 Map of the South-East zone in Nigeria showing the five states in the geopolitical region

The coming of the Portuguese in the mid-15th century marked the first contact of the Igbo with the Europeans, even though Nigeria as a country was not yet in existence. Their contact with Igboland as an area on the Niger Coast was for slave trading. Hence, the main product traded between the Igbo and Portuguese traders was slaves, which was transported to the New World. In 1807, with the official ending of the slave trade, Britain took control of the Niger Coast. This resulted in the amalgamation of the Southern (Igboland), Northern and Western protectorates in 1900, which formed the Nigerian nation. On October 1, 1960, Nigeria, which had been a British colony, gained her independence as a nation, with the different parts of the nation structured as a federation of states.

1.5 Research method

This study adopts a qualitative research method based on primary data on the early missionaries and secondary data including journal articles, magazines, book chapters, conference or seminar papers, newspapers, Internet material, and other works relevant to the study. To evaluate mission as humanisation with a focus on the missionary life and work of Bishop Shanahan, the study reviews literature on humanisation, interculturality and mission. It examines the socio-cultural and religious factors that impelled resilience and acceptance of Christianity in Igboland, as well as how the impact of early missionaries in maintaining humanisation and human dignity in the contemporary church was realized. The methodology adopted for this study concurs with Ekechi (2002) and Uzo (1988) who affirm the adoption of mixed methods due to the diverse nature of the study. This involves three phases, which follows Creswell's recommendations when using mixed methods (Clark & Creswell, 2008). These are:

- The qualitative phase, which enables this study to gain new insights about mission and humanity;
- The interpretative phase, which involves the description, interpretation and verification of literary sources on early missionaries, their activities and impact in Igboland; and
- The evaluative phase, which provides a means through which one can judge the effectiveness of particular strategies and practices.

1.6 Data collection

Since this study follows a qualitative approach, data used to examine and evaluate Joseph Shanahan's life and missionary activities in the South-East of Nigeria will be collected from books, diocesan documents, and other related research material. These will be used to interpret and evaluate missionary works and church growth where Shanahan worked, places in Igboland such as Onitsha, Nnewi, Owerri and Enugu, as samples for extrapolation. Out of the vicariate in Onitsha where Shanahan served, more than ten dioceses have emerged, including Onitsha, Enugu, Owerri, Ihiala, Orlu, Aba, Okigwe, Awka, Nsukka, Abakaliki, Awgu and Nnewi. These dioceses were initially the missionary stations annexed to the vicariate during the early mission. Currently, many of them have more than 30 parishes with large numbers of priests, Church centres and worshippers.

1.7 Limitations

My focus will be on the work and values that Bishop Shanahan exemplified in mission. While referring to other missionaries, this study mostly focuses on the mission theology, history, and missionaries in the Roman Catholic tradition. Although material exists on the life and works of Bishop Shanahan, not all the material is accessible due to the fact that some have been withdrawn from the public domain and submitted for the cause of his canonization to the Vatican authorities.

As expected, a study of this nature has certain limitations, for instance, considering the scope of the study, which comprises only the Igbo community of South-East Nigeria. Another problem is the insufficiency of required facts, which might be due to poor record keeping and documentation.

Although persons and clergies that personally knew and were related to Shanahan might still be alive, the research was not empirical. It is limited to literary sources and to archival resources; thus prompt and detailed access to these archives proves a further limitation to this study.

1.8 Research design

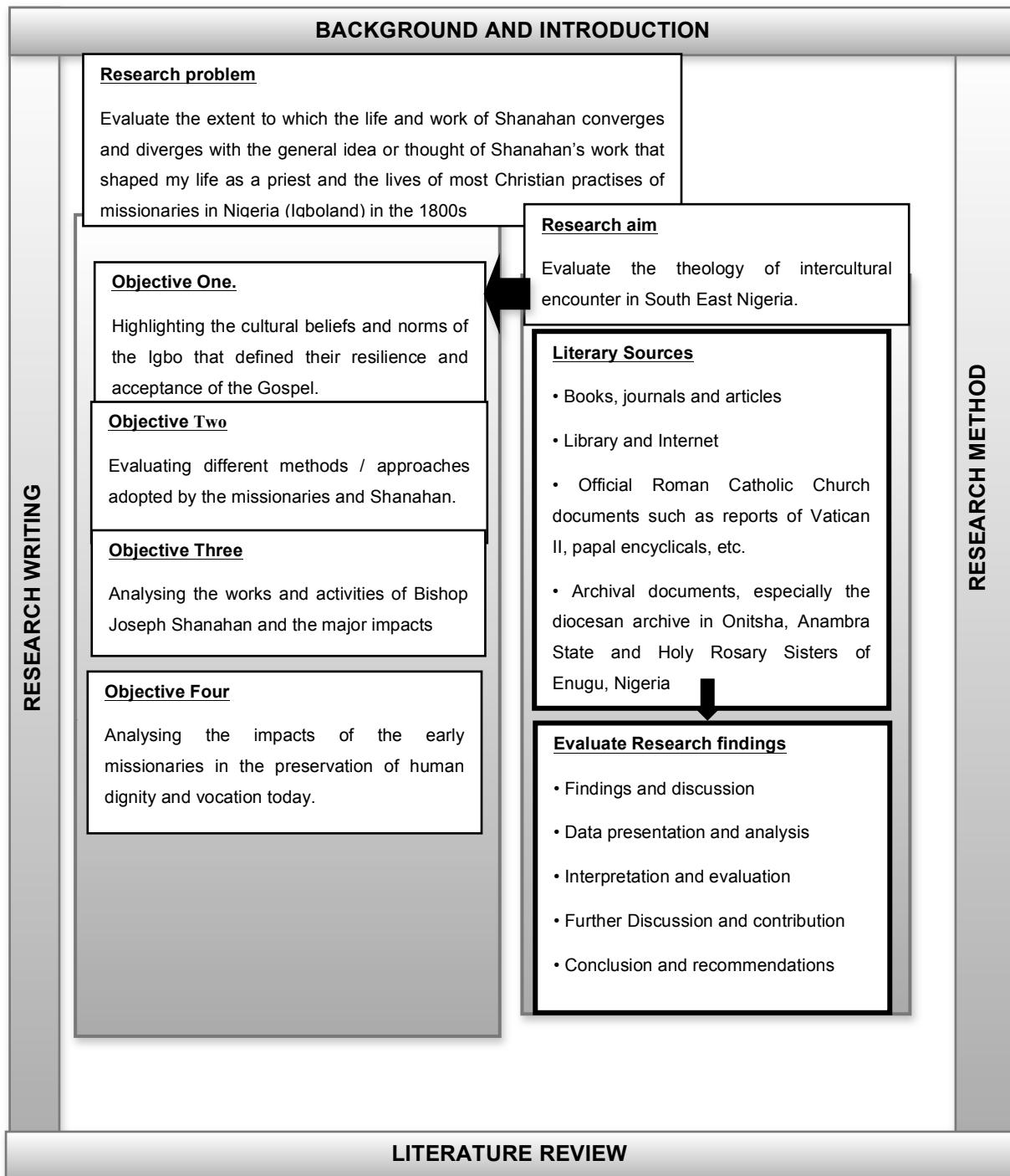


Figure 3 Research methodology designed for achieving the aims and objectives of the study
(Adapted from: Okoye, 2016).

1.9 Chapter outline

Chapter one covers the introductory section that briefly discusses the key issues of this study. This includes: the background, the conceptual framework of the study, the research problem, the rationale for the study, the research aim and objectives, the research design, as well as the scope and description of the study area. It further describes the method, instruments for data collection and analysis, and the limitations of the study.

Chapter two provides the literature review on humanisation and interculturality in relation to mission with particular reference to the Roman Catholic mission. It discusses the concept of humanisation, humanisation in the mission of Christ, and the Apostolate. It also reviews the history of mission and evangelism in the Roman Catholic Church, the beginnings of Mission, and the challenges of the Roman Catholic Church.

Chapter three explicates the traditional religion and Christianity in Igboland. It evaluates the relational controversies between Igbos and the early missionaries, presenting the resilience of the Igbos, their ambivalence and final acceptance of Christianity.

Chapter four explores the core of this thesis. It evaluates the missionaries, and primarily the life and works of Bishop Shanahan. Using the analytical tool of humanisation in mission it examines Shanahan's works and their lasting effect in the contemporary life and mission of the church in South-Eastern Nigeria. Then, the theological evaluation of intercultural convergence in the era of the early mission is analysed.

Chapter five relates early mission as humanisation to contemporary Christendom by assessing the growth of the Catholic Church after Shanahan. This chapter evaluates the impact of the Nigerian church on mission and the preservation of humanisation via respect of human dignity in the church today.

Chapter six gives the conclusion of the thesis by providing the summary of the study, expatiating fully on the research aim and contributions of this study. Lastly, it provides recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO:

HUMANISATION, INTERCULTURALITY AND MISSION

2.1 Introduction

The first two sections of this chapter will progressively develop the concept of humanisation—presenting criticisms on humanisation in mission, and at the same time presenting humanisation as a form of mission engagement—and then proceed to discuss the apostolate and a Christological review of mission. This is to establish the concept of humanisation as a yardstick for assessing Shanahan’s life and missionary work in Igboland. This chapter further discusses the notion of cultural receptivity, tolerance, and reconciliation, as well as evangelisation, communication, and education, as an integral part of mission. It also engages a historical overview of mission in the Roman Catholic Church from the pre-Vatican to the post-Vatican era. In addition, it highlights the particularity of Roman Catholic mission and mission challenges in Igboland, since this is the focal point of this study.

2.2 The concept of humanisation and mission

The concept of humanisation implies recognizing the dignity and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. Thus, engaging mission as humanisation makes the humanity of those to be evangelised a central part of the missionary consideration. In this, one acknowledges the human condition and needs of others, and helps them realize such, as well as makes it possible for people to actualize themselves. Mission as humanisation progresses from the person to be evangelised first as a human being then as a spiritual being. That is a movement from the temporal to the spiritual sphere. It entails human kindness, awareness of human existence, and respect for human dignity (Chatterji, 1971:185). There is a redemptive clause that underlies humanisation. In this process of redemption, all kinds of virtues are expected to be imbibed, namely, love, kindness, goodness, respect, patience, and peace. So, humanisation is about bringing balance to the different facets of human existence and it aims to reach the totality of the human person. It takes into consideration people’s personal experiences of the world, reflected in the socio-cultural, psychological and religious aspects of the individual. It does not leave any

aspect untouched since the unredeemed nature of the individual has the tendency to thwart that which has been salvaged. Humanisation, as it were, focuses on the things that promote the actualization of self-esteem and protection of human dignity (Hemingway, Scammell & Heaslip, 2012:27).

But quite disheartening is Little's observation of the direction the humanisation process took during the Enlightenment. Little (2008:65) blankly points out, "It is widely recognised that our present era has been fashioned by the Enlightenment which was successful at dislodging God and placing man's dignity, aspirations, values, and needs at the centre of the universe." But then thanks to the modern day perception of the concept. On this note, Little (2008:65) heartily comments, "The church has not remained impervious to this far-reaching reconstruction". Thomas (1971:10-11) earlier referred to this when he connected the "conceptual framework of Missio Dei such as mission as the dynamic relationship between God and the world" with mission as participation in the humanisation of the world.

The need to humanise the fallen human being cannot be overemphasised in the theology of mission. Even though the best of capitalism has been good, i.e. it has endowed people with the benefits of production, consumption and quality of life, more than any other economic system; a serious critique shows the downside of capitalism, which must be confronted. For instance, one in six in the United States are living in poverty. In South Africa, that figure is 50%—one in two. Even though between 2000 and 2006 many black people, according to the South Africa Market Research Foundation, moved into the upper middle class, we are still facing an economy in which a huge majority live in extreme poverty; on less than a dollar a day (Khoza, 2012:1). The same could be said about Nigeria where poverty has escalated to the extent that only a small percentage of Nigerians live on more than a dollar a day, about 100 million live below this (BBC World News Africa, 2012).

Reflecting on the foregoing scenario, one needs to understand that humanisation is of utmost importance to both the individual and the society due to the value it adds to life. Some theorists believe that humanisation influences culture, since it is Christ himself that influences culture. By extension, therefore, humanisation may be seen as the greater part of evangelisation, which Christ commanded his disciples to spread to the ends of the

earth. Humanisation and evangelisation, therefore, share the similarity of a redemptive character. The very goal of redeeming and restoring fallen humanity back to grace, which is the concern of humanisation, is also the aim of evangelisation. This process, as we have seen, must pass through the people's culture to reach to them. By virtue of this understanding, we are enjoined as Christians to share the redeemed aspect of culture with others for, according to Jupp,

Humanisation is beneficial because it introduces an improvement to an individual or a society at large. Proponents of humanisation argue that Christ influences culture, and we should share these redeemed aspects of culture to others. This is partly true. Jesus showed us what it meant to be truly human, and we should strive to share this perfect humanity with others. While critics sometimes define humanisation as "civilizing the uncivilized," the concept does not need to be understood in such a negative sense (Jupp, 2010:2).

The concept of humanisation in mission, therefore, is to make human life better. In this regard, the life of Bishop Shanahan is exemplar of humanisation. According to Bosch (2006:191), in the theological approach, the first attempt to humanise the world appeared in close relationship with God's offer of humanity in Jesus Christ. By this identification and humanity of Jesus, being one with God and the Son of God, drawing many to himself, rising from the dead, defeating sin and evil, the theologians laid the foundation of true humanisation (Bloesch, 2005:237). If we consider these deeds individually and reflectively, we will understand what the process of humanisation entails. Humanisation thus emulates Jesus. For instance, Jesus revealed his identity, that he is "one with God." Though equal with God, he lowered himself to share in the nature of humankind so as to interact with as many as would receive him. Through this, he was able to "draw many to himself" (Phil. 2:6-7, NRSV). He commissioned the church to evangelise the world; it was a mandate of humanisation, which entails making human life better.

By extension, humanisation has a bonding relationship with public theology, which as Koopman (2010) posits in his research report 'Some Contours for Public Theology in South Africa', proposes a universality of the 'Trinitarian' love of God. Koopman's (2010:123-138) striking statement at the beginning of the essay that "to ensure a redemptive and constructive, humanising and dignifying presence of Christian faith in public life, the practice of critical public theology is required" is itself critical of what he discovers in studying Hans Frei's 'five types of theology,' which all, irrespective of their

differing theological tasks, ‘reflect on Christian faith’ (Koopman, 2010:124). Following this discovery, he asserts that since all theologies equally reflect the Christian faith, it then becomes the task of all ‘theological disciplines to address the … questions regarding the contents, rationality and implications of the Christian faith or … the Trinitarian love of God’ (Koopman, 2010:126). By addressing the Christian faith, Koopman expects theology to project the Trinitarian love of God as a light that is shed across the hearts of all human beings without territorial barriers. He implies that the reflection of public theology on Christian faith must “challenge us to have God’s love for the whole world, for all of reality” (Koopman, 2010:134). In the eschatological framework, this very Trinitarian love of God is expressed through the humanity of Christ.

Therefore, the relevance of the humanity of Christ for the church is made manifest in the mission to all people and nations. Emphasizing the fact that the humanity of Christ is not solely for Christians alone, Chatterji (1971:186) opines, “…wherever those who profess to know Him have failed in their mission or been indifferent to the need for struggle for humanisation, He has used solely those who do not know Him or even those who are opposed to Him.” In Chatterji’s words lies the degree of the importance of humanisation. It connotes the indispensability of human beings and the importance of humanisation.

Humanisation, therefore, should be considered a cardinal aspect of mission, since it is the primary means of recognizing the innate value of an individual in preaching the message of Christ. Mission aims to bring people into relationship with Christ and to achieve this through evangelisation, which is the spreading of the gospel. For Bevans & Schroeder (2004), the terms ‘mission’ and ‘evangelisation’ are interlinked. Mission, which is the “mother of church,” is viewed as a great task given to the believers “that binds them together, provides them with nourishment, focuses their energies, heals their sinfulness and provides them with challenge and vision” (Bevans & Schroeder, 2004:11). Christian actions that exhibit Christ’s traits, as in their model, are exemplary to people. Behaviour, according to Bevans & Schroeder, is the best way to evangelise, because by exhibiting exemplary character, these Christians are able to make converts of many. For Bevans & Schroeder, words alone are not enough. This is a practical way to teach, to evangelise, and to humanise. In Pope Francis’ homily on the 10th of December 2013 (*Evangelium Gaudium*, part 8) on the Advent journey, the Pope said that as shepherds, the evangelisers should make it real by smelling like their sheep. By so doing we will reflect the

missionary joy to God's people.² A missionary shares the good news and evangelises, just as the apostles in the Acts of the Apostles did. The missionary often renounces everything about him-/herself and devotes their life to the service of people. By becoming poor, the missionary prepares for the gospel, overcoming attachment with the world, thus enabling him/her to be available to those served, thus bringing them Christ, the Saviour (1 Corinthians 9:22-23, RSV). This is the goal of missionary spirituality. Therefore, mission as humanisation radically manifests in the act of mission itself, bearing the humanity exemplified in Christ that formed the origin of Christian mission. Chatterji (1971:190) believes that:

The dehumanising forces are...commonly identified as poverty, starvation, disease, ignorance...while the task of humanisation is seen to be identical with solving these specific problems....I am not trying to say...that the Church and other voluntary agencies should not rush with relief and aid....What I do want to emphasize is the fact that the sum total of all these concerns does not exhaust the concern for humanisation.

In mission, the policies of humanisation are the means through which humanisation is established, for true humanisation in the recognition of its eschatological standpoint and Messianic actuality. Chatterji goes on to assert that the Messianic actuality includes the very things that embody the theme of the policies of humanisation and the dynamic notion of the actuality. This implies essential restitution through destruction or adjustment that is dependent on the main causes of dehumanisation and pliability of the structures (Chatterji, 1971:194). Regardless of the revolution or reform, the policies of humanisation are both a concept of theology and ideology. Theology and ideology, as seen here, are two sides of the same coin that must operate hand-in-hand for the unification of the objectives of humanisation with which the church is engaged. While theology completely emanates from the things of the church (or rather the things of God), ideology cannot be completely attributed to secularism. It has to do with those guiding ideas and beliefs that form the consciousness of a like-minded set of individuals. Since Christians think alike, their own ideology may be said to have been built on their belief in God. Humanisation does not discard secular ideology completely, but improves it for the betterment of humankind. Hence, the opinion here is that both theology and ideology need to be incorporated in the church's mission as humanisation at present.

² Viewed from: www.americanmagasin.org. [Accessed:9 July 2017]

2.3 Receptivity, tolerance and reconciliation as components of humanisation

Receptivity, tolerance, and reconciliation are an intrinsic part of humanisation that ensures a successful mission. The ability to receive and tolerate the culture of the people to whom the gospel is brought enables intercultural reconciliation and success in mission. It gives a human face to mission, since it implies that the evangeliser considers the other as valued and dignified. Reception of linguistic culture is the basis for fruitful mission. It is very important that one who aims at imparting another understands the other's language, since it is the primary means of communicating and transferring the good news of the gospel. Hence, the reason for the introduction of the philosophy of anthropology for the missionaries in the 18th century. The missionary effort yields less fruit when there is a language barrier. So, where language becomes a barrier, cultural tolerance is equally at stake. Language and culture are interwoven to such a degree that the missionary's inability to speak the people's language translates to a poor perception and understanding of the people's cultural peculiarities, and invariably to an insufficiency in humanisation tools. Communication, therefore, encompasses language and culture. It is not only verbal; there are signs, symbols, thought patterns, attitudes, etc., that are cultural in themselves through which the people also communicate.

Mission as humanisation entails a conscious effort to learn both verbal and non-verbal means of communication built into the people's culture for successful missionary work. In so doing, the missionary learns how to approach the people concerning the aspects of their culture that seem to contradict the gospel he/she brings. Change, therefore, remains constant in this interaction. The missionary brings the message of change and also experiences change due to the cultural encounter.

The age-long philosophical assertion that change is the only thing that is permanent retains certain indisputable facticity, and amidst this flux is a continued attack and collision that sometimes seems to impact on the relationship between language and truth and their impact on knowledge claims. "All truth claims involve the interpretation of a linguistic situation and, therefore, require careful semantic analysis, using either pragmatic or formal semantic techniques" (Kirk, 1999:7). There would be no need to talk about truth claims if there were no challenges posed by language. These challenges

emanate as a result of the change that occurs over time on the effects of language. This is where the philosophy of language comes in with the tool of semantics, as Kirk asserts, to offset the imbrications of change on language and uncover the actual meaning contained in such expressions, whether they be verbal or non-verbal. It is seen, then, that semantics is another important factor that missionaries need to avail themselves of.

The good news is that growth was eminent at this point of intersection — of language, culture and semantics — which also informed the radical change and at the same time looked at so many things from different perspectives. It aided the radical movement of missionaries to the ends of the interior hinterlands of Africa and Asia, especially in the fifteenth century. The early missionaries place more priority on mission than their lives. This is explained by the rate at which European missionaries embraced the coasts of the African continent from the fifteenth century and in the succeeding centuries. This incremental rate was because of the foundation led by the very first set of missionaries who encountered the continent's culture in its unadulterated form. Conversely, some of the early missionaries became a guise for the incursion of European merchants on slaves. It was also during this era that human slavery became buoyant merchandise for Europeans. They entered with the assistance of their compatriot missionaries and turned Africa and Asia into human merchandise zones.

But worthy of note is that some of the early missionaries neglected the culture of the people as well as their language. Perceiving the people as lost souls to be won and concentrating more on the spiritual sphere of evangelisation, they imposed the gospel. Their attention was not given to the culture of the recipients of the gospel. Another reason for their intolerance, outside perceiving the African soul as lost, was the mental condition of the missionaries due to the crisis of religion in Europe. Though responding to the mandate of Christ, to make disciples of all nations, the missionary came from a background characterized by much division due to the Reformation.

Reception of the African culture by the missionaries was problematic. They considered Africans to be unbelievers, and totally condemned their culture as paganism. They therefore sought to replace African culture with their own. But my concern in this thesis is the early missionaries, with special focus on Bishop Joseph Shanahan, who took religion seriously, and in a positive sense, to be people-centered. Not those who consider

it as the opium of the masses and a guise for oppression and subjugation. Receptivity, therefore, would mean considering things that unite more than those that divide. It is considering commonalities in every religion and culture, and finding in these similarities reasons for cultural tolerance, which is often not easy given that the problem is not mainly with religion but with humanity.

The very question of religious coexistence should be of concern to both missionaries and theologians, as well as a disturbing thought to every stakeholder in society. The chaotic conflicts that go on in society have the largest roots in religious intolerance. No religious adherent agrees to cross the same line with the adherents of another religion. Yet all religions profess the worship of the same God. Among Christians, there still exists the issue of religious intolerance. Religious intolerance questions the possibility of evangelising the ends of the world and its positive result. The key to achieving this tremendously positive result is tolerance. There must be tolerance first among adherents of the same religion before there could be among adherents of different religions.

In a ‘narrative exegesis,’ Walter J. Hollenweger used the letter of St. Paul to show how interactive and simple the Christian life could be. Walter discusses the need for mutual understanding and tolerance among Christians. But the highlight is the need to translate the gospel to address the need of the converts and to make it less prescriptive. This approach to the gospel is inclusive and leaves no part of the Christian body out of consideration. Amongst the three identifiable groups, the slaves did not expect to be freed in the secular society, but they did expect – and Paul backs up their expectation – to be of equal standing in the church (Hollenweger, 2010:23). What this shows is the potentials of interactivity and inclusivity. Through interaction, everyone airs his or her views. Intentions and meanings that are hidden in people’s hearts are unveiled, and those that require immediate attention receive the same, while those that need time to be worked upon are treated as such. In this kind of environment, no offence or grudge is left buried in the recesses of anyone’s psyche. And so, everyone feels free, fulfilled, and like they belong.

Furthermore, reconciliation as a component of humanisation proposes an in-depth union with God, whose intention was to make human beings in His own image—Genesis 1:26. Also, it further requires people to be reconciled with one another, and with oneself. Being reconciled with oneself is perhaps the most important. It takes one who is at peace with

oneself to be at peace with one's neighbour. And how can one decide to love God if one does not first love oneself? So, it takes this order: reconciliation to oneself, and reconciliation to God who will in turn help one to be reconciled to one's neighbour.

But instead of reconciliation, the crisis of knowledge has led humankind to fighting. It has multiplied knowledge in what Philip Clayton calls the cacophony of voices (cited in Kirk and Vanhoozer, 1999:79); hence no one pays attention to the other. Robert Stanley, responding to Brian Stanley's paper presented at the centenary Edinburgh conference of 1910, believes "that the best hope for reconciling warring humanity with itself appears to lie in the propagation of the Gospel of Christ" (1999:98), and the actualization of the aim of creation. And responding to the question of what ecumenism means for the survival of mankind, Margull holds that ecumenism should serve to bridge the gap in human relationships, thus echoing the idea of liberation that was first discussed in Louvain (also debated in the first World Conference of Liberation on Asian ground, at New Delhi in 1961), "where Church Unity hitherto regarded as an internal problem was exposed to questions like justice, religions, racism, the handicapped in society and the cultural differences of mankind. In this development, the Younger Churches have not failed to play their part" (Margull, 2010:16). He further highlights that the problem of liberation has continued to be a problem for theology, particularly in its dealing with the idea of Third World Christianity.

Receptivity, therefore, would mean considering things that unite us more than those that divide. It leads to always sieving out the hidden elements that are common to every religion, and thus, the reason to be tolerant towards them, which is often not so easy given that the problem is not with religion but rather with humanity. If humans are to allow religions to coexist for some time we will end up with cross-pollination without a trace of interconnectivity on how one differed from the other. South Africa, for instance, presents a nation still grappling with the effects of apartheid and racial discrimination that reigned even in the churches and places of worship. Most of the children at school or on the streets do not even see these boundaries unless someone pointed it out to them. So, it is more of the things of the mind than reality that we are being challenged with when tolerance is mentioned, or reconciliation envisioned.

2.4 Evangelisation, communication and education

Both sections 2.3 and 2.4 are interchangeably twisted and can be represented inversely to hold together the mission mandate. As components of mission and humanisation, therefore, we might be repeating the forms and the objectives thereof for both. How can one know unless one has been thought and the one that teaches gives the word of the Lord? So, tolerance creates an atmosphere for the receptivity of the message of the gospel. In the process of evangelisation both parties are educated with the power to be docile, and enlightened to reconcile and tolerate one another to the extent of allowing the other their space. In either way, language plays a very important role in keeping with the same principles. Evangelisation, redemption and education happen simultaneously in mission and humanisation. These components are interlinked to the extent that people feel evangelised when they experience redemption or salvation; and evangelisation at the same time is the process of enlightenment through education. According to Pope John Paul II (1990) in *Redemptoris Missio*, mission, evangelisation and redemption (or salvation) are holistic in nature. The encyclical repeatedly referred to mission as integral to evangelisation, which is the current missiological thought as well as Catholic magisterial teaching. The document further described that preaching the kingdom and promoting its values are the evangelising tasks of the Church, which is effectively, and concretely at the service of the kingdom. It is important at this point to emphasize the theology of the Holy Spirit in mission and evangelisation that brings salvation and enlightenment. The Holy Spirit occupies an important space in evangelisation because His presence and activity do not only affect individuals but also society, history, people, cultures, and religions (Kroger, 2016:11-12). The Holy Spirit is the active and vital principle in mission and humanisation.

In line with the foregoing, Doe (2008:1-2) stated that evangelism is strongly connected to mission. There is, as it is, a necessary connection between evangelism, redemption or salvation and enlightenment. Doe further said, “As ‘Christians’ (Anglicans) we are called to participate in God’s mission in the world by embracing respectful evangelism, loving service and prophetic witness. Mission and evangelism therefore is the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus Christ, the good news of God’s love, incarnated in the witness of a community for the sake of the world”.

2.5 Christological and apostolic review of mission

Mission is when evangelism crosses cultural, spiritual and/or geographical boundaries. In carrying out mission, missionaries are regarded as carriers of one culture to meet another. This movement in the early missionary history has often been from a culture of relative comfort and convenience to one with less. The question of Christian mission centres on Jesus Christ, his teachings and the good news. This implies that a good missionary is required to have an adequate knowledge of Jesus and his/her message, as well as be able to replicate this in his/her life and work so as to impart it to the lives of the people to whom one is sent. Jesus Christ is God's revelation to humankind (John 14:9). According to Mugambi (2013:165), mission cannot progress in the absence of adequate interpersonal relationships. He observes that:

Missionary activity, conducted for the purpose of winning potential converts, can best succeed if those involved in outreach are prepared and willing to acknowledge the capacity of the converts to grasp, understand and appropriate the New Message in their own respective cultural contexts, on their own terms and in their own conceptual frames of reference. Whenever and wherever such readiness and willingness is lacking on the part of the missionary, potential and actual converts respond in ways and means totally unpredictable to the missionary agents.

According to Mugambi, therefore, the culture of the individual for whom the gospel borne in mission is intended is paramount to the success of mission, and the missionary must be ready to respect it. However, Mugambi is not in any way insinuating that the missionary abandons his/her purpose of converting such individual for the demands or norms of the individual's culture. Rather, he implies that the missionary ought also to have certain knowledge about the culture encountered in mission. Understanding the intricacies of other cultures helps in relating the message of the gospel. The missionary's interpersonal relationship with the people must not lead him/her to yield to negative compromises. He/she imbibes this sense of inculcation only when the culture is not detrimental to his/her belief, purpose, and the entire aim of mission.

The Acts of the Apostles signifies only one stream of events of the New Testament theology of mission. The genealogy of biblical theology stretches from the "mission of inclusivity and universality in the Old Testament" to the mission of Jesus as an 'evangel'

and evangelist and “post-resurrection faith of the first disciples”, as witnesses to Jesus’ gospel (Bevans & Schroeder, 2004:305). However, with regards to ‘mission,’ the book of Acts often surfaces instantaneously into the discussion. This is expected since Acts is all about the mission and growth of the early church. It is the announcement of the Church, where the apostles lived the gospel as received from Christ before His ascension. At the beginning of Acts, the words of Christ: “You will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to earth’s remotest end,” give a comprehensive summary of the whole book of Acts (Acts 1:2-8). The word ‘mission’ is derived from the Latin verb ‘*mittere*,’ meaning ‘to send’ or ‘to dispatch’. Jesus uses mission when He explains how the ‘Father has sent Him, and He also sends us’ (John 20:21), although the concept of *mission* is referenced throughout the Old Testament to the book of Psalms. The book of Acts does not narrate a history of the early Church often rationalised by many people; rather, it explains the power of the gospel and transformation of the Roman Empire through the preaching of the apostles.

The Acts of the Apostles synoptically narrates the spreading of the gospel by the apostles to the ‘ends of the earth’ (Acts 1:8). Bevans and Schroeder (2004:12) believe that Luke, the author of Acts, constructed the theological history of the earliest times of the Christian community in a somewhat idealised and schematized form. For them, though Luke “undoubtedly made clear his own interpretation of events, he has also left a sufficient number of lacunae and loose ends for us to be able to construct our own interpretation, and this says a lot for his basic honesty” (Bevans and Schroeder, 2004:12). In further describing Luke’s account of a great number of missionary events with historical value in Acts, Bevans and Schroeder hold that, as Luke redefines the narrative, it is imperative to recognise the way he does it as a key to understanding the kind of history he tried to write (Bevans and Schroeder, 2004:12).

The mission of the Apostles aptly narrated by Luke clearly indicates the place of Jesus and the place of the Holy Spirit in evangelisation. Despite arguments by scholars on the theological nature of Acts, it is generally agreed that “Luke is a theologian. He wrote the book of Acts, not simply to tell interesting stories or to record facts for posterity, but in order to put forth his own distinctive ideas about God’s interaction with us through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit” (Bevans & Schroeder, 2004:12).

Luke's narrative is admittedly selective, describing the events in "a highly schematized account of development of ecclesial consciousness" (Rosemann, 2007:14). Contrary to the Gospel of Mathew, the action of the death of Jesus, His resurrection, and the disciples' witness of His ascension are presented by Luke as actions that progress towards Jerusalem. The action branches out from Jerusalem to other cities and to the 'ends of the earth,' thereby presenting the church's mission progress (Bevans & Schroeder, 2004:29). Bevans & Schroeder further hold that seven distinct stages in this vivid theological narrative are discerned from Acts; the seven stages represent particular moments of the community's understanding of its mission and its understanding of itself as the church (Bevans & Schroeder, 2004:13). The focus of this study is on 'stage five,' which includes the excerpts of Saul/Paul's conversion and mission.

The seven letters written by Paul on his mission over a period of about seven to eight years recognised the missionary dimension of Paul's theology (Glasser, 1999:153). His mission did not flow from his theology; rather, his theology is a missionary theology (Bevans & Schroeder, 2004:11). The mission is integrated into his identity and thought. This, according to Bosch (1991/2011:126), stems from the fact that Paul's view and participation in mission "is not a dangling abstract from a universal principle, but an analysis of reality triggered by an initial experience that gave him a new world-view" as a convert himself.

The conversion of Paul is mentioned three times in Acts, and each occurrence includes slightly different details. This might be due to the audience present or the message he was conveying (Acts 9:3-8; 22:6-11; 26.13-19). While Paul's conversion depicts a triumph of love and the revelation of God's great love for all as well as desire for repentance, it accentuates the great merciful love that God has for each person, regardless of the magnitude of their wrongdoings. The message that one can derive from Paul's conversion entails that judgement and condemnation are personal decisions of individuals and not God's own making. Individuals encounter God in diverse ways. What matters is what one makes of his/her own encounter with God. At the point of his own encounter, Saul obeyed and became Paul. Throughout his life and ministry he also exhibited constant repentance, showing that repentance does not happen once and for all. The need for continual repentance and conversion shows the constant power of God's calling on peoples' lives and reflects their responsiveness to Christ's call. The conversion of St. Paul

is the foundation for his great missionary activity for the Church of Christ. St Paul took the good news beyond the deserving nation (the Jews) to the undeserved (the Gentiles), showing that God's love and redemption shows no favouritism. Taking the message of Christ to the "Gentile nations" expresses Christ's desire that the message be witnessed to the 'ends of the earth'.

Moreover, the apostles and other disciples, according to the history of the mission of the early church, adopted various mission strategies to reach the people as well as equip others for the mission. In those days, in the life of the church, the converts surrendered their resources to assist people in evangelism and mission, although there was a lack of dedication in peoples' lives. Numerous books on mission strategies and evangelism, and many inspiring stories in Acts, however, narrate the missionary journeys of Paul, the apostles, and the disciples till date. The call to mission is not limited to a few, but to all members of the mystical body of Christ. The gospel is to be shared with all people (Mathew 28:19-21). Jesus is on a mission from the Father and He sends us on a mission to continue his work of redemption. By this call and life of witnessing, Jesus is made manifest.

2.6 A brief look at Roman Catholic mission history

Before the 16th century, the history of the Roman Catholic mission was the same as the history of Christian mission until the English Reformation that led to the birth of the Church of England (Anglican), occasioned by a series of events in England. These events were political, theological and sociological, and included: the decline of feudalism and a rise in national consciousness, the refusal of Henry VIII to accept the decision of the Church on marriage annulment and the divorce of his first wife, to mention a few. These and industrialism at the time initiated the English Reformation that started the religious protest against the Catholic Church and the eventual separation of the Church of England from papal authority, and subsequently, spurred Martin Luther's idea of reformation. He initiated the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century that questioned the traditions of the Catholic Church, which eventually led to the separation of the Protestants.

Until this time, the history of the Catholic Church dates to the time of the apostles. The spreading of the gospel also began with the apostles, especially Peter's dream at Joppa

that led to his visit to the house of Cornelius. And secondly, the acts that led Paul to be recognised as the Apostle of the Gentiles, hence his commitment to preach the gospel to non-Jews. Separate religions were never an intention of the apostles, hence the reason for the Council of Jerusalem and several warnings by Paul that Christ was not divided. To this reason, Bosch, citing Brown (1980) and Schweizer (1971), states that:

...during the early stages, there was clearly no intention to form a separate religion. The Judaism of the time exhibited a degree of pluralism, which permitted Jewish Christianity to exist as one group among many without severing its links with the main body. The members of the Jesus community continued to worship in the temple and the synagogues. The situation only changed after the Jewish War and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 (Bosch, 1991/2011:42).

Thus, the mission history of the Roman Catholic Church briefly reviewed in this thesis takes the Vatican Council II as the summit of mission in the life of the contemporary Church. My relation of mission in the Roman Catholic Church, therefore, will be divided into the following stages: before, during, and after the Vatican Council II. This is done to establish the place of Joseph Shanahan, first as a catholic missionary, and second, as sent in the name of the church to the African mission, which is one of the missions that the Vatican Council regards as essential for the life of the church in general.

2.6.1. Brief mission history of the Roman Catholic Church: Pre-Vatican II

Rome became the seat of the Catholic Church after the conversion of Constantine, who continued with the mission mandate to preach to the ends of the earth, and was not discouraged by persecution and trials. By the fifteenth century, mission and missionary activities were centred on the Mediterranean region, until the time the Portuguese set out to establish new colonial empires for business and for slave trade. Having encountered a new culture in their trade, they also discovered a lack of Christian belief and negotiated for one. Hence, Robert Wuthnow writes that:

...when Europeans first came to the American continent they were, of course, encountering a world that could scarcely be considered Christian. They were nevertheless optimistic. In fact, Christopher Columbus and his crew thought the making of a Christian land in the New World would happen easily.... Columbus's voyage was undertaken with several goals in mind, not the least of which was to discover treasure for the Spanish crown and to ensure his own fortune and place in history. But the voyage was also inspired by a religious mission, one that not only reflects his own faith and the rising influence of the Spanish monarchy in western

Christendom but that also illustrated the large reasons for Europe's eagerness to believe that America would become a Christian land (Wuthnow, 2007:10-11).

Furthermore, the Church's missionary effort could be seen in the different Councils that were convoked at different stages. These Councils were called up by the encounters of the Church on its missionary journey. A typical example is the Council of Jerusalem otherwise called the Apostolic Council held in Jerusalem in AD 50. This Council, which is the first, treated the issue of Gentile Christian inclusion in the Church, where it was ruled that they are not obliged to keep all the Mosaic laws like circumcision. The second council, the Council of Nicaea, which was held in Nicaea on July 4, AD 325, discussed the creed that professes the belief of Christians. This council produced the Nicene Creed that summarises the faith of Christians. The First Council of Constantinople convened in AD 381; it was also an ecumenical council, where they discussed and concluded the creed. Among other councils is the Council of Trent held between 1547 and 1563, and is recognised as the embodiment of the Counter-Reformation that was convoked in response to the Reformation brought about by King Henry VIII and Martin Luther. The Council of Trent, therefore, discussed the Church and its position regarding Protestants. It also initiated the preparation for the Vatican II Council held 400 years after the Council of Trent. These councils contributed immeasurably to the formation of the Christian faith and its structure.

The session for the councils was informed by the problem the Church was facing at that particular point in time. As a matter of fact, they all reveal the Church's effort to break through barriers in her mission to minister the Word of God. These barriers range from communication inadequacy to religious intolerance. Here, the councils dealt with these problems, although not eradicating them completely.

So, these series of councils communicate the burning desire in the life of the Roman Catholic Church to live out the vocation of calling people to one-fold where Christ is the Lord and Shepherd. In addition to the Councils, especially the Council of Trent, that inspired the convocation of the Vatican Council II, there are also individuals that lived before the Vatican II that exhibited characters that contributed to this Council's convocation. Individuals like Roberto de Nobili (Collins, 2007) proved themselves authentic missionaries by the various strategies that they applied in the face of challenges

in the mission field. Roberto, a Jesuit priest born in Italy in 1577, spent his missionary life in India applying all the principles of Vatican II even though he lived and worked in the pre-Vatican II era. He used the theory of adaptation that he developed—a theory that is inculcated in form. In his view, whichever culture suits the liturgy of the church or the teaching of the scripture should be used in evangelisation. Hence, he believed that this missionary method is rooted in both the New Testament witness and the Catholic tradition. Shanahan, who is the main focus of this research, practised this theory of adaptation and humanisation in his encounter and mission in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria. Chapter four of this thesis deals more specifically with Shanahan's missionary works interpreted in the light of humanisation and interculturality.

2.6.2. Roman Catholic Church mission history: Vatican II

Until Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church responded mainly to practical challenges. Thus, an in-depth study of Vatican II and a reading of the Council's documents revealed that mission was the central framework of the Church. In deeper thought, one could refer to Vatican Council II as a missionary council, since it centres on connecting and structuring the totality of Catholic mission. It addressed the issues that missionaries encountered. The council fathers at Vatican Council II expressed awareness of the presence of God and even of religions that do not profess Christ. The notion of mission changed from confrontational to more an understanding and inclusive relationship. In John Cardinal Onaiyekan's (2013:110) terms:

At this point, when people were becoming more tolerant, the Catholic Church went through the providential revolution of an Ecumenical council, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).... Vatican II came with a new spirit. Pope John XXIII led the church to open itself to others whether non-Catholics or non-Christians.

Furthermore, on the theoretical and theological levels, a new theology of the church emerged. The Sacred Council strongly advocates an erasure of the past. It “pleads with all to forget the past, and [urge] that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding; for the benefit of all men, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values” (*Nostra Aetate*, 1964: para 3). Finally, the Council came out with the whole document on religious freedom: The Declaration on Religious Liberty (*Dignitatis Humanae*, 1965).

The *Sacrosanctum Concilium*'s acceptance of the vernacular (Flannery, 1975:53; SC, 36.2) and sensitivity of the liturgy documents to local cultures and customs (Flannery 1975:32; SC, 37) won the support of many missionary bishops. The Council accepts liturgy as the centre of mission and requires adaptation in the celebration of the liturgy to suit any given cultural environment. It upholds as a missionary statement the fact that "the liturgy is the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed. At the same time, it is the fountain from which all her power flows" (Flannery, 1975:6; SC, 10). Mission during the Vatican Council is linked to the Eucharist, in particular, the belief that "the liturgy, particularly the Eucharist, is a missionary act [of nourishment] for more selfless and effective apostolic service" (Flannery, 1975:111-114).

Christ's light shining on all people of every nation becomes the resultant effect of proclaiming the gospel to the ends of the earth (Bevans, 2013:264). Light, here, is metaphorically used to symbolise the peace, joy, love, prosperity, etc., that emanate from Christ towards mankind by reason of the preaching of the gospel. This, in turn, indicates the transformative power of greatness that is embedded in the gospel of Christ. The gospel unites the human person with God with the Church serving as the sacrament of this unity; an instrument of unity among mankind, and between God and man (Flannery, 1975:350; LG, 1). The end of the LG 16 and the whole of LG 17 drafts the motives, contents, and methods of the mission of the Church. The LG 17 insists that mission should treat cultures with respect and that "the obligation of spreading the faith is imposed on every disciple of Christ, according to his or her ability" (Flannery, 1975:369).

Similar to LG, the Constitution on Divine Revelation - *Dei Verbum* (DV)³ (Word of God) also begins with a missionary vision (Bevans, 2013:265). Like the Councils of Trent and Vatican I, the preface shows the document as presenting the Church's authentic teaching on revelation and tradition, "...so that by hearing the message of salvation, the entire world may believe. By believing, it may hope and by hoping, it may love" (Flannery, 1975:13; DV, 1). Bevans (2013: 265) believes that "the council's desire to renew and reform the Catholic Church spiritually and institutionally was for the sake of making the Church a more effective sacrament of God's mission in the world." He further asserts that many missiologists like the Italian Gianni Colzani believed that though "at the first

³ cf. A. Flannery (ed.), (1975:663). *Vatican II. Dei Verbum: The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*. Dublin: Dominican Publications, 18 November, 1965.

glance, it may seem that the theme of the Church's mission ... was not a major issue at the Second Vatican Council, nor a major factor in the hermeneutic" (261), yet documents like *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *Dei Verbum*, and *Ad Gentes* in particular, have developed the Decree of the Mission Activity of the Church. Hence, the Church so to say is more organised in terms of her approach to mission and missionary activities with much consideration given to the background of various individuals. This is aptly presented in the documents of Vatican II.

2.6.3. Roman Catholic mission history: Post Vatican II

The three issues confronting the reality of mission today include inculturation, migration and justice. To encourage the renewed vigour of the Church to engage in mission as reaching out and involving other cultures in justice and peace, Pope John Paul II officially calls for 'new evangelisation,' while Pope Benedict XVI inaugurates the Pontifical Council for the 'new evangelisation' or 'renewed evangelisation.' He also convoked the Synod of Bishops in 2012 to discuss evangelisation and the church. It was a time for the Catholic Church to reaffirm the council's missionary intentions and methods, mostly in the precepts of the new world. Post-Vatican II documents encouraged more dialogue, ecumenism and intercultural communication between Catholics, other Christians and non-Christian religions:

Far from wishing to be the one in whose name a person would kill other people, he (God) requires believers to join together in the service of life in justice and peace. Particular case will therefore be taken so that Islam-Christian dialogue respects on both sides the principle of religious freedom with all that this involves, also including external and public manifestations of faith. Christians and Muslims are called to commit themselves to promoting a dialogue free from the risk of false militant fundamentalism, and to raising their voice against unfair policies and practices, as well as against the lack of reciprocity in matters of religious freedom (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 1995).

Apart from the testimonies of many Church fathers and missionaries who witnessed the success of collaboration, reconciliation and dialogue, Vatican II provided a more informed and mature attitude of understanding and love towards non-Catholics. By doing so, Vatican II seems, through its practice, to encourage heroic and exemplary witnessing, which Schreiter (2009:99) asserts as follows: "The 'going out' and discipline of the

modern period called for practices and conceptions of the missionary as the ‘super-disciple,’ leaving behind all things and engaging in heroic effort, even to the point of martyrdom”. In 1964, Vatican II also resulted in the establishment of an office by Pope Paul VI called Secretariat for Non-Christians, for the promotion of relations with all non-Christian believers. Later, in 1974, the office was renamed the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), providing services as a positive sign from the side of the Church and her disposition to address the well-being of all—both within and outside the Church. This idea of opening the door to those outside the Church confirms the Church’s belief that she stands as God’s salvific action in our present time. Hence, she reaches out to all people in ways unknown to us. It also pointed to the autonomy of the secular world with which the Church is called to dialogue. The decree on religious freedom upheld the primacy of conscience and the visibility and social nature of its pursuit of truth. The constitution of the Church spoke of it as the sacrament of the unity of all people and the beginning of the reign of God (Amaladoss, 1990:271).

With a new dawn in human history, occasioned by the Vatican II Council, the constitution and decrees were altered to incorporate these vital essences of humanity necessary for coexistence. Pope John Paul II encouraged all Christians to participate in mission according to their capacity, thus forming the important part of mission theology and acknowledging that all are “labourers in the Lord’s vineyard [and all] have vocation in building up the Kingdom” (Pope John Paul II, 1988:53). From the time of Pope John Paul’s injunction, it becomes obvious that each individual’s capacity is of utmost importance for mission building. Each person is required to assume certain roles according to his/her ability. Like scriptural labourers, Christians as missionaries are given individual talents and are required to use them in the work of mission, especially in our contemporary time and its inventions.

Our common destiny, according to Vatican Council II, is established in the universal, salvific will of God. One of the four principal dogmatic constitutions issued by Vatican II, as indicated in DV, explicitly says that God wishes to “give eternal life to all who seek salvation by patience in well-doing” (Flannery, 1975:751). How does God manifest this will towards all who existed before and beyond the linguistic and structural confines of the Church or the Christian faith? *Nostra Aetate* indicates that the answers can be seen in covenant theology. It unambiguously links the origin of Jewish salvation to the covenant

with Abraham and Islamic salvation indirectly to the same covenant (Flannery, 1975:740-1).

However, there are two great pre-Abrahamic covenants declared in scripture – the creation itself (Genesis 2:3; Exodus 31:16ff) and the restoration of humanity after the flood (Genesis 9:17). Based on that, God’s covenant with humanity starts with creation and the other post-covenants in the scriptures are linearly deducible from this basic relationship. DV reiterates the position of the First Vatican Council that God “provides men with constant evidence of himself in created realities” (Flannery, 1975:750-65). In cultural parlance, these created realities are simply known as Mother Nature. It encompasses all physical realities through which God manifests himself to people. That God manifests himself in these things does not in any way entail that anyone can ever see him. On the contrary, when people ponder on the wonders of God’s creation, it makes them revere and extol God more. It fortifies the faith of devoted Christians, causing them to give more of their best to God’s work. They increase their expectancy of having to meet God face to face someday. In the same vein, they increase their hunger to live in holiness. The *Lumen Gentium* (LG) (Flannery, 1975:350-426) explains that God wills the religions of the world as long as they make people holy, “not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness”

Nevertheless, different world religions can be viewed as covenantal responses to one of God’s covenants. Genuine affiliation to any religion places one into a distinct tie with the Catholic faith, which has its heritage in the Abrahamic covenant as well as the covenant of Noah, Adam and Eve. Vatican II says they “belong or are related” (Flannery, 1975:365) to the Catholic faith, and “whatever good or truth is found amongst them is considered by the Church to be a preparation for the Gospel” (Flannery, 1975:368). *Gaudium et Spes* (GS) encapsulates this as follows: “...and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery” (Flannery, 1975:924). By seeing all people of goodwill as crypto-Christians, St. Augustine emphasises that:

The salvation which belongs to this religion, the only religion through which alone true salvation is truthfully promised, was never wanting to anyone who was worthy of it; and anyone to whom it was wanting, was not worthy of it. From the beginning of human propagation to the end, He [Christ] is preached to the reward of some and to the judgment of others (cited in Jurgens, 2002:5).

The post-Vatican documents, therefore, serve as a review of the Vatican II Council. The documents reveal the mind of the church about evangelisation of unique cultures. It identifies common ground for the unity of all religions in the world, thus solving the problem of religious exclusivity. It points out what all religions have in common, namely: the creation account, rebirth after the flood, and the Abrahamic covenant. This common heritage is posited as the element that points to all as children of the same God. Hence, the overall mission of the Vatican II Council is foregrounding liturgy as an act of nourishing through the Eucharist and manifested in the act of mission.

2.7 Mission and missionary beginnings in Igboland

This section will summarise missionary works in Igboland; reference will also be made to missionary activities in other parts of Nigeria when the need arises. Generally, the history of Igbo Catholicism started in 1885, with many indigenous bishops, priests and clergies distributed worldwide (Nnabuife, 1983:1). The Protestant mission laid their roots in Igboland almost 40 years before the Catholic mission. As a result, there are more documents on the missionary activities of the former than the latter. Most studies examined Catholic mission with a focus on the interdenominational struggle for dominance that existed between Protestants and Catholics. This study, however, analyses catholic mission in Igboland to portray the acts of humanisation in the missionary works of the early missionaries, with special focus on Joseph Shanahan.

In 1841, Simon Jonas, an Igbo man sold into slavery, was rescued and resettled in Sierra Leone, and initiated Christianization in Igboland. Interestingly, the thought of the entire period of his slavery, even the thought of his pain, did not deter him from carrying out this mission, seeing that it is a mission whose roots emanated from Europe, the land where he served his term of slavery. There was something worthwhile about Christianity that propelled Simon to dedicate himself to it. In 1857, the first stable mission, established at Onitsha, was under the leadership of a man of Igbo ancestry, Taylor Christopher, born in Sierra Leone. Hundreds of Igbo men in Sierra Leone made petitions

to the Church Mission Society (CMS) to send delegates to explore the likelihood of missionary work and resettlement in Igboland; as a result, it was mainly the people of Igbo origin that began the first mission. Isichei (1977:56) affirmed that most of the missionaries at the two borders, the Delta and Niger, were Africans from Sierra Leone; not all were of Igbo origin. It might as well be said, they were exiles that sought and found solace in Christianity. Hence, they earnestly sought to bring the same gospel of liberation to their people back home. From Sierra Leone, those who were Igbos began to espy the route to Igboland.

A remarkable feature of mission in Igboland was the early taking over of missions by Africans, due to the health challenges that confronted the European missionaries. Having established the mission, the Europeans were challenged by ill health, which forced them to hand it over to the Africans who at that time were mostly liberated African slaves. The mission at Onitsha was under an African Bishop, Samuel Ajayi Crowther, who later went to Rabba, the Nupeland capital in Northern Nigeria. J.C. Taylor, therefore, headed the Onitsha mission. Accompanying Taylor was Simon Jonas, an expert in expeditions in 1841 and 1854, and was called the first apostle of the Igbo because of his missionary achievements in Aboh. Another Igbo ex-slave, Thomas Samuel, employed by the new trading centre at Onitsha, later joined the mission until his death in 1878. Similar to Thomas Samuel was another ex-slave, Augustine Radillo, employed at the trading post and assisted the mission. Augustine Radillo changed his name to *Chukwuma* (God knows) and became a model for Igbo Christians, who dropped their foreign names for a native name with profound religious significance. These African missionaries left their comfortable lives in Sierra Leone for the uncertainties and adversities of missionary life in Igboland because of their quest to create a new Igbo nation.

The missionaries arrived at Onitsha when they were fighting with people of Ogidi, their neighbouring town. Onitsha people suffered more casualties in this feud with twenty or thirty of their people killed by their opponents. As a result, “Onitsha people welcomed European traders and missionaries to strengthen their forces” (Dike, 1962:1). Dike further records that in negotiating the establishment of trading centres and mission stations at Onitsha, Simon Jonas and Augustus Radillo acted as translators. While Dr B.W. Baikie, the leader of the expeditions in 1854 and 1857 was the spokesperson for the British government, Captain Grant controlled the commercial situation, and Reverend S.A.

Crowther, a man of great diplomacy and common sense, managed the missionary crew (Dike, 1962:1). Crowther expressed his appreciation for the land that was allocated to them by the Onitsha King to build a mission station in Onitsha, when he said:

I am fully convinced that there could not have been a better place selected as the headquarters of our Ibo Mission establishment, for salubrity, and elevation of the country above the swamps of the delta, as well as facility to communicate with the interior (cited in Dike, 1962:1).

After some days, Crowther completed the mission station and placed it under the charge of Rev. Taylor, who recognised that his responsibility was to fulfil Crowther's wish, which was to see the natives become missionaries and carry on the gospel of Christ. The missionaries saw this as the easiest way to preach to the people. By converting the natives and commissioning them to the mission field, they reduced the workload for themselves. This in turn provided them with ample time to attend to major (or heavy) issues pertaining to mission. After Crowther left, Taylor engaged in many activities such as teaching, preaching, visiting, studying the vernacular language, and writing journals. As mentioned previously, Simon Jonas, the catechist, assisted Taylor in his missionary works. As reviewed from his diary, one of the services held by Taylor, as Dike notes, expresses Taylor's surprise on the number of people, about 500 to 600 souls, that turned up for the afternoon service and the orderly conduct of the adults. Taylor later opened a school as one of the important tasks in his mission and, a week after, twelve children enrolled in the school.

Crowther, on his visit to Onitsha in 1958 was impressed by Taylor's achievements, and sent learning tools to Mr Romaine, the schoolmaster, to aid his work. Taylor's works spread across other towns in Igboland, and most of them wanted mission stations to be opened in their communities but this was delayed due to the insufficient number of missionaries and resources. Contrary to Crowther's wish, the natives at this time were still in the process of tutorship. Taylor wisely concentrated on his pastoral works at Onitsha; despite his numerous successes, he faced much resentment and hostility from those devoted to the Igbo traditional religious practices. The consensus from the memoirs of the early missionaries, notwithstanding the attraction of Western religion and education, was that the local people still persisted in old religious practices, such as the killing of twins, burying slaves alive to accompany their dead masters into the next world,

and the depositing of people who died of a queer sickness in the evil forest. Repugnant to the Christian faith and violable to human dignity and rights, the missionaries naturally condemned these practices.

According to Dike (1962:1), the missionaries neither understood nor could comprehend the African way of life, and their unfamiliar brutalities. Crowther related that the Onitsha king would not leave his house or go beyond the confines of his premises unless the gods were appeased by the sacrifice of a human person. Taylor also recorded the annual sacrifice of girls to placate the gods for the evils of the Onitsha people. In 1880, a French sojourner, Adolphe Burdo, confirmed Taylor's story when he witnessed the annual human sacrifice of girls, who accepted their fate, who while lugged to the river, sang and danced to their death. Despite the mission's influence and work, the practices persisted and the social approval enforced in Onitsha, which served as cohesion and stability measures in the Igbo society. The main opposition to the mission were the *Juju* priests (medicine men), as they perceived the new religion to be a threat to their long-standing traditional religion. In mid-1857, Taylor recorded in his journal that the people called them spirits without toes because of their shoes, and refused to give them a mat to sleep on. In late 1858, the impact of the Christian message was evident, as Taylor also recounted that when he went on leave, his little congregation hugged, cried, and begged him to return to them.

It is evident that Taylor put up a selfless service in his mission. If he had treated the natives, his little congregation, with disrespect, they would have been happy to see him go. He truly maintained the acts of mission, namely, respect for others, tolerance, love and care, and it yielded the desired result. Likewise, Crowther established and propagated mission in Lokoja, Northern Nigeria, at the same time Taylor was heading the Onitsha mission, and there were great hopes of establishing Christianity among the Moslem, just like in Onitsha. Today, Crowther's vision has become a reality: Christianity has penetrated even the remotest regions in the northern sphere of Nigeria.

Until the middle of the 1880s, the CMS dominated missionary work in Igboland. In 1885, missionary work in Igboland drastically changed. Two Catholic missions arrived in Igboland, the Society of African Mission (SMA) and the Holy Ghost Fathers, with their headquarters at Asaba and Onitsha, respectively. Other missions such as the Methodists

and the Presbyterians followed in the 1900s. The growth of missionary work in Igboland generated new opportunities for both individuals and communities, to the extent that the missionaries themselves were amazed at their progress. The missionaries who viewed mission as “soul winning” insisted that the natives radically adjustment their cultural and societal values and norms to conform to Western ways. They provided Western education, which was irresistible for the Igbo people who were anxious to imitate the White man. As a result, they sent many of their children to Western schools, which over time transformed their social, religious, political and economic lives; more so than the other regions in Nigeria.

2.8 Roman Catholic mission in Igboland

The religious configuration of Nigeria shows that Igboland has the highest concentration of mainline churches, particularly Catholic and Anglican Churches. This is attributed to the evangelisation strategies largely employed by the early missionaries. Woodberry ascribed approximately 90% of Western education in Nigeria to the early missionaries (as cited in Kunle, 2013:3). Unfortunately, these strategies, especially education, which according to Ibewuike serves primarily as enticement rather than empowerment (cited in Kunle, 2013:16), also engendered rivalry and competition between the two groups, robbing them of the real focus and commitment needed to penetrate the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the people. In their conflicts, they failed to place education in its right track. They failed to remember that the African placed his religion at the top of his priority list. They failed to realise that separating the African from their religious universe, or ‘religious roots,’ was to replant a tree without its roots, because the African person was born, grew up in, lived and died in a religious universe, and the transfer of this to Christ was particularly delicate. The idea was well synthesised by Amadou Hamapaté Ba, when he declared that to attempt to understand Africa and the African without the contribution of traditional religion would be like opening a large armoire devoid of its most precious contents (Sourou, 2014:146).

The Holy Ghost Fathers, who were the first set of RCM⁴ from France, arrived in December 1885. Their arrival was an agitation for the CMS who for some decades had

⁴ RCM stands for Roman Catholic mission; here I am referring to Roman Catholic missionaries.

been the only missionary group in Igboland. Furthermore, their competitiveness seemed to emanate from the political struggle between Britain and France over African colonies. Thus, the arrival of the French Catholic missionaries was perceived as French resolve to triumph over the territory. According to Ekechi (1972:219), Bishop Crowther and his fellow missionaries expressed concern over the arrival of the RCM. They somehow considered it a challenge. Crowther (cited in Ekechi 1972:219) envisaged a disturbance at the CMS schools and churches due to the activities of the Roman Catholics⁵, and Archdeacon Henry Johnson saw the arrival of the RCM as an “invasion” of the Niger that would make the spread of the “insidious teachings of Romanism” inevitable⁶.

However, the Holy Ghost Fathers were able to settle as an independent mission and expanded within a short period of time due to their own practical strategies of evangelisation, namely, using modern medicine to treat the natives. The RCM pioneer, Father Joseph Lutz, used modern medicine, and devoted his time to the local people by taking care of their health issues, especially the children, which softened the hearts of the parents towards the missionaries. The CMS report submitted to their Mission Secretary in 1890, as reviewed by Ekechi (1972:221), shed light on the impact of this compassionate approach to mission: “Father Lutz is the doctor of the whole town [of Onitsha]. From 7-9 daily, he receives sick folk and, of course, everyone goes whoever they may be....”⁷ Attending to the people’s health challenges, which is a fundamental human need, boosted their docility to the gospel message. A clear indication that “the task of the church remains, as it always has, the faithful exposition of an unchanging message to individuals. Irrespective of the cultural changes, the fundamental needs of human beings remain unchanged” (Kirk, 1999:165).

The medical activities of Father Lutz significantly developed the affections of the indigenes towards the RCM, as many parents, including Protestant converts, sent their children for baptism in the Catholic Church before treatment. This RC charity incited provocation in the CMS circles, as one of their missionaries narrated the situation indignantly: “The parents did not take their children to them for baptism but for medical aid, and the priest seized the opportunity of administering holy baptism first and then

⁵ CMS: G3/A3/O, Crowther to Lang, 5 January 1886.

⁶ CMS: G3/A3/O, Johnson to Lang, 27 September 1882.

⁷ CMS: G3/A3/O, Dobinson to Lang, 5 May 1890.

medicine afterwards”⁸ (Ekechi, 1972:221). At this point, the RCM and CMS and their adherents continued to present a strategic struggle over the people in the bid to win more converts. What they displayed both in public and in private was discouraging, since they should have been models of Christian receptivity and tolerance. Instead, there was religious rivalry and competition. The mission field turned into a mere political arena. Interestingly, Mugambi (2013:178) delved into the root cause of this kind of religious strife and found its roots in the European religious sphere. He writes:

The cultural, ethnic, national and religious plurality of European Christianity was transported and transplanted into tropical Africa through the modern missionary enterprise, to the point where some denominations became identified with specific ethnic communities. Likewise, Islamic presence in tropical Africa has been dominant among specific ethnic communities, mainly along the eastern coast, in some areas along the Nile River basin and across the Sahel. As a result of historical plurality, missionary intolerance (of diverse opinions in biblical hermeneutics, exegesis, ecclesiology and missiology) has often provoked inquisitive converts to dissent, rivalry and conflict.

Despite the opposition faced during the early days of mission, the RCM continued to grow. The dysentery outbreak in 1890 provoked fear and panic among the local people and instigated them to approach Catholic missionaries for medical treatment, given that the local medicine men (*Dibias*) were unable to curb the outbreak. At the same time, the RCMs strategic approach to conversion created some distressing moments in the CMS circles. Crowther was stunned by the RCMs method of inculcating devotion, while Johnson, a CMS teacher, unnervingly remarked: “I am rather uneasy as regards [sic] to the prospect of our work when I think of the proceedings of these Roman Catholics. Our school at Onitsha is half ruined because the children are enticed away”⁹ (Ekechi, 1972:222) by the Roman Catholics. Anglican teachers complained:

We are daily coming across cases of persons who used to belong to our church, but who now are Roman Catholics. In almost each case, the means used to draw our people has been medicine... Our converts have gone over after receiving attention and kindness from the Roman [Catholic] Fathers and Sisters¹⁰ (Ekechi, 1972: 222).

However, the RCMs experiences “reinforce their own sense of being in direct contact with God but they also affirm the value of participating in a community of believers”

⁸ CMS: G3/A3/O, A.C. Strong, Annual Report of Onitsha Station, 1886.

⁹ CMS: G3/A3/O, Johnson to Lang, 5 July 1888.

¹⁰ CMS: G3/A3/O, Dobinson to Lang, 5 May 1890.

(Wuthnow, 2005:143). As a matter of fact, it is important not to see this relationship as unhealthy competition but as a tool the Lord used to fan into flame passion for service in the hearts of those he has chosen for mission and as members of his own body. Success in the mission field is not always as planned but is always mysterious. Therefore, at the end of the day, victory is not ascribed to the RCM or the CMS, but to God. The intentions of both the RCM and CMS were good, but due to human nature they demonstrated a competitive tendency, which is actually a form of weakness, planting the seed of discord. However, their mission yielded abundant fruit for both Catholic and non-Catholic converts proving that mission was God's, not theirs. Like these missionaries, Shanahan also played his part, responding to the challenges and demands posed to him both by the opposition and the demands of the field of mission, such as an obnoxious tradition that portrays dehumanisation and African religious practices.

Another approach that also hastened the RCMs prominence was education, although utilised as an evangelisation scheme by different Christian missions. The RCM adopted an advanced form of education, which other missions, particularly the CMS, showed great reluctance to follow. This gave the RCM a firm base in the country, since they used English as a language of instruction in the schools, and the parents and children were campaigning for English education. They used this medium rather than the vernacular insisted on by their counterpart, the CMS. This caused a significant drift to the RCM schools, to the extent that Igbo children complained to the CMS of their complete saturation of religious instruction in the church and Sunday school. As a result, the CMS gave into English education in Igboland to avert losing adherents to the RCM (Ekechi, 1972:219). The RCM, as well as the CMS, primarily applied this approach to win the hearts of the youth in Nigeria. They seemed to do this so that by establishing a mutual understanding gained through education they could easily point out to them (the youths) the areas of their traditional religion that were deemed barbaric in order to overwrite such and inculcate in them the gospel contained in the Church's own doctrine.

The Society for African Mission (SMA) and the Holy Ghost Fathers were the groups in the forefront of mission in Nigeria. They erected various institutions for the propagation of the faith, i.e. through education and hospitals, starting in Lagos with Fr Borghero in 1860, moving through many other towns to Oghuli and other parts of Igboland in Nigeria. As a member of the Holy Ghost Fathers, Joseph Shanahan worked mainly in Onitsha

where he erected primary schools, and devotedly taught baptism classes. He was one of the most dynamic RCM priests whose evangelisation and mission approach incorporated education and learning. He made it his duty to be one with the people by learning the Igbo language, which endeared him to the Igbos and influenced many who converted to his mission. Through these actions, he seemed to be condemning the administrative structure of “the fundamental Eurocentrism of most sixteenth- and seventeenth-century missionaries, which meant that it was impossible for them to consider that anything other than their own perceptions and attitudes [was] of value” (Collins, 2007:324). He knew that to convert people like those he dealt with, he needed to humble himself like a servant. He later founded a female congregation, the Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Ireland in 1920 to assist the Holy Ghost Fathers in Igboland. By his charitable work and mission strategy, which considered the person first as a human being like himself, who has dignity and requires utmost respect, Shanahan gained many converts to the Catholic mission, with a record of many indigenous men and women entering the priesthood and following a religious way of life. In 1933, the first Cathedral built in Nigeria was consecrated (Iheanacho, 2004; Ngbea and Achunike, 2014).

Another challenge the Roman Catholic mission encountered was syncretism. Many converts were merely following the missionaries but holding tenaciously to their traditional beliefs. As dehumanising as the ‘osu caste system’ was, the twin-murders and human sacrifices, as witnessed by the early missionaries, were so barbaric and horrendous. Igbo traditional religion (ITR) had elements of human sacrifice believed to placate angry gods. In addition to the practice of human sacrifice is the ritual of burying the traditional ruler with a prescribed number of slaves alive. This was practised in Igboland before the advent of missionaries. The missionaries’ preaching against these practices was met with strong resistance, since at some points their approach was confrontational and condemnatory. According to James N. Amanze (2000:329), “African Traditional Religions...were considered as the devil on the cross which was to be defeated and destroyed once and for all times”. A number of missionaries were murdered as a result of the tension occasioned by the confrontation (Oparaji, 2015:2).

Furthermore, language was one of the challenges that limited the work of the missionaries. The language barrier was a very big disadvantage to mission work in Igboland. Hence, they sought to develop the Igbo language to evangelise the people. To

empower the Igbo people, Christian missionaries took it upon themselves to engage indigenes that teach reading and writing in the Igbo language not only for the natives but also for themselves. As a result, the Igbo language was exalted above any other language at that time, making Igbo men and women proud. It eased the problem created by using interpreters in evangelism. The missionaries “paid considerable attention to the development of Igbo, sometimes against the wishes of both the Igbo people and the colonial government” (Igboanusi, 2006:157-158), and they “not only initiated the processes of developing these languages, they also encouraged vernacular education with an emphasis on religious instruction” (Ayandele, 1966:301, cited in Igboanusi, 2006:157-158). By 1910, the Bible was translated into the Igbo language, which was a significant achievement for the missionaries. This brought the Igbo people and Igbo language global attention.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter analysed humanisation as an intrinsic part of successful mission. It reviewed the concepts of cultural receptivity, tolerance, and reconciliation, as part of humanisation and the practical aspect of considering the humanness of the other in evangelisation. It further reviewed the idea of mission, tracing it to the biblical injunction of mission as a divine mandate. It relates mission to the apostles. By investigating the place of the church as a continuation of the apostolic mission, it introduced Joseph Shanahan, who is one of the early missionaries that brought the good news of the gospel to Nigeria, and to Igboland in particular. The humility exuded by Bishop Shanahan and his power of understanding made him accessible to the people. However, such friendliness and openness was not shown to Shanahan in Dekina, Cameroon, South Africa, Kenya or any other African region. As such, the disposition of the people, together with his innate understanding and personality, enabled the mission to succeed in Igboland. He worked strenuously to bring people into the unity of the Catholic Church. His missionary methods equally reflected the ancient understanding that the perennial value embedded in any culture is evidence that the Holy Spirit had already prepared the way for the Church’s mission, as succinctly observed by Hovis (2010:3) that “...the Church does not have a mission, the mission [of God] has a Church”.

CHAPTER THREE:

IGBO CULTURALISM AND CHRISTIANITY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter critically engages the controversies between Christianity and Igbo culture, with the aim of highlighting Igbo traditional religious beliefs, and their social and political ideologies in relation to their resilience and acceptance of the gospel, as contained in objective one of this study. Strategically, the chapter is subdivided into the following subheadings: slave trade and slavery in Igboland; the impact of colonialism: Igbo traditional religion and philosophy; and the Igbos' acceptance of, as well as resilience and ambivalence towards Christianity.

3.2 Slave trade and slavery in Igboland

Before the advent of European trade masters and missionaries, who struggled to stop the slave trade, Igboland practiced slavery. They were mainly local transactions, for instance, a man would give his son as a slave to a noble as a form of payment (Chigere, 2001:199). An unruly child was already a bona fide slave to prevent him or her from influencing others with their bad behaviour. In addition, war victims or those taken captive during intertribal wars over boundaries or some other communal disgruntlement or dispute were sold into slavery in distant lands rather than being killed. They could be used as sacrifices to the gods or as domestic slaves in the household. Sick and disabled children were sold for other demands or as sacrifices to the local deity. These victims might escape the harsh punishment and be retained to serve as slaves in the communities or families that purchased them. They often had isolated shelters built for them in market places, particularly those who had been dedicated to the gods, such as *Osu* or *Ohu* (Chigere, 2001:43). In those days, slave trade was regarded as a very, if not the most, lucrative business among the Igbo. Those who were marked to be sold were usually aggressive, so the slave masters subjected them to excruciating suffering to keep them subdued and acquiescent. Due to their aggressive behaviour, most potential slaves were kept ignorant of the intention to sell or resell them, or to hand them over to a communal deity, where they would forever be regarded as the sole property of the deity. However, some rejoiced

at the idea of being an eternal slave to one deity or another; this group was later known in Igbo parlance as *Osu*. The same surreptitious approach was applied to those that would be killed. Of all these inhumane acts, the most horrific were the human sacrifices made to their idols. People sold into slavery could survive and become useful to society someday, as illustrated in the preceding chapter. But bloodshed was quite irrational and unacceptable.

Cult slavery and local slavery are typical examples of enslavement in the history of Igboland. It originates from the Igbo traditional religion and cosmology, in particular, the belief in *Ala/Ani* (the earth deity) (Oriji, 2003:122; Chigere, 2001:56). In this practice, the people empower the earth goddess with the highest judicial and religious power of the land to preside over any kind of atrocity committed. Major common laws are subsumed under the earth force. Going against the sacred laws of *Ala* by committing abominations or sacrilege like incest, homicide, stealing, etc., has dire consequences, ranging from death, ostracization through slavery, compensating the victim/family, and finally to carrying out a prolonged and costly ritual cleansing ceremony—*Isa Ihu* (washing one's face) in a shrine dedicated to *Ala* (Oriji, 2003:122).

Individuals who voluntarily took refuge in the shrine of *Ala* to save their lives or save themselves from going into exile became outcasts, which in Igbo parlance, is also known as *Osu* or *Ohu* (cult slaves) in society (Oriji, 2003:122). *Osu* or *Ohu*, however, represented an institution where individuals, groups of individuals, or families, were set apart because of the voluntary (or involuntary) dedication of their lives to the things that pertain to the gods or deities of a particular community. These parties were subjected to various forms of discrimination. Marriage between them and the community was abhorred, and no personal contact or communication was approved except among themselves. Generally, they were seen as uncanny, detestable and infectious. In actual fact, they were loathed not only by their community but also by surrounding communities. This brewed hatred between them and their community. Even those that willingly gave themselves over to become *Osu* for their deity eventually began to detest their existence, as it automatically became extremely pitiable. New generations spent their miserable lives cursing their foreparents and ancestors because of their undue suffering. They can be likened to the Hebrew lepers, where any form of contact with a passerby spelt doom (Chigere, 2001:44). Igbos believed that associating with anyone

from this group would automatically make one a member. Whoever touched them accidentally or killed them would remain contaminated until an expiatory sacrifice was made to appease the gods, ancestors, or the land. These cult slaves often escaped during the dark to faraway places to find new homes and live as freeborn. Through this, many communities in Igboland, like the Ugboko of Udi and the Osu clan of Mbano, were established (Oriji, 2003:123). Owing to these local practices, the trans-Atlantic transaction on human beings initiated legitimate trade to the New World (Chigere, 2001:44).

Just like any other African society, the Igbo people lived with much animosity between them. Although the cult slaves (which they call *Osu* or *Ohu*) enslaved and oppressed the Igbos for a protracted period of time, the sophisticated trans-Sahara and Atlantic slave trade worsened the existing animosity between them. Like many other African societies, Igbos quickly switched to colonialism, a more civilised form of enslavement that affected even the freeborn, particularly the unlearned. Of the many regions in West Africa, Igboland experienced the most severe raiding and trading of slaves during the centuries of colonialism. The number of African slaves are vague but it is estimated that about 600 000 slaves, two-thirds of slave shipments, were transported from Igboland to America between 1600 and 1750 (Oriji 2011:108). While Edwards' (1969) report of the earliest account of slave raids and trade in Igboland is queried by Carretta (1999) as being incomprehensive, Oriji's (2003) insights seem more credible as it includes a detailed account of slave raiding and trading in Igboland according to their ecological zones. The slave raiding and trading of human beings resulted in the establishment of the African-Americans that are domiciled in the United States of America today. These people also endured torment at the hands of their slave masters. However, due to a limited scope, their story has no place in this research.

3.3 The effects of colonialism

The ending of the slave trade and slavery in Africa had wide-ranging effects on the African continent. Nigeria, like many other African countries, suffered at the hands of the imperialists who had participated in an economy based on slave labour. Although slavery ended in theory, in practice it was still very much alive in the form of imposed colonial labour. This is because both applied the same method of coercing Africans to work

without pay or at least for minimal compensation. As matter of fact, this has always renewed the pain, and in some cases, even kept alive the stigma of torture alive in the minds of descendants affected by slavery, even generations after slavery had been ‘abolished’. This was due to its proximity to the colonial imperial structure.¹¹

I have placed the word ‘abolished’ above in parenthesis because we have only witnessed a switchover to another form of possessiveness and therefore cannot call it the total abolition of slavery. Colonialism continued with the same phenomenon of man’s inhumanity to man. It was almost like the powers that were now in place needed a breathing space, which they found by getting rid of the increased competition in the slave industry. So they promulgated laws to force their competitors out of the system.

The impact of European imperialist aggression, diplomatic pressures, military invasions, and eventual conquest and colonization cannot be overemphasized. Western Europe’s courageous effort to abolish slavery was only because of the shift in economic interest from agriculture to industrialisation. The bill was passed in the British territory in 1833, and in France in 1848, followed by America in 1865. This move was partly the reason why almost all African nations surrendered to the colonial powers, and in the end had to fight for freedom and independence at the dawn of the 19th century. The questions that come to the fore here are: If, in the olden days, black (African) slaves were bought to perform menial tasks or domestic labour, or to serve as wives, or concubines, or to enhance the status of the slaves owner, as indicated by Donald R. Wright, then did colonialism or reformation improve the situation? Did apartheid solve the problem? In addition, did neo-colonialism change anything?

According to Iweriebor (2016), between 1870 and 1900, life for the African was never the same, and has continued to change ever since. However, by the early twentieth century many of the African countries, except Ethiopia and Liberia, had been colonized by European powers.¹² This, nevertheless, affected Africans both positively and negatively. In that, Africans lost a great part of their culture in the process, and gained

¹¹ Cf. Donald R. Wright. (2000: n.p.), *Slavery in Africa*, viewed from: <https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/97> (Accessed: 20/3/2017).

¹² Cf. Ehiedu, E.G. Iweriebor’s essay on colonialism in Africa. Viewed from: <http://exhibition.nypl.org/africanage.html>. For further information on the impacts of slavery and colonialism in Africa. [Accessed 2017/14/07]

much from European culture. As such, the mutual effect that was supposed to characterize the encounter was lost, as the former saw the other as inferior. This same attitude was adopted by most of the missionaries, who viewed traditional African worship as paganism.

There were other factors apart from economic influences; these included the inter-European power struggles and competition for pre-eminence.

One way to demonstrate national pre-eminence was through the acquisition of territories around the world, including Africa. The social factor was the third major element. As a result of industrialization, major social problems grew in Europe: unemployment, poverty, homelessness, social displacement from rural areas, and so on. These social problems developed partly because not all people could be absorbed by the new capitalist industries. One way to resolve this problem was to acquire colonies and export this “surplus population” (Iweriebor, 2016 15 07 n.p)

Before gold and diamonds were discovered in South Africa in the 1880s, no region in Africa was more attractive to the European powers than Nigeria. Colonialism was achieved in Nigeria through war and by the threat of war. For example, king Jaja of Opobo, Ijabu kingdom, Oba Ovonranwem of Benin, king Ibanichuka of Okirika, Nupe and Ilorin kingdoms were attacked and defeated in 1897. The list continues. Losing a war, forced removal, or the death of a king translated into one major outcome: loss of independence and incorporation by force into an expanding British empire. To a large extent, modern Nigeria is a product of violence (Toyin Falola, 2009:1).

The Berlin conference was Africa’s undoing in many ways than one. The colonial powers superimposed their domain on the African continent. By the time independence returned in 1950s, the realm had acquired a legacy of political fragmentation that could neither be eliminated nor made to operate satisfactorily. Nigeria, the so called “the giant of Africa” and “the biggest black nation of the world” is an important nation in Africa that suffered this phenomenon. In fact, the name “Nigeria” itself was coined by the colonial master, after the distortion of established and natural boundaries which was replaced with the artificial ones to suit their benefits. (Ahmad Faosiy Ogunbado, 2012:51)

To prevent wars and conflict, the German chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, convened a diplomatic summit of European powers in the late nineteenth century. “This was the famous Berlin West African conference (more generally known as the Berlin Conference), held from November 1884 to February 1885. The conference produced a treaty known as the Berlin Act, with provisions to guide the conduct of the European inter-imperialist competition in Africa” (Iweriebor, 2016). At least with slavery most

Africans knew about it and had been dealing with this problem for generations. They would with agreement trade their enemies and the unwanted in the society, whereas colonialism turned one against another and disrupted the formal kinship that many had enjoyed and protected from time immemorial.

It is quite clear that most African societies fought fiercely and bravely to retain control over their countries and societies and protect them against European imperialist designs and military invasions. But the African societies eventually lost out. This was partly due to political and technological reasons. The nineteenth century was a period of profound and even revolutionary changes in the political geography of Africa, characterized by the demise of old African kingdoms and empires and their reconfiguration into different political entities. Some of the old societies were reconstructed and new African societies were founded on different ideological and social premises. Consequently, African societies were in a state of flux and many were organizationally weak and politically unstable. They were, therefore, unable to put up effective resistance against the European invaders, who came upon them with much more sophisticated weaponry. Around 1900, the majority of the African states had been colonized by seven European powers - Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Portugal and Italy. After the conquest, the European powers set about establishing colonial state systems: decentralizing old, and centralizing new states. The colonial state was the machinery of administrative domination established to facilitate effective control and economic exploitation of the colonized societies.

“While they were all authoritarian, bureaucratic state systems, their forms of administration varied, partly due to the different national administrative traditions and specific imperialist ideologies of the colonizers and partly because of the political conditions in the various territories that they conquered” (Oyebade, 2002:23).

In his view, Abdulrahim (2004:294) defends that some of the principles applied by the colonial masters affected the entity called Nigeria. These include, according to him, among other things: “Policy of separate development which engendered unequal and uneven distribution of economic and social development.... Adoption of a dual urban policy particularly in Northern Nigeria and the creation of stranger quarters....” This in turn left the Nigerian economy, like other Africa countries, vulnerable to the vagaries of the world capitalist economy. Eteng (2004:37) blamed all this on the negative perception

of British colonial administration in Nigeria as noted by Lord Lugard in his book *Dual mandate in Tropical Africa*. “Lugard’s forced amalgamation of 1914, and subsequent British colonial policy of divide and rule, instigated inter ethno religious suspicion, residential segregation and antagonism among various communal groups” Eteng (2004:37). Even though Azeez (2004:332) spotted that economic insecurity under the colonial regime motivated the indigenes to adapt to communal welfare support, and thus, strengthen them in their various regions against national loyalty.

The involvement of the white man (Europeans) into the life and affairs of the Igbo people brought about a tremendous change that will remain forever indelible in their lives. Consequently, it carries with it a whole lot of effects—both good and bad. The first Europeans to visit Nigeria around the 14th and 15th century were traders that came to Benin kingdom and surrounding kingdoms for business. The interest soon spread and the Royal Niger Company was established towards the end of the 15th century. The power struggle continued until the Berlin Conference whence Africa was divided by the Europeans and arbitrary boundaries erected to divide ethnic groups. The resultant effect of the conference is what gave birth to European colonisation in Africa and Asia. The colonial masters made rules for their subjects until they gained their independence. Different countries fell under different colonial systems and rules; for instance, Cameroon and Namibia were German colonies. Niger, Congo, Central African Republic were under the rulership of the French, while Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya etc., were under British rule. This also influenced the language of instruction and religious rulership.

3.4 Igbo traditional religion and philosophy

The Igbo communities are largely composed of genealogies of patrilineal clans that enclosed residential groups, with similar religious structures, notably the earth deity and ancestral cult’s coupled with the mutual belief in the primal being, *Chukwu* (Nzomiwu, 1999:2). As far back as 1900, Europeans perceived the remarkable traits of the Igbo people and their religiosity. John P. Jordan cited Bishop Shanahan’s conclusion about the Ibos:

The average native (Igbo) was admirably suited by environment and training, for an explanation of life in terms of the spirit; rather than of the flesh. He was no

materialist. Indeed, nothing was farther from his mind than a materialist philosophy of existence. It made no appeal to him (Jordan, 1977:115).

Mbiti (1990:4, 256) seems to be echoing this when he asserts that the traditional religious attitude of Africans was notorious, reflecting strong religious beliefs and practices. The Igbo had a strong belief that reflected their culture as the Europeans encountered them, and they strongly lived it out. Only the European missionaries who learned about the people, their language and culture had a different attitude towards them. Hence, the philosophy of the Igbo and Africans at large cannot be separated from their religious practices. Remarkably enough, when they enter into any religion—whether Christianity or Islam—they wish to embrace this with the same spirit of fortitude, to the point that most often than not they tend to be competing with original owners of the religion in terms of dedication to service and the exhibition of selfless sacrifices. They are ready, for instance, to lay down their lives willingly so that the mission work would move on smoothly. Confirming this, A.G. Leonard remarks that the Igbo:

...are, in the strict and natural sense of the word, a truly and a deeply religious people, of whom it can be said, as it has been said of the Hindus, that they eat religiously, drink religiously, bathe religiously, dress religiously and sin religiously. In a few words, the religion of these as I have all along endeavoured to point out is their existence and their existence is their religion (cited in Tanye, 2010:31).

Leonard's assertion implies that the philosophy, tradition, culture and life of the Igbo are considerably interlaced. Understanding the religion and philosophy of the Igbo does not strategically involve any form of concept analysis but comprises a bunch of abstractions, with no codified or articulated systems. Culturally, the Igbo religion is learned and accepted, and forms a fundamental part of Igbo tradition and culture. The mythical level of any culture embeds in itself the major beliefs of the people that translate to pragmatism in life. In other words, culture refers to the beliefs, customs, ethics and conduct of a community, but does not necessarily preserve morality, as contrarily agreed by Onwu (2002). The basics of culture can be deduced from religion, and religion itself assumes the intrinsic fragments of the culture. Learning one is invariably learning the important elements of the other. Philosophy, on the other hand, is the bedrock of culture.

The term '*Omenala*,' which literally means 'the doings of the land,' generally refers to Igbo customs and traditions, and expresses Igbo philosophy. In other words, *Omenala* can

be referred to as the intrinsic life force behind any particular Igbo custom or act. According to Nwala, “Igbo philosophy is the philosophy of Omenala” (cited in Onwu, 2002:1). African traditional religion and traditional African society and culture are inextricably interwoven. As a result, the essential philosophy and spiritual rudiments of African traditional religion pervades the traditional social institution and its norms. Religion and philosophy are inseparable in both belief and practice, as a philosophy could exist without a religion but no religion could stand without a philosophy. It is worthy to note that every Igbo custom, such as sacrifices, dances or festivals, encapsulates a philosophy or idea. It is imperative that narrating traditional Igbo religion must incorporate the philosophy behind it.

In the Igbo perception of cosmology, the world did not accidentally exist or emerge through the big bang theory as scientists affirm. Igbos believe that the world was created and fashioned by a creator they call *Chukwu* (God). The Igbo religious view of the world accepts the presence of minor divinities such as *Agbala*, *mmuo* (spirits), and ‘the created’ (humans, animals, plants, land and water). They believe that the universe consists of visible and invisible elements, and that the invisible elements are more powerful than the visible ones. Three major and distinct worlds make up the traditional Igbo cosmology—*elu igwe* (heaven or sky), *elu uwa* (earth), and *ala mmuo* (the land of the spirits or the underworld). Each of these worlds realistically consist of elements or entities, with the *elu igwe* being the dwelling for *Chukwu*, *Osebuluwa* or *Chineke* (the mighty God); hence the Igbo expression *Obasi bi n’elu* (God that dwells in heaven). *Elu uwa* is the terrestrial abode of ‘the created,’ the divinities, spiritual forces—*mmuo* (spirit), and patron deities, such as *Arusi* (Oracle). Besides these entities inhabiting the earth, the major primeval deity inhabiting the universe is *Ala* (the earth goddess). Other deities, such as *Eze mmuo* (the king of the spirit), ancestors, and many evil spiritual forces inhabit *Ala mmuo*, the great beyond. Due to the influential role and impact these worlds have on human destiny, the Igbo consider each world to be very important.

The religious philosophy (religion and philosophy) of the Igbo began with the notion of a primal and Supreme Being, also called *Chukwu*, *Osebuluwa*, *Chineke*, *Obasi di n’elu* (Chigere, 2001:53). The Igbo refer to various attributes to express their perception of the Supreme Being, seeking clarification of all things. Like any other societal philosophy, the school of thought concerning Igbo traditional religion does not have a definite theory or

claim that provides a comprehensive view or clear perception of the Supreme God. Consequently, in Igbo philosophical perception, God is subsumed under two key principles, the principle of creation (*Chi okike* or *Chineke*) and the principle of absoluteness (*Chi ukwu* or *Chukwu*) (Onwu, 2002:1). Both are implicit on the divinity and dependence revealed in the conception of one's personal Chi (God). The principle of creation demonstrates man's divine origin, as the creator (*Chineke*) created all things including human beings and endowed them with nature and destiny (Chigere, 2001:57). The principle of absoluteness reveals the absolute power and might of the Supreme Being, as expressed in *Chukwu* (the Mighty God), and *Chukwuka* (God is supreme), *Ifeanyichukwu* (Nothing is beyond God's power), *Onyekachukwu* (who is greater than God), *Chukwunweike* (God has all might). When everything fails, the Igbo resort to the power and deliverance of the Supreme Being, based on these principles.

The deep consciousness of God can be expressed in the Igbo traditional ritual of Ofo (staff of authority). The concept of the authority and justice of the Supreme Being is expressed by the Ofo symbol. Externally, the Ofo stick is artless but incredibly sophisticated in ritual and its religious symbolism. The origin of Ofo, an Igbo traditional plant, started with the Nri myth of Igbo cosmology. As Anyacho narrates:

The Nri myth of [human] origin relates that a full-grown Ofo tree, the archetype, is located at the center of Obi Chukwu (God's compound). Several twigs had fallen at the time Eri and his wife, Nnamaku, were about to set out on their epic journey to the earth... With time, Eri came to the realization that he received Chukwu's attention promptly any time he addressed him pointing the Ofo ritual stick skywards, towards Chukwu's abode (cited in Ejizu, 2014:51-52).

This myth is the basis for the vast spectrum of connotations and the functional range of the Ofo ritual stick. The dense connotations of Ofo strike every aspect of the Igbo—cultural, sensory, and ideological elements—into transcendental depictions. For the Igbos, the Ofo symbol connotes the sacred power and authority, as well as the important values of justice and morality vital for human coexistence and interaction. The Ofo symbolism can also represent other factors such as family unity, blood, the male sex organ, and *ndu* (life). Cole observes that:

The Ofo itself dramatizes the spiritual basis of even the most secular matters even today. For its power represents the authority of the high God, Chineke, channelled through ndichie (lineage ancestors), without whose support and concurrence man

dare not act. Thus, the ultimate sanction for human activity - law making, war, buying and selling, changing village sites, planting or harvesting, making and using "art" - comes not from living men but from supernatural beings (cited in Ejizu, 2014:52).

Many researchers have attested to the Igbos' cognizance of the Supreme Being (Onwu, 2002). The notion that the Supreme God is a 'copied god' from the missionaries is absolutely groundless and speculative. At every Igbo religious and traditional festival, the Supreme God is often assumed to be present, even though no ostentatious house was established for his dwelling. In fact, records repudiate the missionary claim by showing that the early Christian missionaries utilised their pilfered ideas and names of the Supreme God from the Igbo traditional religion in their renditions and translations (CMS, 1862). The full details of the social, cultural and traditional religious tales of the Igbo are available in the works of Chigere (2001), Onwu (2002), and Ejizu (2014). The next section will discuss the connection between Igbo traditional religion and Christianity, which resulted in their acceptance of Christianity.

3.5 Igbo resilience, ambivalence, and acceptance of Christianity

Concerning the major tribes of Nigeria, the Igbo, for some reason, have shown an extraordinary inclination as well as resilience to the gospel from the time they were evangelised. Many factors must have informed this attitude of the Igbos, who agonised in more ways than one, i.e. from antagonism between themselves, and the constant struggle for survival. Furthermore, there was the devastating effect of slavery and the slave trade, which carried over to imperialism the attitude of colonial superiority, notwithstanding the chains of neo-colonialism that followed. This generated forfeiture of the culture and tradition of affection that had sustained the Igbo people through tough and painful times. This resulted in resentment toward white people, i.e. those that worked for them as warrant chiefs or colleagues, teachers at schools, and even missionaries.

In the pre-colonial era, the Igbo community was one of the West African communities that engaged in obnoxious cultural practices, such as the killing of twins, which was done by exposing or suffocating the newborn and disposing of their bodies in the evil forest (*Ajo Ofia*). This practice was prominent during the late 19th and 20th centuries because of the broad discussion and publication of this custom or religious practice by the Europeans

who traded in Igboland. Eradication of twin killing, certainly, developed as one of the great mission causes that attracted and inspired the works of every missionary in the 1900s (Bastian, 2001:13). Some missionaries, like the famous Mary Slessor of Calabar, campaigned vigorously against the practice of twin abomination and the killing of multiple births (Bastian, 2001:13).

Before it was abolished, the birth of twins in the Igbo pre-colonial era was considered an abomination (*nso ani*) against *Ala* or *Ani* (the earth goddess). It was believed that they would contaminate the community if they were allowed to stay. For this reason, they were killed and thrown into the ‘evil’ forest to save their lineage and the community at large. Similarly, the missionaries considered twin killings an abomination against God. What the missionaries perceived as innocent human life, faithfully practised in the Igbo traditional religion, elicited intense emotional response and reaction from both the European and African missionaries alike. The Igbos inherently saw in their practice of the killing of twins the act of respect for human life, which they had supposed, the twins were coming to contaminate. However, the missionaries, based on this regard for human life, convinced them that twins were also human beings as well as God’s gift to mankind, and this made a huge difference in their understanding and perception of multiple births that led to the discontinuity of twin murders.

The multiple births were not largely the issue, but the discourse over the fate of the twins and the boundaries of human existence and humanity were. Due to these two contrasting cosmological, philosophical and theological positions, the preservation of multiple births constituted an extended struggle for the missionaries in converting and annulling those beliefs of the Igbo people.

The foregoing were the many challenges encountered by the missionaries in attempting to Christianise the Igbos against their traditional beliefs. This, therefore, addressed one of the research questions of this study, namely: “Based on historical and archival evidence were there challenges resulting from preservation or destruction of human dignity in the early era of mission?” On this note, Bastian (2001) explored the reformist struggle to abolish this act in Onitsha, a town in Igboland, in the early twentieth century. During that period, Onitsha insisted on the cosmogonic interpretation of the abominable conception of multiple births against the *Ala*, and strongly held to those practices that potently

sabotaged the mission interests and works, even while seeming to concede to their mission. The CMS mission swore to fight against this ‘demonic superstition’ by saving both the physical and spiritual bodies of the twins, as well as their parents and other relatives.

The Igbos’ turning to Christianity was made complete when they finally accepted the message of the missionaries. This is indicated in Achebe’s worries reflected in the voice of the narrator in *Things Fall Apart* that questions why the white man, in the first instance, was allowed in their midst. It further indicates the speed with which the Igbos accepted the missions, beginning with those who were victims of obnoxious traditional practices, like the killing of twins. According to Onwu (2016), *Things Fall Apart* also narrated how the *Osu* (the outcasts) of Mbanta and Umuofia flooded the church, which for them became a refuge from societal oppression and rejection. The case of offering *Ikemefuna* as a sacrifice to the gods by his ‘father’ Okonkwo, and that of Nwoye who was shock-stricken when he witnessed twins abandoned in the evil forest as demanded by tradition; and the story where the Igbo people gave land that was reserved for their gods and shrines to the missionaries who built a church, and were surprisingly not harmed by the gods, as the people had expected; these all provided avenues for the missionaries to make more converts. Even though the Igbos had not wholly accepted Christianity, they were not so foolish as to continue to believe in those failed gods and shrines, and thus they “became convinced that the white man’s God was very powerful” (Onwu, 2016).

Their deadly cultural and dehumanising practices, like slavery and the slave trade, women abuse, human sacrifices and twin murders, were transformed by the institution of hospitals, education, and general mission introduced by the missionaries. The Igbos innate desire for something better favourably disposed them to accept the missionaries. It reduced their superstition added to the spirit of community, as well as fostered the notion of human dignity among the Igbo. The syncretism between Christianity and the Igbo traditional religion enlightened the Igbo, resulting in the transformation of their traditional religion.

3.6 Conclusion

The idea that African religion should be totally abolished and replaced with Christianity resulted in the resistance of early mission work. However, this was due to missionaries’

misinterpretation and misunderstanding of African culture and practices, which they viewed as pagan and evil. Even so, the missionaries came to appreciate the African religion, realising that in these religious practices lies an inherent (true) spirit of reverence for the human person that brought about an understanding between Africans and the missionaries. This greatly facilitated the acceptance of Christianity by Africans in general, and by the Igbos in particular. Nevertheless, to the Igbo people, Christianity was a new religion that did not reflect on all the aspects of their lives. The initial misunderstanding of African religious practices led to the failure of the propagation of this new faith, and the resulting ambivalence towards Christianity caused some Igbo Christians to resort back to their original practices.

Seemingly in line with the foregoing, Fr. Barth Anyacho (2009:1), a Deanery Chaplain, writes with reference to the spirituality of Catholic men in the Awka Diocese:

When we remember that many of our married men up to the present time came from pagan background, it is no wonder that more than half of their population adhere more freely to the traditional/pagan tenets than to our Catholic faith. And I think it is one of the major reasons why many CMO members do not only decline from participating in diocesan activities but also shelve their parochial and family responsibilities.

CHAPTER FOUR:

MISSION AS HUMANISATION IN THE LIFE AND WORKS OF SHANAHAN IN IGBOLAND

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to evaluate the mission of Joseph Shanahan in the light of humanisation and interculturality. In the same vein, it examines the different methods/approaches adopted by the early missionaries in their missionary work and the impact of these strategies. As a matter of discourse strategy, therefore, this chapter is guided by the following focal points: The life and work of Bishop Joseph Shanahan, and the methods and approaches adopted by Shanahan. These analytical foci present a discussion on mission as humanisation, and humanisation in the mission of Shanahan, including the theological evaluation of Shanahan's work, as well as the intercultural encounters of religious convergence in Igboland.

4.2 Shanahan and mission as humanisation

Shanahan displayed a host of innate and special qualities through his character; he showed remarkable physical strength and his intellectual vigour was unimpaired. These strengths point to the following research question: "How is humanisation in mission exemplified in the life and missionary work of Bishop Joseph Shanahan?" (Cf. Chapter 1). His closeness to the locals created a sense of warmth and acceptance that portrays the true value of the African concept of *Ubuntu*. In turn, their friendliness with and acceptance of Shanahan, promoted free entry into the region. His discernment helped him see the internal devastation caused by their antagonism towards each other. He also noticed their depression, which was caused by both systems of governance—colonial and the slave masters. Consequently, he filled the vacuum in their lives created by their surrounding circumstances. This section seeks to answer the above-mentioned research question by deliberating relevant facts in the literature.

Shanahan deciphered the people's inherent knowledge of God as well as their sacredness and respect for elders from the Igbo world of cosmology, and immediately bought into it.

He used it to form a solid foundation of the faith that he intended to share with them. He stood as a father figure to the Igbo people as well as to others. He regarded his disciples as fellow missionaries working together towards the expansion of the church in the country, rather than as mission employees. They responded favourably towards his attitude of trust and respect, and felt free to develop any form of work that benefited the people in his vicariate. His attitude towards mission gives it the identity of what may be seen in the words of Ilo as vulnerability. According to Ilo (2012:255):

Vulnerable mission promotes a credible lifestyle because it helps Christian religious leaders to live like Jesus, speak the language of the people, use the people's spiritual, material and cultural resources to serve them, and show the presence of Christ as people actively engage the tensions and ambiguities of their lives. Vulnerable mission is the most effective praxis for transformation because it validates the essential message of Christianity that victory comes from suffering and self-sacrificing love and that strength is found in weakness.

Ilo further explicates 'vulnerable mission' as being "sensitive to children, women, and those in the margins of the society" as well as going "out in search of the poor and the weak in a comforting and supportive manner," which is precisely central to Shanahan's missionary activities. As a church official, Shanahan avoided treating the poor and the vulnerable in any sense of the word "as objects for personal agendas, but rather as subjects of divine love. These vulnerable women, young girls, children, and men who flock to the church in search of help [he] protected from any kind of verbal, emotional, sexual, or physical abuse" (Ilo, 2012:255) and cultural intolerance.

Shanahan's foundation yielded a fruitful outcome, but there were not enough hands to assist him in his mission. With much confidence and a sense of satisfaction that he was doing excellent work, and because the people wholeheartedly accepted him, he requested the Pope to send more aid. Nevertheless, his ideas were vague until he spoke to Pope Pius XI during his visit to Rome, who not only approved of the idea but also encouraged it. He wrote to the sisters that formed a fiat in 1924 with seven women as foundation members, who later erected a number of schools, hospitals, women development centres, and leprosy centres in more than twenty dioceses in 2014.

Shanahan's firm belief was that the school was their main stream of evangelisation and conversion. Two of his priests followed his footsteps and had their first journey for what

is referred to today as the ‘Great Trek’. Shanahan walked through the forest, over steep hills and crossed small streams with about 15 boys carrying his mass box, a camp bed, and poles for mosquito nets, as well as basins, pan and pots. They covered ten to twenty miles daily, arriving at the village market square before dusk. It is noteworthy that his choice of the market place for spreading the gospel denotes more than being a public place but is also a place for the community to offer sacrifices. The shrine of the local god was located in the marketplace, where sacrifices were offered every fourth market day. Igboland has four market days, namely, *Eke*, *Oye*, *Afor* and *Nkwo*. In this sacred marketplace, Shanahan offered the first sacrifice of the Mass. His own faith and mindfulness impelled him to be cognisant of the effect of that Mass. “As I stood there,” he wrote, “in the shadow of the palms, it came home to me that the ground around me had suddenly become holy” (cited by Salamone, 1985:21).

Shanahan visited the local chief as soon as possible before the people became apprehensive about the unexpected arrival of the white man and his group. The exchange of gallantries heralded the negotiation on the importance of school education. Without the chief’s endorsement and backing, the school would not flourish or even take off. His esteem, charming sense of humour and comprehension of the local normally produced positive results. The establishment of the school followed that of the church, and was constructed of mud-bricks, a mat roof, and bamboo posts. This was the turning point in the transformation of the community; he then left for the next community on his mission.

Most of the time, these expeditions required tremendous courage and bravery. The freshness of the mornings often gave way to a scorching tropical sun. Drenched in perspiration, covered with dust, and weary with tired limbs and aching feet, Shanahan and his followers would end the day’s walk. The risk of attack from terrified natives was a constant reality, and sleeping in the open left them susceptible to the attack of headhunters and lesser evils such as snakes, scorpions, centipedes, and the occasional leopard. Nevertheless, Shanahan was driven by aspiration to convey the divine life to as many as possible without counting the cost. He never grew disheartened because there was no one to converse with in English or French, but derived much joy from the beautiful forest-covered plains, and the amusing conversations he had with the local rulers and their advisers. His cognizance of God’s presence was his source of strength and happiness, as he disclosed to one chief that worked closely with him, “Look here Robert,

the more I pray, the more I feel the presence of God. At times, he seems too close, even closer to me than you are now" (cited by Salamone, 1985:21).

Whenever Shanahan conducted Mass at the marketplace, the local people looked at him in bewilderment and curiosity, contemplating this towering white figure standing before them, adorned in apparel made with gold thread and hands outstretched toward the altar. Their reaction was priceless as they continued to gaze at a huge intimidating figure, also dressed in white, at the corner of the marketplace, whom they had not seen before. They watched on as the interpreter translated and demonstrated some parts of the Mass in Igbo. To them, these gestures were comparable to what the elders did in the shrines, talking aloud, bowing and kneeling before an invisible presence, as one bent only before very great kings. They wondered if this white man was in contact with *Chukwu* (God, the Great Spirit), for each of them owned their own *Ikenga* (household Spirit) upon which they poured *Mmaya ngwo* (Palm wine) prior to any important journey or decision (Uzo, 1988:33). Shanahan's prayers and good works appeared as a prophecy in the lives and towns he visited:

...thirty years later, two big Church-schools were erected, one of them quite close to the spot where Shanahan celebrated his first mass, and these Churches were unable to cope with the crowds that thronged for Sunday Masses. These are the present Church-Schools at Abagana and Nimo, situated a mile and a half from each other, with a population of Catholic numbering over nine thousand people (Uzo, 1988:34).

4.3 Shanahan and the earlier missionaries: Methods and approaches

The religious structure in Nigeria has revealed that Igboland is dominated by major Christian denominations, namely, the Roman Catholic Church (RCM) and the Anglican Church (CMS). To a large extent, this was because of the evangelisation approaches adopted by the early missionaries. Regrettably, however, these approaches also stimulated conflict and competition between these two Christian missions, averting their actual focus and obligation to eradicate the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the people. Subsequently, routinization and ambivalence have become a common trait within the contemporary Christian circles in Igboland (Nwaka, 2012:1). Onitsha was the base of the RCM and Protestant mission, but the remarkable achievement of the former left the latter in great bewilderment. While the CMS established their mission in Onitsha in 1857, the RCM arrived in 1885, but from all indication and despite the late arrival, the RCM was

more successful than the CMS in winning more souls and members. Different strategies adopted by the RCM to gain more converts are summarily analysed in Table 4.1 below. The analytical discussion of these approaches, in the light of Shanahan, is subsequently elaborated thereafter.

Table 1. Missionary methods and approaches adopted by the earlier missionary Shanahan in Igbo land

Approaches adopted	Earlier mission - Church Missionary Society (CMS)	Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) - Shanahan
Liberation of slaves	Incorporated them as missionaries, which boasted their relation with the communities because of their awareness of the norms and language.	Freed many slaves, providing them with new lives and religion. Zappa purchased slaves who became Catholics (cf. Section 4.3.1 Liberation of slaves).
Education and school chapel	Adopted education but hesitated on the use of the English language as a medium of instruction.	Introduced advanced forms of education incorporating in itself the use of English and taught more than religious studies. Shanahan viewed this approach as a system of evangelisation rather than merely for learning.
European medicine	Later adopted the method and also built hospitals.	Used European medicine to win the hearts of parents via the treatment of their children. Father Shanahan's medical care gained him affection from the natives, and they became converts (cf. Introduction of Chapter 1 & Section 4.3.3 European medicine).
The value of children	Showed care for the	Shanahan figured that the main

	children (mostly in the school setting and through learning).	channel for evangelisation was via the children. He welcomed the children, just like Jesus, and empowered them with the gospel and education, which they willingly shared with their parents.
Women empowerment	Might have incorporated women later on in their mission in Igboland, but was not central in their strategy.	The church has been aware of the importance of women in mission. Shanahan recognized the well-known fact about women's power in ministration, especially towards their fellow women, and adopted this approach. In so doing, he put an end to the marginalisation of women in Igboland.
Power of language, culture and contact with the chiefs	In their mission, he used local missionaries that were familiar with the language and culture of the people. Had contact with the chiefs, but their adherents had no firm foundation on the Word of God, as they were easily swayed by the powerful message and skills of the RCM.	Shanahan perceived the main element of evangelising to the Igbo by learning the core facts of Igbo cosmogony. Besides learning the Igbo language and having a good rapport with the chiefs, he maximised the mysticism of Igbo culture in the light of the Christian message.
Indigenisation of vocation and mission	Adopted the method of using locals to win locals, for example, Christopher Taylor, and many more (cf.	In addition to using locals in their mission, a seminary was built to train priests, clergy and missionaries for greater impact.

	Section 2.7 Mission and missionary beginnings in Igboland).	Shanahan felt that inviting reluctant missionaries to this region would hinder the conversion and salvation of the Igbo people; he therefore built their very first seminary.
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4.3.1 Liberation of slaves

The RCM liberated many slaves who came to them for security and to protect them from the harsh punishment of Igbo traditional religious practices. Fr. Carlo Zappa (1861-1917), a member of the SMA¹³, was seen to purchase thirty children at three hundred and ten-pound sterling. He also established the Western Prefecture in 1886 and built a house for the nuns in Lokoja (Okpanachi, 2013:25). Although his action was perceived as controversial, it served as one of the most enterprising means of alienating the suffering and pain of the Igbo people, fostering conversion. He offered them freedom that came with both the salvation and redemption of the soul. However, Okpanachi's (2013:25) debate on Fr. Zappa's intention had no implication on the strategy adopted by the Catholics to gain converts:

The purchase of these children held as slaves was a controversial issue in the mission field. Fr. Zappa admitted that they bought them but trained them and liberated them afterwards. Some view this action of his as contributing to the promotion of slave trade while others saw it as a way of liberation from the evil fangs of slavery (Okpanachi, 2013:25).

The missionaries, not just the Catholic missionaries, worked hard in response to the book of Isaiah that says, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound” (Isaiah 61:1, KJV).

¹³ SMA stands for Society of African Missions.

4.3.2 Education and school chapel

It is seemingly unarguable from the data presented in Table 4.1 that the victory of the RCM was largely due to their introduction of advanced education in the already existing school system. This approach led to the RCM supplying personnel like clerks and secretaries to the colonial masters, and to the missionaries' catechists and interpreters to take care of menial jobs in their offices. While the Protestants insisted on their students becoming proficient in English and sufficiently equipped to engage in Bible study, the Catholics were keen to supply the required skills the imperial government was in dire need of.

The African acceptance of education was clearly linked to the employment opportunities created by the colonial presence. The British administration needed literate young men to fill minor positions; the missions needed teachers, and business enterprises (such as the United African Company Ltd, and John Holt Limited) needed accountants (Abernethy 1969, cited in Nwosu, 1985:159).

Shanahan was extraordinary in applying these novel strategies in his mission work. Unlike earlier missionaries before him that adopted similar and various methods in their mission, he adapted these strategies impinging on them his innate view of the human mind and dignity. He was convinced that the school and formal education would not only create job opportunities for him, but that it would also be an indispensable instrument for evangelisation. Therefore, he immediately plunged into implementing his plan by utilising personnel, finance, and land, as well as gaining the support of the village chiefs (cf. Section 4.3.6 Power of language, culture, and contact with the chiefs). Reflecting on the request made in his report to Europe on 3 December 1905 for new missionaries to be sent to the Lower Niger Mission, detailed the success of his plan (Uzo, 1988:40). He reported the progress made in the opening of new stations in Umuoji, Anam and Calabar (Uzo, 1988:40). According to Uzo (1988:40), “[Shanahan] was optimistic that the school apostolate would succeed”. Interestingly, as he had hoped, many towns and villages, including Awka, Achala, Oguta, Igbariam in Igboland began to invite the mission to establish mission schools in their areas.

4.3.3 European medicine

The importance of European medicine in missionary evangelism, especially in relation to the RCM, must not be ignored. The RC medical work among the Igbo people enormously facilitated the dominance and influence of Catholics before 1900. This measured satisfactorily with the cost of the operation and the expenses of the Holy Ghost Fathers (Ekechi, 1972:224). In addition to serving as a strategy that improved the attitude of the indigenes towards the missionaries, it greatly affected their belief in the healing potency as well as the livelihood of the *Dibias* (medicine men). The *Dibias* made *Ogwu* (medicine) to cure any type of sickness or remedy any crisis situation disturbing the individual or groups of individuals. The *Dibias* were both respected and dreaded throughout Africa because of their supernatural power. When Africans seek medical treatment from the missionaries instead of depending on the *Dibias*, it indicates that they recognize the potency of European medicine. Although the traditional healers were not disregarded, it was clear that some natives placed greater value on European medicine. This created enormous conflict and a number of challenges between the traditional *Dibias* and the Western medicine of the missionaries, especially in situations where the native's medicine was discredited by the potency of the white man's medicine. As exemplified by Ekechi (1972:224):

When Chief Idigo of Aguleri was converted to Christianity in 1891, the *Dibias* threatened him that he would die within a year. Father Pawlas, however, called their bluff, assuring Chief Idigo of good health and prosperity. Father Pawlas won.

Many locals strongly believed in the magical powers of the *Dibia*'s medicine, although many also thought the Christian missions had medicines that were equally potent. When some communities in Nnewi were involved in a civil war in 1893, an Anglican missionary that visited their region was asked to provide a 'miracle-working' medicine. The mystified missionary replied:

They said they were glad to see us and hear what we've got to say, but they wanted help in one thing, medicine. Their town [Ichi] was at war with another town; some of their people had been shot in battle; they asked if we had medicine, which poured upon a bullet wound would heal the man immediately. The chief, himself, is said to have asked for same medicine which, poured into his food, would kill any poison that might have been put in it (Ekechi, 1972:225).

In general, receptivity to European medicine depended on its practical results. The consistent results Western medicine yielded was consistent with the Igbo people's cosmological ideas. The people hardly resign themselves to their fate; therefore, the shift from fully relying on the *Dibias* was likely in response to any emerging circumstance. From an economic standpoint, the invasion of European medicine drastically affected the income of the *Dibias*. In addition, it also negated their ancient belief in the powers of their deities, which they religiously revered. It is therefore no wonder that they fought back, resisting the missionaries and their medicine. For the most part, the joint forces of the colonial powers and missionary evangelism destroyed the social prestige and spiritual powers of the *Dibias*.

4.3.4 Value of children

After he became the Apostolic Prefect of Southern Nigeria in 1905, Shanahan did nothing but reflect on the existing situation. His predecessors had addressed themselves to the adult population; in particular, they devoted themselves to the care of those suffering from diseases or social disabilities. The outcasts and the abandoned were the chief beneficiaries of their ministrations. They gathered poor people around them, attended to their spiritual and material well-being, as well as paid the slave dealers to redeem slaves. They presumed that the sight of this heroic act of charity would win the pagans' affections over to the religion that inspired it.

Shanahan discovered that they were not impressed. The system did not encourage a social life that was not part of their system and lifestyle, one consisting of individual adherents. He then decided to take it to the homes of the freeborn and chose their children as bearers of the gospel message via the school chapel. Emulating Jesus, Shanahan called the children to himself (Matthew 19:14). Before the school system was established, he first made the children his teacher by learning to speak Igbo from them, and in turn, he taught them the English language. Later, this relationship was transformed into a more formal system, which has improved continuously to date.

It is the contemporary Igbo child's fundamental desire and core value in life to learn. It was almost like a competition, with the children desiring to go to school, but often altered due to the lack of funds. The value they place on education and their passion towards formal learning is largely due to the foundation laid by Bishop Joseph Ignatius Shanahan.

4.3.5 Women empowerment

In the history of the Church, women have been involved in various ways, although this has not always been acknowledged. Mary, the mother of Jesus, by her humble submission to the will of God, made the incarnation possible, and was with Christ throughout his journey to the cross. Mary Magdalene was even the first to see Jesus after He rose from the dead (Matthew 28:8). Right from the beginning, some women singled themselves out for the service of the Kingdom and humanity (Romans 16:3). After many struggles, the Church had to accept their value and give them their place. Through these examples of fortitude in service, many women religious orders have been formed, and their ministry remains the practice of the Church to date. A great example is that shown by St Clare:

Women, as well as men, were drawn to Francis's vision, the first and most widely known being Clare, born in 1193 into a wealthy family of Assisi. Recognized already during her youth for her spiritual gifts and encouraged through her contacts with Francis, Clare's moment of renouncing her old life and choosing her new one occurred on Palm Sunday of 1212 (Bevans, 2011:3600-3603).

Throughout their lives, they sought to reflect the life of Christ to one another and to those drawn to them from their neighbouring towns. To use Clare's image, they were to be a 'mirror of Christ'. In this way, Clare and her community developed a "feminine incarnation of the Franciscan evangelical life" in such a complementary way with the friars' life and work that "she and her sisters would be missionaries, preachers, healers, and restorers of Churches while remaining behind monastery walls" (Bevans, 2011:3620-3630).

It is the charisms of these religious women that Shanahan wanted to add as part of his educational outreach to the Igbo youth, as is evident by the numerous invitations extended to religious women from various congregations to join him in his missionary endeavours (cf. Section 4.3.5 Women empowerment). They were able to extend this mission to the education of girls, thus creating mutual solidarity between the nuns and the local community, which in turn created a sense of mission and Church within the local Christian context. Like St. Clare and her outreach to the Saracen army, and following Shanahan's example of cultural immersion and respect for local customs, their approach to mission was strikingly different to the prevalent approach of the time. Like the great achievements of Catherine, these efforts were empowered because of the balance they kept between contemplation and action.

Shanahan was acting out of the wealth of experience of what women could do, especially in helping to bring up other women and to spread the good news of caring for the less privileged. About Shanahan's formation of religious orders, Obi notes:

....he tried everywhere to get an existing congregation to come to Nigeria but was disappointed.... Two young Irish girls offered to come to the mission – one had been a science teacher while the other a nurse.... Both set about training, and came to Nigeria in 1921; others followed in 1922. Out of the nucleus of Irish girls who came to Calabar, came eventually the sisters of the Holy Rosary, and indirectly the Medical Missionary of Mary. Bishop Shanahan also accepted an Irish Sisters of Charity and the Holy Child Society sisters (Obi, cited in Nwosu, 1985:133-134).

Shanahan instituted these women religious orders knowing the need to reduce the marginalization of girls in this area. Consequently, he thus introduced them to a life that would comprise much sacrifice, making them ready to give their life to mission—not only to win souls but also to add value to the lives others, especially girls, exemplified by their life of selfless and dedicated service. As Sister Anyaegbunam stated:

Bishop Shanahan realised that by himself, and even with the help of his priests, he could not give Igbo women the spiritual elevation necessary to enable them to rise to the level of their male companions, as God originally intended them to be. So in 1924 he founded the congregation of the Sisters of the Most Holy Rosary to undertake this task, since women are better qualified than men to train other women to the full development of womanly qualities (cited in Nwosu, 1985:71).

Further, she confirmed the progress made so far by the religious women in bringing more people to God. As at 1966, a family had given their three girls out to the religious way of life. More families were sending their children to convents to be trained. Some were nurses and midwives in hospitals and maternity homes. They established Mary League Girls Association¹⁴ and The Legion of Mary¹⁵. They took care of the orphans and prepared children for sacraments. In this way, the involvement of the sisters in parish activities presented a challenge to the girls, and they generously responded to it (Anyaegbunam, cited in Nwosu, 1985:87).

This growth and wonderful witness have continued till date with many still willing and desiring to be of service to the human race. More congregations have been formed to accommodate the growing number that desire to join the religious life. It is encouraging

¹⁴ A Catholic pious organisation for young girls.

¹⁵ A pious organisation for all categories of Catholics who are devoted to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

to see that they are giving back to the world what they have been blessed with. This displays the vitality of Shanahan's mission, in that what he began with just two Irish girls has grown to accommodate thousands of girls proclaiming the good news of the kingdom to all.

4.3.6 Power of language, culture and contact with the chiefs

Shanahan's respect, openness, and continuous interaction with the chiefs won him many followers; this is apart from those that were drawn by the testimonies of the children. Shanahan's zeal to redeem souls is evident in the following excerpt:

...[in] each town...would gather together in schools the apostles who were destined to transform everything. I felt that Christ would one day take up His residence among these people in His Sacramental tabernacle as well as in the tabernacle of their hearts. Therefore, I blessed every village we saw, so that Satan would be driven forth and things got ready for the coming of the Master (Jordan, 1977:46).

Shanahan showed the same careful balance between prayer and purpose. Only after prayerful reflection, would Shanahan approach a chief. This recourse to prayer is what gave him the needed wisdom to engage in meaningful discourse. Jordan tabulated an account of Shanahan's dialogue with a chief. After the chief had welcomed Shanahan and his group, and they had exchanged pleasantries over the breaking of kola nuts¹⁶ Shanahan began his presentation in the form of a dialogue:

Shanahan: "I come, not as a soldier or a trader, but as a white who serves the Mighty *Chukwu* (God). You know, of course, that He made all things?"

Chief: "*Ama m*" (I know)

Shanahan: "It is good that we do His will, is it not?"

Chief: "*O di mma*" (It is good)

Shanahan: "Well, I know what His will is for men. It is to teach it that I came to this country. I am friend of *Chukwu*, Great God. The people of this town must become His friends too. They are a good people and are well ruled. If they were bad, I would not have slept unarmed, in your market place last night. There was no danger for me, because yourself and your *Isi ani* (Headmen) are both powerful and intelligent, and keep good order. Is it not so?"

¹⁶ Presentation of kola, is a sign or gesture of welcome and hospitality to a visitor.

Chief: “*Eeye, anyi nwere uche nwekwa ike*” (Yes, we are intelligent and powerful) (cited in Uzo, 1988:35).

The dialogue continued until Shanahan asked them for a piece of land for a church and a school. He promised to bring a trained teacher to Onitsha during his next visit. He urged the people to build a house where *Chukwu* (God) could be worshipped, and where the children could come every day and learn about *Chukwu* and the ‘book’ to make them wiser than the children of other towns. With rapt attention, the chief and his men listened to him until at last they donated a piece of land to him. In addition, to honour their good encounter and budding relationship, the chief also gave him a lamb and said, “The man of God must eat in our town” (Uzo, 1988:35).

Bishop Shanahan had a huge advantage over his predecessors because of his fluency in both French and English. With similar enthusiasm for learning French, Shanahan took upon the challenge to learn the Igbo language. With the help of the children and his slave friends, he learned enough to see him through his interaction with the chiefs. He knew the power of communication, especially if people engaged in dialogue could speak the same language.

Over a few weeks, he visited many villages and chiefs, and discovered that the Igbos were rigid in their structures and proud of their ancestral heritage. This strengthened his dialogue and made him cautious in discussing change. He was very careful never to condemn paganism or anything pagan, regardless of whether it concerned customs, rituals or laws. He knew that the people would not understand him and would become suspicious and antagonistic. Carefully studying their beliefs and culture helped him see that their traditional ideas about God were not wholly incorrect, but merely incomplete. Thus, reflecting on the mind of Jordan who recorded Shanahan’s apostolate, Uzo reiterated:

The people at the time knew nothing about the Blessed Trinity, but they did believe firmly in the existence of One Supreme Spirit, who created all things and controlled them. Igbo people call God ‘*Chukwu*’, (God or the Great Spirit), and in some part of Igboland, he is called *Chineke* (God, the Creator). He (God) had no equal. However, He had one great enemy called *Ekwensu* (Devil) (Uzo, 1988:36).

The Igbo strongly believe that the Devil, *Ekwensu*, is the source of all misfortune. Shanahan found that the Igbos already believed in gods, which for them, existed to some

degree and in certain categories (similar to the Christian understanding of the Trinity). They believe that *Chukwu* is the Supreme God that controls other gods. They also believe that among the smaller gods, there are good and bad ones. But *Chukwu* is always good; hence, the small gods revere him. For Shanahan, the Igbo cosmogony and belief was a good asset. Thus, when presenting the doctrines of the Catholic faith to the Igbos, he was able to build upon things they already knew and cherished. He would gather the people together in the market-place or in the public square, or at a big compound, and begin his teaching, from the known to the unknown:

Shanahan: "You believe that there is one God?"

Igbos: "Eeye!" (Yes; *with emphatic nods*)

Shanahan: "Well, so do I."

Shanahan: "You believe that Ekwensu (Devil) exists?"

Igbos: "Eeye! Anyi kwere." (Yes, we believe.)

Shanahan: "So do I."

Shanahan: "You believe there are many good and evil Spirits?"

Igbos: Eeye! "Anyi kwere." (Yes, we believe.)

Shanahan: "You believe that it is good to sacrifice to the Spirit?"

Igbos: Eeye! "Anyi kwere." (Yes we believe)

Shanahan: "Well, I believe all these things too, except that I think it is right to sacrifice only to Chukwu. So you see, we understand each other" (cited in Jordan, 1977:55).

Again, when he perceived that the Igbos believed in reward and punishment (even in life after death), that God is omniscient, and *Okwu Chukwu bu eziokwu* (God's word is true), he applied this insight to his catechesis on the Trinity:

Chukwu tells us that in Him there are three persons, *Chukwu Nna* (God, the Father), *Chukwu Nwa* (God, the Son) and *Chukwu Mmuonso* (God, the Holy Spirit). I believe this is true because *Chukwu* says so, and He knows about Himself (Jordan, 1977:55).

He continued with all his explanations. Seeing that the Igbo chiefs did not eat in public, which would be a serious transgression in every Igbo community, he applied it to his explanation:

Shanahan: “If I were not to believe, I should be like a small child who says about a big Chief, I do not believe that the Chief eats food because I have never seen him eat it. The small child understands small child palaver, the Chief understands Chief palaver, and God understands God palaver. Is it not so?”

Igbos: “*O bu etua!*” (It is so!) (Cited in Jordan, 1977:56).

He observed them offering sacrifices and was especially observant of the protocol that was involved. This he used to explain to them the Catholic understanding of the sacrifice of the Mass and Holy Communion. First, the people trusted in the sacrifice and its reconciliatory effects, and secondly, someone (a *dibia*) is always set aside to perform the sacrifice.

For the Igbo, sacrifice was a necessary step to keep away adversary and to appease the spirits for evils that have been committed. The adversity might be ill health, or the loss of property, or injury, or anything that could be called ‘man’s misfortune’. When this disaster could not be traced to a person or a known cause, then it was deemed the work of the spirits. Thus, the spirit needs “sacrifice” and gifts (Uzo, 1988:38).

Shanahan was a fine exemplar of the principles that John Paul II emphasized in *Catechesis Tradendae* when describing his approach to catechesis. He said “...the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: Only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity” (John Paul II, 1979:10).

4.3.7 *Indigenization of vocation and mission*

On September 28, 1905, Cardinal Gotti wrote to Monsignor Le Roy, and Fr. Joseph Shanahan was judged the most prudent and capable of Lejeune’s colleagues. Consequently, he was officially appointed the Apostolic Prefect of the lower Niger mission. He received the news with mixed feelings for he referred to that day as the saddest day of his life. Probably, his sadness was caused by two realities. First, as Apostolic Prefect, he would have more administrative work, which would keep him away from his missionary activities. Second, he would now be responsible for persuading missionaries to come to the region.

Not many missionaries desired to go to Nigeria for their mission because of the difficulties and near-death experiences they would face on a daily basis. The danger of travelling through a narrow bush path in those days cannot be underrated. Apart from the danger of wild beasts, snakes, leopards, and bush cows, the security of a stranger among the natives was uncertain. A stranger in any town was regarded as a potential enemy, and enemies were killed whenever and wherever they were found. Shanahan did not allow his colleagues to make this trek but preferred to do it himself. Dressed in khaki and having his boxes with him, he thought to himself:

I felt that I was doing the work of John the Baptist, going out to prepare the way before Christ. My task was to preach of a glory to come, of the day when we should have a teacher, catechist for each town, who would gather in schools the apostles who were destined to transform everything (Jordan, 1977:45-46).

Due to the difficulty of attracting missionaries with extraordinary zeal to this area, Shanahan became convinced of the need for the indigenization of the clergy and religious life. Mission and local vocations were interlaced. Church mission in any region was complete when local people took up the challenge. In 1924, he instituted a seminary for the training of native priests and clergy, and ordained the very first priest, who later became Bishop Anyogu. With this ordination, Bishop Joseph Shanahan saw his mission, to a certain extent, as being complete, since the goal of any missionary work is to establish a vigorous and self-supporting Church in a new land, and this goal seems to have been accomplished when a native clergy was ordained. Bishop Shanahan laboured to plant the Church in Igboland and was willing to leave the harvest for others to reap (see Section 2.8 Roman Catholic mission in Igboland).

4.3.8 Receptivity of an outside religion

What must have informed the automatic response of the people of the Lower Niger area to the new teaching and the abandoning of their old practices could not necessarily have been because the white man's religion condemned the practices involved in African traditional religions, but because most of the missionaries were patient enough to understand what they believed in and so participated consciously in the acts that bonded the people together. In other words, it was not merely due to their gathering together for worship, but because of speaking their local language and tolerating their culture. Yet during these events, the missionaries still showed them that they were not of course

totally stupid. This explains the claim scholars make when differentiating between social science and missiology. In such claims, social science is presented as struggling to maintain the integrity of scientific methods, while missiology is considered more comprehensive and versatile because it can weave together scientific explanations and normative views. When learning the language of the people, it takes time to know their culture, discover similarities, or find elements of practice that could be considered good or comparatively similar to what looks European in the latter (Montgomery, 1986).

The humanity of the missionary, therefore, informs the action that disposes the recipients to be receptive of the outside religion packaged by missiology or the missiologist. This follows Montgomery's argument that 'missiology makes great use of historical studies, and increasingly it has been drawing on the social sciences' (Montgomery, 1986:288). All in all, missiology borders on human identity and values the human person, which in the words of Brian Stanley could be termed 'reconciliation'. This is reiterated in the words of Stan Chu Ilo (2012:251), where the underlying structure of fruitful mission is explored:

The church has received from Christ the ministry of reconciliation as an instrument of communion, reconciling love, and solidarity. An African theology of reconciliation will, therefore, seek to show how the life of African Christians can become deeply immersed *in Christo*. The more rooted and immersed in Christ the Christian is, the more he or she develops the mind of Christ (Phil. 2: 6), which seeks not to serve one's own interest or to promote only the good of one's friends, ethnic group, class, or reference group, but to serve the other through self-forgetting and self-forgiving love. The more Christoform the Christian life is, the more universal one's vision and the more inclusive one's mission in life will be.

Reconciliation is, first and foremost, dismantling every stronghold of dissimilarity between Christians and non-Christians in accordance with St Paul's injunction that all baptized in Christ should be clothed in Christ, and thus "there [should be] no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all ... are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3: 28-29). It is this stronghold that premiers and ignites the fire of discord, creating a religious crisis. Once it is dealt with, all parties involved will consequently find peace. However, the ultimate reconciliation is that which begins from home. If Christians can learn how to treat everyone equally, irrespective of their social status or ancestral background, then all, whether bond or free, male or female, will participate in mission with joy and proclaim the gospel to those who are yet to experience what they have already experienced. But the problem is that contemporary mission is

comprised of adherents who still hold tenaciously to the strife that once existed between the founding fathers of their various denominations. By implication, there is a clarion call here to all to eschew the spirit of strife and embrace the gospel of reconciliation, without which Christians run the risk of running their race in vain, as well as risk living in constant friction with themselves and with non-Christians.

4.4 Theological reflections on Shanahan's work

Shanahan was a devout servant and he devoted his life to serve both God and humanity; both elements are clearly evident in his work. The place of God, as reflected in his work, suggests an understanding of God and of the mission of Christ. My attention henceforth is to focus on the underlying principles and theological currents that shaped and propelled this renowned missionary. To this effect, I will carry out a Christological exploration of Shanahan's work, with the aim being to unravel the essential elements that correlated with Jesus' teachings and work. In a similar manner, the soteriological insights in his work will be discussed.

4.4.1 A Christological review

A Christological enquiry about the nature of Jesus presents the two natures of Christ, as upheld by the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451). The church held that Jesus was fully divine as well as human. Thus, considering the human nature of Christ, who lived in history and over a period, healed the sick, raised the dead, and was merciful and compassionate (Luke 4:18). This Christological aspect will form the basis of this evaluation; it will also consider those aspects of the humanitarian work of Shanahan that made him outstanding. It is, therefore, on this note that the assertion in Luke 4:18 becomes paramount. This is because the mission of Christ is declared in this verse, and it offers us a model for Christocentric mission, as seen below:

- The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. (Luke 4:18):

Despite much persecution, Jesus' desire to save humans from the wrath of God became a fundamentality in his ministration. Bishop Joseph Shanahan strove to live in line with this mandate of preaching the good news to the poor. He left the comfort of his home in

Ireland, and withstood the harsh terrain, climate, and people. Despite his hardships, he persevered in spreading the good news to the Igbos. He met them in their poverty, lived with them, learned their language, and preached the good news of Christ that turned them away from their evil traditional religious practices.

- He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives (Luke 4:18):

Understandably, the era in which Bishop Shanahan worked was an era of slave trade and human degradation of all sorts. In addition, from the accounts of his exploits, it is recorded that he worked towards the liberation of slaves. As literal as this sounds, it is important to note that he might not have directly liberated slaves, but ensured that he gave them the opportunity and access to the good news he came with, giving them the opportunity to be freely born in Christ, living a life worth emulating, and as dignified creatures made in the image of God.

- To restore sight to the blind (Matt. 11:5):

Among the many aspects of his humanisation work, Shanahan took it upon himself to ensure that education was for all. As part of his mission, he particularly saw to it that every person in his reach had access to education. This was a very remarkable venture in the life and history of the Igbos in Nigeria. The establishment of schools and educational institutions served as a veritable source of enlightenment. Education brought light to the lowly, illuminating and abolishing their ignorance. Basically, the mission work of Bishop Shanahan in South-Eastern Nigeria, encapsulated many strands of the humanisation process.

- To heal the sick and feed the hungry (Matt. 9:35; Luke 9:13, 16):

The mission of Christ, demonstrated in both word and deed, offers salvation to mankind through the preaching of the gospel and the healing of the sick. Christ's compassion lays the foundation for mission, as He shows mercy to the deserving and undeserving alike, e.g. the Canaanite woman (Mathew 12:22-28). Christ perceives the intense pain and suffering of humankind when he heals the sick, blind, crippled, and even raises the dead (Luke 18:36-43; Mathew 17:15; Mark 5:22, 23). Jesus never leaves people with just the

Word; He provides them with food for the body and the spirit (Mathew 14:13-21). Feeding the hungry, both physically and spiritually, signifies his mission and life while on earth, when He finally gave Himself up for humankind (Luke 22:19). These deeds underline the prominence of God's zeal for mercy and love. Shanahan not only emulated the words and deeds of Christ, he lived the life of Christ and touched the hearts of many Ibos through the care and administration of European medicine provided by the RCM. In addition he took the necessary steps to trickle down the wealth to the poor masses in Iboland in a bid to curb their hunger and reduce or prevent social marginalisation and exclusion.

- All men are equal in the eyes of the Lord (Acts 10:34):

Shanahan showed the same love that Christ showed to all by seeking to liberate African women from oppressive cultural and religious practices. He repressed and restricted the systems that inflicted unnecessary violence (i.e. harm, damage or oppression) on the *imago Dei* of African women (Bevans, 2012:126). The life force, the *imago Dei* personified in African woman, empowered them to resist oppressive religious and cultural systems, or situations. Shanahan perceived this spirit in African women, and therefore liberated them and used their Godly talents in expanding his mission. As Bevans (2012:124) says, “The transcendent spirit finds expression, creatively and inherently, in the vast arrays of beliefs, customs and ways of living among African women”.

- Leave the children to come to me (Matt 19:14):

Jesus Christ adored children; He used them to amplify the mystery of His Kingdom and accentuate the fundamentals of the gospel. Shanahan realised this and made the children the centre of his mission. He empowered them by teaching them about the gospel, and with the knowledge they gained, they acted as ‘missionaries’ to their parents and families. Christ praised the humility of children, saying it should be the way of life for true believers. Similarly, Shanahan used the humility of children to affect the lives of the Igbo majority.

- Go ye into the world and spread the gospel (Matt. 28:19-20):

Prior to His ascension, Christ mandated His apostles to continue the propagation of the gospel in his absence. Until and after his death, Christ showed fervent determination to raise humanity from their fallen state. He encouraged local vocation to the priesthood and religious life considering the shortage of missionaries in Igboland, Shanahan sought to emulate the acts of Christ as He sent out his disciples. The directive given by Christ to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth was set in motion by Shanahan's indigenisation of vocations in South-Eastern Nigeria. Until now, the ripple effect of this single act by Shanahan is widely felt in various parts of the world, as the majority of contemporary missionaries are from Igboland.

- Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar (Mark 12:17):

Christ's respect for and active participation in the Jewish law and culture reflects one of the moral values intrinsic to mission. Christ made it clear that He did not come to abolish the law or the prophets but to fulfil the law, which was wrongly practised by the Jews. Christ's encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) confirms that Christ, in His mission, also came to restore human dignity and worth. Shanahan, cognizant of these principles found in Christ, respected the culture of the Igbos and dignified the essence of their humanity and self-value. Without criticism, Shanahan persuaded them to practice their culture in light of the gospel. With such charisma, he turned many souls away from evil traditional religious practices to Christianity.

- I come for the sinners and the lost (Matt. 9:13):

Christ redeemed many sinners and made most of them his disciples. Jesus shows that He came for sinners and the lost by choosing most of his twelve apostles from amongst them. Simon Peter, an unworthy man, was the first apostle chosen by Christ (Luke 5:8). Zacchaeus, a tax collector and a sinner, desirous to see Christ, climbed a sycamore fig tree to see him. Jesus singled him out, on top of the tree, and said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:1-10). Shanahan was well aware of the sinful and evil practices of ignorant Igbos, and that the lost communities had no right sense of God and mysticism. He therefore penetrated their social and religious barriers, and brought the ignorant and lost in South-Eastern Nigeria into the light of Christ.

4.4.2 Soteriological reflections on Shanahan's work

The word *soteriology* is derived from two Greek words, ‘*soteria*’ and ‘*logos*’. While the former means ‘saviour’ or ‘preserver’ (salvation), the latter means ‘study’. Hence, *soteriology* refers to religious doctrines about salvation. David Bosch (1991/2011:162), in *Transforming Mission*, emphasizes that “Christian missionary movement has been driven throughout history by the aspiration to mediate salvation” in the world. In sum, the salvation of souls remains central to mission, and largely explains the rudiments of the ‘Great Commission’ found in Matthew 28:19-20. Considering the rate at which Shanahan invested his time, energy, wealth, and zeal into the mission, it is no exaggeration to say that he sought the salvation of the Igbo people.

Considering the works of Bishop Joseph Shanahan, at face value one would think that he was more of a social worker or humanitarian of some sort. This is because he partook in various kinds of humanisation activities, which touched the lives of many people. He tacitly merged his work with the sublime touch of Messianic love, bringing Christ to the Igbos with the message of hope and salvation, enlightening them with the Word and Spirit. He achieved this by teaching catechism, preaching the Gospels, living amongst them, and speaking to them in their local language. This means that Bishop Joseph Shanahan advanced salvation and soul winning in his mission through the act of humanisation; one can thus find traces soteriology in his work.

4.5 Theological evaluation of bi-cultural convergence

Culture is the totality of all the material and non-material attributes that define one as a member of a given society. It is a complex whole, which includes the social, religious and intellectual capabilities of members of any definite group. Niebuhr (1956:37) also defines culture as a social tradition to be conserved not so much against non-human natural forces, as against revolution and critical powers in human life and reason. Another definition by Triandis (2000) suggests that culture is the acclamatisation of a particular group of people to a particular environment and involves the knowledge the people require to interact efficiently with their social environment. From these definitions, one can observe that culture comprises the totality of a people’s life, and often religion plays a central role in its formation and growth. Therefore, a modest effort to offer a theological evaluation of the bi-cultural encounter between Western culture, as embedded in

Christianity, and the Igbo traditional practices of South-Eastern Nigeria, as met by the early missionary Bishop Shanahan, entails that the religious elements and dynamics must be explored. In doing so, it becomes clear that there is a relationship between African cultural religion and the Christian religion, which often has a weak consistency and sometimes a salvific, sacred, or even a non-sacred influence on one another (Bevans, 2012:111).

To carry out this examination, this study will focus on five of the most prominent areas found within these two religious traditions where the intercultural encounter and missionary engagement of Shanahan happened and continues to happen. They are: (1) the idea of a Supreme Being, (2) the communion of saints, (3) cult of prayer, (4) the sense of morality, and (5) belief in the after-life. This study will also highlight the theological blueprint underlying the encounter between Christianity and the Igbo traditional religion.

Christian God and Chukwu (Supreme Being)

The idea of God or an array of gods in the Igbo traditional religion was never novel with the arrival of the early missionaries. Many scholars, who have observed that the people of South-East Nigeria are religious in nature, have upheld this assertion. Until these recent times, the Igbo continue to express the belief in a free-hearted creator known as *Chukwu*, the creator of the world. Arinze (2008) alludes that every typical Igbo person has this fundamental belief in an ultimate Supreme Being. This explains the theological undertone of many names ascribed to God in the Igbo traditional religion such as *Chi Okike* (God the creator), *Chi Ukwu* (Great God) and *Olisa bulu uwa* (God who upholds the universe). These names are indicative of the religious worldview of the people. Historical records abound with respect for this. This is reflected in the writings of Naylor, a 19th century missionary to Africa, thus: "...despite the abnormal folds of animalism with which it is covered, the idea of God persists, and is capable of revival and enlargement. Some missionaries find a distinct conception of the Supreme God" (Naylor, 1905:89).

Comparatively, this illustrates Shanahan's encounter with the Igbo, a people with an already existing belief in a supreme being. Significantly, this formed the basis for his mission. Just like Paul in the Acts of Apostles (Acts 17:22-29), Shanahan taught them about the Christian God using their belief system; a meeting point of two different religious cultures, with dissimilar approaches. In Athens, Paul saw an inscription in the

temple that read: “To the unknown gods,” which he used to explain the Christian God to the people. Likewise, Shanahan used the Igbo belief in the Supreme Being to teach them about the Christian God.

Saints and Nna nna anyi (Igbo ancestors)

The Igbo tradition and culture, particularly in terms of its communal and relationality, has an ancestral-based system. In Igbo culture, it is believed that the souls of those who lived good lives continue to live on in another world, where they watch over the community and their respective families, and the loved ones they left behind. This confirms their belief in the afterlife—an eschatological belief that most often shapes and influences the way they live. This reality was a very good one for Bishop Shanahan to propagate the belief in life after death for those who die in Christ. The Catholic teaching on belief in life after death conspicuously falls into place with this ideology. The reward of living a good and holy life is sainthood in the ‘Christian religion,’ just as ancestorship is the reward for living a good life in the Igbo traditional religion.

Christian prayer and Igo mmuo/Ekpe m chi (rituals/incantation)

Prayer, especially in the form of sacrifice, remains a central point in the Igbo life and culture until now. The Igbo believe that prayer to both the Supreme Being and the smaller gods is a significant space for translating their belief in and relationship with these supernatural beings. Similarly, the idea of prayer is central to the Christian religion. It is considered a highly sacred act performed by a Christian or by anyone who claims to be a Christian. This is because it is the space of an imminent encounter and concrete relationship with the transcendent God. The Igbo maintain, as do Christians, that in prayer, one is able to remain connected to divine beings. The form of prayer in both traditions is similar, i.e. it can be in the form of worship, a plea for forgiveness, thanksgiving, and supplication. Shanahan appreciated the experience of prayer as one of the vital spaces for encountering the people he came to evangelise at the time. This also explains why the Christian faith has thrived in Africa, in that the people already had a profound relationship with supreme deities, whom they have always relied upon to give their lives meaning and fruitfulness.

Good and Ajo ihe (Evil)

In a typical Igbo setup, the notion of good and evil exists, and these are dependent on the effect of a given action in the community, or the group within which the individual operates. This provided fertile ground for Bishop Joseph Shanahan to preach on. In the Igbo traditional culture, evil actions have numerous consequences, ranging from the absence of peace of mind and heart, overwhelming behaviour and actions, to the loss of serenity and order in the cosmos. A noteworthy point is that as much as the Christian religion abhors evil, so does the Igbo religious culture. The Scriptures speak of love among neighbours (Mark 12:31), so does the Igbo religion and culture. We find this profound sense of fraternal solidarity in the various axioms and sayings of the people, for instance, *egbe bere ugo bere*, or *ibiri ka mbiri* (live and let live), *onuru ube nwanne*, *onye aghala nwanne ya* (do not forget your brother as you progress).

Resurrection and afterlife

Belief in the afterlife is another significant element for understanding the cultural encounter between the Christian religion propagated by Shanahan in his missionary efforts and the Igbo culture that he came to evangelise. He observed that the Igbos were conscious of the other world. Not only were they immersed in the present material realities of this life, but they also had a deep sense of another entity that is beyond their immediate grasp and physical perception. The Igbo live true to this consciousness, as seen in the sense of good and evil that pervades their existence. Moreover, belief in the resurrection of the dead is one of the cardinal beliefs in the Christian religion. For instance, in the Christian burial rite in the Roman Catholic Church, it is expressed that “for those who believe in Christ, life is not ended but transformed” (cf. 1 Thess. 4:16).

4.6 Conclusion

Shanahan and his colleagues made quite a remarkable impact with their Catholic education on the life of Nigerians, particularly the Igbo. Until today, the people value Christianity, just as they valued education and learning that brought them so much change and awareness about life. Beforehand, the Igbo lived in constant terror and worry, speculating about almost everything. Health and medical care was often a great challenge. Although there were *Dibias* and diviners, their treatment was usually ineffective, which led to many deaths, and consequently, to disbelief in their gods.

Shanahan embraced a culture and language other than his own, and moved far away from the familiarity of his home. His family background and orientation must have been what informed his docility to embrace a culture other than his own—the culture of the Igbo people. The reason was probably because, “Cultural value analysis acts as an organisational grid in mapping the relationships among cultural variability, self-conception, and communication” (Ting-Toomey, 1999:58). When Shanahan was presented with the opportunity to study in France, his perspective was fortified with compliance and flexibility. Conscious value appraisal acts as an important step towards an enhanced comprehension of people from varied cultural backgrounds. The resultant effect of this discovery about the Igbo people of Nigeria and the successful seed of faith sown by Bishop Joseph Shanahan had a profound effect on the local people. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE:

MISSION IMPLICATION IN CHRISTENDOM TODAY

5.1 Introduction

The contents of this chapter flow from the conscious effort of the previous one, chapter four. It seeks to prove that the untiring sacrifices of Bishop Joseph Shanahan were not a waste but rather a blessing. This chapter explores humanisation in mission, human dignity, and the church today, as well as the impact of the Nigerian church on mission today. It will also analyse the impressions of the early missionaries in maintaining human dignity via humanisation and vocation call in Christendom today. The growth of the Catholic Church in South-East Nigeria from the time of Shanahan until today will also be evaluated in this chapter.

5.2 The growth of the Catholic Church in Igboland after Shanahan

The significant growth in the number and size of converts since Shanahan is statistically deductible. In Shanahan's letter to Cardinal Gotti, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith in Rome, he gave a clear report of the problems facing the mission and also stated the progress his mission had made between 1900 and 1906. In 1900, there were only three mission stations. By 1906, the mission stations had increased to eighteen (18), with nearly 2,270 pupils in schools. The report testified that 569 persons had been received into the Church the same year. By that time, he had 33 catechists working in the stations (Uzo, 1983:43). In late 1905, Shanahan sent a report to *Propaganda Fide*¹⁷ in Rome, with the number of missionaries at that time being only twenty-six. Due to the large volume of work and deficiency of missionaries and indigenous clergy at that time, he requested four additional missionaries to speed up the progress. According to Uzo's (1983:42) report, there were 11 priests, 8 brothers, 7 sisters, 25 local catechists, 4 church buildings, 15 school churches, 18 schools, 3 nursery schools, 3 hospitals, 7 dispensaries, 3 refugee camps, 4 workshops - vocational/technical schools, and 2 sewing shops for girls.

¹⁷ Also known as the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, Vatican City, Rome.

The growth statistics from 1920 to 2010 are graphically represented below, according to the six major communities (Onitsha, Enugu, Abakiliki, Awka, Nnewi and Nsukka) where Shanahan lived and administered his missionary service, which was not only to the Igbos of South-Eastern Nigeria. He also served in two ecclesiastical provinces, the entire lower Niger from Onitsha to Cameroon, Ogoja, Calabar, and down to Port Harcourt. To avoid the clumsiness of sampling all these regions, focus will be exclusively on the representative sections from the metropolis where his work was central, that is Onitsha.

However, as shown in Figure 4, it can be observed that the number of Catholic priests in Onitsha grew consistently with the total population, except in 1970 when the total population was about 2000, but the number of priests reduced from 120 to 100. There was a progressive increase in the number of parishes from 1950 to 1980, and then a sharp decline in 1990 to the late-1990s, after which a sharp rise can be seen in 2000 (Figure 4). As the number of parishes grew exponentially from 80 to 160 in 1999 to 2000, the number of priests barely changed from 80 to 100 (Figure 4). This could probably mean that in 2010, the number of parishes created barely corresponded to the number of priests ordained, or that the indigenous priests and religious were sent to missions in other parts of the world.

Likewise, the number of male religious shifted negligibly when compared to the female religious growth in 2010, as shown in Figure 5, which depicts a remarkable increase in the number of women religious. From 1920 to 1940, the growth in number of both the male and female religious was consistent until 1950 when the latter increased more than the former (Figure 5). The increase of Catholics and priests against Protestants and their clergies in Igboland is shown in Figure 5, where there is a proportional increase in the total population, the number of Catholics and priests from 1920 – 2010, in Onitsha.

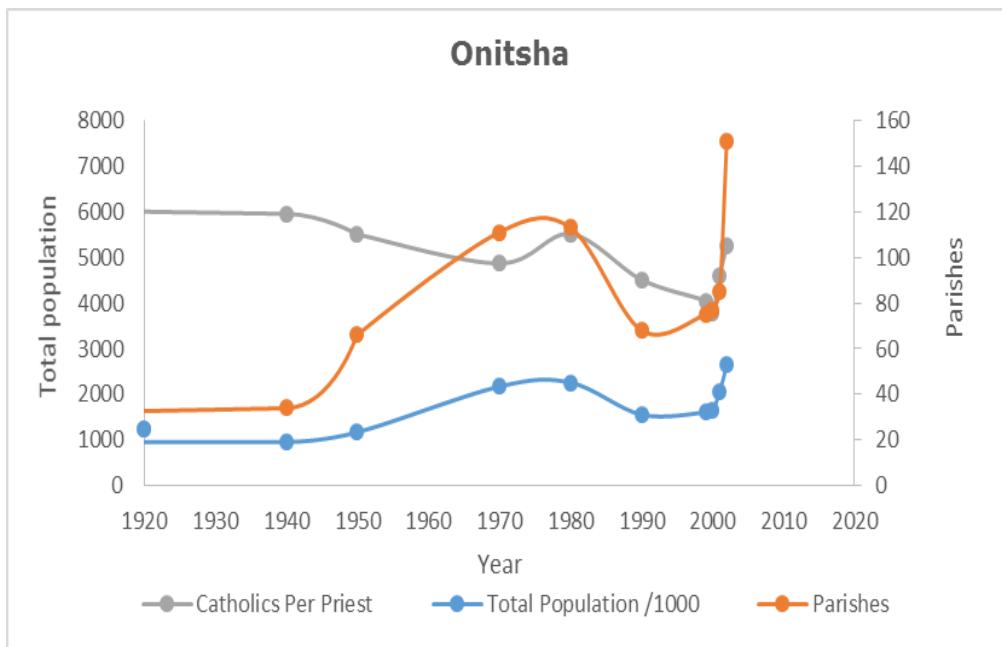


Figure 4 The total population, Catholics, priests and number of parishes in Onitsha Archdiocese

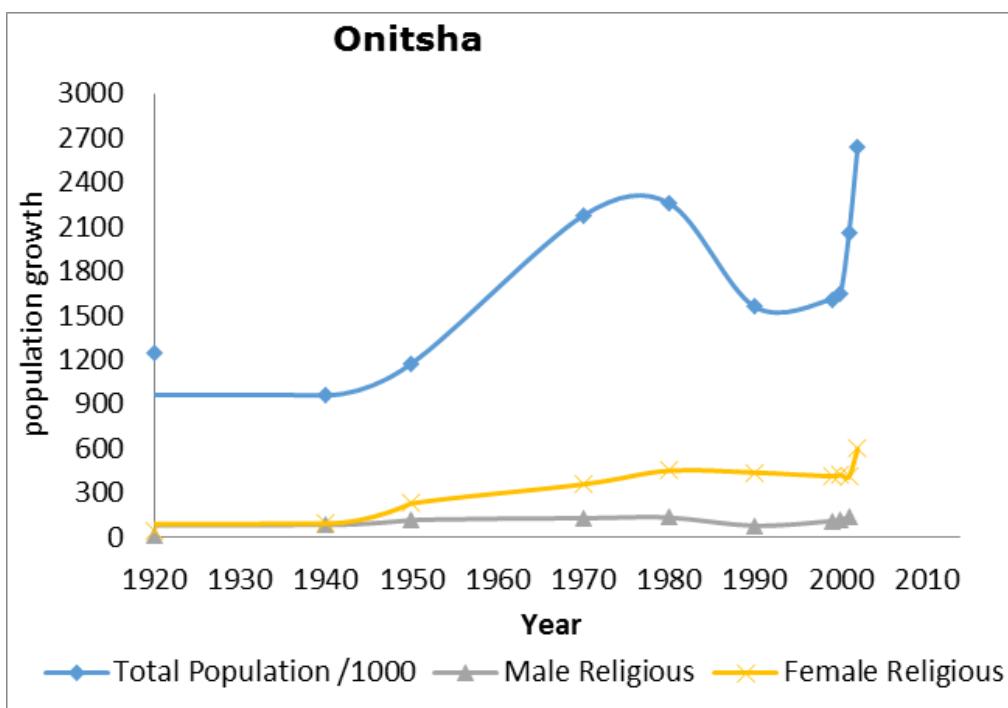


Figure 5 The total population in comparison to the growth of male and female religious

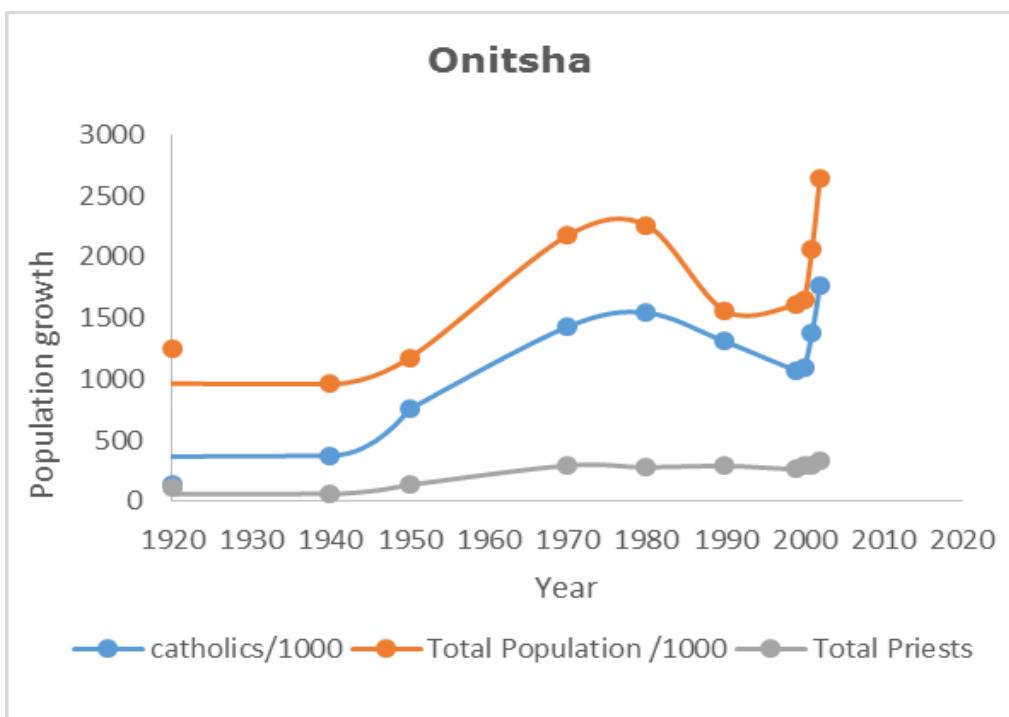


Figure 6 The total population, Catholics and priests in Onitsha Archdiocese

Similar to Onitsha, Enugu Diocese recorded a sharp fall in the number of priests in 1990 against the rising parishes, which peaked sharply in 2000, as shown in Figure 7. Similarly, another decline was observed between 2002 and 2003 in the total population, the number of priests and the parishes, correspondingly (Figure 7).

Contrary to Onitsha Archdiocese, Enugu Diocese showed a higher number of male religious than female religious from 1970 to 1999. Then, from 2000 the population of female religious overshadowed that of males (Figure 8). The sharp decline in total population in 1990, as shown in Figure 8 might be due to the high rate of mortality resulting from disease, hunger, or some other factor prevalent at the time. Although the population dropped, it did not affect the growing number of female and male religious (Figure 8). Although the graphs look slightly different, the production of priests increased with the number of Catholic converts and the total population in Enugu Diocese, just like in Onitsha (cf. Figure 6 and Figure 9).

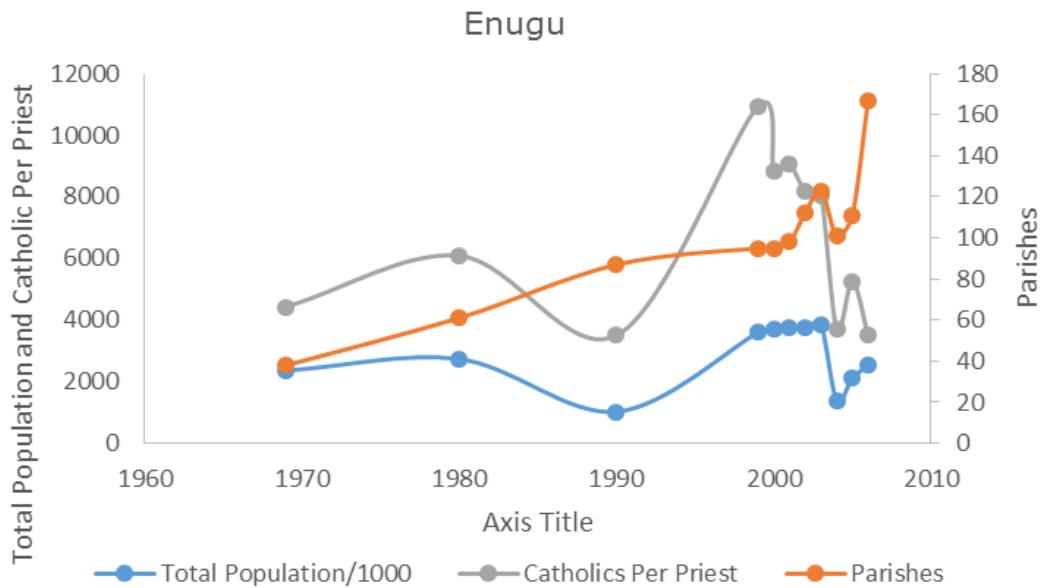


Figure 7 The total population, Catholics per priest, parishes in Enugu Diocese

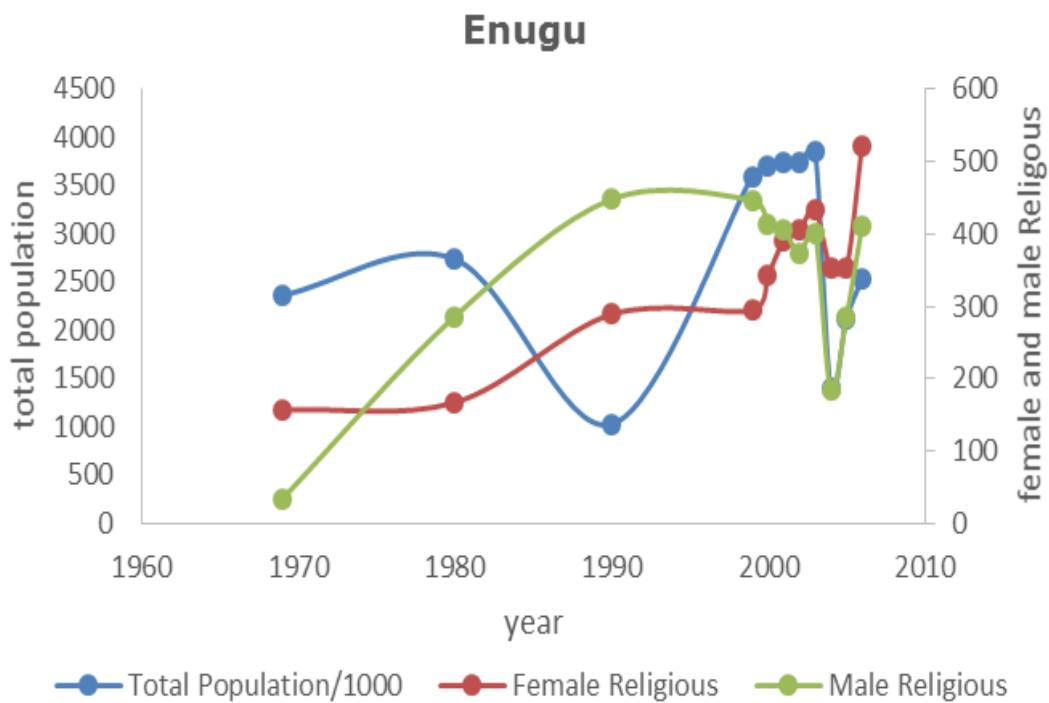


Figure 8 The total population, female and male religious in Enugu Diocese

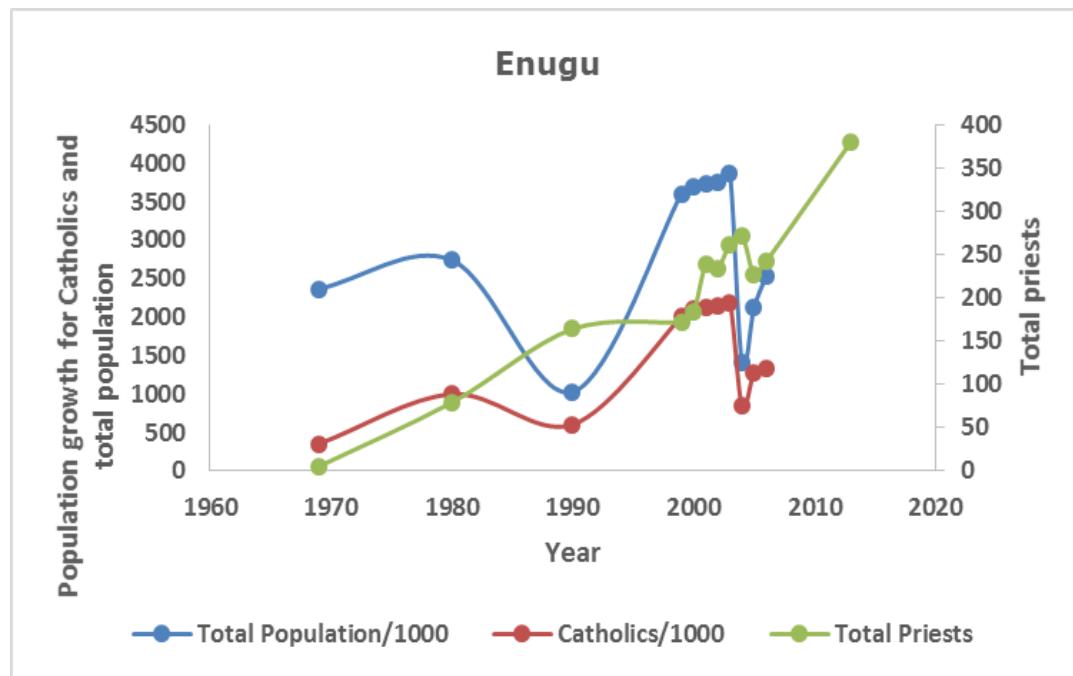


Figure 9 Total population, Catholics and priests in Enugu Diocese

In Onitsha (Figure 4 – Figure 6) and Enugu (Figure 7 and Figure 9), the fluctuations in the numbers representing the total population, parishes, priests, Catholics, male and female religious, can also be explained by the fact that new dioceses were formed out of these territories, thus affecting the size, though it picked up over time. Enugu Diocese was formed out of Onitsha, and as the population continued to grow; later in 1978, Awka was formed from Onitsha. Recently, in 2000, Nnewi diocese was also created from Onitsha. These account for the rise and fall that can be visibly seen in the graphs, particularly in Onitsha Archdiocese and Enugu Diocese, and does not, in any way, indicate a diminishing or weakening of the faith. The two falls are due to the two successive times new dioceses (Nsukka and Awgu) were formed out of Enugu Diocese (Figure 7). Hence, with the formation of Nsukka Diocese and Awgu Diocese in 1990 and 2005, respectively, there was a sharp decline in the progression of the church in Enugu Diocese at the time of their creation, as shown in Figure 7.

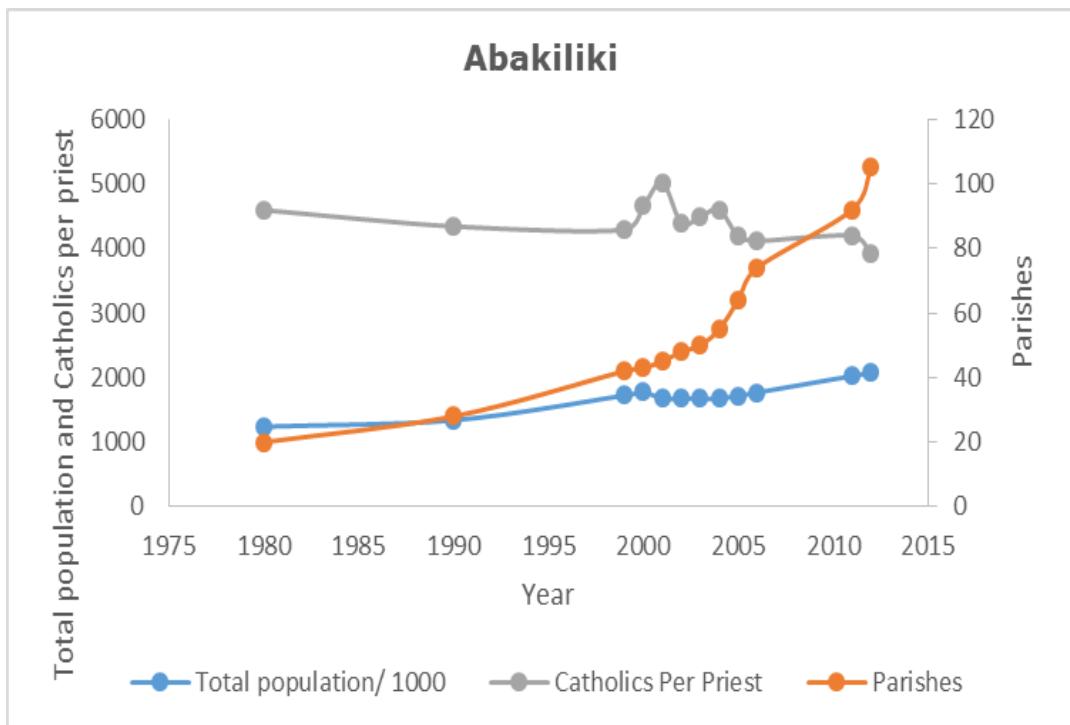


Figure 10 The total population, Catholics per priest, parishes in Abakiliki Diocese

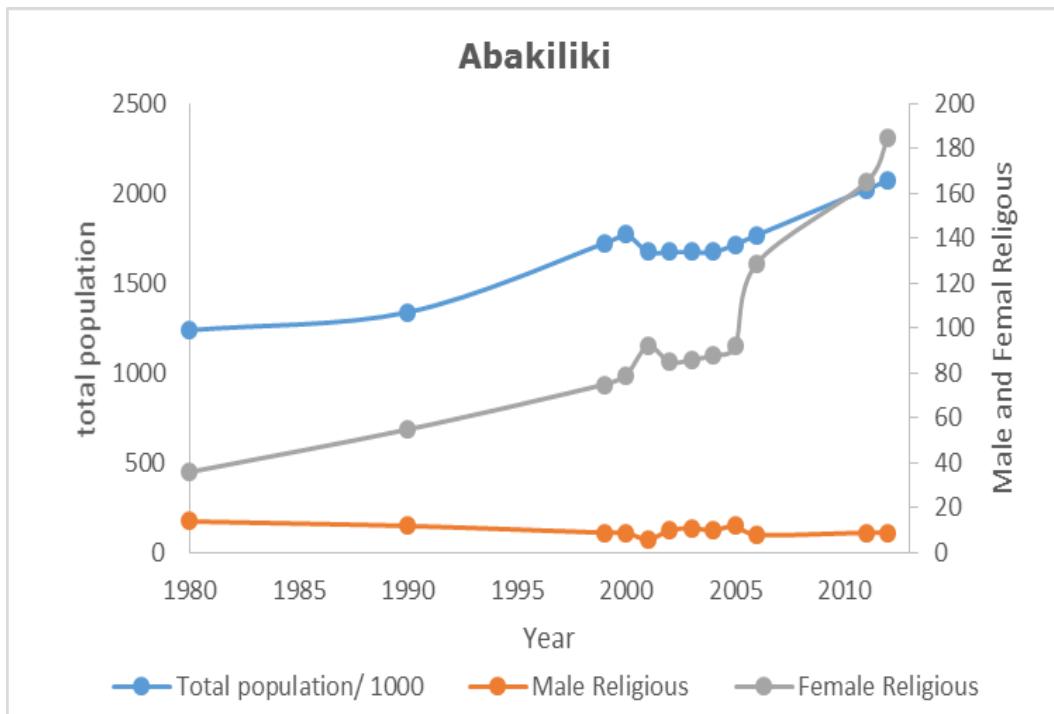


Figure 11 The total population, male religious and female religious in Abakiliki Diocese

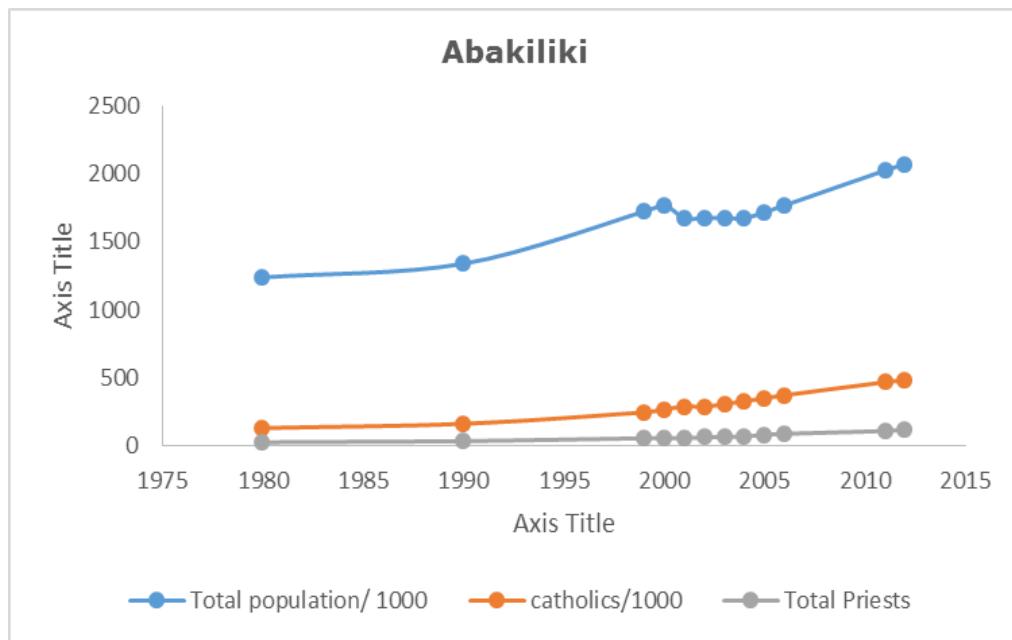


Figure 12 The total population, Catholics and priests in Abakiliki Diocese

In Abakiliki Diocese, the parishes' growth outstrips the trajectory of population growth, while the number of priests keeps pace with the population growth and the growth in the number of Catholics, with downward fluctuations in the number of Catholics per priest (Figure 10). As the number of priests is proportionate to the population growth and runs against that of the parishes, this could only be linked to the migration of Catholics to larger urban cities, as Abakiliki is a semi-urban community. This same trend can be observed in Figure 12 and Figure 11, and follows a similar interpretation of Figure 10.

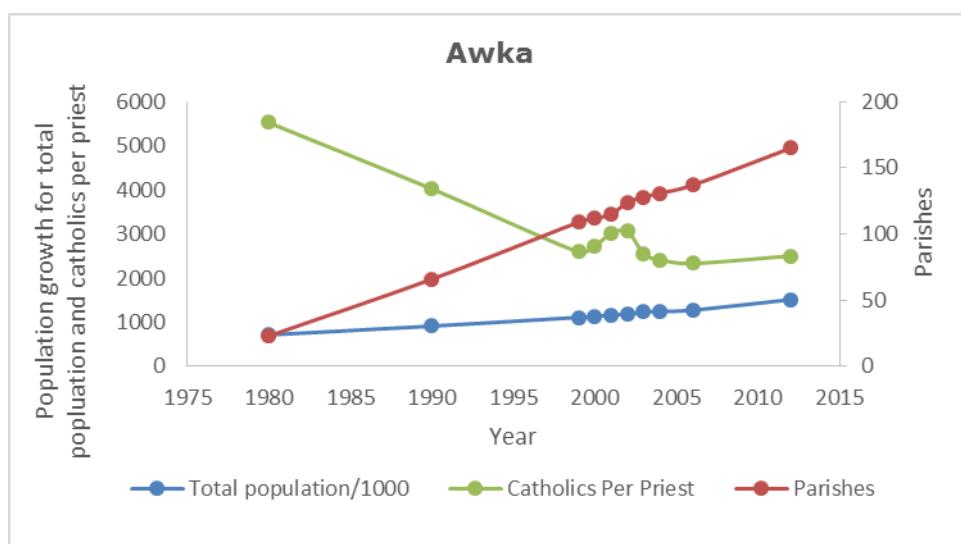


Figure 13 The total population, Catholics per priest, and parishes in Awka Diocese

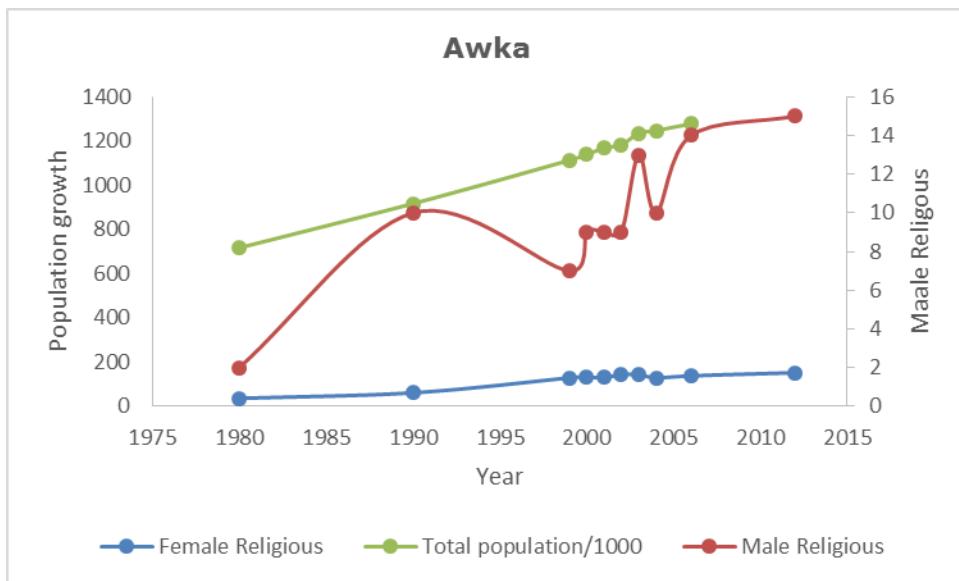


Figure 14 The total population, female religious and male religious in Awka Diocese

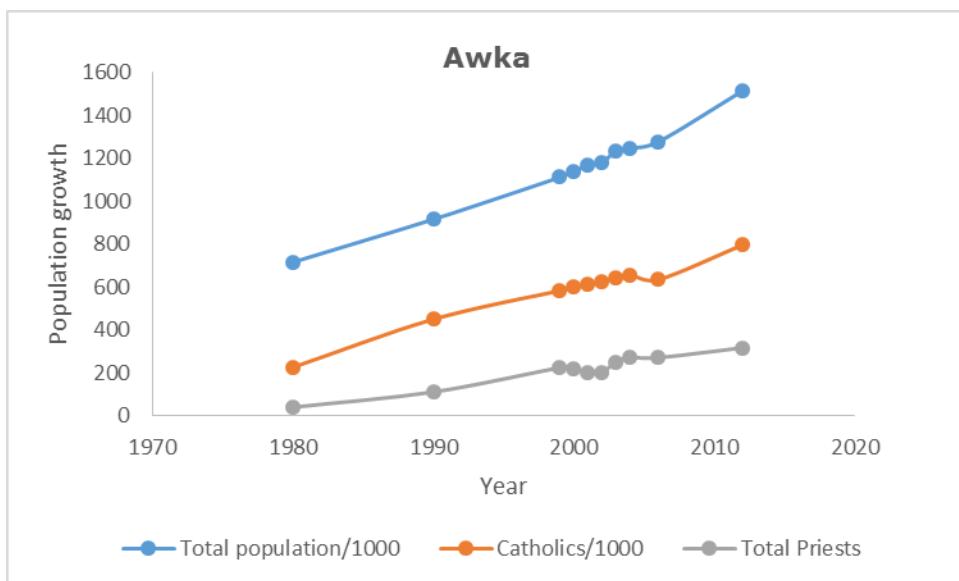


Figure 15 The total population, Catholics and total priests in Awka Diocese

Comparing Awka and Abakaliki Dioceses, their trends follow a similar continuous and gentle rise, and it can be inferred that no other diocese has been formed out of these dioceses. Contrary to Abakaliki Diocese, the male religious was seen to increase and decrease over the years in Awka, with the male population in Abakaliki remaining the same throughout the years. This could be attributed to the urban nature of Awka when compared to Abakaliki, as many Igbo youths, mostly men, migrate to the city for commercial purposes (Figure 14).

Nnewi showed a continuous increase in the total population even up until 2012, but there was an increase in the number of parishes in 2012 (Figure 16). Again, the drastic fall of Catholics per priest from 2001 to 2002 can only be attributed to the emerging Pentecostal denominations in the region and human migration (Figure 16). Similar to Awka diocese, the male religious increased more than the female religious did over time (Figure 17). This trend observed in Figure 16 about the sharp decline of the Catholics per priest and total population is seen to remain steady from 2003 to 2013, as indicated in **Error! Reference source not found.**

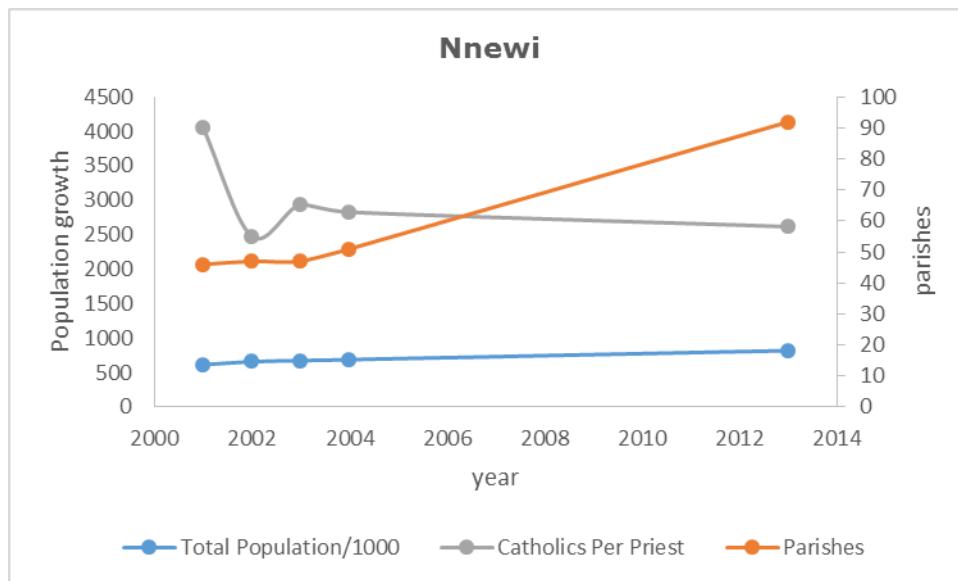


Figure 16 The total population, Catholics per priest, and parishes in Nnewi Diocese

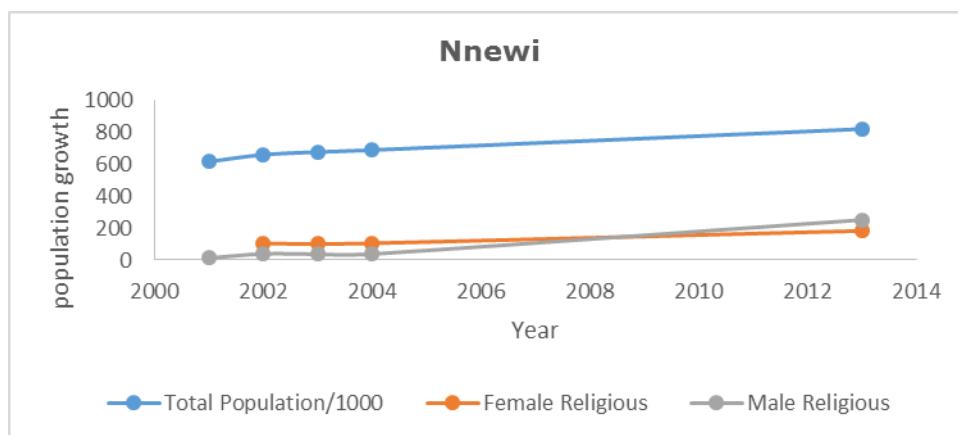


Figure 17 The total population, female and male religious in Nnewi Diocese

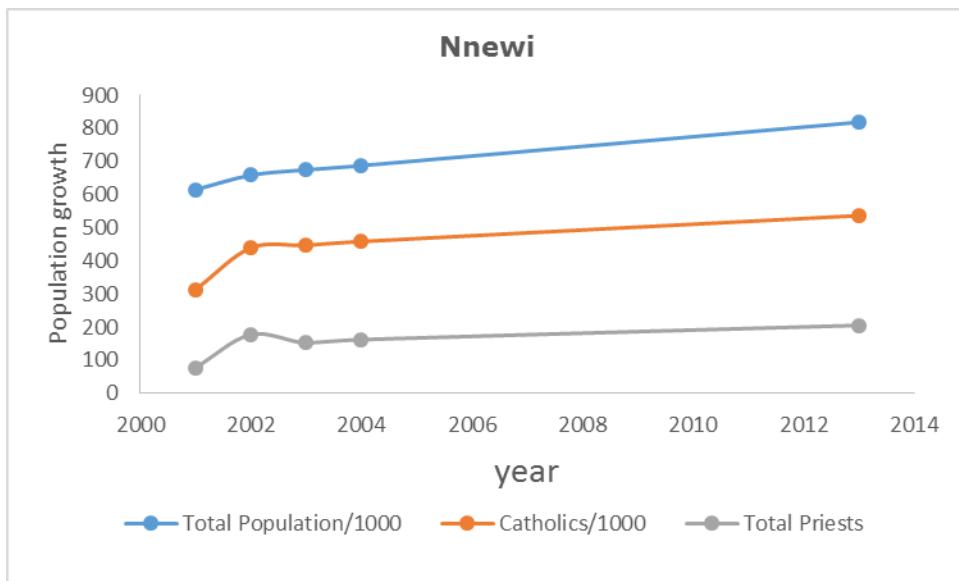


Figure 18 The total population, Catholics and priests in Nnewi Diocese

No diocese was formed out of Nsukka to account for the fall that was seen between 2000 and 2005 (see Figure 19 and Figure 21). This might have occurred as a result of migration, as young men and women migrate to bigger cities in search of better living. This human migration often affects a community, particularly the population and number of Catholics. It can be seen that the number of parishes and priests remain on a stable increase throughout the year (Figure 19).

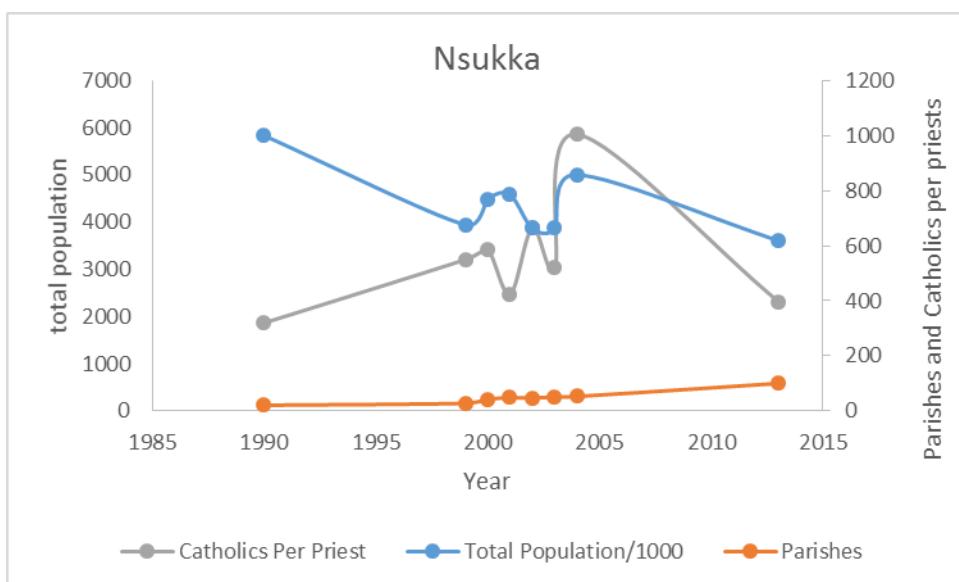


Figure 19 The total population, Catholics and parishes in Nsukka Diocese

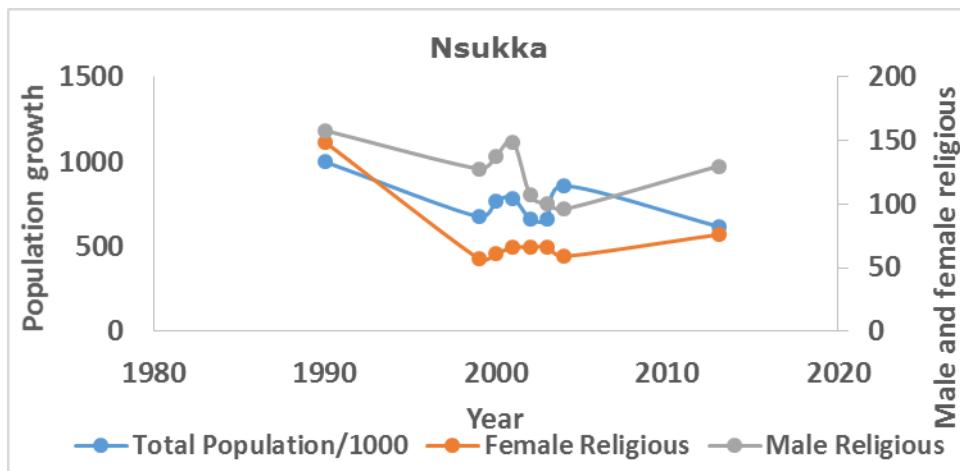


Figure 20 The total population, female and male religious in Nsukka Diocese

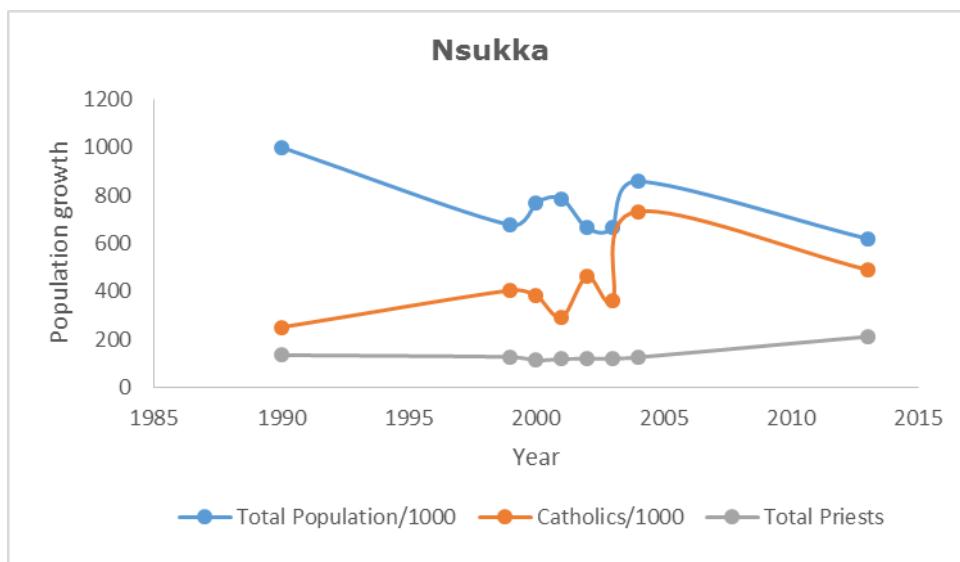


Figure 21 The total population, Catholics and priests in Nsukka Diocese

The male religious are seen to be in greater number than their female counterparts in Nsukka, just like in Awka, and in Nnewi, with the highest male population occurring in 2000 (Figure 20). The number of Catholics in Nsukka increased with the total population, as growth in the number of priests remained insignificant from 1990 to 2014, similar to that of Nnewi Diocese (Figure 21).

5.3 The impact of the Nigerian Church on mission today

Nigeria, in comparison to other nations, only recently embraced the Christian faith, yet their contribution to spreading the gospel cannot be ignored. Despite various incidents of

incapacitation towards the faith, such as tribal wars, slavery, colonial servitude and oppression, the strength of the Christian faith in Nigeria is highly encouraging. Christianity in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, has become the new dawn. It has opened the door for liberation so that on every street corner, a church can be found. This reality did not go unnoticed by scholars, for instance, when Andrew Walls (1975) mentioned the “modern shift in the centre of gravity of Christianity¹⁸” towards the continents of Africa, Asia, Oceania and Latin America, in the wake of the missionary enterprise from the West. At the same time, a Swiss Roman Catholic Capuchin missionary, Walbert Buhlmann, asserted a similar view in his book, *The coming of the third church - An analysis of the present and future of the church*, as surmised by Bediako (1997:127) when he speaks about the ‘Third Church’ as a new global reality:

I make the point that Third Church has no derogatory connotation in the sense of Church of the ‘third rank’! It simply expresses the fact that, alongside the Western and Oriental Church, there has arisen a new entity, which, by its special characteristics and future expectation, deserve to be denoted and appreciated by its own special name. ‘In the third place’ means not ‘at the end’ or ‘in conclusion’, but rather a new reality alongside what existed before, a fresh peak reached (Buhlmann, 1976:6, in Bediako, 1997:127).

However, some people doubt African Christianity, otherwise called ‘negro-sceptics’. They have likened the Christian faith in Nigeria to the rivers in Africa, wide but shallow. This doubt in the integrity of the faith in the life of the Nigerian populace is simply due to equalising the moral state of the populace with the scandalous immunities of some political leaders. Yet, looking at the manifestations of faith, particularly in the places where Shanahan lived and worked, the effort of his mission is quite evident. Most of the institutions, such as schools, hospitals, churches, and other establishments, are still effective in the service of God and God’s people.

Another striking phenomenon that negro-sceptics refuse to recognise or admit is that the people of South-East Nigeria, among whom Shanahan worked to establish peace, up to this day appreciate the instrumentality of the Church in the peace of mind they enjoy. With this peace, they are eager to follow the mandate to preach the gospel and evangelize

¹⁸ An observation Andrew Walls makes in his essay entitled, ‘Towards understanding Africa’s place in Christian History’ in *Region in a pluralistic society: Essays presented to C. G. Baeta*. Ed. J. S. Pobee. 180-189. Leiden Brill.

the same people that first brought them the good news, those in the West. Just from the Archdiocese of Onitsha, more than 100 priests are presently on missions to various parts of the world, including Italy, America, South Africa, and many more. As Bediako (1997:173) observed:

[It] has become more apparent in the post-missionary setting of the non-Western Churches, and as Christianity's centre of gravity has shifted to the non-Western world, so also has it been possible to recognise the Christian religion as a non-Western religion.

The presence of churches in South-East Nigeria is evidence of accepting Christianity, and the churches are poised to seek ways of incarnating Christianity in larger areas of life. This is, in fact, the resultant effect of the genuine discipleship of missionaries like Joseph Shanahan. Christ's mandate to his disciples to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth has been passed on from generation to generation, and each new community receives the commission anew. Precisely for this reason, Africans, especially the Igbo people, are at present one of the largest groups involved in fulfilling this mandate, not only *ad intra* but also *ad extra*, attesting to the depth of their Christian faith.

Many feared that the Age of the Enlightenment would be the last epoch in world history to exercise an influence on the thoughts and practices of mission. On the contrary, considering the continent of Africa, and Nigeria in particular, receiving and continuing mission has brought back hope to the eternal nature of the gospel "till the end of time". This is achieved more by the response to the gospel, which Bediako (1997:174) aptly captures in the following statement: "The significant transforming impact of the Gospel upon the non-Western world arises from non-Western responses to the Gospel in its own terms and not in terms of Western expectations". He believes that African people's response to the gospel was a response to their own faith, and not necessarily a response to the faith of the white man and their experience of Christ.

African experience of Christ has taken root in South-East Nigeria, as largely planted by Bishop Shanahan. The Igbo race was empowered to appropriate their own encounter with Christ through the humanising mission of Shanahan, which until today, in their present history and efforts, attests to the significant transforming impact of the gospel. Like Shanahan, the effectiveness of African missionaries in Europe and North America is

assured by the genuineness of their African experience of Christ with Shanahan as their model of mission as humanisation.

5.4 Humanisation in mission, human dignity, and the contemporary church in the light of Shanahan's mission

"Is respect for human dignity in relation to humanisation found in the contemporary church?" This is one of the research questions of this study (cf. chapter 1.3). Mission as humanisation is still evident in contemporary churches, particularly the RCM. In many regions of the world, people are suffering because of war, hunger, poverty, oppression, a lack of knowledge about God, mutilation, and other forms of human degradation. The Catholic Church, in obedience to the central element of their theology, which is mission, sends missionaries to the ends of the world to be witnesses of Christ and the message of global peace. They go on mission to identify with the suffering people in order to redeem souls for Christ and restore human dignity. The mission elements, as shown by Shanahan during his mission, are still characteristic of most missionaries dispatched to these places. This exemplified the eminent humanisation in mission, which is still found in church missionaries today. In many ways, Shanahan restored human dignity using methods that were in accord with the prevailing system of the society and governance of his time. The growth of the Church after Shanahan up until the twenty-first century indicates that humanisation in mission is effective in the lives of the priests and Catholics in Igboland. Other acts of humanity and charity are also prevalent in churches. However, there are a number of setbacks to mission and the spread of the gospel, one of which is the tendency to make the Christian faith a matter of routine.

Routinization and ambivalence are common attitudes in Christian circles today, and call for a new approach to evangelisation (Nwaka, 2012:1). The attitudes of Christians towards the gospel and the Church itself are routinized, ambivalent and redundant. Some Catholics assume that attending church on Sundays is a duty, or task they must complete to appease their parents, or a form of inherent training one cannot do without. This form of routinization neutralises the Christian message or makes it redundant, when it is supposed to abate human antagonism and enhance human relationships. In addition, many born into Christianity veer from the faith when they are swayed by technological advancements or ideologies that cause them to question the existence of God and the core of their faith. The ambivalence of Igbo Catholics during the time of Shanahan can be

compared to the incompatibility of religious and secular worldviews of Christians today. The Scriptures are then regarded as an old book with stories and events that will never be repeated, and as comprising many controversial analyses that include the existence of God, wars, and poverty, and many other related issues. Such ambivalence causes many to have a dual identity, where they deny God (sometimes as atheists), but then during a moment of crisis they seek prayer from fellow Christians, and thereby, acknowledge the existence of the Supreme Being.

Furthermore, some Christians, especially the youth, affirm to be Christians yet outwardly reject Christ—the very basis of the Christian faith. This is in conflict with the teachings of the early missionaries, who converted many by leading and following the exemplary life of Christ in humanisation. This biased view might be due to a distorted interpretation of the Scriptures by ‘fake’ pastors to gain more adherents or wealth, or individual intellectual interpretations in relation to concurrences in the contemporary world. The uncertainty of the Christian faith is spreading like wild fires and needs to be extinguished before the core essentiality of Christianity is lost. Although most churches still hold the light of humanisation, the extinguishing light cannot equal the burning light of the Christian faith in the world today. While the growth of Catholics in Igboland has been consistent over a period of twenty years (1990 – 2010), similar continuous growth has not occurred elsewhere. Therefore, the deeds and methods of the early missionaries, particularly that of Bishop Shanahan, might help Christians sustain their faith as well as that of others, especially by means of evangelisation.

It is important to remember that Shanahan did not just preach to the people; he also lived an exemplary life: a life of humility, compassion, and service to all, and thereby affected the people positively. His life completely epitomises the fullness of humanisation strategies in mission, which includes empathy, exchange and education. He became the reason why many communities in dispute recognised their behaviour as the main cause of their complex circumstances. Rather than regarding their opponents as inhuman monsters deserving terrible punishment, they began to identify with their struggles. Disputes that had lasted between communities for centuries, creating lasting animosity and aggression, were transformed by Shanahan’s kind heart and empathic approach, which facilitated a better understanding and reconciliation. He was friendly to all, and instead of forcing them to believe in his God, he devised an approach of respectful dialogue. This was in

contradiction with the approach of many tribal chiefs who were convinced that they would sort out their differences through wars and taking the other into slavery. The same applies to contemporary pastors who insist on making converts in the name of their denomination, rather than on the message of the gospel. The communities watched Shanahan's gentle approach and way of dealing with the people, even with communities that rejected him, and learned to adopt the approach of dialogue. Their common fears, needs and motivations were resolved through dialogue, which helped them to deal with disagreements and factions.

Dialogue is one of the most effective ways to carry out deeds of humanisation and evangelisation. It is the semantic space for conversion. For those that listened to Shanahan, their transformation was clear as they became enlightened through education. The chiefs gave him land not just because he was a missionary, but even more so, because he was able to dialogue with them and convince them that land was needed for evangelisation. As people were enlightened through education, those in other communities became more receptive to his assistance. The common goal of education created a strong unifying effect evident in the growth of multiple developments and a peaceful coexistence never enjoyed before in Igboland¹⁹. This case of South-East Nigeria can be a model for other regions in the world where conflicts rage. Well informed as a teacher, who observed transformation in the students he taught, he volunteered to go on mission to Africa. The power of education offers people an opportunity to be more constructive when dealing with people. When informed through education, cooperative behaviour is established because understanding is created. Shanahan practised this form of education among children, encouraging them to accept people different from themselves. He also helped them recognise that their needs and values were similar to those of other groups. Shanahan recognised the principle of reciprocity and encouraged each party to treat one another with the respect and fairness that they would expect in return. A true example is summed up in the words of Pope Francis when addressing the missionaries of today, that as pastors, they should smell like the sheep.

¹⁹ Michelle Maiese, 2003. 'Moral or Value Conflict' <http://www.beyondintractability.org/>, University of Colorado. Accessed 20170704

5.5 Shortfalls in the efforts and missionary work of Shanahan and the early missionaries in Igboland

As human beings, it is natural to expect that some aspects of their mission would exhibit limitations, indicative that the missionaries were far from perfect. Both Catholics and Protestants condemned slavery, but only on certain occasions did they purchase slaves in order to release them. They did not want to compromise the laws of the powers that sponsored them, like the Royal Niger Company or the British power that was in charge. Thus, by not outrightly condemning slavery, they indirectly benefited from it. According to Akukwe,

The British traders antagonised the Igbo people by using their superior military power to settle trade disputes. When the British gun boat bombarded Onitsha in 1879, it had the tacit approval of the CMS as this was seen as a help in subduing the people who were resisting the missionaries (cited in Nwosu, 1985:217).

Summing up the attitude of Bishop Shanahan's personnel, it is obvious that they employed a number of unqualified teachers to help address the need at the time. This, in addition to the crisis of knowledge facing Europe since the 15th century, also spurred the antagonism between the followers of Christ, affecting the efforts of the evangelists. Consequently, both parties forgot that they were meant to evangelise, not scandalise. They were meant to 'smell like the sheep' and feel for the other in the name of Christ, the Saviour, rather than concentrate on who is better or has gained more converts than the other.

This explains why the efforts of the missionaries in the 14th century, and subsequent ones before the 19th century, proved unsuccessful. As Ekechi put it, the hostility of the natives, together with the harsh weather conditions and deaths resulting from mosquito bites, kept them away. This is possibly why many professional missionaries from Europe refused to come to West Africa, and from the document above we see how Shanahan and his colleagues struggled, and how the CMS brothers literally resorted to using ex-slaves from Sierra Leone to fill the gaps. Since no one gives what he has not, they (the unqualified teachers or those with minimal training used to supply the much needed education) only tried their best. The fact that they were Nigerians was an advantage, as they easily

adapted to the weather, spoke the language, and mingled with the people, but they lacked professionalism, especially when facing new and unique challenges.

Mission as action is where tradition is tested, and becomes the real act of handing down one's beliefs. Then it can be rightly claimed that mission is tradition not by reproducing unchangeable statements and structures, for that would from the beginning prevent new experiences or subordinate them to the control of the existing theology and Church, but by taking the actual scope of tradition as a foundational structure for societal harmonization.

Even though they made a serious effort to speak the Igbo language, they did not really understand what some of it meant, and on some occasions, they literally used force or ignored the warnings or advice of the locals. It is most probably neglect and intimidation, as recorded by Mkpuefuna (1980:19), which lead to the Church's apathy and school growth, following an incident when Fr. Bubendorf went against the advice of the elders.

School children were employed to do this work while the Rev. Father occasionally came to inspect the work, usually in his boots. As the work went on, the children contracted various diseases. Some of them died; some were very sick; and others, such as Paul Nwafor Nnose, were paralysed (Nwagbogu, cited in Nwosu, 1985:102).

This brought serious setback in the Nteje region, as the priest eventually moved to Adazi to begin a completely new mission station but not without apology to the Igwe and 'Irugo' age grade (Nwagbogu, cited in Nwosu, 1985:102). It was also reported that some parents did not want their children to join the religious orders and even went to the convent to ask them to return home. According to Anyagbunam,

Ironically some parents of plain-looking girls also brought war on the convent, demanding the release of their children and made more noise. The idea of sisterhood was most repulsive to the pagan woman, and as the sisters walked along the road, some of them heaped abuses on them" (cited in Nwosu, 1985:83).

5.6 Conclusion

The graphical representations on the growth of the Church in terms of the total population, parishes, Catholics—male and female religious, and the priests, show a significant growth of the RCC in South East Nigeria, after Shanahan. Although there

were regressions in growth over the years, the long stretch of progression outweighs the decline. Since most of the declining figures cannot be ascribed to a reduction in or failing faith, such decline would be termed ‘false’. In actual fact, the decline was the result of new dioceses being formed out of the Onitsha and Enugu dioceses, which on their own continued to experience growth.

The significance of female empowerment initiated by Shanahan was evident in most of the dioceses, as the number of female religious outweighed the number of male religious. Another significant point here is the proportional increase in the total population of each diocese, with the numbers of Catholics increasing across the period. From these analyses, the efforts of Bishop Shanahan have achieved the coming of the ‘new era’ in the life of Christianity in Nigeria, as he exclaimed at the end of one of his reports, according to Jordan:

A new era is opening up for the immense Igbo race. The very soul of that race is at stake. Who will take possession of it? Will it be the Godless or the true envoys of Christ? The future of the mission depends on our initiative and on your fraternal charity (cited in Jordan, 1977:35).

It is noteworthy that various acts of immorality, corruption, proselytization, and indirect infringement of human dignity are found in contemporary churches. Some churches, especially the proliferating Pentecostal churches, lack human kindness, due to their self-centred purpose of evangelisation, which is mainly for financial gain. These churches often replace the fundamental basis of the Christian faith with personal improvement. They deviate from the values established by Shanahan, and on the contrary, enrich themselves with proceeds from the congregation, and neglect the poor. Though not exclusive to Africa, these incidents prevail in African churches, where people are brainwashed with the same Christian message that in the early days uplifted the dignity of the human person, giving them life and peace. One example of such an incident occurred in South Africa, where a pastor perverted the Scriptures and reduced his congregation to goats by commanding them to feed on grass, in the name of prosperity and success.²⁰ This, in fact, is viewed as a new form of slavery, and disrespects the essential elements of humanity.

²⁰ Cf. ENCA.com 15 July 2015 Prophet Feeds snake to the congregation: Johannesburg, Prophet Penuel Mnguni, ‘End Time Disciple Ministry. Pretoria South Africa.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Overview of Shanahan's missionary contributions

This study evaluated Joseph Shanahan's intercultural encounter and mission in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria (Igboland), with special focus given to the challenges encountered between the Western missionaries and the Igbo culture. In their encounter, common ground was established between the Christian culture and the Igbo culture (African culture), assimilating and sharing similar values. In Shanahan's opinion, Igbos believed in the things they valued and respected, such as the Supreme Being, spirits, sacrifices, evil spirits, and life after death. Acknowledging this common ground provided a foothold for his mission, and building a firm conviction in the Igbos encouraged them to accept him and give their children to Shanahan and to Western education. Shanahan reached out to the elders through their children by using the local language. He used dialogue to relate to them and communicate concepts they already knew to emphasize the Christian God. It takes a humble mind to acknowledge the good in other people's religion, beliefs and practices, and this is the reason why Shanahan won many souls for the kingdom. He understood the limitations of the religious beliefs and practices of the Igbo people, but respected their culture.

Most early missionaries remained on the coast, and therefore never had similar encounters like those of Shanahan, who ventured beyond the coast to local villages. He translated the Igbo philosophy of *ihe ka m enu, efee m ya* (anything that is greater than I am, I worship) as an impersonation of the Supreme God, and used it to his advantage. Where they represented, bowed, and made sacrifices to trees, land, rivers and mountains, Shanahan made them aware of greater things than these. He was receptive enough to call the Igbo God by the vernacular name *Chukwu*, and he acknowledged that *Chukwu* is the same God as his. He watched them offer sacrifices to different deities, he equated their sacrifices to the holy sacrifice of the Mass but also made them understand the difference. Acknowledging their respect for their elders and reverence for their ancestors in comparison to the saints confirmed their belief in an afterlife. These points of correlation

between Christianity and African traditional religion became effective instruments in the mission of Shanahan, and shaped his attitude towards the Igbo.

These points of convergence are not just sociological and historical coincidences between the two traditions. They were strengths that ensured Shanahan's missionary success. The intersection of religious beliefs was possible because of the underlying theological presuppositions intrinsic in the cultural and religious elements examined above. The study identifies few of these theological pointers. The fact of human experience and the cultural realities of a people and their given context as a *locus theologicus* (place of theology). Melchior Cano (Sullivan, 2013:65), a sixteenth-century Spanish scholastic theologian, stresses that human experience is one of the indispensable places for theologizing. Bishop Shanahan, in his missionary life amongst the Igbos, considered this theological element as fundamental for a fruitful missionary engagement. He appreciated the cultural and religious experiences of the Igbo people as a place to encounter God. In his effort to evangelise them, he employed cultural values that were already present and perceptible amongst the people, rather than ones steeped in highly Western metaphysical Christian concepts. This explains why the present study advances the discussion about the role of human experience and its hermeneutics in theology, and the development and interpretation of doctrines.

Another theological significance of the bi-cultural convergence discussed in Chapter four is a new theology of mission and its understanding. It is a theology in which missionary endeavours are appreciated, not just in terms of conversion, which is criticised for its patriarchal, proselytising and colonial orientation, but where mission and evangelisation is seen more in terms of mutual enrichment for both religious traditions that happened to come in contact with one another. This does not preclude the reality of conversion, which could take place in the course of the encounter if the Holy Spirit permits. This openness to mutual enrichment is encouraged given the fact that there could be spiritual and moral goodness discerned within other religious traditions, even though the Church teaches that the fullness of the spiritual and moral goodness is found within the Christian faith.

The study also emphasizes the requirements for contemporary missionaries to achieve their mission goals. Since the central missionary goal is winning souls, missionaries are expected to live by the very virtues of the gospel that they preach. In terms of

hypothetical and social values that inform our approach towards human relations and life orientation, a qualitative analysis of humanisation in mission and as mission done in this study provides a leeway for structuring and comprehending human interaction. Reciprocity generally improves knowledge, which in turn, informs attitudes and behaviour.

Moreover, the conflicts that occurred between the early missionaries, particularly between the CMS and RCM, was also examined as part of the formation of early mission in Igboland. Though the CMS lost dominance, their presence and power is currently felt in Igboland, as well as worldwide. While flaunting the strategies the RCM adopted in their mission, the CMS adopted similar strategies, perhaps on a smaller scale, or later on in their mission. The foundation laid by the early missionaries placed Nigeria, especially Igboland, on the map as one region in the world firmly established in Christianity and mission. Though warped and ambivalent in their understanding, yet living the gospel, Igboland currently produces the highest religious vocations when compared to South Africa or to any other region in the world.

This research concentrated on the exceptional life and missionary methods of Shanahan, and illustrated how he applied the same principles of his predecessors, leaving a lasting legacy—one that the Church is only beginning to acknowledge after hundreds of years. Shanahan's approach manifests elements of the Enlightenment and belief in progress. Shanahan was well informed of the vision of the age of the Enlightenment. Unlike most from the colonial West, he evaded the Machiavellian twist, where expediency became more important than morality and where people could exploit others with impunity. He ventured beyond the coast into the heart of Igboland to experience the life of the people first-hand. Unheeding the deals and promises of the colonialists, he directly approached the corrupt warrant chiefs and slave dealers. Shanahan believed in the benefits of real development, which would trickle down to the poorest of the poor over time, giving each one a fair share (especially through education) of the wealth generated.

Shanahan bore the scars of the experience and was willing to make the expedition with the downtrodden, not just as a shepherd, but also as a brother and friend. In his human frailty, he served to the limits of his ability. With the benefits of being a European, educated and of coloured skin, he did his best to meet the various needs of the people he

evangelised. Importantly, he was resilient and fearless in the face of setbacks and difficulties, and was not discouraged when confronted with antagonism and animosity. The Igbo were not Shanahan's primary audience, nor were they the first to embrace Christianity. Yet many today can't seem to fathom how he made such an enormous impact and brought about such enduring and life-transforming change in the midst of such dire challenges, using the exact same tools and methods of his predecessors, but somehow achieved far greater success. Scholars have noted that Catholics were latecomers to South-East Nigeria but now they dominate the area. The difference, as this study has shown, is the manner of approach to mission, and the character of Shanahan.

Not only did Shanahan's concentrate on schools and children, according to Edith Dynan (n.d.), he was also interested in the marginalised. As a result, he was the first to treat women with due respect by bringing them into the ministry of the Church as religious. In his view, Christian women would understand the welfare of other women, and liaise well together. He invited two women from Ireland that helped him start a local congregation for women. Women were cared for during marriage courses, where they taught them sewing, needlework, and other trades. Many learnt basic domestic work that helped improve their family lives and way of living. A number of other female religious orders emerged from this female congregation initiated by Shanahan, and they, in turn, contributed immensely to the well-being of the Church.

In his account, Nwosu (1985:25) confirms this realisation in a peripheral way in the coastal ministry of the early missionaries, through the likes of Fr. Lutz. The priority given to buying and freeing slaves, unlike the intentions of other buyers at the slave market, was to restore their dignity by setting them free, and even perhaps making them converts (Nwosu, 1985:25). As Fr. Lutz himself confirmed:

The Igbos were not satisfied with killing twins alone; they mercilessly get [sic] rid of all who have some natural defect or infirmity... We have undertaken to wage war against this notorious traffic, by buying these creatures (cited in Nwosu, 1985:25).

It was noted in the study, that the missionaries who were able to withstand the harsh conditions of the African continent were actually freed slaves turned missionaries, mostly from Sierra Leone. This way, those that the early missionaries rescued from oppression and slavery sustained the mission in Igboland.

The study also examined the life and work of Shanahan as a reflection of justice and uprightness. Nzomiwu (1999:30-32) writes on the Igbo sense of justice, which is central to the preservation and protection of human dignity in Igboland. He noted that the chief, by virtue of his office, was the chief justice and commander-in-chief of the local army, as well as the chief priest as far as *Ofo* (staff of authority or office) is concerned. Justice, referred to in the Igbo language as '*Aka m kwu oto*' (my hands are clean) or '*Ikpe m kwu oto*' (my justice is pure), embraces a number of virtues. In Igboland, a just man is one who is kind, compassionate, sociable and upright, and speaks the truth without any fear or favour. In the pre-colonial era, a just man was often used as an excellent arbitrator, who spoke and judged according to *Ofo*. Justice is truth in action captured in the well-known Igbo idiom, *Eziokwu bu ndu* (truth is life), which reflects the high regard of justice in Igboland (Nzomiwu, 1999:31). Shanahan possessed these exact qualities according to the Igbo customs that commanded authority. As Ogbukagu (2008:356) notes:

...among the Igbos, some old men who lived extraordinary and mysterious lives on earth after death are deified as gods with shrines built after them for honouring and worshiping them. Such a person is regarded as a divinity and hence he has to absorb the attributes and characteristics of a divinity. The ancestors are to traditional religion, what the saints and the blessed and even Mohammed are to Christianity and Islam (Ogbukagu, 2008:356).

This explains the reason why the Igbo accorded Bishop Joseph Shanahan the same respect and reverence, even giving him a second burial. His legacy is still very much alive in the lives of the Igbo, especially in the practice of their Christian faith.

6.2 Summary

Over the years, missionaries have struggled to communicate the mind of God to each new generation. A clearer understanding of Shanahan's missionary success would help facilitate the healing of human relations and bring the people into God's plan for salvation. Despite their challenges and pain, these missionaries are required to be the light of Christ and show understanding. The experience and labour of Bishop Shanahan in the lower Niger Mission transformed the entire region, mostly Igboland. The fact that this region had no prior knowledge of Christianity or Catholicism made the legacy more striking. This study has established that Shanahan's huge impact was largely because of his distinctive personality, and his respect for human dignity. Through dialogue, his

manner of approach, and a loving attitude, Shanahan captured the hearts and minds of the Igbo people. Shanahan combined the contemplative with the active thrust of mission by understanding what God required of him, especially in challenging situations, by acknowledging the sayings in Micah 6:8²¹. Actively, he went about discerning what was just in the people's culture, and in a humble and respectful manner, was able to show God's fulfilling mercy in whatever was good in their culture through the life and teaching of Christ. Shanahan appreciated the Igbo people's devotion to their customs. Therefore, he focused his attention on what was positive, on their dedication to the transcendent, and spoke to them about the unseen God. They drew near, along with their children, because this white man was different from the rest—who were only interested in slaves or minerals. Shanahan appreciated the little and more hidden qualities of the Igbo people, and especially the fact that they valued the Creator instead of their fabricated gods. His example will continue to be for the good of humankind and the salvation of souls.

The history of Shanahan's effectiveness will help this present generation to solve the mystery of life as a Christian with a contemplative disposition in a world of pluralism. As Bevans (2011:6628-6629) would say, "The relationship of Christianity with world religions poses the most challenging item for the theological and missiological agenda at the beginning of the twenty-first century". This statement by Stephen Bevans highlights the pertinent issues that surround the efforts to satisfy the human quest for meaning. Every religion claims they can answer the ultimate desire of soul searching to make contact with its Maker.

Depending on Christians' encounter and individual experience of Christ, they inevitably will influence the 21st century with their worldview. The worldview, to have lasting value, must not remain individualistic but informed and shaped by the wisdom from the past within the realities of the present. Mission is crippled without comprehensive theology and mission history. Protestants generally focused on instituting local Churches and congregations, which also prevails in the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council opened the door for new understandings of itself, as more communal and less hierarchical and as a communion of local Churches. Agitations arise on the Church's role and identity in relation to God's supremacy and maintaining unity in multiplicity instead of regularity. Despite these differences, all the Christian traditions rediscovered a mission ecclesiology during the twentieth century (Bevans, 2011:6614-6618).

²¹ "To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God".

In agreement with Knitter (1991:1-2), contemporary theologians must recognise theoretically, and practically, that theology can no longer be ‘studied’ or ‘done’ from within only one religious or Church tradition. Certainly, theologians must be rooted in the faith of one religion, but if focus is within one religion, then their jobs will be unjustifiable in a pluralistic world today, which rather includes than excludes. In other words, theologians will eventually fall out with Knitter’s (1991:75) assertion about the growing obligation of all people in the shrinking and interdependent world of today. Flannery (1998:367) asserted the entreaty of Luke 10:2²². The more focus that is given to mission, the more overwhelmed one will become by the awareness of the amount of work still to be done. Hence, Bosch (1991/2011:175) cautioned, “Christians should never lose sight of the fact that Israel is the matrix of the eschatological people of God; they should therefore never surrender the community of God’s story with Israel,” since the Christian faith, in Kirk’s terms, “is an extension, or fresh interpretation, of what it meant to be Jewish in the first century (cited in Bosch, 1991/2011:175).

The Church is not the ‘new’ Israel, in the sense that God has switched the covenant from unbelieving Jews to believing Gentiles, rather an ‘enlarged’ Israel. If God enlarged and fulfilled His covenant in Christ, this route will persist. Missionaries must realise that they are instruments for the gospel, a messenger of enlargement. Expanding this to both the reality of the new Israel and its understanding of the will of God, made manifest in Christ (Matthew 15:17-20). For effective evangelism in the twenty-first century, missionaries are required to observe the signs of the times, and show compassion to the weaknesses and challenges of this age. This is an era where evangelistic mission is a dialogue with Christ. Hence, missionaries need to be more humane, just like Rev. Bishop Joseph Shanahan, rather than condemnatory.

6.3 Conclusion

The methodology adopted for this study proved amply effective in achieving the aim and objectives of this study. The data gathered from books and resource materials on/from the dioceses where Shanahan worked proved reliable in evaluating his life and works rooted in mission as humanisation. Through an extensive literature review, this study discussed

²² “The harvest is plenty, but the labourers are few ... Ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his harvest”.

the concept of humanisation and humanisation in mission from an apostolic and Christological perspective (Chapter 2). It also provided new insights into Catholic mission and theology, as well as African theology. These analyses on mission, as developed at Vatican II, provided insights on the early Church that are central to missiology in particular, and theology in general. The data also helped in examining the growth of the Catholic Church in Igboland after Shanahan. The research question that asks whether there is a link between humanisation and the concept and praxis of mission was sufficiently analysed and established in the concept of RCM theology and mission in Chapter two. The Chapter also provided a background of the advent of missionaries and their challenges in Africa, particularly in Nigeria.

The history and intricacies between Igbo culturalism and Christianity dealt with in Chapter three provided the socio-cultural context of the region where the life and work of Bishop Shanahan, as analysed in Chapter four, is framed. Chapter four also examined the core aim of the study: to analyse Shanahan's mission strategy in the light of the current theology of humanisation and interculturality. The missionary adventures of Shanahan studied in this chapter exposed the fundamental importance of humanisation in mission. The other research questions were sufficiently addressed in the different chapters and sections, sufficiently accomplishing the expectations of this research.

Having evaluated the theoretical and practical effectiveness of Bishop Joseph Shanahan's missionary style, the verdict on the effectiveness of his policies and practices is open for consideration. This study also analysed historical accounts and documentation on the growth of Catholicism to assess the opinions shared by many about Shanahan's mission and impact in South-East Nigeria. The results of this analyses showed that the general consensus of opinion was that Shanahan's missionary approach and methods were exceptional and effective. He has set an example worthy of emulating in mission practice today. Thus, he is recognized as a worthy figure in Church history, and one deserving all the honour accorded him by the people of Onitsha and Christians in Igboland in general.

In conclusion, this study contributes to scholarly works on humanisation, mission and Catholicism, particularly in view of intercultural amalgamation of religions and the mission of Bishop Joseph Shanahan. Other deductible facts for this study can be

impressed and expressed in theological conjunctions and the pragmatism of Christianity in the contemporary world.

6.4 Recommendations for future research

Although a large number of facts and data were considered, there were, however, limitations encountered during this study, as were highlighted in Section 1.7. Therefore, recommendations for future studies are formulated below:

- 1) Field studies on the areas where Shanahan carried out his missionary works will give finite facts and details necessary for stronger validation of results and findings.
- 2) Direct archival documents on the missionary works of the early missionaries will provide more precise details concerning the accurateness of missionary conflicts and successes, especially regarding their methods and strategies.
- 3) Lastly, a firm study that will incorporate direct social studies and data collection narrowed to one church or denomination, will give exact facts on humanisation in mission and respect for human dignity in the contemporary church, as well as the impact of the Nigeria Christian Church on mission today.

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