

IGWEBUIKE PHILOSOPHY, NATIVE PASTORATE PROGRAMME AND CONTEMPORARY NEO-COLONIALISM

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Abstract

The question of selfhood and national integration call for a reflection on how various ideologies as well as groups have contributed in giving Nigerian state the shape it has today, not only as a multi-ethnic nation rich in both human and natural endowments, but as a sovereign independent state. Such important reflection brings to the fore such ideology like the Igwebuiké philosophy of the pre-colonial Africa, which played a key role in the realization of the Native Pastorate Programme, developed towards the end of the nineteenth century within the ecclesiastical circle but which was a significant instrument in the hands of Nigerian educated Christians for the realization of their political goals and national integration. The significance of this reflection lies in its inspiration for effective response to contemporary neo-colonialism in Nigeria. This novel idea is the contribution of this study to scholarship. The study advocates that in the present struggle against neo-colonialism and the quest for more sustainable development in Nigeria, attention must not be lost of what such an ideology as Igwebuiké can offer in the actualization of this noble course. Neo-colonialism came and precipitated a social disintegration with its attendant economic dependency, living the people in the hands of neo-colonial exploiters and their black accomplices. However, a united effort can still be the principle for sustainable development and national integration. This is the principle that Igwebuiké stands for and which contributed in no small measure in the pursuit of the 19th century Native Pastorate Programme and the eventual evolution of modern Nigeria.

Keywords: Igwebuiké, Philosophy, Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony, Pastorate Programme

Introduction

The history of Christianity, like the history of all great religions and social movements, is fraught with the wrecks of words, wrenched from their original meaning, widened or narrowed, and forced into a bewildering variety of vessels that chum their ways in seas of semantic confusion. According to Shapperson (1968), the Church in Africa south of the Sahara has acquired and added to the many Christian verbal transmogrifications that came originally from the west. In

its turn, it has produced its own eccentric ecclesiastical etymology, of which, perhaps the most striking examples is the Native Pastorate question.

Native Pastorate programme was a religious movement among black African Christians that embodied the earliest stirring towards religious and political freedom in the modern colonial period. The ideology was initiated in the 19th century as a result of the frustrations felt by most educated African freed slaves who were denied advancement in the hierarchy of the mission Churches in Sierra-Leone. Other contributing factors were the desire for a more African and relevant Christianity, for the restoration of communal life, and for political and cultural autonomy expressed in the slogan “Africa for Africans”.

The Native Pastorate question arose primarily from the need for political outlet of some sort. The movement denotes a struggle between those who recognize the claim to equal participation in social and political rights with others, and those who assert a certain superiority of race, and claim for it as a consequence of causes, however accidental, exclusive and special privileges. In this way, African converts not only imbibed a new set of religious beliefs but began to nurse alien ideas, economic ambitions and political aspirations of their own and as such the Church became the first political organization in Nigeria to codify in its resolutions the idea of independent movement and national integration. It could also be understood to mean a step toward the delimitation of a new nation called Nigeria.

The Native Pastorate aimed at the advancement of the ‘natives’ to the highest ecclesiastical offices within the mission Churches. It was a struggle towards the actualization of the far sighted vision of Henry Venn (the secretary of the Church Missionary Society from 1841 to 1872) whose idea was a clear-cut distinction between the duties of a missionary and that of a local pastor. For Venn, in all questions relating to settlement of a native Church in any mission field, it is important to keep in view the distinction between the office of a missionary, who preaches to the “heathen”, and instructs inquirers or recent converts, and the office of a pastor, who ministers in holy things to a congregation of native Christians. While the work of a missionary may involve for a time the pastoral care of newly baptized converts, it is important that, as soon as settled congregations are formed, such pastoral care should be devolved upon native teachers (Shenk, 1983). Native teachers are to be regarded, after their ordination,

as pastors of the native Churches, rather than as the agents of a foreign society, or of other independent parties.

Henry Venn's theory of the Native Pastorate scheme was fused into the already existing Igwebuike ideology of the pre-colonial Africa and was resolved by African converts into political and nationalistic agenda. Their conception of this principle was not just one of ecclesiastical or religious independence. They saw in the principle infinite possibilities for the emancipation of Africa from alien rule and the training of Africa in the European art of self-government. It was for them an institution that would achieve several worthy ends for the glory of Africa at large. The significant thing about this movement lies in the fact that it was an all-inclusive affair for all Africans irrespective of religious or ethnic affiliations. It principally reflected the original thought of Africans in their communal manner of handling socio-religious and political matters. The educated Africans tactically appropriated what seems to be relevant for them from the white man's teachings and fused it into their traditional Igwebuike philosophy for their social and political advancement. According to Ayandele (1970), such an arrangement would become a training ground for Africans in the cultivation of virtues such as self-dignity, self-reliance and desire for self-government. The Native Pastorate was an institution of crucial significance for African Christians of the 19th century because it was capable of creating and diffusing the principle that create and sustains an independent Christian nation. In either case, this ideology in practical terms expressed the African struggle for power and position in the Church government. They also had parallel in the struggle by Africans for the higher positions in the civil service, and they awakened the dream of nation state to be controlled ultimately by the natives themselves. Olanisebe (2006) ultimately had the Igwebuike philosophy in view as he submits that "intricately tied to these concepts was the slogan "Africa for the Africans" (p. 315). Christianity should serve as a superstructure upon which the modern African nations should be founded, and the principle of Igwebuike provides a philosophical foundation for such a perspective.

Igwebike in African Philosophy

Igwebuike is the heart of African thought pattern and the modality of being in African philosophy. It is taken from the Igbo language which is a composite word made up of three dimensions. *Igwe* is a noun which means number or population; *bu* as a verb denotes is; while *ike* is another verb that stands for strength or power. Thus put together, Igwebuike means number is strength, that

is, when human beings come together in solidarity and complementarity, they are powerful or can constitute an insurmountable force (Kanu, 2017 a,b&c). Kanu went further to explain that it is an English equivalent of complementarity, and at this level, no task is beyond their collective capacity. It is a concept that was employed by African traditional philosophers of the complementary school of thought to discuss the nature of the observed African reality (Kanu 2016a&b). Little wonder it was found a worthy instrument in the hands of the 19th century educated Christians who saw complementarity as the only sure way of actualizing their socio and political liberation from colonial domination and subsequent national integration in modern Nigeria. Igwebuiké is anchored on the African worldview, which, according to Iroegbu (1995) is characterized by a common origin, common worldview, common language, shared culture, shared race, colour and habits, common historical experience and common destiny. It is a complementarity philosophy which understands life as a shared reality. It is a relationship, though of separate and separated entities or individuals but with a joining of the same whole (Kanu, 2015a&b). It a relationship in which case the two or more coming together make each of them a complete whole. It is a diversity of being one with each other.

Origin, Growth and Implications of Native Pastorate to the Evolution of Modern Nigeria

Christianity represented salvation for the Nigerian peoples both as individuals and as a society. For the individual it was to bring freedom from fear and superstition. For the society it was to bring freedom from economic and socio-political domination. Some of the early converts in Nigeria believed that the way to their socio-economic and political advancement lay in joining the Churches established by the missions and in seeking the best employment in commercial companies. They hoped that one day their children or grandchildren would rise naturally into the controlling positions, these new converts were thinking in terms of Christian Churches under indigenous leadership which would logically extent to the indigenous leadership of their country.

In Nigeria, Native Pastorate movement was the first time that her larger ethnic groups-Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo-had ever united in a common ambition, a clear reflection of the Igwebuiké philosophy underpinning the traditional African worldview that nurtured most of the educated Christians. Thus, Native Pastorate provided a new focus of loyalty and interest apart from the ethnic groups. It

brought Nigerians together for a common cause, trained them for a common action, and created an organized followership for Nigerian leaders. The champions of this movement in Nigeria brought to the attention of the colonial masters what they felt should be the goal of their colonial policy; a multi-ethnic Nigerian state controlled by an elite drawn from all ethnic groups and bound together by a patriotism rooted in a common educational experience, the English language and devotion to the modernization of Nigerian society. In this way, the Native Pastorate was designed to be multi-ethnic and Nigerian in membership and scope. They had been inspired by the example of traditional African solidarity and complementarity born out of their Igwebuiké ideology. They thus resisted the temptation to found ethnic Churches after the pattern of the Zulu Churches of South Africa. They wanted a Nigerian or multi-ethnic Church, much as they wanted a Nigerian or multi-ethnic state. They generally believed that a major bond among the nationalities of any future Nigerian state would be their Igwebuiké complementarity ideology. Their major political interest, therefore, was informed to aid the consolidation of this philosophy for national integration. Many of the most talented and devoted Nigerians were involved in assisting this movement through which they believed they were promoting a basic prerequisite of a modern Nigerian state. They looked forward to the day when they would build a strong and united nation without any assistance from Europe or America. These set of committed individuals were, indeed, the first real Nigerian nationalists. It was at this period that Edward Blyden, the renowned cultural nationalist, visited Nigeria from his station then at Ivory Coast and made a clarion call for the establishment of independent non-denominational and non-ethnic African Church in Nigeria. This was particularly so as the hope of the educated Nigerian Christians of rising to the top leadership positions in the mission Churches was becoming increasingly illusive. The elevation of Ajayi Crowther to the bishopric in 1864 had been opposed from the first day by some white clergy and from 1880; they began mounting attacks upon his Niger mission. To this, Babalola (1988) avers that "in 1890, local white missionaries succeeded in carrying through a purge of the mission and when Crowther died in 1891, in the midst of the crisis which this caused, the African clergy broke away" (p. 169).

These separatist movements were remarkably early manifestations of protest against white domination and the status of inferiority. Barrett (1968) sees these separatist movements as that geared towards the principle in which the individual congregation or Church is an autonomous and egalitarian society free

from any external ecclesiastical control. Idowu (1965) sees it as a movement of the Church of God in Nigeria, which must know and live in the watchful consciousness that she is part as well as “presence” of One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Onuwa (1991) sees it as the desire for autonomy and independence of African Churches, which was the genesis of the development that crystallized into what we know now as African nationalism as well as the struggle for political independence. Be that as it may, it was a clear manifestation of the efforts of the African educated Christians towards acculturating Christianity into the already existing and efficacious Igwebuike ideology that had glued different groups together in the African traditional setting.

However, while those who were impatient with the European missionaries’ imperialistic policies broke away to form the Ethiopian or African Churches. Others who believed in the consummation of the Native Pastorate principle remained in the mission Churches to pursue their aspirations. They envisioned an African Christianity which would incorporate suitable aspects of African religion, adopt its own language, hymns and liturgy, and create a Christian nation because for them, the foreign oriented Churches is not their own. The prayer book, they said, was to be one in which prayer for the foreign authorities would be replaced with prayer for native rulers. They considered the Native Pastorate as an acceptable means to that goal. This nationalist hope troubled both the European missionaries and the administrators; however, the Native Pastorate was established and grew. In Sierra Leone, committees were set up to collect contributions for the Native Pastorate scheme. Rieber (1977) notes that “by 1889 all the Churches in Lagos but one had been absorbed into the Native Pastorate, and already in 1882 it had become a missionary body with stations outside of Lagos” (p.269). On 29 April, 1892, the Delta pastorate was created among the Igbo in the Onitsha district (Ayandele, 1966).

In initiative, capacity for organization and administration, territorial expansion and statistical success, the Native Pastorate recorded a landmark achievement. Nigerians saw in the Native Pastorate a power agency and a training ground for self-government in Church affairs that would automatically qualify them for self-government in the administration of Nigeria. In the school boards and Church committees where the white and the black missionaries were represented, bitter words were often exchanged and educated Nigerians began to question the practice of European missionaries in reserving superior positions

for members of their own race, as if the grace of God and the operations of the spirit were confined to race or colour. European missionaries came to dread the direction in which the Pastorate was moving. In an effort to make it indigenous the prayer book was revised to exclude prayers for foreign authorities and prayers for the native kings were substituted. Native names became acceptable for baptism and native airs were sung in the Church.

The foundation of the Native Pastorate signaled the beginnings of the evolution of modern Nigeria. By marking the beginnings of the displacement of white dominance from Church affairs it removed the quest for the evolution of modern Nigeria from the realm of ideology to that of practical achievement. Through its councils and committees, chiefly controlled by the converts, the idea of selfhood gradually spread throughout Nigeria. Consequently, by the end of 19th century the prestige of the white missionaries had fallen sharply and the days of the all-powerful, paternalistic and patronizing missionaries were clearly over. By 1889 James Johnson had concluded that Nigerian converts had vindicated their ability to administer and organize and that they were mature enough to be allowed by the British government to participate in the administration of their country by the election of representatives to the legislative chamber (Ayandele, 1970).

It is remarkable that the European missionaries themselves noticed that the ousting of the white man from the Church would be only a prelude to his ousting from the administration of the country. The Church became a hotbed of contest between the white man and the black man. There is amongst some of the prominent and influential natives a strong and frequently expressed feeling that Nigeria should be evangelized by Nigerians. They desired that Nigeria should rise in which desire they would have the sympathy and best wishes of every right-thinking persons. With such persons the presence of the white man in the country was only partially welcome. A European missionary remarked in 1880 that:

The Native Pastorates have done their best to bring about a root of revolting spirit in the Church. The cry the native, the native, is simply the worst you can do to them. They cannot bear it. This spirit of revolt against the white elements in the Church will it not go over to politics? (Ayandele, 1966: 102).

The result of the Native Pastorate in the commercial sphere as well as in the administration was that on the Niger, until the advent of Taubman Goldie and

his amalgamated company, and in Lagos until the 1890s, the big firms left the retail trade largely in the hands of the educated Nigerians, which many Nigerians like R.B. Blaize, J.J. Thomas, C.J. George and J.P. Heastrup, to name a few held their own in the commerce of the Lagos colony as independent traders. In the civil service educated Nigerians held positions of responsibility and in many cases they filled posts which Nigerians were never to occupy again until the attainment of independence.

The reaction of the European missionaries to the growth of the spirit of nationalism in the Native Pastorate made it seem like it was a rebel against constituted authority. However, the flaw in their thinking was that their attitude was illogical; they ought to have perceived that its origin and motivations in Nigeria are basically the same as those that led to the formation of practically all other national Churches in Europe and elsewhere in the world. Anyone who is familiar with the history of the Church of England (Anglican) or the Lutheran Church Germany and central Europe, would appreciate the common desire on the part of these movements to free themselves from foreign domination of Rome and to establish or strengthen their sovereignty by placing Church bureaucracy within the management of national governments. This manifestation may be deplored by some on ethical or theological grounds but that does not in any way alter the basic truth about this aspect of the history of the Church; it is essentially an expression of Igwebuiké complementarity ideology in national selfhood.

Of great importance is the fact that the Native Pastorate, just like Igwebuiké philosophy were it drew inspiration from, ceased to be a solely Christian affair; it transcended ecclesiastical and religious frontiers. The secular authorities in Nigeria were from the first involved with the Christians in this struggle, and assisted in the building of new Churches. Webster (1964) notes that in 1904 the *Oni* invited the African Church to build a Church in Ife in order to chastise the C.M.S., who had become intractable. This was to further keep alive the Africa's claim to leadership in an age when it was being submerged in Church and state. Leading Africans of all denominations began to see the Native Pastorate in predominately racial and nationalistic terms. The prospectus made it clear that Nigerian Christians wished for complete independence. They anticipated the Church as an institution or instrument for the political unification of the Nigerian peoples.

Christianity was to be the new Igwebuike as a cohesive force binding all Nigerians together in brotherly love and unity. While the foreign missions emphasized the individual nature of Christian life the Native Pastorate stressed its Igwebuike characteristics emphasizing its communal responsibilities. The foreign missionaries preached “come off from among them and be ye separated”; the Native Pastorate sought to unite the people together for a common course. (Webster, 1964). They argued about the future of Nigerian society, and their policies were conditioned by Igwebuike worldview. They worked for the massive ingathering, ‘the national Church’. Thus, began a movement of independence in religious matters which there-after resulted in the foundation of several new religious groups that asserted that Nigerians must adapt Christianity to local conditions. Some called for the formation of a national Church whose creed was to be ‘No cross, No crown’. This racial anti-clericalism appeared to be strongest among the group of nationalists who organized themselves into a party known as the National Council of Nigerians and Cameroons, and which had its largest support in south-eastern Nigeria. Its members were most vociferous in this plea for a national Church, and it is instructive that the name of this Church was to be the National Church of Nigeria and Cameroons, an obvious attempt to make the name similar to that of the party (Afigbo, 1981).

These groups were African associations which gave race-conscious leaders an outlet for their energies, a platform for their ideas, and an organized followership. Despite their small number, the groups brought Nigerians together in a common cause and provided a milieu in which they could feel that they were masters of their own destiny.

Neo-Colonialism and the Challenge before the Church in Contemporary Nigeria

Nigeria as a nation emerged from the shackles of colonialism in 1960. Thanks to the independent movement pioneered by Nigerian educated Christians under the umbrella of Native Pastorate Scheme and inspired by traditional Igwebuike philosophy, but Nigeria’s human and material resources were largely exploited or largely left underdeveloped and which, in consequence, is faced with serious and urgent economic, social, technological and perhaps political problems. Under this condition, the average Nigerian is confronted with lack of food, clothing, shelter, security and sense of dignity. The Churches, by their scandalous disunity, simply compounded the problem on the ground, while

globalization has infiltrated foreign cultures into the very being of the Nigerian society. In the midst of this quagmire, integral development, therefore, must be regarded as essential for Nigeria's national integration to be a sustainable one. This means the comprehensive uplift of the whole society in all its many wants and needs on to a recognizable higher and better plane than before. This is not an easy task because the situations created during the colonial days make the task almost impossible. To this, Omoyajowo (1978) observes that:

Attempts at industrialization and urbanization, with their accompanying detribalization have, to a large extent, disintegrated African family and social life. Consequently, religious and other values and sanctions of tribal life have broken up. The secularization of life and conduct in an essentially religious society and the havoc which the products of western civilization played in the spiritual, religious and moral lives of Africans cannot be overstressed. In this age, therefore, of development the spiritual risks are very great. For, as we separate everyday life from religion, we are breaking up the unity and the wholesome of life. (pp. 95-96).

More worrisome is the fact that neo-colonialism has become a prominent feature of African societies. What happened in Nigeria immediately after independence was the appearance of local schemers and economic gluttons who have replaced the colonial exploiters. Instead of an honest sharing of equitable opportunities for everyone's self-fulfillment and self-realization, these local leaders in politics, business, education, and so on, try very often to take the shortest route to acquire for themselves the maximum personal gain, prestige, and immense wealth, however dirtily acquired, and they become oppressive, totalitarian and anti-Christian in their behaviour. Thus, centuries ago, Nigerians lamented the evil of white colonialism. Today, neo-colonialism is staring the people in their faces. Decades ago, the people jubilated as they celebrated their independence from the white man. Today, they have come to realize that the freedom they celebrated was a mere facade since it was simply an exchange of slave masters. They detested the exploitation of the colonial white, but today they struggle with greedy politicians of their own country. They attributed the underdevelopment of Africa to slave trade and colonialism, but today, Nigerian politicians and their henchmen carry local natural resources to the white man's country, sell them to the white man at the white man's own price, and deposit the money in the white man's bank in a secret account to be inherited by the white man when they die. According to Odey (1996) "Africa suffered under the colonial masters who came as innocuous seekers of fortune but proved to be harbingers of Africa's doom; today, the same Africa is going through the challenge and horror of leadership in

the hands of Africans” (p. 8). People are suffering in almost every African nation as they never suffered in the colonial era. The entire continent has been reduced to a land of oppression, misery and despair by the arrant greed of African leaders. This was why Rodney (1981) foresees that the euphoria which greeted the emerging independence of African nations could be turned into a charade by African leaders, the nationalist bourgeoisie, who would later do more harm to Africa than the whites.

In the colonial days, the form of political subordination was obvious. Under neo-colonialism, the domination takes up a subtle form. Former colonial masters now set up black puppets that collaborate with them to exploit and destroy Nigeria. Local politicians now connive with more developed countries to suck their nation dry and dump the money in foreign banks for the benefit of those who already have everything they need while people die here in abject poverty, misery and want. These factors have continued to create situations of unrest, instability and disintegration in Nigeria. There can be no meaningful and sustainable development under this situation. The question now is: Where is the Church and the Nigerian educated Christians who championed the course of political movements that gave Nigeria her independence? Where are such ideologies as the Native Pastorate Scheme, inspired by the traditional complementarity philosophy that was encoded in the Igwebuiké system, which served as umbrella under which educated Nigerians rallied together for selfhood and national integration? Omoyajowo (1978) hazards an answer to the above questions when he states that:

In its present form Christianity does not seem to be properly equipped to face the challenge. It seems not to be interested in the integration of the society, for although its proclamation is about one Lord, one faith and one baptism, it is hopelessly and depressingly fragmented into hundred diverse and often opposing directions. (p. 97).

Suffice it to add that by deliberately pursuing a narrow goal, by carving out spheres of influence for themselves in different parts of the country and its consequent notorious quest for membership, by shameless appeal for financial assistance from local politicians and foreign organizations, by abandoning the message of salvation as mandated by Jesus Himself in favour of notorious health and wealth gospel, and by refusing to cooperate effectively with one another and those outside the bounds as done by the 19th century Native Pastorate movement, the Church lost the chance to be a prophetic voice in the midst of the studied

neo-colonialism and corruption that have engulfed Nigeria since independence. This is the invidious effect of Church proliferation and rivalry in contemporary Nigeria. This needs to be emphasized because as this process of securitization continued, the Church lost her social significance which is manifestly obvious in her loss of grip on power bases as a pressure group. The Church lost the opportunity quite early to transcend it and be a national integrating force because mutual suspicion is still not lacking, and since tribalism is the stuff from which Nigerian politics was made, its effects in Church politics could always be assumed.

The Church that will pursue the course of sustainable development and national integration in Nigeria cannot identify itself with a particular social class; prefer a particular political philosophy or party. The Church which gives room for Christians to adjust the spirit of the gospel to humanistic thinking calls for urgent examination. However, in spite of the embarrassment and frustration created by the above studied situation, Kalu (1978) still believes that God is feeding the Church in Nigeria with the manna of humiliation, the manna of considerateness for one another, and the manna of hope based on the Christian experience of "ecumenism".

Ecumenism is a large issue with an enormous amount of literature. The point, however, is to relate the central aspects of it to contemporary Nigeria. This could be done by picking certain concerns to the neglect of others and to the neglect of details. It should be pointed out that ecumenism does not mean Church union, Church unity or the loss of denominational identity. The word, ecumenism, comes from the Greek word, *oiukomene*. This means simply the whole inhabited earth. It is related to another word, *cosmos*. When applied to a theological context, it refers to an affirmation of God's creation of and rulership over the whole inhabited earth. Kalu (1978) relates ecumenism to the secularized society when he states that:

It is an instrument whereby the Churches may bear witness together to their common allegiance to Jesus Christ and cooperate in matters requiring united action such as being a medium of public statements and joint actions among Churches on social, moral, political economic, religious and educational matters. (p. 11).

Obviously ecumenism, like the 19th century Native Pastorate Scheme, has captured the essence of African philosophy of complementarity as encoded in

the Igwebuiké principle, but the process has been in part a growing recognition of the secularized society because the cooperation of Churchmen of different persuasions will be meaningful only as those Churchmen have recognized their essential responsibility to the society. Ecumenism in Nigeria, therefore, in practical sense must stress the wholistic approach which sees mission as both spiritual and physical healing. It is upon this principle that Igwebuiké philosophy was formed and it is particularly important when it is reflected that Christ came for the poor in spirit and in body. Contemporary neo-colonialism and inhuman economic policies are widening the gap between the rich and the poor and increasing the challenge to the Church; so the Church in Nigeria should constitute an effort to restore the role of the Church as a prophetic voice amidst the encircling gloom characterized by unemployment, retrenchment, rationalization, economic stringency, insecurity, religious killing and the marginalization of large sections of the society. These issues are crucial to understanding the meaning of Christ in our midst. The various Christian denominations may not agree on doctrines but can serve together in social problems as a form of social ecumenism drawn from African traditional complementarity principle of Igwebuiké that turns service to the society as a theatre for cooperation.

Obviously Christianity cannot afford to think that the great human society for which Christ died should be abandoned to the powers of evil. The alleviation of human suffering and the achievement of an abundant life for all have a primary claim of Christianity. Christianity must then work energetically toward the elimination of social causes of suffering, and at the same time, care for the victims of social injustice and misfortune as well. This concern for just relationships in society is one aspect of the compassionate ministry of Christ (Omoyajowo, 1978).

Conclusion

The present study has tried to explore the concept of Native Pastorate Scheme in Nigerian as bases for selfhood and national integration. The emphasis is on the inspiration drawn from the traditional African complementarity programme encoded in the principle of Igwebuiké which brought together various sections of Nigerian communities, especially the Christian educated Nigerians, in reactions to European activities in Nigeria both as missionaries, traders or administrators. European policies and opinions about Africa at their

headquarters in Europe have no place whatsoever, except when these affected the African people themselves. The study tried to give due prominence to the ideological views for which the native agents of the missions, in spite of their religious inclination, pursued vigorously the course of the political and economic liberation of the Nigerian people from colonial subjugation and their desire for the integration of various ethnic groups in Nigeria towards national development. The struggle, it must be noted, took outward courage coupled with inner conviction and spirituality-attributes of the truly sincere Christian. In this way, Nigerian Church men, under the umbrella of Native Pastorate, had already settled the issues of indigenous leadership, selfhood and self-government. Native Pastorate as an ideology expressed through the medium of the Church procured self-determination and self-support in Church government, created avenue for lay leadership and promoted cultural renaissance and paved the way for economic and political independence.

However, ironically independence has not brought the much needed liberation from abject poverty and wants from independent Nigeria due to the insurgence of neo-colonialism and corruption in the leadership of the country, hence the urgent call for sustainable development and national integration. One would ordinarily expect the Church to step forward as it did in the 19th century colonial Nigeria, to showcase the social dimension of the gospel in our present oppressive situation, but the situation is painfully not so because the scandalous disunity of the Church in Nigeria has robbed her of her social significance. However, the present study maintains that the spiritual substance of the Christian religion remains what it is, and will continue to minister to the spiritual and social needs of those who take solace in it. The absurd faces of Christianity we see today in Nigeria are the manifestations of human limitations of those who practice the religion. Through ecumenism the Church in Nigeria can restore her social responsibility and come forward to foster a sustainable development and national integration in the light of Christian principles, and here in Nigeria, of Nigerian culture. One of such unique principles is the sense of community evident in the habitat structure-the village with the extended family structure, and in the power and presence of the ancestors. This, in summary, is what Igwebuiké stands for. Igwebuiké philosophy is essentially anti-individualist and as such, the ownership and management of the large-scale means of production must be vested not in individuals but in the people as a whole. Then there will be a national adoration of the true God, the source of everything, not the amassing by individuals of incalculable wealth whereby they hold men and families

perpetually enslaved to them. All these together will make Christianity relevant to the people.

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