

POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN METHODIST CHURCH NIGERIA, 1962-2020

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CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to God Almighty, and my biological parents: Mr. Onoja George and Mrs. Onoja Martha who have given so much to support me morally, academically and financially.

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ABSTRACT

Policy development, an iterative process designed to help organisations advance policies to make them run efficiently in the realisation of their corporate objectives, is pivotal for organisational success, including the Methodist Church Nigeria (MCN). Existing studies on MCN have focused largely on historical development, renewal movements and doctrinal exegesis, with scant attention paid to its policy development. This study was, therefore, designed to examine policy development in MCN, which was orchestrated by the constitutional reforms from 1962, when the Church was granted autonomy from the British Methodist, to 2020, when the MCN held Constitutional Conference and reviewed the MCN Constitution, 2006. This was with a view to identifying the trends in policy development, its attendant benefits and challenges to the church.

Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory was adopted as the framework, while the descriptive design was used. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 31 members of the clergy and 33 members of the laity based on their experience on policy issues in MCN. In-depth interviews were conducted with 14 episcopates, seven presbyters, eight priests, two deacons, one deaconess, four evangelists, four lay presidents, 10 stewards, seven fellowship presidents and seven former lay officers because they were involved as policymakers and implementers in the Conference area. Church records and the MCN Constitutions, 1962, 1976, 1990 and 2006, were consulted. The data were thematically analysed.

The policy developments in MCN was a reflection of the changing dynamics in administering the church. The Deed of Foundation, 1962, granted the Church autonomy, while the MCN Constitution, 1976, addressed ecumenical matters with the introduction of Episcopacy and the adoption of titles, such as Patriarch, Archbishops and Bishops. The MCN Constitution, 1990, focused on reconciliation and reunification of the church after 14 years of internal crises. The MCN Constitution, 2006, which was in use until 2020 repositioned the church for effective ministry. The benefits derived from the policies include the introduction of new methods, such as the reordering of the ministry, charismatic worship and numerical growth from two districts at autonomy to 80 dioceses in 2020. The policies equally enhanced the national impact of the church in the education and health sectors, while it achieved global relevance in international outreach mission to Gabon, Togo, Dubai, United Kingdom and United States of America. Moreover, MCN's leadership role in World Methodist Council was firmly established. However, there was the erosion of Methodist heritage and traditions, like simple hierarchies of priesthood and unelaborate liturgy as a result of the policy. There were also the Presidential and Patriarchal conflict from 1976 to 1990; partial implementation of the policies and financial burdens were evident in the irregular payment of Church workers' salaries.

Social change underpinned policies for autonomy, episcopacy and repositioning in Methodist Church Nigeria, from 1962 to 2020, with attendant benefits and challenges.

Keywords: Policy development in Methodist Church Nigeria, Church autonomy, Church constitutional development

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page	i
Certification	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	vi
Table of contents	vii
Abbreviation	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Background to the study	1
1.2 Statement of the problem	4
1.3 Purpose of the study	4
1.4 Scope of the study	5
1.5 Significance of the study	6
1.6 Definition of terms	6
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	
2.1 Issues in religion and changing social trends	8
2.2 Wesleyan changing tradition	21
2.3 Perspectives on Methodist Church Nigeria	26
2.4 Theoretical framework	45
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	
3.1 Research design	47
3.2 Study area	47
3.3 Study population	48
3.4 Sampling procedure	49
3.5 Method of data collection	49
3.6 Method of data analysis	49
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS	
4.1 Introduction	50
4.2 Advent and evolution of Methodism in Nigerian	50
4.3 Precursor to autonomy	52

4.4	The autonomy of Methodist Church in Nigeria	54
4.5	Policy developments in Methodist Church Nigeria from 1962 to 2020	56
4.5.1	The Deed of Foundation 1962-autonomy	57
4.5.2	The 1976 Constitution-episcopacy	58
4.5.3	The 1990 Constitution-reconciliation and reunification	66
4.5.4	The 2006 Constitution-repositioning	68
4.5.5	The Book of Resolutions- All the decisions and resolutions of Conference	73
4.5.6	His Eminence, Dr Sunday Ola Makinde, 2006-2013	75
4.5.7	His Eminence, Dr Samuel C. Kanu Uche	75
4.5.8	Other issues in the Book of Resolution	76
4.6	Purpose of policy development in Methodist Church Nigeria	78
4.7	The contributions of Methodism to Nigerian society	83
4.7.1	Education	84
4.7.2	Health	86
4.7.3	Female child education and women empowerment	89
4.7.4	Social services	92
4.7.5	Economic development	96
4.7.6	Politics and democratisation	97
4.7.7	Social movements	98
4.7.8	Honorific awards	99
4.8	Prospects of policy development	102
4.8.1	Introduction of new methods	102
4.8.2	Church growth and expansion	107
4.8.3	National impacts	109
4.8.4	Global relevance	110
4.8.5	Adjustment to social realities	112
4.9.	Problems of policy development	114
4.9.1	Erosion of Methodist heritage and tradition	115
4.9.2	Crisis: presidential and patriarchal dichotomy	124
4.9.3	Financial burdens	129
4.9.4	Partial implementation	133
4.9.5	Conflict of interest	136
4.9.6	Weak structure	138
4.10	Conclusion	142

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1	Summary	144
5.2	Conclusion	147
5.3	Recommendations	148
5.4	Contributions to knowledge	154
	References	155

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ABBREVIATIONS

MCN	Methodist Church Nigeria
WMMS	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society
PMMS	Primitive Methodist Missionary Society
WCC	World Council of Churches
WMC	World Methodist Council
CCC	Conference Connexional Council
MF	Men's Fellowship
WF	Women's Fellowship
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Religion is among the most pervasive social institutions in any given society. It has been a central feature of social life and the policies that preceded it¹. It is anchored on many centuries' policies, traditions, customs, beliefs and ideas. African Religion, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism have all been practised for many centuries with a good number of relics. Over time, as the world evolves and changes, new trends, values and perspectives can create tension between existing traditions and customs. This is because adherents see anything connected to religion as eternally binding. Hence, a strict adherence to doctrines, practices and traditions.

Notwithstanding, the society in which religion exists is a web of constant change and is in a flux as observed by scholars.² Such human induced and natural changes cut across language, meanings, dressing, arts, technology, and so on. Heraclitus³ observes that nature is in a state of constant flux. "Cold things grow hot, the hot cools, the wet dries, the parched moistens." He notes further, "Everything is constantly shifting, changing, and becoming something other to what it was before." On the other hand, a pre-Socratic school of philosophy founded by Parmenides in the early fifth century BC called the Eleatic insisted that change was impossible, and that reality was one and unchanging. Despite the views expressed by the Eleatic in contradistinction to Heraclitus, it is obvious that change and innovation occur in all societies. This is evident in the fact that the population, if not controlled grows at geometric

¹ D. Fletcher *et al*, 2014. Religion, Social Cohesion and Peace building in Conflict-affected Countries. Retrieved from https://www.du.edu/korbel/sie/media/documents/faculty_pubs/sisk/religion-and-social-cohesion-reports/rsc-researchreport. Accessed on 11/20/18

² C.H. Kahn, 1979. The Art and Thought of Heraclitus. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 45. *An Internet Encyclopaedia Philosophy. Heraclitus.* Retrieved from <http://www.iep.utm.edu/heraclit/>. Accessed on 17/06/2017. 11:37am

³ Heraclitus Change. Retrieved from <https://philosophyforchange.wordpress.com/2008/04/07/heraclitus-on-change/> Accessed on 1/25/2018

progression; there are advancement in technology just as material equipments, ideologies and values take on new components, and institutional structures and functions undergo reshaping to a point that absolute reverence for tradition without innovation can easily degenerate into stagnation and formalism.⁴ One can therefore say, change is constant in the society with attendant benefits and problems which social institutions try to manage.

Modern socio-cultural systems, which emerged in post Feudal Europe during the commercial and industrial revolutions saw the gradual shift of economic activities from the countryside to the cities⁵. The same trend was experienced in post-colonial era in Nigeria.⁶ Within these periods, the society improved in technology for production of food, clothing and shelter. There was also an increased population and expansion into a larger territory with more specialisation of groups and roles and a greater differentiation of occupations, classes and other groups in the organisation of society. In particular, the last fifty years in the world all over have seen more changes in the political, cultural and religious configuration of the world than ever before.⁷

Within these periods, also, learning, work, worship and religious piety became much more separate and discrete. People progressively understood issues of religion as separate from other institutions in the society, and by the 14th and 15th centuries it was glaring in many European climes for instance, to talk of personal religion, religion in general, and other religions⁸. Hence, some seminal sociologists of the 19th and 20th centuries imagined or postulated that religion would either disappear or become increasingly weakened with the rise of modern institutions⁹. However, religion did not disappear but has enhanced even social transformation; it remains surprisingly vibrant

⁴ C. Hubert and D. Benjamin. (eds), 1978. *A History of Christian Doctrine*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Ltd. 184

⁵ E.B. Tylor, 1871. *Primitive Culture*. London: John Murray. 87 Retrieved from <https://www.bookedupac.com/pages/books/2628/edward-b-tylor/primitive-culture>. Accessed 17/06/2017.

⁶ N.S. Nomfundo, (n.d). Political Changes in Africa after Independence. Retrieved from <https://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/POLSC325-Subunit-2.1-Overview-of-Politics-in-the-Post-Colonial-Era-FINAL.pdf>. Accessed 17/06/2017 12:04pm

⁷ R.A. Idialu The Pastor in a Multi-cultural and Multi-religious Society. In O. Adeogun, R. Idialu, S. Adegbite (eds). *The Pastor and the challenges of the 21st Century*. Ibadan: En-Joy Press and Books. 21

⁸ J. Meyrowitz, 1997 "Shifting Worlds of Strangers: Medium Theory and Changes in 'Them' versus 'Us' ." *Sociological Inquiry* 67: 59-71 in 1991 *The Changing Global Landscape*. Atlanta.

⁹ C.L. Harper and B.F. Lebeau, (n.d). *Social Change and Religion in America, Thinking Beyond Secularization*. Retrieved from <http://are.as.wvu.edu/sochange.htm>. Accessed 23/03/2017.

and socially salient.¹⁰ This is particularly true in Nigeria, where it has been a strong factor in emerging social matters.

Notwithstanding, there are instances of change that one can interpret as religious decline, such as dwindling membership, especially among liberal/mainline Protestant denominations, and also declining involvement in religious activities and traditional forms of piety like prayer, evangelisation and Bible Study. In the view of Vidler, “the Church has inevitably been affected by what has happened in the world in which it is set”.¹¹ This has become a serious concern in religious circle, especially, Methodist Church Nigeria; who, like other social institutions is embedded in a broad process of socio-cultural change, reflexively shaping and being shaped by the large-scale transformation.

In an atmosphere of rapid transformation, one may ask, what is the way forward for religion or generally speaking, social institutions? The fact remains that no institution, no matter how placed can stop the wave of change; hence, concerted efforts are made through brainstorming to frame policies that will help to sustain such an institution in the midst of change.

As the first surviving foreign mission¹², Methodist Church Nigeria has gone through myriads of changes owing to a number of policies introduced from time to time. In the first instance, the form of Christian traditions that accompanied the Wesleyan Mission was highly at variance with the local settings and the religious background of the Nigerians. As the wind of change blew across the nation, the Church was caught up in the web of using old or existing moribund foreign traditions and practices in the evolving Nigerian socio-religious development. This became the foundation for re-appraisal of Church policies and practices to align with Nigerian religious worldview.

The steps towards this development were central to the introduction of African elements and episcopacy as well as other transformational policies to the Church life. The wave of these changes was heavily championed by the first Patriarch, His Pre-Eminence, Professor E.B. Idowu and subsequent heads of the Church. Also, the Conference Connexional System, comprising Archdioceses, Dioceses, Circuits and

¹⁰ C.L. Harper and B.F. LeBeau. *Social Change and Religion in America, Thinking Beyond Secularization*.

¹¹ A.R. Vidler, 1974. *The Church in an Age of Revolution 1789 to the Present Day*. England: Penguin Books. 9

¹² M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. *The Wesleyan Presence in Nigeria: An Exploration of Power, Control and Partnership in Mission*. Ibadan: Sefer. 3

Local Churches have been actively involved in collective policy formulations to cope with changes in the society. The impacts of such policy developments towards growth and expansion have been yielding fruitful results in the life of the Church as well as some challenges.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The evolution of Methodist Church Nigeria has been largely characterised by various forms of policy development which are responses to changing trends in the society. Existing studies on the church have focused on diverse perspectives. For instance, Familusi¹³, Oduyoye¹⁴, Okocha¹⁵ and Fatokun's¹⁶ contributions are on historical development. Ekebusi¹⁷ is concerned with renewal movements, Aina¹⁸ examines doctrine and worship as exhibited in the church, Idialu¹⁹ emphasises contextualisation, while Addison²⁰ works on Methodist character. Also, Kolawole²¹ and Ladigbolu²² paid attention to lay ministry and identity crises respectively. However, inspite of the avalanche of academic works, not much has been said about policy development, which is a key area in Methodist Church Nigeria's response to changing trends in the society.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The study examined policy development in Methodist Church Nigeria from 1962 to 2020. Since change in the society has a way of redefining people's worldview from time to time²³, the tendency of seeing rigid religious practices as archaic cannot be

¹³ M.M. Familusi, 1992. *Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992)*. Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers.

¹⁴ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. *The Wesleyan Presence in Nigeria: An Exploration of Power, Control and Partnership in Mission*. Ibadan: Sefer,

¹⁵ J.O.I. Okocha 2013, *Yet Alive Methodism*. Aba: Onyii Graphic Press

¹⁶ J. Fatokun, 2009. *Methodist Witness in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Positive Press

¹⁷ C.C. Ekebusi, 2010. *Renewal Movement in Methodist Church Nigeria*. Aba: Soul Winner Publications

¹⁸ O.O. Aina, 2016. *Polity, Worship, Doctrine. Methodist Church Nigeria Perspective*. Lagos: Rotabstone and Company.

¹⁹ R. Idialu, 2015. *Contextualization of the Gospel as a Platform for Membership Retention in Methodist Church Nigeria*. A PhD Thesis submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan.

²⁰ B. Addison, (No date) *Methodist Character and Pentecostal Practices*. Oladunjoye & Co.

²¹ D. Kolawole, 2015. *The Lay President and the Methodist Church Nigerian Constitution*. In Allwell A.O. et al. *The Lay Presidency and Methodist Church Nigeria. Nigeria: Methodist Church Nigeria*

²² L.S.A. Ladigbolu, 2018. *Methodist Church in Identity Crisis within the Context of politics, Security, and Injustice in Contemporary Nigeria*. In R.O. Opeke., Familusi O.O. and Berekiah O.O (eds) *The Heart of the Act: Church, Politics and Social Transformation. A Festschrift in Honor of His Grace, Most Rev M.K. Stephen*. Ibadan: University Press Publishing House.

²³ J.V. Spikenard, (n.d). *Worldview, Beliefs and Society: Mary Douglas' Contribution to the Study of Human Ideas on Ultimate Reality and Meaning*. <https://www.utpjournals.press/doi/pdf/10.3138/uram.13.2.109>

denied. In the same vein, religion is mostly resistant to change on practices that could have outlived their social relevance and meaning. The inability to adjust even when such adjustment does not affect religious essence has made some activities and practices impracticable.²⁴ Recent initiative to bridge the gap between religion and change is found in Church policies. Therefore, this work was able to:

- (a) Identify changing trends of policy in Methodist Church Nigeria.
- (b) Examine policies that determine the direction of the Church in a changing society.
- (c) Appraise the prospect and the burden of policy development in the Church.
- (d) Recommend how the Methodist Church Nigeria can be more proactive on policy development.

1.4 Scope of the study

The study is limited in scope to Methodist Church Nigeria. The choice of Methodist is based on the fact that, Methodist is the first surviving mission in Nigeria²⁵. While the Wesleyan Missionary Society arrived Badagry in the year 1842, the Primitive Methodist Mission Movement arrived in the South-South region of Nigeria in 1893.²⁶ The former opened the gate of mission to other foreign Missionary Societies to evangelise Nigeria. It is therefore apposite that any meaningful research on Church and policy development in Nigeria must strongly acknowledge the central place of the first foreign mission in the country.

Furthermore, the study focuses on methods employed in policy formulation. Methodically, things are not just done without a unanimous policy to that effect²⁷. Such policies are instruments of change in the Church life. Any meaningful study on Methodist Church Nigeria, especially as regard to change will definitely not escape policies that engender changes. This work, therefore, uses contemporary policy frameworks from 1962 to 2020. It was in 1962 that the Church got her autonomy from

²⁴ J.M. Haase, 2009. *Postmodernity: Impact and Implications*. A PhD Thesis submitted to the University of Zululand, Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa.

²⁵ F.E. Ogwuonuonu, 2012. Celebrating 170 Years Of Christianity In Nigeria retrieved from <http://www.thenews-writer.com/?p=4951>. Accessed on 20/06/2017. 3:35am

²⁶ M.M. Familusi, 1992. *Methodism in Nigeria 1982-1992*, Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers Limited. 6

²⁷ Methodist Church in Britain. 2017. Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church. Retrieved from https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/11452/methodist_church_safeguarding_policy_procedures_and_guidance-_april_2019.pdf. Accessed on 23/6/2017.

the British Methodist Church²⁸ shortly after Nigerian independence.²⁹ On the other hand, in 2006 Constitution popularly called the Reposition Constitution was intended to bring the Church to a suitable position in Nigeria for effective witness and service to humanity. This same Constitution operated till 2020 when it was revoked. Since enactment of constitutions within these periods introduced new policies that redirected the Church afforded the researcher the opportunity to obtain and report with firsthand information. In addition, the Book of Resolutions, which is believed to be next to the Constitution, was introduced by the 2006 Constitution to replace Standing Orders. This also formed part of policies examined.

1.5 Significance of the study

The study is significant in many ways. It serves as a valuable contribution to scholarship by adding to the body of existing knowledge in the field of the sociology of religion. This work is to function as a memoir to religious institutions, especially the Church, on how to manage change through policy formulations rather than recourse to crisis that has negative social outcome. Furthermore, the insight gained through this research will serve as an instrument for social adjustment and adaptation by religious institutions. The study is particularly significant to Methodist Church Nigeria as it has been able to appraise the changing trends of policies over the years in the light of their contribution to the Church growth and the burdens that they bring as well. In addition, it is a veritable tool for other Churches and religious bodies on how to respond to social change. Lastly, the work is significant to Nigeria in the area of policy that will engender change and development.

1.6 Definition of terms

Policy development

Policy development concerns an iterative process designed to help organisations advance policies to make them run efficiently in the realisation of their corporate

²⁸ C.C. Ekebusi, 2010. *Renewal Movement in Methodist Church Nigeria*. Aba: Soul Winner Publications. 40

²⁹ T. Falola and M.M. Heaton, 2008. *History of Nigeria*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. 139

objectives. It involves research, analysis and writing of government or organizational guiding rules that helps address identified goals, problems or concerns.³⁰

Church policy

This is a reference guide to the functions and operations of the church. It lists routine duties and answers questions that arise as duties are performed. The procedure section gives step by step instructions for performing each task.³¹ It is also a statement that defines the authority required, boundaries set, responsibilities delegated, and guidelines, established to carry out a function of the church. In other words, church policy tells who does the task, why it is done, and, under what conditions it is done. It answers questions that arise during unique circumstances and provides uniform treatment of a situation.

Methodism

Methodism, 18th-century movement founded by John Wesley that sought to reform the Church of England from within. The movement, however, became separate from its parent body and developed into an autonomous church.

Church autonomy

A church is said to be "autonomous" if it is self-ruling, self-propagating and self-financing.

³⁰ Dustin, 2017. Introduction to Government Policy Development. Retrieved from <http://dustinkmacdonald.com/introduction-government-policy-development/>. Accessed on 12/10/2020.

³¹ Smyrna Baptist Church, 2019. Policies and Procedures for Smyrna Baptist Church. Florida. Retrieved from <https://smyrnabaptist.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Manual.pdf>. Accessed on 27/2/2020

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Issues in religion and changing social trends

Religion from time immemorial has occupied a central position in the lives of people and the society at large. Hardly had a society exist without religious history in the development, civilization and social transformation. Nigeria in particular, has a rich indigenous religious heritage which along with other religions, particularly, Christianity and Islam have contributed to and responded to changing social trends. Hence, Ibenwa, writing on religion and social change in Nigeria opines that the whole theme of religious change in Africa has been seen from the perspective of phenomenon, which began when Africa came in contact with the Europeans but that this idea of static African religion and culture which got a dynamic and serious shakeup only when impacted upon by Western culture is no longer tenable.³² In his finding, what actually happened was a system influence in the second part of the 19th century which brought about rapid social change in Africa, and transformed very simple, harmonious, homogenous societies who strictly observed the religion of their communities into complex and heterogeneous ones with popularization of western ideas of rationalism and individualism. In his submission, the changes are unavoidable as they are partly the survival tactics while others are irresistible in the midst of conquering culture. He identifies Christianity and Islam as social revolutionary forces in the society who used education and urbanization as sweet pills to enticed and capture Africans. Hence, the advent of these two religious bodies birthed religious pluralism on the continent of Africa.

³² C.N. Ibenwa, (n.d.). Religion and Social Change in Nigeria. Joen Publishers. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.ng/publications/file/IBENWA,%20christopher%20N.pdf>. Accessed on 9/9/2019

Furthermore, in his findings, submits that Africans quickly accepted the new religions because of their advantages but could not remain faithful to the tenets of the new religion, like the promotion of monogamy and condemnation of polygamy, discarding of oath taking according to cultural practices. Some of these alien cultural and religious changes do not fit in to the African worldview, hence, the beginning of dual religious allegiances and the introduction of African Independent Churches to bridge the gap.

Notwithstanding, he establishes that Christianity helped in the eradication of some barbaric practices such as the killing of twins and albinos which were considered abominable to the earth deity and ancestral spirits. Also, the practice of human sacrifice, Caste System (Osu) common among the Igbo and the practice of burying alive slaves to serve chiefs in the world of the ancestors have been stopped or gradually going into oblivion. Furthermore, Christianity helps in character molding of children and make young ones imbibe such virtues like love, truth, obedience and respect for elders, parents and constituted authority. Islam brought with it Arabic language and culture as well as Islamic learning. The instance of current numeral in use is a legacy of Arabic studies.

Though the work acknowledges the contributions of Christianity and Islam to rapid social change in Africa as well as the transformation of homogenous communities into a complex and heterogeneous one; it fails to acknowledge how African society religion have influence these religions to adjust to the religious temperaments of the Africans. This has been the thrust for policy developments by the different religious bodies. Also, his view that Christianity and Islam promote monogamy and condemn polygamy is at variance with Islamic teaching which allows a man to have up to four legal wives provided he treats them equally.

In an attempt to bring out the motif of the missionaries in expanding influence, particularly, Christian mission; Familusi,³³ writing from the parlance of sociology of religion sees conversion as a veritable tool. He sees conversion beyond spirituality, rather, a fundamental ingredient for social change. This is because, in addition to increment of religious membership, conversion also creates an atmosphere for social

³³ O.O. Familusi, 2018. Christian Conversion as a Tool for Social Transformation in Nigeria. In Opeke R.O., Familusi O.O. and Berekiah O.O (eds) *The Heart of the Act: Church, Politics and Social Transformation. A Festschrift in Honor of His Grace, Most Rev M.K. Stephen.* Ibadan: University Press Publishing House. 49-66

transformation of the individual converts and the society in terms of culture, morality, education, economy and healthcare.

While connecting conversion to social transformation or social change, he submits that conversion from one religion to another carries with it transformative elements of the new religion to the point of change of status as the new convert becomes a member of a new family in terms of fellowship and brotherhood. He posits that the rite of baptism and confirmation in addition to change of diet, dressing, habits, adornment and choice of economic activities are possible engender of social change.

Furthermore, he establishes the possibility of a group conversion in which many members of the society could change their religious affiliation like the case of Indigenous Africans who were adherents of traditional African Religion but turned en mass to either Christianity or Islam because of the bates offered at the initial point of entry. The study which limits its scope to Christian conversion identifies key elements like education and health that enhance wider acceptance of Christianity. He notes that the Church used education which yielded a good result of conversion to the point that the beneficiaries later became influential members of the society. Writing on the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society's approach, he points out how in 1900 the Methodist Primary School, Imesi-Ile enrolled twelve pupils to represent the twelve disciples of Jesus. He noted the families represented by the pupils are among the most enlightened in the town with attendant social impacts. Other schools named after the Churches that established them include St. David's Primary, Baptist College, Methodist High School, Our Lady of Apostle and many others. He notes how The Apostolic Teachers' College established in 1944 produced high profile personalities like Prof. Samson Olayide, former Vice Chancellor, University of Ibadan and Dr Daramola, former Provost, College of Education Ilesa, among others. Hence, the education provided liberated the people from the shackles of wickedness, ignorance, and superstitious beliefs.

In addition, the contribution of the missionaries in their conversion bid to open hospitals in different towns across Nigeria and Imesi-Ile in particular made the town to become the first place in the world to be freed from the scourge of measles between 1962 to 1965. Such educational and the health sector boosted African civility and the elimination of obnoxious and dehumanizing practices and instilled good moral and human values in the people; he noted.

Having x-rayed the continuous contributions of Christian missions in the 21st century such as the establishment of several universities and teaching hospitals of which Wesley University of Nigeria Ondo and Bowen University Teaching Hospital are among; he concludes that conversion engender social transformation since religion has the potential to transform other social institutions or inhibit social change.

One however expected him to identify what areas religion inhibits changes in the society. In other word, the paper appraised the benefits of Christian conversion but failed to tell us how Christian conversion on the other hands affected some social life and culture of the people. More importantly Africa Religion which was derogatorily reduced to idolatry and her culture classified as barbaric. This made Africans left their religion for the Whiteman religion. Also, as a result of conversion some also lost their jobs, social placement and family.

Otto Maduro³⁴, a neo-Marxist, while advocating the need for elaborate and complex understanding of religion and changing trends, opines that religion is beyond a mere passive effect of the social relations of production; it is a potent instrument for social dynamics, both changing and changed by social processes and not just a subordinate element but an important part in the initiation and sustenance of a particular social structure. Having seen religion beyond the functional, reproductive or conservative factor in society; he concludes that it is most of the time the outstanding and the only available means to bring about a social revolution. We agree with Maduro that religion most of the time remains a potent force in social revolution. However, his work failed to acknowledge the implication of social revolution on religion. Revolution induces social change which religion must to in order to remain vibrant in the society.

Roy and Bruce³⁵, using the instances of the movements called The Civil Rights Movement and the New Christian Right; show the example of religion in the quest for a better society. They note that this happened after the abolition of slavery, as the blacks were denied privileges available to the white in the political and legal circles in the Southern States of the United State of America. Noting the situation was severe to the point that blacks were not permitted share the same basic amenities like shops,

³⁴ M. Otto, 1977. New Marxist approaches to the Relative Autonomy of Religion, *Sociological Analysis*, vol. 38, no. 4, Retrieved from https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/rss/24_2-3_241.pdf. Accessed on 11/20/2018

³⁵ W. Roy and S. Bruce, 1987. *Sociological Theory, Religion and Collective Action*. Ireland: The Springer: Vol. 29, No. 1. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/33511965> in *Religion and Social Protest (The American Civil Right Movement)* Brighton: International House. Accessed on 11/15/2018

public transport and public toilets. Inter-racial marriage and education were prohibited by law just as the blacks were disenfranchised. Fuelled by the 1955 when Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white person while travelling on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, black people boycotted the bus service for over a year. This is one of the most significant events to precede the Civil Rights Movement. They suggest that religion served as an impetus for the movement. They argue that the use of Christian values common to both black and white people, the Civil Right Movement was able to push for equality between the white and their black counterparts. Hence, the churches did not only provide fertile ground for the blacks from racial discrimination, but afforded them the platform to preach their message of equality. They affirm that in this context, religious values serve as ideological bases for the protesters to draw support and motivation as well as a legitimate explanation for their actions.

Furthermore, they observe another side of religion which could be an instance of regressive social change. They note that the example of Christian Right Movement, a politically and morally conservative Protestant fundamentalist movement that pushes for the return of America back to God from godless, spineless leaders that have brought the nation floundering to the brink of death. This movement believes that creationism should be taught in schools instead of evolution and that children be taught abstinence before marriage instead of sex education. They are therefore considered as unconnected to the mainstream beliefs of freedom of choice.

Their description of the Christian Right Movement as regressive is subjective rather than objective. While we agree that social change could also be regressive, it is with objective underpinning to restore old system considered to be better for social progress than a new social system which hinders progress.

Ngozi Iheanacho³⁶ viewing the phenomenon of social transformation from the perspective of globalisation notes its wave is sweeping across nations and cultural boundaries, including African countries like Nigeria. Noting further that, globalisation is taking its toll on the people's religions and cultural practices which formerly were

³⁶ N.I. Ngozi, 2009. Globalization Challenges and Change Factors in the Religions of Africa: The Nigerian Experience. Bassey Andah Journal/vol.2. Retrieved from <https://www.academicexcellencesociety.com>. Accessed on 9/17/2019

firmly established before the colonial administration came and alter the cohesive political, social and religious societies.

As one of the main factors of society transformation to a global village; she identifies the characteristics of globalisation as, the integration of economies, technologies and information exchange, as well as free movement of people, which in addition to the internet, telephone, and television among others have changed events and phenomena under which religious traditions that flourish among the people are enmeshed. She points out that this made old practices and belief systems to disappear or perceived to be obsolete while new patterns are favoured and embraced. The influence of such cultural globalization brings about rapid and radical change and social transformation from different aspects of the social system. Hence, globalization has induced and transmitted many socio-cultural changes, the world over. With the trend of capitalism as the sole variable of globalization she further observes its effect on religion as responses have been channeled to the materialist spirit of globalization, and preaching concerning money as a means of attaining human transformation and salvation here on earth. This she notes has eroded the ideal simple lifestyle and fundamental religious teaching of Islam and Christianity for preaching oriented in the capitalist ideas of globalization. Hence, alignment of beliefs and practices to changing world order driving by capitalist indices.

Seeing into the future, she predicts globalisation may result in extinction of many Nigerian languages with its attendant effect on indigenous religious practices as the religion is wrapped up with the different languages. Furthermore, the trend of globalization phenomenon makes the conservativeness of religion practically impossible. Hence, the influxes of new cultural and religious patterns and practices given rise to a secular society.

In addition, she notes how the global village social system challenge traditional societies, religious practices, and institutions as people found themselves in different social settings and value system, which redefine their sect concept and image from those of their traditional societies and religion. More so, the global trend for women's right has equally led to new translations of the sacred literatures of various religions to emphasise gender neutrality of God in theistic religions just as the scientific advance in contraceptive and medical breakthrough in the reproductive system has led to the conception that sex is not necessarily for human procreation, but for intimacy,

pleasure, self-expression, and sect-understanding. This awareness, she opines has led many religious faithful agitate for their religious change of position against the background of global awareness on sexuality. In addition, she observes global advance in reproductive medicine has made birth control measure easily affordable and administered. It has also increased outright termination of pregnancy, global organ traffic, market and transplant, genetic engineering, semen bank and cloning. These she notes are inimical to the teachings of African Traditional Religion, Islam and Christianity; though, a present-day reality they have face.

We agree with her that globalisation poses threat to religion. However, she ignored or failed to show how religion has remained even stronger in her new department and has even utilized globalisation to extend her influence beyond place of origin. This would have given a support to her finding on many Western societies who are also caught in the wave of globalisation as originally religious buildings and institutions are now converted into warehouses while at the other end, of the city, foreign religions which were hitherto alien to the societies are flourishing. Despite the validity of her findings, religion has remained a potent force in the society. The change she observes such as gender issue should rather give more insight to the fact that religion is not static but dynamic and progressive.

Rimamsikwe and Hilary³⁷ while discussing religion in Nigeria from 1900-2013 establish the prominence and the rich heritage of African Traditional Religion which was handed down by the forebears of Nigeria to their children. Hence, Africa and particularly Nigerians knew about God long before the advent of Christianity and Islam who introduced values, institutions and worldviews that are at variance with those of the indigenous religion. In trying to further establish the prominence of African Traditional Religion they show how Islam was influenced by traditional beliefs and practices of magic and medicine just as Christianity too have borrowed heavily from some of the traditions of Africa. While Islam allows men to marry up to four wives, Christianity disallowed polygamy; however, independent African churches in their attempt to indigenize, imported into the church several cultural elements such as polygamy, healing, drumming, dancing, singing, clapping, seeing visions and prophetic utterance among others. The Cherubim and Seraphim were particularly noted

³⁷ H.K. Rimamsikwe and Hilary C.A., 2013. Religion in Nigeria from 1900 – 2013. Research on Humanity and Social sciences Vol. 18. Retrieved from www.jiste.org. Accessed on 9/20/2019

in the illustration while other breakaway Christian churches embrace different indigenous cultural traditions. They equally observe the way churches like Presbyterian, Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) and Methodist changed their rigid and stereotyped liturgy for lively, free and noisier styles of worship that are in agreement with the indigenous ones. Furthermore, Christian Churches have borrowed the traditional Second burial and coined it a memorial thanksgiving service just as many Christians took traditional titles and observe all the rituals involved.

They insist that most of the practitioners of prayer houses in Nigeria are essentially native doctors that have recently learnt the Pentecostal style of administering healing and who probably have incorporated Pentecostal prayers methods into the practice and that some so-called Pentecostal pastors are beginning to patronise native doctors in order to obtain power to grow large churches. This helps in no small measure in brightening the future of African Traditional Religion in Nigeria.

In the areas of contributions to the society, they note, religion exerted a great deal of influence positively and negatively on Nigeria. It has fuelled a lot of tensions and conflict. On the other hands it is a great force of peace and unity in Nigeria as it brings different ethnic groups together to make them coexist peacefully along religious lines. It has also foster national growth and development; helped in wiping out mass illiteracy and the evolvement of a literate culture. In addition, religion has contributed in the area of education, healthcare, and rural development.

On the aspect of religion influencing government, they attest to the fact that Christianity and Islam in particular have greatly influenced Nigerian government to point of establishing pilgrim Welfare Board and sponsoring pilgrimages. Furthermore, religion also is widening in scope and horizon as there are many Higher Islamic Schools and Colleges in Nigeria and over 400 seminaries and Bible Colleges and Christian universities. More Nigerians are also becoming lecturers in colleges and universities Religious departments across the nation. They see religion as occupying a central stage in the private and national life of Nigeria and therefore expected to bring crime rate to the barest minimum in addition to promoting good moral and the tenets of integrity, fairness and justice.

At the social level they point out how the society has influenced religion. Hence, in trying to respond to the yearnings of the people foreign religions attempt to incarnate religion in Nigeria. Christianity in particular, assumed its true African nature by

putting off all foreign regalia and clothing itself with African cultural garbs. Islam and more especially, Christianity borrowed heavily some cultural elements like local drums, vestments, singing in local languages, hand clapping and dancing with African rhythm and the likes which has helped in no small measure to recover many Nigerian cultural values.

It is noteworthy that the high rate of corruption in Nigeria today is attributed to leadership. Since a good number of these leaders received their education from religious institutions which are acclaimed to be center for morality and good citizenship, such leaders should have exhibited such qualities. More so that such leaders subscribe to one religion or the other is good reason to exhibit good leadership skill but the reverse is the case as they are rising cases corruption. Also, the claims that Christianity in Africa puts off all foreign regalia is not a reflection of many Churches who though adopted several African approaches still have a lot of foreign attires and liturgies. Though they acknowledge that religion has fuelled a lot of crisis and conflicts, they failed to give instances of such, not even one.

Okpe³⁸ while writing on religion as a catalyst for nation building points out that the three major religions in Nigeria have common values to make them serve the purpose of the nation. Some of these norms include the concept of reward and punishment, accountability before the Source Being, the idea of hereafter and judgment and the encouragement of good behaviour among fellows. In his findings, he points out the fact that the history of Nigeria has been characterized by series of religious crisis, disunity and suspicion. Hence, it is branding religion in Nigeria with crisis. However, he justifies the fact that religion in itself does not promote negative consequences to development; rather, it is some of the operators that skew it to their narcissistic end. Hence, religion is *sine qua non* to development since it teaches and promotes justice, peace, love and tolerance which are fundamental to achieving correct human behaviors, productivity and nation building. He further shows that the utilization of religious values by different religious adherents of their respective ethical norms can result into development of psychological and spiritual potentials of man in order to facilitate effective nation building in all ramifications.

³⁸N.O. Okpe, 2014. Religion as a Catalyst of Nation Building in Nigeria. Net Journal oof Social Science. Retrieved from www.netjournals.org/pdf/NJSS/2014/2/14/022/pdf. Accessed on 8/14/2019

While it is true that some operators of religion skew it to achieve their narcissistic end; it is a soft way of shying away from the reality since it will be, if not totally impossible to separate religion from its adherents who both promote peace and crisis in religion. Also, religion has been a catalyst to nation building; however, from available indices violence and crisis, it has being also an inhibitor of nation building.

In a study carried out on social transformation activities of the Chapel of the Resurrection, University of Ibadan; Familusi³⁹ examines the transformation ministry of the Chapel to ascertain its impacts and challenges. Debunking the view of some people that the Church is rather a liability he argues that far from that claim the Church has followed the example of Jesus spiritual and social care by operating beyond the pulpit to social welfare. He notes in particular the contributions of the Church in to the development of health, education, economic and political sectors. Using an in-depth interview supported with empirical evidences of social intervention activities, he sees the Chapel of the Resurrection, University of Ibadan fulfilling spiritual and social responsibilities that contribute to social transformation.

He identified Resurrection Youth Education Centre (RYEC) which is a response to the severe problem faced by many secondary school students in passing their final year examination and gaining admission for further studies. According to him, this problem has resulted in depression even to the point of suicide for some of these youths but the Chapel stepped out to salvage this problem by organising intensive coaching for secondary school students preparing for Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination or Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination. To further help these youths, the program is designed to go beyond academic activities by including spiritual activities as fellowship equally holds every Wednesday of the period of the programme. The good aspect of this centre which has already produced many graduates and others at undergraduate levels is that it caters for members, non-members of the Chapel as well as non-Christians.

In the same vein, he also identified a program tagged, Host Family Project which is a project aimed at guiding students and providing spiritual and moral support for them

³⁹ O.O. Familusi, 2020. The Church and Development: A Study of Social Transformation Activities of the Chapel of the Resurrection, University of Ibadan, Ibadan Nigeria. In Science Arena Publications Specialty Journal of Knowledge Management. Vol, 5: 1-13. Retrieved from www.sciencearena.com.

especially students whose relations are not in Ibadan. The Volunteer Parents to these students have the sacred duty to mentor and monitor them from wrong peer influence which has negative consequences if not controlled. The Chapel also has project for Indigent Students who are good and brilliant but financially handicapped by paying up school fees and other legitimate levies. This has curtailed the problem of dropout from school. There is also a scheme called Widows/Widowers/Orphan Welfare Scheme for people who are mostly prone to loneliness or financial crises. They are catered for in the areas of their needs such as financial empowerment, visitation and provision of food items. Closely related to the above is a program tagged, Support for the needy which targets those in extreme poverty occasioned by sickness, lost of jobs, ostracism as a result of conversion experience and even needy members of the public who solicit such supports. Other could be in response to natural disasters. Hence, the Committee charged with this responsibility helps in the payment of hospital bills, resettlement or rehabilitation, and assistance. This goes beyond the local to national and international levels as the Chapel was among other international bodies that responded to Tsunami of 26 December, 2004, which caused serious destruction of lives and property in Asia and part of East Africa. The Chapel was the only Christian Organisation from the South that responded to Jos crises of 2008 with relief materials for victims. Apart from the above, he also notes that there is a Sub-Committee charged with Social Issues both at the local, national and international fronts. This very Sub-Committee kicked against the third term agenda of former President Olusegun Obasanjo; the move that could have truncated the Nigerian nascent democracy if not nib at the bud.

Hence, in the midst of paucity of funds, administrative challenge and differences in ethnic, political and denomination; the Chapel has been able to contribute immensely to social development that averted several problems that go with school dropout, delinquencies, death and starvation.

The article which identifies different Sub-Committees and their transformation activities as well as their challenges in the Chapel fails to bring to the fore the policies that engender this social transformation activities. In this research work, however, policy of the Methodist Church Nigeria will be examined as medium of interaction with social change.

Ekebuisi⁴⁰ while calling for the reposition of the 21st century Nigerian Church avows that mission for transformation was born out of concern for Christians not only to be involved in sharing the gospel and seeking to respond to the salvation of the soul, but also to have responsibility in social matters affecting the society and healing of the decaying society. He notes that this concern was not properly integrated into major Church missionary ideology in Nigeria; especially African founded and led Churches. In addition, that the Mainline Churches who at the initial point of entry establish schools, Churches and medical centers, along with the promotion of lifestyles of hard work, honesty, enthusiasm for social and community welfare which revolutionised the people's mindsets are now paying lip services to such noble work.

Furthermore, even the missionaries with their revolutionary activities do not take proper cognizance of African religious and social background. He observes they were interested in temporal blessings, protection from witch craft and healing from diseases. However, the missionaries were more interested in emphasising strong doctrine of God, the danger of hell and the joy of heaven. Even at that, those doctrines were glued with secular and materialistic worldview. This produced a negative result as African Christian adopted a form of dual allegiances both to traditional and Christian beliefs. Which was the lacuna New Religious Movement championed by African leaders tried to fill through emphasis on spiritual gift such as prophecy, healing and holiness which marked a departure from institutional structures, community engagement, and administrative forms to inner renewal and well-being.

He therefore calls for a restoration of the old ideas of the mission of God for the whole world which is promoting transformation of the society through the effort of the Church both in personal and communal level with emphasis on freedom, justice, righteousness, honesty, hard work and tolerance to produce a moral society free from the shackles of division and stereotype. Warning that, the unprecedented desires of Nigerian Church leaders to promote self, personal wellbeing, comfort and aspiration at the expense of the community will definitely hinder the grand picture and mission of God to his world.

⁴⁰ C.C. Ekebuisi, 2018. Towards a Transformational Church: A Call to Reposition the 21st Century Nigerian Church. In Opeke R.O., Familusi O.O. and Berekiah O.O (eds) *The Heart of the Act: Church, Politics and Social Transformation*. A Festschrift in Honor of His Grace, Most Rev M.K. Stephen. Ibadan: University Press Publishing House. 67

However, his claim that many of those occupying strategic positions in the nation confess membership of one Christian denomination or the other and that if they are transformed and sent as transformational agents, the evil of the nation will be dealt with. If that is the case; then, the individual approach advocated by African Independent Churches' leaders is not out of place. He also failed to recognize government policies and actions that truncate Christian community mission like the taken over of Mission Schools by the government of Nigeria in the 70s which greatly hampered Churches' efforts. Moreover, his conclusion of the social responsibilities of African founded Churches is hasty and out of proportion. This is because, while the foreign missionary bodies have direct sponsors from Churches already established in Europe, the African Independent Churches at the initial stage of development and even largely today is self sponsored. It would not have been possible to incorporate full blown social responsibilities at the nascent stage of development. The paper, being a recent publication should have should have considered transformational initiatives of these Churches as they become more established.

Etim ⁴¹ in an attempt to present religion as a veritable platform for socialization and social control notes its conservative roles in perpetuating social and cultural values which makes her a potential agent of socialisation. He sees religion as a veritable pivot of socialization as parental faith or religion becomes the faith of children. He further points out that religion provides society with a positive framework to manage frustrations and miseries as many people, who could have commit suicide, changed their minds and developed fresh courage for living. Others who have been sentenced to many years of imprisonment are being helped through the process to a better future by religion while those who are hopeless and despondent find succour in religion.

Noting abundant statistics of how Christianity in particular has reduced crime rate in some societies through conversion which turned some of the converted criminals to pastors and dedicated Church workers. More so, Christianity, he observes was instrumental to the abolition of slave trade, human sacrifices, killing of twin babies and ostracisation of twin mothers in Africa. They were also in the forefront in the struggle

⁴¹ E.O. Etim, (n.d). Religion as Instrument of Socialization and Social Control. European Scientific Journal November edition vol. 8, No.26 ISSN: 1857 – 7881 (Print) e - ISSN 1857- 7431136. Retrieved from <https://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/viewFile/574/643>. Accessed on 8/8/2018

against racism, Semitism, apartheid and directly involved in exposing the 'inhumanities' inherent in communism.

He sees religion providing prophetic function through the establishment and promotion of time-honored standards upon which institutional norms can be evaluated in addition to being a “watchdog” and social umpire in transformation agenda. This prophetic function, he notes, is both vital for the survival of freedom and the individual in society. His discoveries about religion are essential to social change, hence, religion as instrumental to social change.

On the other hand, he sees religious functions in providing social cohesion and collective identity as it chastises those who violate religious norms, thereby, controlling the development of self and group identity. That is, in the extreme, groups who deviate from religious proscriptions may be tortured, executed, or excommunicated; in more subtle ways, religious deviants may be ridiculed, shunned or ostracized. Also, that in many societies, religion in its conservative roles has caused its adherents to accept the status quo and to view revolutionary struggle as a diabolic and futile venture.

The paper however fails to acknowledge religious freedom inherent in the postmodern day pluralistic society; in addition, the rise of denominations and religious sects within religious institution has weakened if not totally eliminated proscriptions, torture, excommunication and execution of the dissidents.

2.2 Wesleyan changing tradition

In volume 1 of *The Works of John Wesley*, it was pointed out that the socio-religious influence of John and Charles Wesley was premised on the religious experience they had after returning from Georgia colony in America as missionaries for the Church of England. What they saw left them rather disheartened.⁴² The work further observes that John in particular wrote on returning home from an unsuccessful mission dragged himself to a society assembly in Aldersgate-Street. It was here he experienced a turnaround in his religious life while they were reading the preface of Martin Luther to Paul's epistle to the Romans. It was around eight forty-five in the evening, while he was explaining the transformation which God performs in the hearts of men through

⁴² C.O. Albert (ed) 1988. *The Works of John Wesley*. Vol.1. New York: Abingdon Press.

faith in Christ, felt his heart strangely warmed and felt he did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation.⁴³

After this experience, John and his brother Charles began to move with more assurance and strong passion for the transformation of the soul, the Church and society. They organized renewal movement within the Church of England to focus on personal faith and holiness which gave them the name, Methodist.

Samuel Rogal⁴⁴ assessing John and Charles Wesley's contributions to the spread of popular religion points out that for nearly sixty years, John and Charles Wesley attempted to loosen the rigidity of England's state religion by laboring on behalf of primitive Christianity and practical church reform. In his opinion, the contributions of Wesleyan Methodism to the spread of popular religion in England during the 17th and 18th centuries was a premised on the inability of the Church of England to consider the value (to both church and state) of change and reform in the midst of starvation and severe suffering in the slum. The lack of commitment by the lower and higher clergies made the Church itself to be suffocating from the fume of its social apathy. The people in need of revelation and salvation prompted the Wesleyan for more than half of the eighteen century to labors in unsettling the dust that had been gathering upon the face of England's state religion by eagerly dispensing primitive Christianity and church reform.

Beyond evangelical and organisational set up, he notes some of John Wesley's social contributions to include establishment of a lending society to circumvent the English usury laws. Organising medical clinic at Bristol; distribution of books for intellectual, political and theological motives; and even functioning as the editor, the critic, the moral sensor of his followers' literary habits. In terms of workers, he notes that when the number of ordained ministers sympathetic to Methodism proved insufficient for societies' needs, he trained Lay Preachers-both men and women and even provided a school outside Bristol to educate their children. Samuel Rogal equally recognises his brother, Charles Wesley contribution as a poet laureate of Methodism and perhaps, the progenitor of English Protestant hymnody.

⁴³ C.O. Albert (ed) 1988. The Works of John Wesley. Vol.1. New York: Abingdon Press.

⁴⁴ J.R. Samuel 1983. The Contributions of John and Charles Wesley to the Spread of Popular Religion: Grace Theological Journal. Volume: GTJ04:2(Fall1983)

While it is obvious that the Wesleyan, as a religious movement were not just interested in the conversion of the people alone but their social wellbeing and the growth and development of the society at large; one cannot but expect the work to ignore the inconsistency of John Wesley's earlier policy not to form a new Church but to reform the existing Church of England. Though he died a priest of the Church of England, the Methodist movement which he championed had in his life time assumed an independent posture.

Earl and Mance,⁴⁵ opine that John Wesley always thought of himself as a priest of the Church of England and wanted to see his Church come to grips with the emerging needs and changing circumstances of the people of England. But, their inability to do so forced him to engage in practices which were contrary to its principles. Though unwilling to leave the Church, he preached in the fields within the parishes of other priests, and in unconsecrated places. He also gathered helpers and assistants, and finally, consented to the unavoidable necessity by ordaining preachers within the Wesleyan movement. They noted in as much as he did these and similar practices in order to offer Christ to the multitudes and to relate to the spiritual, social, and human needs of people caught in the miserable economic and social circumstances of his day, his action contradicts his earlier stand "not to form a new sect, but to reform the Church." Hence, had only limited renewal impact upon the Church of England where he remained an ordained clergyman until his death.

They point out; one of the impetuses that drove John Wesley to work tirelessly was the burden for vast changes and transformation both in the Church and society. Reflecting on what they considered as the first conference of the movement in 1744 a key statement of mission was "to reform the nation, more particularly the Church; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land. They avow that the six persons present took on the twin goal of reformation and holiness as essential for total transformation.

They further note that John Wesley himself though a trained intellectual, performed his ministry largely to the poor and that those who heard and responded to him were introduced to social and spiritual disciplines in the classes and societies with many among them becoming leaders in the new labor movement, in political activities, and

⁴⁵ D.C.B. Earl and Mance C.J. Jr. 1988. Wesleyan Transformations: A Study in World Methodism and World Issues. London: THE ITC PRESS.

in other ways to improve societal conditions. The result laid a solid foundation that gave Industrial Revolution unprecedented growth.

More also, they observe it was on record that John Wesley as an agent of change, had a strongest social view in support of the abolition of slavery. That he was at the front burner in publicly campaigning for the abolition of slavery which was regarded as a normal business in his days. In his opinion, no man living has a right to use another as a slave either by war, or contract to the point of such a slave becoming a property like sheep and oxen. He concluded that liberty is the right of every human creature and in that sense, all whips, all chains; all compulsion should be done away. His followers in Great Britain, the United States, and other places participated in the successful effort to eliminate slavery in many parts of the world.

The authors however see as inappropriate Wesley's cold and pessimistic reminiscence about the development of Methodism and its future in Europe and America. His fear was not about her existence, but that they may exist "only as dead sect" unless "they hold fast both to the doctrine, spirit and discipline with which they first set out". To them, he should not have made such statement when he had made several changes to the traditional practices of the Church of England which culminated in the formation of Methodism and the religious revival. That as a matter of necessity, it is likely that Methodism will be transformed as it stresses spiritual truth and practices in keeping with new revelations that are essential for coping with current and future human needs and issues. They observe, this may have been a self-fulfilling prophecy as many congregations and conferences today in these very places are characterised with slow increases or decreases in membership. His fear also held the preceding Methodism to fixed liturgy and practices until recent, when it became impracticable to remain so and expect the Church to grow.

They point out; the Church currently is rethinking her stand on many issues; particularly the British Methodist Church rethinking of a mission to dream of a better world and be committed to work for it now. The American United Methodism likewise has been searching its soul for a new sense of mission for the 21st century. Hence, the development of a theology of Mission Statement for the new age which includes among other things a bold step to set aside distortions and entanglements which has used the Christian message to bless and validate particular economic and social arrangements in the past. In furtherance to this new direction in Church and society by

these two bodies, the representatives of Methodists at the World Methodist Conference in Nairobi in 1986 equally observed that Methodists are known to be people of warm heart seeking holiness to perfection, but regrettably have fallen short of it. The African representative bemoaned the attitudes of the Church which seems to be a departure from John Wesley effort at social reformation and reaching people. Hence, Wesleyan spirituality for the transformation of society and the development of human person was advocated just as the representatives from Asia also voiced out on the needs to develop strong spiritual discipline that will increase Methodist social relevance and impacts.

European representatives were not left out as they observed that Methodist influence seems to be on the decline and there should be effort to start thinking on a global scale in keeping with Wesley's admonition about the world parish". While Latin America recommended the formulation and implementation of biblical and theological foundations and working methods to integrate the experiences of the early Methodist classes, covenant groups and Christian base communities with emphasis on evangelisation and witness and service to the communities.

The North Americans are of the view that in the middle of the struggles for economic and political justice all over the world, Methodist denomination is unfocused, fragmented and drifting. In addition, they opine that the Church do too much studying issues and too little doing something about them, noting that even ministers push for big Churches, big salaries, and prestige with no costly sacrifice on their part. They therefore called for a dramatic re-evaluation of all the Church doctrines and mission while seminaries should provide courses to evaluate social ethical issues and provide prophetic and realistic change strategies.

From The Pacific, there was a call to see the primacy and necessity of renewal in the Church to make it relevant in the last quarter of the 20th century. On a general note they remarked, "the Church is a backwater Church, lethargic and removed from the situation" and needs the prophetic element, especially in our political climate with informed guidance and ability to speak and act strongly on social issues."

From the differing opinions, it is obvious that the burning issue in the hearts of Methodists at the conference was dissatisfaction with the old trends which does not meet up with contemporary society. One could also see clearly the call for spirituality among ministers and lay as essential for social transformation or change. This is because the soul of religion is tie to spirituality. For the fact that the representatives

came from different backgrounds with different experiences, but similar cry shows the Church was in dire need for change.

There is no doubt, the life and work of John Wesley contributed greatly to the history of Christianity, especially in Europe and North America and by extension, Africa. The impact did not only reshape the spiritual aspect, but also the political landscape of England and the United States. In the findings of Elie,⁴⁶ there are arguments that support the central role of John Wesley and the Methodists in saving England from being plunged into a bloody revolution similar to that experienced in 18th century France. While this book covers both the work of John Wesley and the World Methodism; it lacks domestication and ethnographic study. This gap will be covered in this research.

The contribution of John Wesley and the Wesleyan movement to the society in the past is a pointer to Church today to be more effective than the past years in order to remain spiritually and socially relevant.

2.3 Perspectives on Methodist Church Nigeria

It is a notable fact that foreign Missionary Societies were greatly instrumental to gradual and drastic changes in Nigeria. Methodist Missionary Society as a pioneer mission in the year 1842 remains central to any meaningful discourse. Hence, this section gives attention to Methodist Church Nigeria.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye⁴⁷ while writing on Wesleyan Presence in Nigeria gave additional explanation on the advent of Methodism in Nigeria. According to her, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society established in 1813 was involved in the Niger expedition of 1841. With the return of Methodist in response to a clarion call the following year marked the beginning of effective Christian missionary enterprise in Nigeria. Having established Methodist Mission and Churches in different parts of Western Nigeria, she notes by 1942 which marked centenary of the mission in Nigeria, the Church could record growth of mission in different parts of Nigeria with Churches already strong and self-financing. The mission at this point could also show how the Church kept thriving to withstand some challenges such as the threat of Dahomey on Badagry and Abeokuta as well as the formidable protest by the leaders of the

⁴⁶ É. Halévy (ed), 1971. *The Birth of Methodism in England*. Chicago: Chicago University Press

⁴⁷ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. *The Wesleyan Presence in Nigeria*.

traditional religions of various communities and the delicate work of separating what was socio-cultural from what was religious. In addition, the centenary of the arrival of Freeman to 1946 witnessed rapid change with the development of African Ministers to assume positions of authority in the Church. One of such is the induction of Rev'd Dada as the first Nigeria Chairman.

In her findings she notes how the minutes of British Methodist Conference of 1941 declared in its report on Overseas Missions that despite the war (1939-1945), the gathering-in of men and women converted to Christianity had not been seriously hindered in any field. She mentions how the Church stood strong to wade through such social upheaval like the 1939-1945 war and shortage of fuel. Rather than posing negative effects, the war in particular gave the Church ample opportunity to provide chaplaincy services. While A.S. Solari served as African Force Chaplain in India, Watermoth who was involved in serving five army camps in Lagos. She notes that as a result of the enormity of the task of going round the five camps, he pulled the military personnel to attend the service of Methodist Church Olowogbowo. She points out that the aftermath of the centenary was a call to look into the future by increasing more and more the responsibility of leadership devoid of foreign missionaries. This same call yielded a positive result as the subsequent Synods have Africans and African Ministers more than the Europeans. While the book demonstrates that Methodism contributed immensely to leadership development in the Church and the society; it fails to bring to the fore policies that sustained the mission within the period covered in the study.

Familusi,⁴⁸ in the book, *Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992)* establishes the fact that Thomas Birch Freeman, the first Methodist Missionary to Nigeria could offer himself for such noble service because he first had a conversion experience. Hence, the contributions of Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and Primitive Missionary Society to Nigerian Christianity and civilization remain colossal. He notes how they opened schools, planted Churches and build hospitals and leper colonies to treat ailments and leprosy.

He saw the wave of change on the political situations across Africa, especially independence, as extending its influence on the Church in regard to foreign mission in Nigeria society. According to him, the Methodist Conference in Britain was conscious of the profound change taking place in political, social and economic structure of the

⁴⁸ M.M. Familusi, 1992. *Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992)*. Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers.

nations and their influence on moral and religious outlook of mankind, hence, appointed a commission to consider the effect of these changes upon the missionary work of the Church, and in particular the presentation of the missionary obligation in its new setting. This concern of the British Methodist Conference came to reality when the Wesleyan Methodist Church of the Western Nigeria formally initiated the move for autonomy and was finally obtained after the merging with the Eastern Nigeria Methodism. The two together formed Methodist Church Nigeria.

Though Methodism in Nigeria has obtained autonomy, he observes that the autonomy did not bring the expected growth and Church influence in Nigeria; hence, it became a burden to leaders of the Church; particularly, Rev Bolaji Idowu, when he was elected President of the Church. As a result of this dissatisfaction, he establishes that Idowu became the architect of the 1976 Constitution which is reputed for a departure from Presidential system of Church government to Episcopacy. This necessitated the reordering of ministry, restructuring of the Church and ministerial hierarchies and building of a Tailoring Factory for ministers' regalia and other vestments. He outlines Idowu's opinion for carrying out the overhaul of the Church which was to make her reflect as well as emphasise her autonomy in addition to being able to minister effectively to the needs of the members in their native context and to expand the Church's presence in major cities through building of big Cathedrals. He notes further how this change led to the eruption of crisis that polarized the Church to Patriarchal and Presidential sides until reconciliation was achieved with a constitution that harmonised and addressed delicate matters such as the change of the title, Patriarch to Prelate.

The author was able to present a record of how Methodist Church Nigeria passed through different phases of development in response to social change. In his submission, Nigeria has developed beyond the imagination of missionaries who worked in her up to the time of independence. Therefore it would have been out of place for Methodist to remain unchanged or static.

The limitation of this book lies in the fact that many developments had happened in Methodist Church Nigeria since 1992. Hence, in this present work, such developments shall be considered.

In another instance, Oduyoye⁴⁹ observes that Methodist did not only respond to social change but has being a front burner in formulating policies that engenders change. She notes from the onset the missionaries' approaches which help in this regard. The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in their bid to convert the people insisted that any missionary who must work among the people must have proficiency in the local language of the people since the mother tongue was considered the best in effective preaching of the gospel to the hearers. This policy in particular contributed to several conversions at Ake-Abeokuta when the scripture was read in vernacular.

Aside the insistence on the missionaries to learn and use the local language, another approach she observes was developing African collaboration-in-mission. This approach was to limit the missionaries' job to supervision, direction and theological education of Native Agents, trained and returned back to the people since it was believed, the converted Africans must convert Africa. Furthermore, to develop Africans to cope with the demands of the growing society, the Native Agents and the local Christians were made to participate in the educational enterprise of the Circuit and also to send up to three representatives to sit on the "Mixed Committee" which managed District High Schools and other educational affairs. In fact, she further notes that there was already an emphasis on the side of the Mission Secretary the need to develop local leadership to do without the missionaries' supervisory role which they magnify as key to Native Agents efficiency.

One can say that though the overall intent of the missionaries was to win Africa for Christ, yet the approaches laid down greatly developed and prepared Africans and Nigerian for leadership both in the Church and the society at large. Hence, she also points out the role of the Church in developing human resources through the establishment of Boy High School Lagos, Methodist Girls' High School Lagos and in co-operation with CMS, Igbobi College Lagos. These institutions served a dual purpose-to produce an enlightened laity as well as provide academic and technical skill. Noting that by 1879, some of its graduates were already merchants and government officials. Writing more, she records that the Methodist Girls' High School, beside formal education, gave training in plain sewing, housekeeping and music; thereby building their entrepreneurial skills. Other efforts in the direction of educating

⁴⁹ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. Leadership Development in Methodist Church Nigeria 1842-1962. Ibadan: Sefer.

the girls were made. At Sagamu, where an institution was founded in 1927 to teach girls laundry, needle work, personal hygiene, cookery, care of the home and mothercraft.

Furthermore, she points out the felt need for higher training for Native Ministers, who were either trained in Boys High School Lagos along with other students or sent abroad. The felt need led to establishing of Wesley College in Ibadan for training Native Ministers, teachers and pupils teachers in the schools, exhorters, evangelists and Catechists who had direct contact with the unbelievers, enquirers and new converts. Also, Sunday school teachers, Local Lay Preachers, Class Leaders, Society Stewards and a host of others were to be trained there.

She also identified some women like Rebecca Lioyd, and the wife of Champness who gave strength to the founding of the cadre of women missionaries. She notes, while Mrs Champness, an unnamed woman stood beside the missionary work of her husband till death; Rebecca Lioyd on the other hand stood resolutely before the house of Matthew Grimmer, the beleaguered Wesleyan Missionary in Abeokuta and dared marauders to touch one timber of the house. Winifred Shovelton, the first Wesleyan Deaconess, and indeed woman missionary of the society to a station up country, impacted the women ministry in Western Nigeria too. The role played by these women culminated in new order of women's ministry, opening the way for women to offer themselves as candidates for the itinerant ministry and so, a contribution to women emancipation as the women and ministers' wife in particular arranged and supervised a scheme of daily Bible reading for women. They also organised rallies, processions, retreats and open-air preaching which brought social transformation.

The work of Oduyoye which is limited to 1962 leaves a large vacuum that needs to be filled. A lot of developments have since been introduced into the Church which needs scholarship investigation. This research work therefore concentrates on such areas.

Jide Fatokun⁵⁰ while agreeing to historical fact, supports the view that Badagry is the cradle of Christianity in Nigeria and Methodist the pioneer mission. He made it clear that the coming of Christianity to Nigeria was in response to the strong appeal made by the 6th Wheno Aholu Akran, Wrawuru, the reigning king of Badagry. This appeal was made through James Ferguson, a freed slave who found his way back home. On

⁵⁰ J. Fatokun, 2009. *Methodist Witness in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Positive Press

receiving the letter, the Methodist minister in Freetown, Thomas Birch Freeman accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. William De-Graft Johnson were sent to commence mission in Nigeria. They arrived and first preached the gospel under Agia tree. On the other hand he identifies another brand of Methodism, the Primitive Methodists who came from Fernando Po, now Equatorial Guinea to introduce Methodism in the East, fifty one years after Birch Freeman's foundation in Badagry. Both the Primitive and the Wesleyan differently evangelized and planted Churches in the North before a later amalgamation to form Methodist Church Nigeria. By 1962, Methodist Church Nigeria became autonomous from the British Methodist Church. His work which is centers on Methodism witnessing in Nigeria, brings to the fore the Church renewed interest and adoption of new methods of effective witnessing in a postmodern Nigeria.

In the first instance he observes that the Church would have lost substantial evidence of being the first mission in Nigeria based on her response to several changes that took place when other parts of Nigeria were opened up at the advent of British Colonial Administration, coupled with some problems faced by the Wesleyan Mission in Badagry made the interest of the Church shifted to Lagos to the neglect of the cradle of Christianity. The attendant effect was that the work of Thormas Birch Freeman almost if not totally went into oblivion until the ingenuity and dedication of Rev Mellor, assisted later by Rev E.A. Fowode. In his visit to Badagry in 1924, he discovered the land which Freeman acquired had been turned into a Muslim Cemetery and not a trace of Freeman's work was found, not a member, not a Church was found. This is a pointer to the fact that the Church's earlier approach to social change was not strategic.

He notes several issues came up within Methodism in Nigeria, particularly after autonomy. The major one being Episcopacy which sparked off crisis for over twelve years that left the Church badly affected. However, the crisis was resolved under Prelate Sunday Mbang; giving rise to constitutional developments that have since put the Church on a steady growth and smooth transition from one Prelate to another and has yielded fruit in evangelization, education, health, human development, improved the ministry of women and created employment.

Fatokun identifies repositioning as a new method of responding to social change. Unlike previous methods, this agenda is ably led by The Strategic Planning Team. The work states that before the wake of the 2006 Constitution, the Church was gripped with the reality that, though Methodist Church Nigeria is the first to arrived Nigeria,

she has not experienced serious growth especially since autonomy. That comparing her with other established Churches, Methodist Church Nigeria was adjudged to be lagging behind. The efforts to bring the Church to prominence led the church to design a repositioning, with the aim to identify problems bedeviling her growth and efficiency and to design what should henceforth be the mission and vision of the Church.

He further points out that the repositioning document was able to present what were the challenges of the Church from Conference to Local Church levels, and the limitations of the different groups of people, both the ministers and the lay. Among other issues, it discovered at the Church level that there was misplacement of priority, too much bureaucracy, slow decision-making culture and no target orientation. While the ministers were discovered to have lost self confidence, lazy and poor in administrative and leadership qualities as a result of ineffective or absence monitoring from higher authority; the lay on the other hand were lukewarm with poor spiritual commitment to the Church. They also lacked the will power to volunteer for God's work in addition to conservatism and general apathy to innovative ideas.

He notes that the Church did not stop in the identification of these problems, rather went ahead to design strategies, vision and mission statement which were considered measures to overcome them. In this regard, evangelism henceforth is to become the topmost agenda of the Church at all levels and each member is expected to bring at least a new member per quarter. The whole idea is to culminate in increasing the population of the Church to twenty million by ten years. To further strengthens this agenda, the Conference created a directorate of evangelism with a Bishop heading the office while the youths and other professionals will be encouraged to join the ministry along with appropriate lay ministry to meet the present and future needs of the Church and the society. Also, curriculum of theological institutions were to be reviewed upward to degree awarding institutes to turned out not less than a thousand ministers per annum which, apart from growing the Church will bring other social benefits like employment to the teeming population of Nigeria.

To achieve this giant stride, he noted additional key points of the repositioning which emphasise the fact that for Methodist Church Nigeria to move forward there is need to first change the orientation of every members, take a hard look at all the negative cultural practices of the Church that tend to drag down progress and make amend. Hence, the Church management must be dynamic and responsive to the changing

needs of individual members and the society and be target oriented. Also, all Methodists, as change agents must start propagating the fact that the wind of change is already blowing within Methodist Church Nigeria and that the Church has changed for better. They also must start educating family members about the change so that those who left the Church can return. In addition, the members must start changing their own bad cultural practices for the better and volunteer to serve in any capacity necessary to bring about the desired change.

Fatokun, though presents a detailed materials on the Church repositioning which are central to the issue of social change; however, he did not subject the materials to critical appraisal to ascertain the success or the failure of the repositioning. In this current research work, such materials will be given adequate appraisal.

Idialu⁵¹, in his research contextualisation of the gospel as a platform for membership retention in Methodist Church Nigeria notes that the Church like other denominations is trying to discover new ways of communicating the gospel for an emerging postmodern culture and life realities of her members. In his view, the European and America missionaries to Africa in the 18th century did not have proper integration of their message within the cultural, social and other matrixes of their respondent; as a result their missions produce average success. He calls on Churches which are experiencing irrelevancy to its members and the societies in which they are situated to look inward to discover the way forward.

Buttressing on the view of Thom Rainer Crown that, “falling into the familiar patterns and routines that have worked in the past is a trademark of stagnant Churches”; sees contextualisation of the gospel as the answer. He believes that a relevant gospel must speak to specific needs in the lives of people, provide a new and renewed reason for both the individual and the society. Hence, contextualisation which is a capacity to respond meaningfully to the message of the gospel within the framework of one’s existential reality is a necessity for the transformation of both the individual and the society. Aligning with the assertion of George Barna that “if the rapidly changing world is to hear and understand the unchanging truth of the gospel, then, it must be brought to them by a leader that understands the context of today’s world”; he also substantiates that the mode of worship changes from the way it was in the Old

⁵¹ R. Idialu, 2015. Contextualization of the Gospel as a Platform for Membership Retention in Methodist Church Nigeria. A PhD Thesis submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan.

Testament down to the New Testament through the reformation period up till now. Hence, the need for this change becomes necessary due to the changing context of the people. So, worship has to be adapted to suit their prevailing contexts.

Methodist Church Nigeria like other denominations is trapped in methods considered potent in the past but are no more relevant today. Hence, a paradigm shift in mission for the present and the nearest future remain keys to curbing the tide of the current exodus cum dwindling of members. He points out the experiences of spiritual and psychological dissatisfaction of members as responsible for the lethargic attitude to Church activities in the Church. Calling on the Church to reconsider the urgent need to address the issue of worship style, content and method of communication of the gospel, Church organisation, which includes administration and policies that do not correlate with the expectation of the members, as well as the use of style and strategy which are already outdated to a trending modern society. These he notes could be part of reason members exeunt the Church.

The research embarked upon to see how contextualisation could panacea the problem of membership drops currently bedeviling the Church entrenches grounds from which contextualization could be carried out in Church growth process such as liturgy, theology, translation of hymns or songs, and worship among others. Exploring the history of contextualization within his scope of study, he concentrates on the theology of Bolaji Idowu, who spearheaded the process of contextualizing the gospel in the Church and whose contributions outshined those of his predecessors. According to him, Idowu longed to see a Church where worship will actually be Nigerian, and not an imposed form of worship which has no meaning to the people. Wondering why the Nigerian Christian must be taught European etiquette, dress code and fashion, mode of worship and many more.

Reviewing one of Idowu's book, *Towards an Indigenous Church*, Idialu notes his observation shows that the negative spiritual life of the Church of his day which was due to the incompatibility of the spiritual and worship life of the missionaries and that of Nigerians from about the 19th century up to about the middle of the 20th century, and so advocated that the Church in the postmodern Nigeria be allowed to experience God in the best way comfortable and meaningful to her. According to Idialu, the book opens the eyes of the people to see the need for them to experience the revelation of God in the best way they can understand it. Furthermore, he is of the opinion that a

liturgy that gives no room for spiritual expression of Nigerians could lead to a faulty worship style. This he notes is present in the Church as he gathered from his field work.

In addition, he points out some achievements of Idowu to include raising the intellectual level of the ministers and the lay officers in order to be able to perform their lay responsibilities in the Church. He equally made the liturgy relevant to the lives and context of Methodists through indigenous songs rich in African idioms, forms, philosophy and theology. He equally introduced imagery and symbolism in the liturgy of the Church such as water, kola nut, bitter kola and others during naming ceremony. Also such new teachings as tithing, baptism by immersion, anointing oil and so on were among the new changes that were introduced to the Church.

He found out that Idowu was the one who introduced the Deaconess Order, Tent Making Ministry, Youth Work, and Corporate Episcopacy which was adopted to lift the status of the Church in the nation. Though Episcopacy generated a heavy crisis, according to Idialu, despite the pain the Church experienced as a result of the crisis, there is largely no regret for the adoption of Episcopacy as the pioneer Archdioceses of Lagos, Ilesa, Enugu and Calabar have given birth to many Archdioceses today. In his finding, as at 2014, the Church had 16 Archdioceses and 56 Dioceses.

In his findings, many who come to the Church to seek God's intervention in life realities but could not find leave for other Churches. He therefore suggests that ministers and lay officers must endeavor to identify the needs of the members of the Church, especially, the young members. He also found out the predictability and dullness of worship service as another. Hence, her services have to be a bit more dynamic to meet the current trend and yearnings of her members. The songs, hymns, sermons, prayers and other parts of the service have to be contemporary so as to be relevant for today's Church. Lastly, he discovers there seems to be indifference to new members. That is, the Church is not receptive to new members and visitors, especially in areas where they are not part of the tribe. It is therefore suggested that the Church becomes more receptive to new members and visitors to give them sense of belonging.

Though the work is very relevant, it fails to see the exodus of members as well as the dissatisfaction of current members beyond contextualization. In other words, he saw contextualisation as key to membership retention. However, in a globalised society with features of dynamic change, contextualisation may not produce a concrete result

for membership retention. This is because social change has brought along with it, assimilation of values and cultures of other societies to the point that a given society or social institution defines herself on a global scale. Hence, the need to explore policies developed by the Church to cope with the diverse changes within the global society

Ekebuisi⁵² While attesting to the historical facts about the advent of Methodism in Nigeria, agrees with other scholars that two brands of Methodism, Wesleyan and Primitive evangelised Nigeria but were later unified to become Methodist Church Nigeria. He also attested to the fact that Methodist Church was not growing as expected; hence, the need for reformation and renewal of the Church. Having identifies Idowu as a frontline defender of the theology that has full African thinking and meditation; he explored some of his scholarly works such as, 'Towards Indigenous Church'. This book he noted brought to the consciousness of Nigeria the need to indigenise the Church from its European colorations to avoid the repetition of the North African Church which though produced great Church fathers like Tertulian, St. Augustine of Hippo, Cyril and Athanasius; yet, today is no longer in existence just because it remained foreign to the environment which she lived. Hence to achieve Christianity goal, it must adjust to African worldview and have the original image of the fact that she is the Church of God in Nigeria and should afford Nigeria that means of worshipping the Almighty creator in such manner that align with the spiritual aspiration and intelligent idioms of the people. The lack of this concern in the mission Church led to the emergence of different movements that finally broke out to form independent Churches.

Other publications that he identified to have had a great influence on Idowu's administrative reforms are 'The Selfhood of the Church in Africa', The Predicaments of the Church in Africa and his introduction to Kwesi Dickson's book, 'Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs'. He noted that Idowu advocated the autonomy and self determination of the Church in order to develop theology and liturgy based on the religious backgrounds of the Africans.

Ekebuisi used these scholarly books to establish the foundation of Idowu's reforms and renewal. Among them are the rebranding of the image of the Church, overhaul of the liturgy, and designing of methods that increased the ministerial strength of the Church.

⁵² C.C. Ekebuisi, 2010. Renewal Movements within Methodist Church Nigeria. Aba: Soul Winners Publications

Also, his recommendation to Conference to adopt a crash programme for training ministers for one year in the seminary and five years' probation as deacon before priesthood ordination. In addition, Tent Making Ministry within ordained ministry was also recommended and implemented. Others include the restructuring of the existing structure of the Church which was previously made up of Society, Circuits, Districts and Conference which Idowu considered inappropriate. Hence, Local Church replaced Society; Circuit however remains while Diocese replaced District and a creation of new structure of Archdiocese and finally Conference. Consequently, he noted, the ministry was also reordered to give offices and officers more grace and dignity suitable for African context where the congregation sees the minister as a priest. Hence, he suggested the adoption of the designations of Patriarch, Archbishops, Diocesan Bishops, Presbyters, Priests and Deacons. These reforms he noted were not welcomed by some groups of the Church, hence, a period of crisis and schism from 1967-1990 before the final settlement of the differences and reunification of the Church.

Beyond Idowu's reformation and renewal, he identified other charismatic renewal movements like Methodist Evangelical Movement which had its root in Scripture Union. He sees this movement as a replica of charismatic and Pentecostal movements with emphases on evangelism, healing, miracles, deliverance and signs and wonders which were responses to myriad issues affecting the society in which the Church is to be a vanguard. As a result of their charismatic nature, Methodist Evangelical Movement became a force to be reckoned with in the Church.

Also, he identifies 'repositioning' as another move by the Church to respond to the challenges of the 21st century. According to him, the repositioning was designed to help the Church ascertain where she was, where she is now, where it hopes to be and how to get there. He noted the committee set up came up with a glaring picture of the Church to be living below expectation. Hence, plans and mercenaries were put in place to reposition the Church to a vision and mission of spiritual and social relevance as well as institutional expansion of the Church to hit a population of twenty million in ten years. To give the repositioning a constitutional backing, a new constitution was drafted and passed by the Conference known as 2006 Constitution. He concluded that the orientation of the Church is changing in favor of the charismatic. Though the work is more centered on presentation of renewal movements within Methodist Church

Nigeria, it fails to tell us the result of these renewal movements. Also, the work failed to present any report of the success or failure of repositioning.

In a related work, Okocha⁵³ x-rays Methodist Church Nigeria with the guiding principles and practices of the Wesleyans. He describes Methodism as a movement which God raised by empowering John Wesley to move towards the reviving of the faith of the Church through spreading scriptural holiness in the entire world. He noted that John Wesley deviated from the traditions of the Church of England to seeming irregular practices. Thereby becoming the first preachers since the days of the Franciscan Friars who ever reached the working classes and the rejected slums. Furthermore, he observes the Wesleyan of the 18th century were instrumental to the abolition of slavery which helped in the quick spreading of the gospel, particularly Methodism in Nigeria.

He however frowns at the deviation from such a noble course; he sees the Church currently reaching out mainly to the rich and wealthy while the working classes and other lower classes of the society are ignored. The focus of the Church, he advocated, should rather be to reach out to hostile mobs till they are transformed through the gospel. While assessing the experience of Methodism in Nigeria, he observes the Church has passed through some threatening periods. One of such was the planned but collapsed Church union which in his explanation, Methodist Church Nigeria in addition to other denominations contributed to its failure. Another threatening experience of the Church was the political climate, especially after the 1964 election in Nigeria which brought about political instability that badly affected the relationship of the Church before, during and after the election. Also, issues that loom its ugly head after the election of Professor Ebenezer Bolaji Idowu as the President of Methodist Church Nigeria threatened the Church as the elaborate plan to change what was expected to be service of induction to consecration which was strange to Methodist Church Nigeria coupled with the document spelling out the new direction of Methodist Church Nigeria on liturgy, rituals, ordering of the ministry, offices and the structural composition as well as the stand regarding traditional chieftaincy with the emphasis that the time had come for a change suitable to the ecclesiastical stature and the national image of the Church. He observes how these were not welcomed by some individual personalities and groups who boycotted the 1975 Conference, hence, a

⁵³J.O.I. Okocha, 2013. *Yet Alive Methodism*. Aba: Onyii Graphic Press

faction that rejected the 1976 Constitution with attendant result of several litigations and crisis that lasted fourteen years before reconciliation in a service of re-unification in 1990. Though, the title, Patriarch was changed to Prelate while Episcopacy was retained.

He praises the level of progress made by Methodism in Nigeria; besides being the first Church, she was also the first to start a school with the establishment of a Nursery of the Infant Church in 1842 which has grown to primary, secondary and tertiary institution. He equally notes how both the Wesleyan and Primitive Missionary Societies have been able to reach different places for Church planting and that the greatest thing that has happened to Methodist Church Nigeria is the 1976 Constitution which gave her Episcopacy and reordered the ministry. Hence the introduction of hierarchies such as Patriarch, Archbishops, Bishops, Presbyters, Priests, Deacons/Deaconesses, Sub Pastors and Evangelists to replaced President, Chairman, General Superintendent, Superintendent of Circuit, Circuit Ministers, Probationers, Catechists and Church Agents. To him, Episcopacy gave confidence and dignity to ministers and removed inferiority complex of ministers before other denominations during ecumenical gathering.

He is of the opinion that what the Church achieved in 1976 is alterable; despite the fact that Episcopacy has come to stay it can be refined to serve the present age of Nigerian Methodist. He recommends a commission of study on the application of Episcopal power both objectively and subjectively. In addition, registering a tone that support Episcopal pattern which limits the duration of period of service in this status to term either of five or ten years at most.

His conclusion that the 2006 Constitution which seeks to reposition the Churchmanship process and practice in order to inspire a rethinking in the vision and mission of the Church is a fact that Methodism yet alive, is ambiguous. It is notable that many a times; there is a wider gap between what is written and what is practiced. Hence, neither the 2006 Constitution nor the Reposition paper is a determining factor of the livingness of the Church but their recorded social impact. The work which fails to bring to the fore the social impacts of the constitution and the repositioning leaves a gap which this research intends to fill.

Ayo Ladigbolu⁵⁴ while discussing on Methodist Church in Identity Crisis within the Context of politics, Security, and Injustice in Contemporary Nigeria pointed out that evangelism coupled with social action geared towards a practical conversion of the total person who in turn becomes an agent of transformation in the society was topmost on John Wesley's agenda. The effect was a massive growth of the Church until the beginning of the twentieth century when such agenda ceased to be normative. Having established that evangelism with emphasis on scriptural holiness was the hallmarks of the Wesleyan transformation, he further establishes that it was predicated on active involvement in politics which remains a noble calling that seeks the best and highest interest of the society. According to him, Wesley's social ethics indicated a complete transformation of the individual, the English nations, other nations and the human society at large.

He observes however that the emphasis has depreciated as implementations of policies were observed more in breach than in reality. He therefore asks Christian leaders, as change agent to retrace the path of the Wesleyan vibrancy and fervor of spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land. This he avowed will re-ignite the fire of renewal that will make the Church a central reference point in social transformation along with other denominations who are committed to changing anomalies in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria along with advocacy for the right of the minority and the marginalised as well as insecurity.

However, it is contradictory that, though he rightly acknowledges many Methodist Ministers with character and sound doctrinal standing...who will not compromise their integrity. Yet he allows those he called unstable, uncertain and misleading to push him to accepting the overgeneralization of Richard B. Wilke that "now we are tired, listless, fuelled by the nostalgia of formal days...like a tired old man who remembers but who can no longer perform". Though, it may not be as colossal as the charismatic graces of John Wesley, the few uncompromising are still advancing Wesleyan transformational agenda in today's Nigerian society. Also, he failed to identify if any a single policy observed in breach than in reality.

⁵⁴ L.S.A. Ladigbolu, 2018. Methodist Church in Identity Crisis within the Context of politics, Security, and Injustice in Contemporary Nigeria. In Opeke R.O., Familusi O.O. and Berekiah O.O (eds) The Heart of the Act: Church, Politics and Social Transformation. A Festschrift in Honor of His Grace, Most Rev M.K. Stephen. Ibadan: University Press Publishing House. 39

Odunuga⁵⁵ while trying to establish the transactional versus transformational relationship between ministers and lay officers in Methodist Church Nigeria observes that there is a wide gap between the minister and the congregation which have devastating effect on Church. He further discovers that right from inception, there has been unhealthy tension between the shepherd and the sheep. The ministers abuse power while the lay also are vulnerable to the same abuse of power in their quest to rule their leaders. According to him, this has impeded Church growth. What pervaded the Church is the little lifespan and less efficient transactional relationship rather than transformational relationship which has prospect of growth. To bring such growth and expansion to Methodist Church Nigeria, he therefore offered ingredients essential for the Church to experience transformational relationship. They are availability, care and love. Others are honesty, trust, loyalty, empathy and transparency.

While submitting to the view of Bola Akin John (2015) that, “the shepherd cannot reproduce sheep, but the sheep can be nurtured to reproduce and multiply themselves”; he concluded that the lay are the greatest potential for growth in the Church today since the minister is enabled through lay officers to multiply himself and expand his ministry. Though, deducing some elements of truth in his claim, it will be a disservice to the valuable position of ministers to place the growth of the Church on the lay people. The single input of a leader, which the minister is could influence a good number of people to the Church. Take for instance; the transformation witnessed within the Patriarchal era was largely attributed to the work of Patriarch Bolaji Idowu. Also, the claim that transaction relationship pervades the Church may not be fully accepted. Within Methodist Church Nigeria all categories of Lay Officers of the Church are to assist and advise the minister in the effective discharge of his ministerial duties. The fact that such stewards and other leaders of the Church are to advise and assist the minister show there is both transactional and transformational relationship between the minister and the lay officers of the Church.

Kolawole⁵⁶ unarguably asserts that like evangelism and liturgy, the constitution of the Church which is the heart of policy formulation has interesting development with

⁵⁵ J. Odunuga, 2018. Transactional Versus Transformational Relationship between Ministers and Lay Officers in Methodist Church Nigeria. In Opeke R.O., Familusi O.O. and Berekiah O.O (eds) *The Heart of the Act: Church, Politics and Social Transformation*. A Festschrift in Honor of His Grace, Most Rev M.K. Stephen. Ibadan: University Press Publishing House. 269

⁵⁶ D. Kolawole, 2015. *The Lay President and the Methodist Church Nigerian Constitution*. In Allwell A.O. et al. *The Lay Presidency and Methodist Church Nigeria*. Nigeria: Methodist Church Nigeria. 25

regard to the laity and in particular, the Lay President. He notes that the creation of the office of the Lay President in the 1962 Constitution and the later introduction of Episcopacy in 1976 necessitated the Lay President's office at the Diocesan, Archdiocesan and Conference level. This development according to him made Methodist Episcopacy corporate and not monarchical. The reason for this is that, the Church strongly believes in accountability enshrined in the principle of connexional system which make her at each level answerable to the next, and finally, all answerable to the Conference. This equally makes the diocesan Bishop subject to itinerant ministry in addition to the absence of power to prefer, station or even discipline independently. Hence, the power of the Church at all levels is not vested on any individual but the conference which is the highest authority of the Church and its decisions are binding on everyone including the Prelate. At every level of the Church administration, the minister who has spiritual and administrative oversight also has a lay counterpart to assist him or her in carrying out responsibilities

While acknowledging that the Church has policies on various issues, he expresses his worries that these policies tended to be forgotten in the general run of things. The issue raised here is apposite to our work. It exposes the fact that the Church has not been ignorant or negligent to social change around her; though, on many occasions she has being at the receiving end of social change. His view here is a revelation to the fact that policies could have been designed on various issues but suffered implementations and so yielded result below expectation. His observation however lacks substantive facts validate his claim. This research work therefore beams its searching light to such lacuna.

Ameh⁵⁷ agrees with many scholars that Methodist, through the sacrifices of European missionaries and African helpers is the oldest Church in Nigeria. He as well avowed to the contribution of education to advancement of mission but regretted government takeover of mission schools. He equally noted that the Church is facing some challenges today ranging from insecurity to exodus of youths to the New Generation Churches. He therefore urged the clergy and the laity to reappraise strategies and reorganise their homes to inspire faith and trust on their children to grow up as Methodists. He cautioned against unguarded complaints and too quick to blame

⁵⁷ A. Ameh, 2015. Methodist Church Nigeria: The Lay President and Growing church. In Allwell A.O. et al. The Lay Presidency and Methodist Church Nigeria. Nigeria: Methodist Church Nigeria. 148

syndrome; rather, there should be commitment to the goal of the Church. While supporting the need to maintain the true word of God and Church traditions, he called the Episcopate and Lay Presidents to adopt methods that conform to today's reality. In addition, more efforts should be geared towards the establishment of more primary and secondary schools where Methodists' Children could be given quality education along with good Christian upbringing for social transformation.

In actual sense, Methodist Church has established and grown many schools including tertiary institutions. What is needed most is the design of policies and programs that enhance productivity and social relevance. He called on the clergy to reappraise strategies but failed to tell us which strategy or strategies needed to be reappraised.

Adetona⁵⁸ acknowledge the uniqueness of Methodist Church Nigeria involvement in human and national development as a departure from the traditional preaching of life more abundant in heaven which was already losing acceptance in the minds of many. He observes frontline role of the Church in national development while still preaching the gospel. Hence, he summarised the mission of the Church as evangelism and social action which are in line with the focuses of Millennium Development Goals (MDG). He noted educational advancement through the establishment of primary, secondary and tertiary institutions which as centers for teaching morality, human resources and capacity development. Also, in economic development, the Church, he observes has contributed to skill acquisition, established a micro finance bank and built one of the largest Tailoring Factory in Nigeria and have been a pacesetter in the health sector, as she has contributed in building hospitals, leprosaria, health and restoration centers across the nation for the use of the general public. He equally showcased the role of the Church in political development through the promotion of democracy and good governance and defense of human rights in addition to the promotion of interreligious dialogues. In particular, the Church has made effort towards poverty eradication as the relief fund offering observed during Holy Communion is solely used to help the poor and the needy.

However, he failed to link the Church's social action to evangelism. The bottom line of social actions is to be a tool for enhancing evangelism right from inception. This is the

⁵⁸ V.O. Adetona, 2018. Social Action as Medium of Church Contribution to National Development. In Opeke R.O., Familusi O.O. and Berekiyah O.O (eds) *The Heart of the Act: Church, Politics and Social Transformation. A Festschrift in Honor of His Grace, Most Rev M.K. Stephen.* Ibadan: University Press Publishing House. 249

fact buttressed by Fagbiye that John Wesley made a difference between the outward performances of good deed services which were not without value, but only provisional, and the performance of good services that followed the inner renewal by God's grace prompted and shaped by love. Indeed, Wesley believes those with inner renewal are the ones to transform the society; hence his mission among the slum dwellers.

In *Methodist Character and Pentecostal Practices* while exposing Methodist character to Christians of other denominations, Ben Addison⁵⁹ reminds Methodist Church Nigeria of the history, theology, traditions, heritage, beliefs and practices of the universal Methodist Church as originated from Britain. The book also examines the various programs and activities of Methodist Church Nigeria under the Bar of Scriptures while offering opinions as to whether or not each program and activities complies with the Christian scripture and Methodist Character.

He linked Methodist faith to the faith of the revolutionary early Church but bemoaned its negligence today. According to him, John Wesley and early Methodists were noted for revolutionary activities like open air preaching which witnessed astonishing success among ordinary Bristol working people, the social outcasts such as pimps, thieves and vagabonds. The result led to the establishment of classes devoted to scripture and practice of Christian lifestyle.

He however sees most of Methodist Church Nigeria practices today to be at variance with her heritage and therefore categorically knocked out several practices of the Church as not reflecting Methodist character. Hence, singing of choruses has no place in Methodist character. Also, praying aloud, Holy Ghost Nights, vigil and revival service are not Methodist character. In addition, he noted tithing and speaking in tongues are also non Methodist. While he believes Methodist partly practice Episcopacy. He claims such Episcopacy is historic episcopacy which is nonhierarchical rather than apostolic succession. He sees Methodist Church Nigeria's Episcopacy as that of apostolic succession governed by hierarchies which is foreign to Methodism. In this sense, hierarchies from Prelate to Evangelists, especially their titles are non-Methodist and should be discarded and all programmes and activities at variance with universal Methodist should be discouraged.

⁵⁹ B. Addison, (N.d.), *Methodist Character and Pentecostal Practices*. Oladunjoye & Co.

His critical stands against Methodist practices that are in tandem with the scripture and a way of responding to social change according to him is to make the Church returned to her proper heritage. However, one dares to probe the possibility of such in an ever-changing society. What one knows today can change to something else. Methodist Church Nigeria cannot be effective in a dynamic society if she is to go by his recommendations.

2.4 Theoretical framework

The study is premised on Anthony Giddens Structuration Theory which was introduced into Sociology in 1984. The theory which sees social ‘structure’ and ‘action’ as complementary holds that “people actively make and remake structure during the course of their everyday activities and that, both structure and social action are interrelated.”⁶⁰ While social actions create structure, social structure also creates social action. Giddens, therefore, uses the word “structuration” to explain the relationship between structures and social action relationships over time and space. He stresses that the survival of structures is dependent on the human agencies with the ability to make changes to the structure. These structures still exist because people keep them functioning, and they can add, subtract or alter the basis of such structures.⁶¹

While expatiating on this theory, Olayinka and Okewumi opine that, “structures are guided by rules which can be changed as new pattern of interaction develop”. They go further to say that the theory is a departure from the belief that structures constrain people, stating that only in few exceptional cases are humans completely constrained since unlimited choices exist for human agencies because they have transformative capacity. This capacity gives ‘agency’ power to change things, actions or people.⁶²

Giddens theory is apposite in this research centered on policy development in Methodist Church Nigeria. This is because actions that remake or transform the Church are determined by policy development. Such policies are found in the 1962 Constitution which grant the Church autonomy, the 1976 Constitution which introduced Episcopacy and the 1990 Constitution which reunified the Church after that

⁶⁰ A. Giddens & W.S. Philip, 2013. *Sociology*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 89-90.

⁶¹ A. Olayinka & O.E. Okewumi, 2019. Contemporary Sociological Theories: An Africanist View. In <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335311160>. 34-35 Accessed on 20/10/2019

⁶² A. Olayinka & O.E. Okewumi, 2019. Contemporary Sociological Theories: An Africanist View. In <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335311160>. 34-35 Accessed on 20/10/2019.

of 1976 polarised the Church into Presidential and Patriarchal blocks for fourteen years. In the same way the 2006 Constitution came into force to reposition the Church when it was felt that the Church was not growing as expected. Such policies and leadership acumen in recent time have ushered in new ways of doing things such as improved mode of worship and traditions, style of leadership, time of meetings/activities, and places of worship as well as general mode of operation to measure up with modern social realities without destroying core essence or doctrines. It has also acted on the individual as well as collective membership of the Church to think and act in a progressive manner in line with the Church interest to be relevant in the society.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This research employed both descriptive and historical study research method. To ensure a good understanding of the context and condition of the issue under study, secondary sources were obtained from relevant scholarly books and journals. Besides, Church records, both archival and recent documents were engaged. Since the research centres on the Church policies, the Constitutions of the Church from 1962 to 2006, and the Book of Resolutions were utilised.

In addition, both structured and unstructured in-depth interview were conducted with the Ordained and Lay Leaders as well as members of the Church across the Conference area. In all, a total of 64 people were interviewed including 14 Episcopates, seven Presbyters and eight Priests in addition to two Deacons, one Deaconess, two Pastoral Agents, two Evangelists and four Student Ministers. Also, three Lay Presidents and 25 other lay members serving in different capacities across the Conference area.

3.2 Study area

The study explores the historical context of policy development in Methodist Church Nigeria from 1962 when she became autonomous to the year 2020. It pays particular attention to how policies of the Church over the years have helped in the growth and expansion of the church in a dynamic society. It also examined the impact of social changing trends generally on the life of the Church. Methodist came to Western Nigeria in 1842 through the activities of Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. Another group of Methodist known as the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society brought Methodist to the Eastern part of Nigeria in 1893. The two missionary bodies independently

evangelised Nigeria until 1962 when they were formally harmonized to form autonomous Methodist Church Nigeria. The Church today has 17 Archdioceses, 80 Dioceses with 631 Circuits and 4260 Local Churches across the Nigerian Conference area.

The policy development of the Church which is our focus in this research, span a period of 58 years. That is, from 1962 to 2020. These policies include 1962 Deed of Foundation which constituted the Church as autonomous Christian community; after that, the 1976 Constitution was introduced. Same Constitution introduced Episcopacy; this was followed by 1990 Constitution which unified the Church after 14 years of crisis that polarised the Church into Presidential (practicing 1962 Constitution) and the Patriarchal (practicing 1976 Constitution). After another 14 years of using the 1990 Constitution, a new one was introduced in 2006 called the Reposition. This Constitution sought to reposition the Church to minister effectively to the 21st century society. It has been in use from 2006 until 2020.

3.3 Study population

The population for this study comprises the Conference area. To elicit vital information, in-depth interviews were conducted among members and leaders of the Church. Since the structure of the Church comprises of Conference, Archdiocese, Diocese, Circuit, and Local Church; effort was made using purposive sampling to select 31 members of the clergy and 33 members of the laity across the aforementioned to represent the general view of the Conference area. Such leaders are: The Prelate, who is in charge of the entire Conference area. We equally interviewed Archbishops and Bishops who are in charge of Archdioceses and Dioceses respectively. Others are Presbyters, Priests, Deacons, Deaconesses, Evangelists and Pastoral Agents. While Presbyters are in charge of Circuits, Priests and Deacons are in charge of Local Churches. Deaconess are in charge of Women work while Evangelists and Pastoral Agents often serve as assistant to Ministers and in some cases oversee a Preaching Stations. Aside the Ministerial, the Lay officers of the Church were also covered, these are: Archdiocesan and Diocesan Lay Presidents, Circuits Stewards and Local Church Stewards and others. The above-mentioned leaders are the decision makers of the Church. Also, as far implementation of policy is concerned, these leaders are actively involved.

3.4 Sampling procedure

Collection of samples for this study was done using the purposive sampling techniques to obtain information from our interviewees. The choice of these techniques is based on the fact that the Church is structurally set up, consisting of the Conference, Archdioceses, Dioceses, Circuits and Local Churches. In the same vein, the leadership of the Church are classified in the hierarchies of Prelate, in charge of the entire Methodist Church Nigeria. The Archbishops and Bishops are in charge of Archdioceses and Dioceses respectively. The Presbyters are in charge of the Circuits while Priests are in charge of Local Churches. Hence, these techniques aptly fit into the existing structure of the Church as it was able to cover leaders in each of the structures and hierarchies.

A total of sixty-four respondents were purposively interviewed based on their strategic positions, vast understanding of the history of the Church and active involvement. Fourteen Episcopates, including the Prelate, seven Presbyters and eight Priests were interviewed in addition to two Deacons, one Deaconess, two Pastoral Agents, two Evangelists and four Student Ministers. Also, three Lay Presidents and twenty five other lay members serving in different capacities were interviewed.

3.5 Method of data collection

In-depth interview method was used for data collection. This method affords the researcher the opportunity to meet with respondents who were majorly involved in policy formulation and implementation in the Church.

3.6 Methods of data analysis

Data obtained from respondents were thematically analysed. The themes cut across every aspect of the research work.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents results of the research by appraising policy development in Methodist Church Nigeria. Since the Church is a living organism in a dynamic society, concerted efforts are made through policy formulations to ensure relevance over the years. In the light of this claim there are evidences that beginning from autonomy to the present; constitutions have been made and amended several times with the aim of serving the members of the Church and the society who are constantly experiencing the unstoppable wave of change in all areas of social life. According to Ogunbisi,⁶³ “Methodist Church Nigeria has never thrown away completely any of her Constitution, what is done is a review of current Constitution in the light of their relevance to current contemporary issues. This chapter therefore aims at appraising such policies in the light of their prospects and possible problems emanating from it.

4.2 Evolution of Methodist Church in Nigerian

Nigeria as a country is an amalgamation of different ethnic groups or kingdoms for the sake of administrative convenience adopted by the British colonial rule in 1914.⁶⁴ Prior to this development, two different Methodist Missionary Societies; the Wesleyan⁶⁵ and the Primitive⁶⁶ Missionary Society were already evangelising the Western and Eastern regions of the Niger.

⁶³ F.A.O. Ogunbisi. *Interview Respondent*. (Very Rev) Lecturer at Immanuel College of Theology Ibadan. (M), (54years), Interviewed on 1st December, 2020, 2pm at Samonda, Ibadan.

⁶⁴ O.O. Sandy, 2018. The 1914 Amalgamation of Nigeria: Some Matters Arising. In *International Journal of Inflation & Good Governance Quagmire in Africa*. Volume 10, Issues 4&5. 17. Retrieved from <http://www.arcnjournals.org/images/GARC-IJIGGQA-10-4-5-3.pdf>. on 8/4/2020.

⁶⁵ G.G. Findlay and W.W. Holdsworth, 2006. *The history of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*. London: The Epworth Press. 210. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/historyofwesleya04finduoft/page/n5/mode/2up>. Accessed on 8/4/2020

⁶⁶ U.K. Ogbu, 1986. Primitive Methodists on the Railroad Junctions of Igboland, 1910-1931. In *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 16. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1580979>. Accessed on 2/27/2020.

In a nutshell, the story of the arrival of evangelical missionaries to the shore of the present-day Nigeria began with the coming of Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. The freed slaves who found their ways back to their fatherland from Sierra-Leone made a passionate appeal to Rev'd Thomas Dove, a Methodist missionary working with freed slaves in Sierra-Leone. The request was actually made by James Ferguson on behalf of the ex-slaves and approved by the Governor of Badagry by name, Warraru, the tone of the letter shows that the people were in desperate need of missionaries to help establish the rich heritage of Christianity which they had enjoyed over the years as slaves but now cut off and were in total darkness⁶⁷. In response to the clarion call, Thomas Birch Freeman along with his wife in company of Mr. and Mrs. De-Graft arrived from Cape Coast.⁶⁸ They began what is recognised as the effective beginning of Christian missionary enterprise in Nigeria in Badagry 1842⁶⁹. The missionary works from this point spread across the different parts of Yorubaland beginning with Abeokuta where Thomas Birch Freeman was the first representative of European civilisation to enter.⁷⁰

While the Wesleyan Mission to the West was a result of a more organised Missionary Society, the Methodist missionary activities in the East were carried to the region through the personal witness of men in their daily occupations and through organized missionary endeavour⁷¹. In a nutshell, the Baptist Missionary Society first witnessed to the people of Fernando Po but was expelled after the arrival of the Roman Catholic on the island, in 1858.⁷² Finally, when liberty of worship was granted to non-Roman Catholic, the people of the island who were Protestants were planning to write to the Church of England for a missionary when one of the Primitive Methodist members, a Local Preacher, James Hands witnessed to this small group of Christian who were earlier converted by the Baptist Missionary Society. Hence, the desire not to recall the

⁶⁷ C.E. Chinoyere 2010. *Renewal Movement Within Methodist Church Nigeria*. Aba: Soul Winner Publications. 21.

⁶⁸ A.S. Oyalana, 2005. *Christian Witnessing in Nigeria, Common and Divided*. Ibadan: Day Star Press. 11

⁶⁹ G.A. Oshitelu, 2002. *Expansion of Christianity in West Africa*. Abeokuta: Visual Resources Publishers. 65

⁷⁰ F.D. Walker, (nd). *Thomas Birch Freeman the Son of an African*. London: Student Christian Movement 32 Russell Square, W.C.1. 152

⁷¹ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. *The Wesleyan Presence in Nigeria: An exploration of Power, Control and Partnership in Mission*. Ibadan: Safer. Vii.

⁷² M.M. Familusi, 1992. *Methodism in Nigeria (Revised Edition)* Lagos: Methodist Publishing Company. 48

Baptist among them anymore but the Primitive Methodist missionary to direct them in the way that leads to eternal life.

The General Missionary Committee of the Primitive Methodist responded to their request by sending Rev'd R.W. Burnet and Henry Roe to Fernando Po, a Spanish island on the west coast of Africa⁷³ later known after independence in 1968 as Equatorial Guinea. The island is about 100 kilometres South-east of Nigeria coast⁷⁴; hence a neighbouring country to Nigeria. In a week after arrival the first Methodist Society (Church) class made up of eleven members was formed on the island. The first service was held in the house of one Madam Job. It was from this point that the idea was hatched to extend the mission in West Africa. With the approval of the Missionary Committee, the Rev'd. Robert Fairley and F. Pickering went prospecting in several directions on the West Coast mainland. Rev'd Robert Fairley first visited both Obo and Calabar River Deltas but could not make headway because of existing missions and stringent conditions of German Governor of Cameroons who controlled the Issangelli, an area chosen to begin the mission work. A new location was sought by Pickering who explored the creeks around Rio-del-Rey River through the Aqua Effey river to Archibong town which was under the British Niger Coast Protectorate. Here, they were gladly welcomed by the head of the town, Prince Archibong. At this point they returned to Fernando Po with the success story of the tour which later saw Achibong becoming the cradle of a fruitful mission. Gradually from this place the mission extended her frontiers to Eastern parts. The Primitive Methodist Missionary Society equally evangelised Idomaland while along with Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society evangelised other parts of the North.

4.3 Precursor to autonomy

The move towards granting autonomy to Overseas Mission, to which Nigerian Methodism was a part, was laid down when the Conference of the British Methodist in the year 1936 put up a plan that will bring about devolution of ecclesiastical responsibilities. They designed a policy aimed at developing the smooth runnings of the Overseas Missions in preparation for the establishment of Circuits that could stand

⁷³ Fernando Po. Retrieved from https://theodora.com/encyclopedia/f/fernando_po.html. Accessed on 7/4/2020

⁷⁴ A. Bolaji, 1970. Nigeria and Fernando Po 1958-1966 the Politics of Irridentism. In *African Affairs*, Volume 69, Issue 276, July 1970, Pages 236. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.afraf.a096019>. Accessed on 8/5/2020

on their own. To make this policy a reality, an indigenous minister by name, Rev Moses Odutola Dada was appointed the first Nigerian Chairman of the Western Nigerian District Synod in 1946. Subsequently, the move was prosecuted in an atmosphere of global tension when conflict involving Spain, Albania, China and Abyssinia (Ethiopia) were generating uncertainty in the political sphere. Responding to the unstable situation, large movement of population, especially of children from vulnerable areas, were being undertaken in Britain. Restrictions placed on hours of lighting were affecting evening meetings of the Church. Collection of income for the work at home and overseas became difficult as a result of the rising cost of living. The situation compelled Methodist Missionary Society to write to all in the field advising economy of meager resources and apologising for the inevitable resultant hampering of the work.

In addition, the problem of the World War II, which happened from 1939-1945 laid the foundation for autonomy. The involvement of peoples in the European colonies in Africa and elsewhere in the war brought peoples of many nations and colours into contact, stimulated thought and spread ideas. Awareness grew that the world was on the threshold of a new life, a life that was to reach out into new dimensions of thought and action. A global awareness of the one world and one human race was stirred as Blacks, White and Yellow were thrown together to die together of gun shots. Africans fought for freedom not only on the side of Britain for ideological freedom, but later against Britain and other colonisers for political emancipation.”⁷⁵ With the end of hostilities on 8th May 1945, not only the global, politico-economic arrangements but also the global evangelising forces of Christianity entered a new era. There was recognition of the fact that the Christianising enterprise was a joint one between African and European and that the two groups of Church workers were colleagues.”⁷⁶ Hence, this religious understanding coupled with political emancipation had great influence on the Church in the gradual emergence of self-governing Church from 1946. The rite, which was captioned as “historic ceremony at Olowogbowo” brought in Rev M.O. Dada, the Superintendent of Olowogbowo to chair the entire Western District of the Church. In affirming the credibility of the new chairman, Rev’d W.G. Waterman, predecessor, says that church growth is not measured by the level of

⁷⁵ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. *The Wesleyan Presence in Nigeria: An exploration of Power, Control and Partnership in Mission*. Ibadan: Safer. 72-73

⁷⁶ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. 92-93

expansion, but the quality of people produced, and their capacity to govern themselves. At the reception held in his honour, Waterman stated that he had been in Africa for 36 years and that during this period he had had the “desire always to see that Africans were raised to post of responsibility”. He was therefore pleased that he was being succeeded by a national. In his induction sermon, the Rev. M.O. Dada said, “those who love democracy should not be afraid to give self-government to others.”⁷⁷

In a nutshell, the missionary societies in Nigeria, particularly those of British origin worked hand in hand with the colonial masters to change the landscape of Nigeria. Their contributions include governing the people, Church planting, building of schools and hospitals that brought about a rise in learning and experience. Consequent upon this, the nationalists began to press for self-governance or independence especially in relation British Colonial rule. This in like manner built up among the different mission Churches culminating in the demand for autonomy particularly among Methodist Churches in West Africa. On the other hand, the British Conference was also conscious of such move when in July 1955 set up a commission to consider missionary obligation of the Church with the following terms.

The Conference, recognising the profound change now taking place in the political, social and economic structure of the nations and their influence on the moral and religious outlook of mankind, appoints a commission to consider effects of these changes upon the missionary work of the Church⁷⁸

4.4 The autonomy of Methodist Church in Nigeria

As noted earlier, two different Methodist missionary societies evangelised Nigeria. The two societies, Western and Eastern Districts were operating without reference to each other; they were both under the care of British Methodist Conference. From London, Methodist East and West of Niger, built up by two different British Methodist traditions, were thrown together to become Methodist Church Nigeria⁷⁹ in 1962. This was because both the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist Church in 1932 amalgamated and formed the Methodist Church in Great Britain. It was the conference of the amalgamated Church that instructed Methodist in Nigeria to do same when the

⁷⁷ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. 93

⁷⁸ Report of the Third Inter-District Conference of Methodist Church in West Africa, 1954. 76

⁷⁹ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. Vii.

Western District asked for autonomy though, the Eastern District had not thought seriously about it. This instruction laid the foundation for meetings between the district in the Western Nigeria and that in the East. After informal conversations, the representatives of the two Districts had their first meeting to discuss about autonomy. Towards the end of 1961, all matters were resolved and the name, Methodist Church Nigeria came into existence on September 28th 1962. By this, Methodist Church Nigeria became autonomous. Event to formalise the autonomy included the signing of the document regarded as the Deed of Foundation, and service held in the headquarter church, Tinubu Lagos⁸⁰.

Autonomy in relation to the Church means, self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. The Church in Nigeria was therefore empowered to make decisions, raise money and win the world around them for Christ. This is exactly what the Deed of Foundation achieved for the Church. Though the autonomy did not change the structure of the Church governance, the Nigerian Conference became the highest decision body with a President and Secretary of Conference for the first time. Prior to autonomy, two Districts existed, but with the autonomy, the former Western District was divided into three Synods. Equally, the former Eastern District was divided into three. In the same vein, the work in the Northern Nigeria formerly under Lagos was given a district with headquarters in Jos. The autonomy immediately placed on the Church the responsibility of financing herself, though, the British Methodist Church were still sending grant but not on regular bases. Hence, financial commitment of the Church was to be undertaken locally. The outcome of this was a review of the class fee of two shillings and a penny per quartre to two pounds and ten shillings.⁸¹

There is clear evidence that autonomy is a bedrock policy development in Methodist Church Nigeria as indicated by majority of our interview respondents who opined that without autonomy, the different policies developed by the Church over the years to cope the demands of the society would not have been possible.

⁸⁰ C.E. Chinonyerem 2010. Renewal Movement Within Methodist Church Nigeria. Aba: Soul Winner Publications. 44

⁸¹ C.E. Chinonyerem 2010. Renewal Movement Within Methodist Church Nigeria. Aba: Soul Winner Publications. 45

On the other hand, one of our interview respondents, Edoaka Amuta⁸² said the church was not matured and fully prepared for autonomy as at the time it was given. The implication was the personality issues that overran the leadership of the Church shortly after autonomy and the poor management of what was left by the British Methodist at autonomy. One could agree with his stand as most of the institutions, particularly schools and hospitals the Church has today, though many are moribund were built before autonomy. Lending his voice to the same issue, Ogunbisi⁸³, our interview respondent notes that where the Church was at the time of autonomy was far better than where it is now. This is because the leaders of the Church at that time managed efficiently the schools and hospitals handed over by the foreign missionaries which resulted in financial stability and growth of membership. He lamented however that most of these facilities are today in bad condition because of poor maintenance, drive for materialism and flamboyance for public show that leaves the Church weak.

4.5 Policy developments in Methodist Church Nigeria from autonomy to 2020

The autonomy of the church dates back to September 28, 1962 when the Deed of Foundation was signed in Methodist Church Tinubu, Lagos at a public worship service. Methodist Church as the name rightly indicates operates based on a well spelt out policies of actions. The Wesleyan from the beginning were dedicated to moral, academic and spiritual imperilments of their members as well as the systematic and methodical rules of behaviour, which earned them the nick name- Methodist⁸⁴. This practice has been consistent with the Church to the present time. Since the arrival of Methodist Mission in 1842, the Church had been under the leadership, control and direction of the British Methodist Church until agitations and move for Nigerian Independence impacted her to also take a serious step that granted her autonomy. After that, the responsibility of making rules to govern the life of the Church solely rests on Methodist Church Nigeria. This has enabled the Church to design constitutions and

⁸² E. Amuta, *Interview Respondent* (Rt. Rev) Bishop of Ito Diocese, (MCN) Benue State, and former Connexional Secretary for Evangelism and Discipleship. Interviewed at Bishop's House, Ito, on 13th January 2020 10am

⁸³ F.A.O. Ogunbisi. *Interview Respondent*. (Very Rev) Lecturer at Immanuel College of Theology Ibadan. (M), (54years), Interviewed on 1st December, 2020, 2pm

⁸⁴ O.O. Aina 2016. *Polity, Worship, Doctrine*. Lagos: Rotabstone & Company. 3

resolutions at different times to regulate her operation. Our respondent, Ladigbolu said,⁸⁵

Constitutional development has helped the Church to regulate herself to a vantage position to respond adequately to the emerging needs and conditions of people within her fold. The absence of it would have made the Church powerless and without direction in the face of the constant changes.

(IDIs/ Adult/ Male/ Retired MCN Archbishop of Ilesa/ 2020)

Lending his voice in the same manner, a respondent noted that constitutional development has help in providing a code of conduct expected of both Ministers and Lay just as it has also foster unity in terms of doctrine and liturgy.⁸⁶ Policies of the Church from 1962 to 2020 are examine below

4.5.1 The Deed of Foundation

The Deed of Foundation dated 20th day of September, 1962 constituted Methodist Church Nigeria as an autonomous community of Christian Believers.⁸⁷ It was an agreement document that constituted the Methodist Church Nigeria as an autonomous body of World Methodism with the direction that a Conference known as ‘Foundation Conference’ be held for the purpose of settling and adopting a “Deed of Church Order” which shall be the Constitution of the Church. The Deed of Foundation further directed that the said Deed of Church Order shall contain among other things provision that Conference may revoke, alter or add to any of the provisions of Deed of Church Order except the doctrinal standard.

The Deed of Foundation was patterned after that of the British Conference. The Head of the Church was known as President of Conference who was elected by Conference for a single term of five years and no more. He had a lay counterpart who was elected for a term of five years and designated Vice-President of Conference but only functioned when Conference was in session. The structure of the Church as enshrined in the Deed of Foundation included the Conference, which comprised the entire areas covered by Methodist Church Nigeria. This was followed by the Districts made up of Circuits while the Circuits were made up of Societies. It should be noted that prior to

⁸⁵ L.S. AyoLadigbolu. *Interview Respondent*. (Most Rev), Retired MCN Archbishop of Ilesa and a serving member, Board of Trustee. (82 years). Interviewed on the 2nd October, 2020 3pm in Oyo, Oyo State.

⁸⁶ J.S. Ocheni, *Interview Respondent* (Evangelist) Church Evangelist, Otukpa (38 years). Interviewed on 19th December 2020 in Benue State

⁸⁷ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006 Constitution. 1

autonomy, there was nothing like Conference in Nigeria. Both the Western and Eastern Districts were under the British Conference. The highest decision-making body of the two Districts was the Synod of each District. However, with the autonomy the Deed of Foundation gave the Church full autonomy to operate as a Conference.

Having received power to elect leaders and govern herself in line with the Presidential System of Church hierarchy inherited from British Methodist, the autocephalous Church elected her first President, The Rev. J.O.E. Somerekun, and the Vice-President, Dr. Eyo Moma while The Rev. G. Egemba was appointed the Secretary of Conference.⁸⁸ The Deed of Foundation was so patterned that the President had to change hands every year, but could be re-elected for five years. Also worthy of note is that while the President was elected from the ranks of clergy, his deputy or the Vice-President was elected from was elected from the ranks of the lay members.

While the President oversaw the entire Conference Area, the next structure which was the Districts was headed by a Chairman who presided over the Synod. At autonomy, seven Districts were created, three out of the former Western District/Synod and another three out of the former Eastern District while the Northern Nigeria was also classed as a District. The Circuits which were next to the District were headed by Superintendents who presided over Quarterly Meetings while the Societies which were the last in the structure were manned by Ministers and Catechists.⁸⁹ It is also worthy of note that all the ordained ministers in-charge of the different structures were all addressed as The Reverend including the President. In addition, after the tenure of offices, the appointees, that is, the Chairman, Superintendent returned his former position as a Reverend while a minister who had formerly served under him could be elected to same office.

This same Deed of Foundation was used from 1962 to 1965 without any attempt to improve on it as autonomous Church in Nigeria until the Eastern Nigeria Sector of the Church presented a memorandum on it during the Nigerian Civil War when it became practically impossible to maintain the connexional system of administration⁹⁰

4.5.2 The 1976 patriarchal constitution

This was the first indigenous constitution which replaced the 1962 Deed of Foundation. It is on record that the 1976 Constitution of Methodist Church Nigeria made far reaching

⁸⁸ M.M. Familusi, 1992. Methodism in Nigeria (Revised Edition) Lagos: Methodist Publishing Company. 121-122

⁸⁹ M.M. Familusi, 1992, Methodism in Nigeria. 123

⁹⁰ C.O. Ogan, 1980. Crisis in Methodist Church Nigeria where I Stand. Umahia: Catographic Press. 12

changes in the Polity and Structure of the Church; and introduced Corporate Connexional Episcopacy and potentiating the dynamics of Church Administration⁹¹ which transformed Methodist Church to a Patriarchate with a Patriarch as Head of the Church, and addressed as His Pre-Eminence.

It is worthy to note that the specification to hold a 'Foundation Conference' for the purpose of settling and adopting a "Deed of Church Order" which shall be the Constitution of Methodist Church Nigeria was not held and nothing was substantially done in that regard till the election of Rev. Professor E.B. Idowu. In his Presidential Address to 1973 Conference, he drew the attention of the Church to the fact that the constitution in use for the past eleven years was just a draft, something inchoate, and in many ways unworthy of a Church of the Church of that age and status.⁹² Immediately after his election, he declared his stand on the Constitution as grossly inadequate.

We must undertake a review of our Constitution in a way that would reflect and emphasises that ours is an autonomous Church in Nigeria; there is a task of ordering the life of the Church in such a way that she will minister effectively and adequately to the needs of our people in their native context.⁹³

Hence, the concerted efforts to produce a constitution that was indigenous in Methodist Church Nigeria; in this wise, retreats were organised to brainstorm on the progress of God's work with particular emphasis on the Life of the Church, Faith and Order as well as the Law and Polity. While organising one of the most eventful retreats, comprising representatives throughout the Conference area in Asaba from the 1st to 3rd February, 1974; the President, Rev E.B. Idowu on behalf of the Conference, presented a document on 'Matters Relating to the Life of the Church, Faith and Order, for study and consideration throughout the Conference area.

The thrust was the introduction of Episcopacy and the attendant reordering of ministry as well as restructuring of the Church for the understanding of contemporary Nigeria. According to him, this became important based on the fact that the title of President for the head of the Church was also used in governance of the country brought clash of title between the state and the Church. In addition, other titles such as 'Chairman' and

⁹¹ M.O. Akinwale, 2020. Principles and Practice of Church Administration and Episcopal Authority. Lagos: Methodist Printing Press. 23

⁹² E.B. Idowu, 1973. Restoring the Years that the Locust has Eaten. A Presidential Address delivered at the Representative Session of the Twelfth Annual Conference, Methodist Church Nigeria. 7

⁹³ Methodist Church Nigeria, 1972. Conference Minutes 11-12

‘Superintendent’ did not hold the same respect and recognition like Bishops Archbishops which have Biblical and ecclesiastical background. Hence, since the Latin word, Superintendent means Bishop which is Biblical, and Nigerians understood Bishop more than Superintendent, then the Church should consider the use of Bishop instead of Superintendent and Archbishop for Chairman. In addition, since the President is higher than the Chairman, the title of Patriarch was suggested for adoption in addition to Presbyters, Priests and Deacons which could be found in the Bible.⁹⁴ Lending his voice to the stand of Idowu, Oliver Abah opined that the term “Presidential” is secular while “Episcopal is religious. Hence, the step was in the right direction.”⁹⁵

At the end of deliberations at the retreat, the assembly recommended among other things to Conference the adoption of Episcopacy in its scriptural and ecclesiastical connotation with the titles of Deacon, Priest, Bishop, Metropolitan Archbishop, and Patriarch.⁹⁶ The recommendations of Asaba Retreat was widely circulated at no cost among members of the Church to be discussed from the Society level to the District Synod levels with the view that all suggestions and recommendations resulting from such discussions would be channeled to the Conference. Other circulated documents, particularly on Church Structure were also deliberated with a feedback of good discussion and general acceptance. This satisfactory feedback prompted the Conference to set up a committee to draft a new Constitution which was adopted at the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the Church held at Immanuel College Chapel in 1974. Further deliberations were made and necessary corrections and additions were made before the Constitution was adopted at the 14th Annual Conference held at the campus of the University of Calabar in 1975 with a vote of 118 in favour while one against and non, neutral.⁹⁷ The Conference therefore declared 20th January 1976 as ‘The Appointed Day’ in which the new Constitution was adopted.⁹⁸ One of our

⁹⁴ Methodist Church Nigeria, Asaba Retreat Document. In M.M. Familusi, 1992. Methodism in Nigeria, 1842-1992. Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers. 148-149.

⁹⁵ O.A. Abah (MA), Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Benue, Benue State. Interviewed on 12th Jan., 2020

⁹⁶ C.E. Chinonyerem 2010. Renewal Movement Within Methodist Church Nigeria. Aba: Soul Winner Publications. 79

⁹⁷ E.B. Idowu. Methodist Church Nigeria, You Shall Know the Truth and the Truth Shall Make you Free. Lagos: Woodfree Enterprises. 30

⁹⁸ E.B. Idowu. Methodist Church Nigeria, You Shall Know the Truth and the Truth Shall Make you Free. Lagos: Woodfree Enterprises. 30

respondent, M.K. Stephen⁹⁹ summarised the change that transpired from autonomy to 1976 and the rationale behind it as follow:

The autonomy triggered the opportunity for introspection and emboldened desires to maintain our distinct identity. Though there had been a lot of changes from the time of autonomy particularly in the area of the leadership of the Church by indigenous people, yet the Church remained very much like the British Church in his methodology until 1973 when Prof Bolaji Idowu took over from President Salako. Idowu pushed for change in terms of the nomenclature of the Church. He felt that the nomenclature from the British Church is not all together understood the way the British Church understood it. Secondly, that the nomenclature does not reflect any scriptural or ecclesiastical parallel within the Nigerian context; hence, the title of President, Chairman and Superintendents and so on do not go down well with the general public who would identify more easily with the term Bishop. In the same vein, during ecumenical occasions, the title of a Bishop is accorded a greater respect to the extent that a Methodist President had to queue in front of the Bishop. Then there is the ego side of it, in the sense that a Professor and Head of the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan who could have had some of these Bishops as his students to be pushing him to the front in procession just because of title. You cannot divorce all those things from the pressure that he saw. Therefore, he felt that the only way he could elevate the ministry of the Church was to have the nomenclature changed. How the society judge the change is another thing all together but on the side of the Church, it was a celebration because through it the society was greatly impacted just as it brought greater prominence and relevance to the Methodist ministry as we were no longer regarded as second-class people.

(IDIs/ Adult/ Male/ Retired MCN Archbishop of Ibadan/ 2020)

As touching the Church ministry and structure, the Constitution¹⁰⁰ explicitly outlined the following features as marks of shift from Presidential (1962 Constitution) to Patriarchal system of Episcopacy (1976 Constitution):

(1) Ordained Ministry

⁹⁹ M.K. Stephen. *Interview Respondent* (Most Rev) Retired Archbishop of Ibadan, and Secretary of Conference, 1996 to 2006. (72 years). Interviewed on 11th October, 2020 in Sagamu, Ogun State

¹⁰⁰ Methodist Church Nigeria, 1976 Constitution. 11-13

This ministry consists of those ordained into the ministry of the word and sacraments. The hierarchies of the Ordained Ministry as specified in this Constitution include: Deacons, Priest, Presbyter, Bishop, Archbishop and Patriarch. The titles of honour of the hierarchies for Ordained Ministers shall be addressed 'The Reverend'. Presbyters shall be addressed as 'The Very Reverend', and after their names, shall have the words 'Presbyter of (Circuit). A Bishop shall be addressed as 'The Right Reverend', and after his name shall have the words 'Bishop of (name of his seat). An Archbishop shall be addressed as 'The Most Reverend' and shall be entitled also to be addressed 'His Grace' and at the end of his name shall have the words 'The Archbishop of (seat of Archbishop). The Patriarch shall be addressed 'His Pre-eminence' (Name) and, at the end of his name, shall have the words 'Patriarch of Methodist Church Nigeria'. By these changes the Church metamorphosed from the Presidential system of ministry to a unique brand of Episcopacy called "Corporate Episcopacy" with a well spelt out Church structure registered in Nigeria by an indigenous Nigerian government with a legal seal that states:

The set up remains unique. It has Deacons, Priests and Presbyters like the Presbyterian Church. It has Bishops and Archbishops like the Anglican and Roman Catholic. There are no Archdeacons and Cardinals. At the head was the Patriarch- a Biblical title that had never been in the language of any Church in this country. It is a Patriarchal system of Episcopacy in a purely democratic set-up, the type which had not been in existence anywhere.¹⁰¹

In the view of Daniel Agbese, one of our interview respondents,¹⁰² "the genesis of Episcopacy has its root from the failed Church Union. That the Church adopted Episcopacy to compete favourably with her counterparts, the Roman Catholic and the Anglican Church who were already practicing it". He described the Corporate Episcopacy adopted by the Church as "paper tiger" since the Bishop does not have final authority within the Diocese. He added that though Corporate Episcopacy intended to forestall monarchical Episcopacy, the permanence of Episcopal offices breed anarchy which features prominently in monarchy. Hence, the Presidential system relinquished for Episcopacy encouraged mutual respect because all positions were tenured in such a way that one who served as a President or Chairman at a time could

¹⁰¹ M.M. Familusi, 1992. *Methodism in Nigeria, 1842-1992*. Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers. 164

¹⁰² D. Agbese, *Interview Respondent* (Rt. Rev) Bishop of MCN, Enone Diocese, Benue State. (47 years) Interviewed on 7th Jan., 2020.

come under a Minister who formally was answerable to him. In this wise, he noted that anarchy was at its barest minimum and available offices or positions served a good number of people; but since the permanence of Episcopal offices with their prestige limit opportunities, virtually all Ministers crave for the office of Bishop and every locality want their own to be a Bishop. This he decried has led to the creation of unnecessary and unviable Dioceses that weigh down the gravity and dignity of Episcopacy. While expressing a mixed reaction, Stephen observed that Episcopacy has accorded the Church a pride of place, honour and “dignity;” engendered the spirit of competition with other ecumenical bodies and removed the grip of inferiority complex in addition to creativity in terms of ministerial, Lay Officers and Knights regalia. But on the other hand, in a bid to measure up with other Episcopal denominations, the Church slipped into self-identity crisis because Methodism has stood for simplicity all along which now the Church is struggling how to remain simple in its own ways of doing things and how not to suffer loss of dignity among other Churches. He further pointed out a clause that defines Methodist Episcopacy as corporate not monarchical. According to him, despite this clause, the Episcopates adopt virtually all the grandeur and traits of Monarchical Episcopacy to the extent that it has blurred the understanding of Methodist simplicity and made the Church to becoming more monarchical than the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches in the excessive use of power and less compassion on the side of the leadership. While going the memory lane, he noted that in the past, that is, before and after the autonomy, one can be the Chairman of District and serve his own term and reverse back to be a Circuit Superintendent without feeling bad. However, the advent of the titles of honour and permanence of Office has placed so many questions Methodist simplicity and self-understanding which by implication affect the growth of the Church.¹⁰³

Oche Job¹⁰⁴ is of the view that Episcopacy gave the Church a position higher than the Presidential system though it demoralised those like Presbyters and Priests who are not within the Episcopal ranks. Also, that the permanence of Episcopal office breeds anarchy as many Bishop are not approachable; this, he advised should be discouraged as any attempt to revert to Presidential will take the Church 75% backward. In the

¹⁰³ M.K. Stephen. *Interview Respondent* (Most Rev) Retired Archbishop of Ibadan, and Secretary of Conference, 1996 to 2006. (72 years). Interviewed on 11th October, 2020 in Sagamu, Ogun State

¹⁰⁴ J. Oche. *Interview Respondent* (Most Rev) MCN Archbishop of Abuja. (68 years). Interviewed on 15th November, 2020, Wuse, Abuja

view of Ladigbolu,¹⁰⁵ our interview respondent, nothing has really changed in the Methodist value system except the change of nomenclatures. In his word,

At the time I joined the ministry of the Church during the Presidential era; five distinctive features defined Methodists, which are strength and vitality of the Ordained Ministry, tenacity and commitment of Lay Members, strong emphasis on the Bible as the rule of life, love for fellowship and sharing among brethren and unalloyed commitment to the preaching of the gospel and outreaches. As an active practitioner in both the Presidential and Episcopal system, these pillars still operate till date. Hence, the change from Presidential to Episcopacy was just in nomenclature. It was just the name of the performers that were changed but their performances remained intact.

(IDIs/ Adult/ Male/ Retired MCN Archbishop of Ilesa/ 2020)

He affirmed that Episcopacy brought prestige to the Church because the titles that came with it were clearer, ecclesiastical and Biblical and so engendered acceptability. However, the prestige of Episcopacy was not without consequences as it increased the number of staff the Church caters for, increased the hierarchies of the Church and introduced lobbying and position seeking which led to envy, jealousy and backbiting which were alien to the Ordain Ministry. These in addition to quest for autonomy of different Methodist communities led to creation of Circuits and Dioceses in addition to new Cathedral management have overstretched the finances of the Church.

(2) Lay Ministry

It consisted of order of Local Preachers, the order of Women Workers, and order of Church Workers not specifically mentioned but engaged in the services of the Church.

1. Sub-Pastors- assistant to Ministers or auxiliary pastoral assistants in connection with the life of larger congregations.
2. Deaconess with the designation of 'Sister'- they are women workers with pastoral or vocational work among the women members of the Church
3. Local Preachers –admitted by the Circuit Quarterly meeting into the order of the preaching of the word
4. The other Church Workers (not already specifically mentioned) consist of categories of workers as may be designated by Conference from time to time.

¹⁰⁵ L.S. AyoLadigbolu. *Interview Respondent*. (Most Rev), Retired MCN Archbishop of Ilesa and a serving member, Board of Trustee. (82 years). Interviewed on the 2nd October, 2020 3pm in Oyo, Oyo State.

It is to be noted that it was this Constitution that introduced the Deaconess Order. Our respondent, Ikeazota¹⁰⁶ opined that the formal introduction of Deaconess Order was a clear demonstration of the Church determination to be in the frontline in women participation in Christian work and leadership. He however lamented the near extinction of this noble Order since the introduction of Women Ordination. Ladigbolu was of the view that The Deaconess Order and training of Sub-Pastors have outlived their relevance or are obsolete as the basic philosophies for having them are no more applicable or have since assumed a new and better posture. Hence, those who later joined the Ordain Ministry like Nkechi Nwosu, now a Presbyter and in charge of Circuit was firstly trained as Deaconess. That of Sub-Pastor was replaced with the Order of Evangelist which started their first training at Ilesa when I was the Archbishop of the Archdiocese. It was used as a model to assist Ministers in the Church and outstations.¹⁰⁷

(3) Church Structure: The structure of the Church deals with the organization of it into different parts functioning as a whole. They are outlined below:

1. The Patriarchate Conference (hereafter called ‘Conference). This is the final authority in Methodist Church Nigeria for the maintenance and interpretation of doctrinal standards of the Church, for the making and custodianship of the law of the Church, for the ordering of the total life of the Church, and for maintenance of discipline
2. The Archdiocese – the division of the Patriarchate for the purpose of Church government and effective spiritual oversight. It was made up of at least two Dioceses
3. The Diocese- Each Archdiocese was divided into Diocese for effective spiritual and administrative oversight. It was made up of unspecified number of Circuits
4. The Circuit- It consisted of one or more Societies
5. The Society- The Society was the local body and local congregation of Methodist Church, meeting together as one for public worship, and organised into Classes. It consisted of Junior Members, Members-on-Trial, and Full Members who are enrolled members of Methodist Church, Catechumens, and Adherents.

¹⁰⁶ C.O. Ikeazota, *Interview Respondent*. (Evangelist) Pharmacist, and Evangelist in MCN (Male) years. B.Pharm. (38). Onitsha, Anambra State. Interviewed on 23rd of November 2020

¹⁰⁷ L.S.A. Ladigbolu *Interview respondent*. Retired MCN Archbishop of Ilesa and a serving member, Board of Trustee. (82 years). Oyo, Oyo State. Interviewed on the 11th October, 2020

4.5.3 The 1990 reconciliation and reunification Constitution

The 1976 constitution was not universally accepted,¹⁰⁸ those who rejected it continued with the 1962 constitution thereby creating two factions and a full blown crisis that lasted for a period of 14 years. Within this period, the section of the Church using the 1962 Constitution had the President as the head of the Church¹⁰⁹ while those using the 1976 had the Patriarch as the head.¹¹⁰ Several attempts were made to settle differences but proved abortive until The Right Reverend J.D. Aluko became the President after the retirement of the former President, Very Reverend E.A. Adegbola. It is worthy of note also that at this time, the first Patriarch, His Pre-eminence Idowu had retired and had been replaced by His Pre-eminence, Mbang.¹¹¹ The duo, were ready to resolve the lingering crisis and therefore made several attempts that finally yielded the desired result. The two sides had a meeting on the 14th July 1989 of over a thousand attendees at Methodist Church Ijoku, Sagamu¹¹². The outcome of the meeting was the setting up of a committee to Review the 1976 Constitutions to an acceptable standard for all and that and that it would also address the grey areas of dispute in the 1976 constitution. The committee was given six weeks to complete its work for presentation before an extra-ordinary Conference scheduled for 20th October 1989. In order to do a thorough review that would satisfy the two factions both the 1962 Deed of Foundation and 1976 Constitution were placed side by side along with The Methodist Church Constitution, the British Conference paper on Doctrinal Standards along with Methodist Lawyers' recommendations of 1987 were made available to all the members as working papers. In addition, members of the Church were urged to submit memoranda, comments and suggestions, to which some responded positively.¹¹³

With the presentation of the Constitution Review Committee, the 1990 Conference at the Representative session held at Hoares Memorial Methodist Church, Yaba Lagos resolved to revoke both the 1962 and 1976 constitutions.¹¹⁴ The work of the Constitution Review Committee was reviewed and accepted with a vote of 263 in favour, four against and four neutral.¹¹⁵ The main concern of the 1990 Constitution

¹⁰⁸ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006 Constitution. 1

¹⁰⁹ Methodist Church Nigeria, 1962 Deed of Foundation.

¹¹⁰ Methodist Church Nigeria, 1976 Constitution. 12

¹¹¹ M.M. Familusi, 1992. Methodism in Nigeria, 1842-1992. Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers. 186

¹¹² Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006 Constitution. 1

¹¹³ M.M. Familusi, 1992. Methodism in Nigeria, 1842-1992. Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers. 187

¹¹⁴ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006 Constitution. 2

¹¹⁵ M.M. Familusi, 1992. Methodism in Nigeria, 1842-1992. Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers. 198

was the attempt to reconcile and reunite the Presidential and the Patriarchal into one Methodist Church Nigeria. Hence at the completion and acceptance of the work of the new Constitution at the Joint Conference of the Presidential and Patriarchate, it was resolved that a Re-unification Service be held on Sunday March 4, 1990 and also that Conference should reconvene on May 23 and 24, 1990 to ratify the new Constitution after the amendment agreed upon had been made and that a service be held on Wesley Day, May 24, 1990 to sign it that Methodist Church Nigeria is one again.¹¹⁶

The Reunification Service took place at Hoare's Memorial Methodist Church, Yaba, Lagos with Methodist members and ministers, international delegates and leaders other denominations. The Reunification service preceded the ratification of the new Constitution, after the service, the Conference reconvene to vote in support of the new Constitution with 344 votes for, none against and none neutral.¹¹⁷

Bearing in mind the gravity of issues this very Constitution aimed to resolve, another service for ratification was held by 4.00.p.m. At this service, the twenty four signatories then came forward one by one to sign the Constitution. At the end, the Secretary of Conference, Rt. Rev. Omodunbi proclaimed, "the Deed of the Constitution Reform Order has been signed! The Deed has been done! The Sacred task has been accomplished in the presence of the Triune God. A united Methodist Church Nigeria is born!"¹¹⁸ This brought to an end all court cases, unhealthy rivalry, hatred and bitterness.

In the spirit of reunification, adjustments were made to some developments in the 1976 Constitution. While the 1990 constitution retained episcopacy, it was described as corporate and not monarchical. Patriarch which was the title of the head of the Church was change to Prelate to be addressed as His Eminence, not Pre-eminence as enshrined in the 1976 Constitution. There was an innovation that there shall be a session of Conference to be attended by Lay Delegates, simultaneously as the ministerial session was meeting. The Constitution created a Men Fellowship to rank with existing Women Fellowship and a committee was also to look after men's work. Officers of the Church henceforth were to be elected for two terms of three years each and not five years as stipulated in the 1976 Constitution. In addition, the head of the Church should have

¹¹⁶ M.M. Familusi, 1992. Methodism in Nigeria, 1842-1992. 300

¹¹⁷ M.M. Familusi, 1992. Methodism in Nigeria, 1842-1992. 295

¹¹⁸ M.M. Familusi, 1992. Methodism in Nigeria, 1842-1992. 205

reached the age of sixty before appointment and would be allowed two terms of five years each before retirement. The Constitution therefore resolved differences and made it possible for the Presidential and Episcopal factions to reunite. Consequently, The Prelate, His Eminence, Dr Sunday Coffie Mbang, formerly Patriarch under 1976 Constitution remained the head of the Church while the office of the President; formerly in the Presidential faction of the 1962 Constitution was given to a lay person to be addressed as Conference Lay President. One can say that the 1990 Constitution resolved internal problems ravaging the Church and put her on a track of effective ministry to Nigerian society. This actually helped the Church to speak with one voice at the setting in of democratic governance in 1991.

In the view of Akor,¹¹⁹ the 1990 Constitution demonstrated the spirit of reconciliation which he thinks the world, particularly Nigeria should learn from Methodist Church. Also, it is expedient to suggest that other denominations passing through one crisis or the other to borrow a lift from Methodist model for settlement of disputes.

4.5.4 The 2006 repositioning Constitution

An excerpt from the former Prelate, Mbang caption the state of the Church that called for repositioning in the 2006 Constitution. He wrote,

For long, many of us have been satisfied with holding to what our forebears left us. Worse still, some of us rather than showing any signs of growth and expansion, a number of our Circuits have been shrinking. Many Circuits, Dioceses and Local Churches have not developed... we must all wake up and act now or never.¹²⁰

Hence, in the quest for strong and effective witnessing in Nigeria, the Church saw the urgent need to reposition in order to cope with the 21st century challenges affecting religious institution. In line with the above, the 2003 General Purpose Committee therefore set up a steering committee known as the Strategic Planning Team. The term of reference was to examine “where the Church was, where it is now, where it hopes to be and how to get there.”¹²¹ The report of this committee showed that the Church

¹¹⁹ R.F. Akor. *Interview Respondent*. (Mr.) MCN Kubwa member, and staff, Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corpse, FCT, Abuja Command. (44 years). Interviewed on 15th November, 2020.

¹²⁰ S.K. Mbang, 1991. Prelate’s Address to the 29th Annual Conference. 113

¹²¹ C.E. Chinonyerem 2010. *Renewal Movement Within Methodist Church Nigeria*. Aba: Soul Winner Publications. 179

membership was drastically dwindling, especially the youths while others felt they were spiritually starved. Also, unfaithfulness on the part of the members to remittance of monies was noted.¹²²

In response to the findings of the Strategic Planning Team, the Church at its 39th/4th Biennial Conference held at Methodist Cathedral, Kaduna between 4th and 12th August 2004 took far-reaching decisions on the re-organisation of Methodist Church Nigeria and accordingly passed a resolution accepting the recommendations of the Strategic Planning Team and directing that committees be inaugurated to examine the various aspects of the proposed re-organisation and make recommendations to be incorporated, where appropriate into the new Constitution of the Church.¹²³ The committees were on mass mobilization for aggressive evangelism and culture change, crash training programme, upgrading of theological colleges and spiritual development. Others were committee to fill key positions at Conference headquarters, committee on good welfare policy for the Church and a committee to review existing Constitution of the Church.¹²⁴

The Conference directed that the new Constitution be in line with the new vision and mission of the Church. The vision is “to be one of the largest and most spiritual vibrant Churches in Nigeria”, the mission equally aims “to consistently win more souls for Christ, develop spiritually fulfilled members and remain very active in serving humanity”. In addition to framing a vision and mission statement, modalities to accomplish same were rolled out;¹²⁵ 20% of the Church annual budget was allocated to evangelism in addition; every member was mandated to bring to the Church at least another new member per quarter which is expected to grow the Church to about 20 million in 10 years. Also, a massive training program for Evangelists Revivalists at Diocesan level was to be embarked upon and appraised from time to time while every newly Commissioned minister shall be posted to establish a new Church. The Local Church was not left out as each was required to establish a new Church/Preaching Station every two years. Also, since the Conference coordinates every activity of Church down to the Local Church level, it was suggested that, Directorates of Finance and Administration, Evangelism and Discipleship, Planning, Research and Services be

¹²² C.E. Chinonyerem 2010. *Renewal Movement Within Methodist Church Nigeria*. 179-180

¹²³ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006 Constitution. 2

¹²⁴ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006 Constitution. 2-3

¹²⁵ J. Fatokun, 2009. *Methodist Witness in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Positive Press. 121

established at the Conference headquartes and that Conference Connexional Council replace the General-Purpose Committee (G.P.C.). All these Directorates were expected to strengthen and help in the actualisation of the Church vision and mission while the Conference Conexional Council was saddled with the responsibility of day-to-day supervision of the Church.

In addition, the Constitution Review Committee was to therefore carefully examine the provisions of the 1990 Constitution with a view to identifying provisions that were currently relevant for the good governance of the Methodist Church Nigeria. They were also to examine all suggestions made to the time of their inauguration in the process for the review of the Constitution with a view to taking out all the suggestions that ran counter to the current thrust of the Church and to produce a complete suggested Revised Constitution.

On the 11th of November 2005, the report of the committee to review existing Constitution and a draft of the Constitution of Methodist Church Nigeria containing the inputs of the Strategic Planning Team and where appropriate, the reports of other committees mentioned above among other considerations were formally presented to His Eminence, Dr. Sunday Mbang, the Prelate of the Church and the General Purpose Committee that, acting on behalf of the Representative Session of Conference by a unanimous votes of 174, which are more than three fourth of the members present and entitled to vote passed a resolution to revoke the 1990 Constitution and to enact in its place ‘The Constitution of Methodist Church Nigeria 2006’.¹²⁶

The completed work of the Constitution Review Committee was ratified and adopted at the 40th/5th Biennial Conference of Methodist Church Nigeria at its Representative Session held at Ibom Hall, Uyo on 2nd to 10th August, 2006¹²⁷.

Major Changes in the 2006 Constitution are highlighted below:

(1) Women Ordination

Previously the Ordain Ministry was solely reserved for men, however, the 2006 included women into the Ordain Ministry of the Church. This implies that women can now serve as Priests with full pastoral oversight of Local Churches, including the administration of the sacraments.

¹²⁶ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006 Constitution 4-5

¹²⁷ C.E. Chinonyerem 2010. Renewal Movement Within Methodist Church Nigeria. Aba: Soul Winner Publications. 183

(2) Changes at the Conference Level

1. Section 145-148 provide for the office of Connexional Secretary for Evangelism and Discipleship in line with the new emphasis of the Church on evangelism
2. Section 149-151 provide for the office of Connexional Secretary for Research and Services
3. Section 160-163 create the Conference Connexional Council as the Executive Arm of Conference, which replaces the General Purpose Committee (GPC). It oversees the day-to-day running of Conference and acting for it between sessions. This body has become a major policy formulation and implementation arm of the Church.¹²⁸
4. The following committee ceased to exist by the provision of 2006 Constitution
 - a. General Purpose Committee (GPC)
 - b. Ministerial and Theological Training Committee
 - c. Committee on the Life of the Church
 - d. Literature and Bookshop Committee
 - e. Educational Scholarship/Training Committee

(3) Changes at the Archdiocesan Level

The Constitution seeks to give the Archdiocese more responsibilities to both the Conference and the constituent Dioceses. Chapter 5 among other things empowers Archbishops to coordinate with their Bishops in outreach and Church Expansion Programmes and to jointly fix Diocesan targets. In a nutshell, the following changes are noticeable

1. Coordination of evangelism, Church expansion and strategic planning (section 206 d)
2. Regular evaluation of policy implementation in each diocese (section 206 e)
3. Setting of yearly performance target (section 206 f)
4. Section 207 provides that the Archdiocesan Council should meet quarterly. This is in line with its greater responsibilities.
5. Section 214 list the power and functions of the Archbishop in relation to the Archdiocese and the Conference. Among others, the Archbishop is to ensure the implementation and enforcement of decisions of Conference, Conference Connexional Council and Archdiocesan Council.

¹²⁸ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2007 Minutes of the 22nd Conference Connexional Council. In, Compendium of Minutes of 1st-33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council. Lagos: Wesley House. 244

(4) Changes at the Diocesan Level

The most obvious changes at the Diocesan level are the establishment of the Diocesan Council with executive power and the streamlining of Diocesan Committees along the same lines as those of Conference. The Constitution also creates a Lay Session for the Diocesan Synod.

(5) Changes at the Circuit Level

1. Circuit Council replaces Circuit Standing Committee (Section 304)
2. Circuit Lay Preachers, Outreach and Evangelism Committee replaces the Lay Preachers' Meeting (section 306)
3. Section 308 establishes a Circuit Law and Property Committee
4. Section 310 makes Senior Circuit Steward, the Chairperson of Finance and Strategic Planning Committee
5. Also, Circuit Women's Work, Children and Youth Work, and Men's Work Committees were established in sections 312, 214 and 316 respectively.
6. Section 338-343 creates Circuit Budget and Development Plan which is a major innovation. it provides for each Circuit to either have a 5-year Development or 5-year rolling plan.

(6) Changes at the Local Church Level

1. The Church Council replaces the Leaders' Meeting (sections 361-368)
2. The age limit of 21 years minimum for membership of Church Council was dropped
3. The treasurer is to receive and bank money (section 382iv)
4. Section 396 slightly amended section 260 of the 1990 Constitution. All properties are registered in the name of Registered Trustees of Methodist Church Nigeria
5. Section 397 and 398 establish a Welfare Committee and provide 5% of Church fund for same

With all these changes it was believed that the Church was repositioned to serve to be one of the largest and most spiritual vibrant Churches in Nigeria and to remain very active in serving humanity. According to Very Rev Fred¹²⁹, the Church actually created adequate awareness on repositioning but not in practice. This was equally

¹²⁹ F.A.G. Onoja. *Interview Respondent.* (Very Rev)). Presbyter, Otukpo Central Circuit, and the Synod and Archdiocesan Secretary, Otukpo Diocese and Benue Archdiocese respectively. Interviewed on 12th August 2020 Otukpo, Benue State.

buttressed by Right Rev Edoke Amuta¹³⁰ who served as a major stakeholder in the implementation of policies spanning over a decade at the Conference Headquarters. In his word, “as an implementer, the Church did not implement the policies enshrined in the 2006 Constitution. We were using other initiatives to raise money here and there.” Another respondent, Kubiatic Dominic¹³¹ agreed that the vision and mission of the Church have helped to define what the Church stands for and by implication should have placed the Church at an enviable height. But he remarks that the Church presence is weak in a good number of places in Nigeria, and equally having a weak financial base and dwindling numerical strength. Another of our respondent is of the view that, “the awareness of change by the Church and the need to reposition in order to minister effectively to the society shows the foresight and creativity of the Church to meet up the demands of every age.”¹³²

4.5.5 Book of resolutions

The Church has come to realise the need to be more proactive to social dynamics which may require adjustment or addition to a system specifically spelt out or not covered by the Constitution. This is borne out of the fact that Constitutional amendment is not a day-to-day issue; it requires a strain procedure before amendment could be possible. Hence, the 2006 Constitution introduced annual publication of a Book of Resolutions containing the proceedings of Conference in the year and standing orders, and rules created or modified.”¹³³ It includes all the decisions and Resolutions of Conference on issues of policies, liturgy and every sphere of the Church life that are not covered by the constitution for further explanation from year to year. The book is also to guide the church at all levels and to keep all Methodist people everywhere informed on the position of the Church concerning its life and polity¹³⁴. According to Onoja Joseph,¹³⁵ the Constitution and the Book of Resolution are twin documents that govern the Church, determine its structure and define its polity. He noted that one without the other is like a bird trying to fly with one wing.

¹³⁰ E. Amuta, *Interview Respondent*. (Male) MCN Bishop of Ito Diocese, Benue State. Interviewed on 12th November, 2020 in Ito, Benue State.

¹³¹ D. Kubiatic, *Interview Respondent*. Undergraduate Student Minister, Immanuel College of Theology. Oyo State. Interviewed on 23rd February 2020.

¹³² G.W. Udoh, *Interview Respondent*. Former Lay President of Enone Diocese. (56 years). Interviewed on 12th September, 2020 at Otukpa Benue State

¹³³ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006. *The Constitution of Methodist Church Nigeria*. 6

¹³⁴ O.O. Aina 2016. *Polity, Worship, Doctrine*. Lagos: Rotabstone & Company.

¹³⁵ J.S. Onoja. *Interview Respondent* Former Northern Coordinator, Methodist Campus Fellowship. Benue State. (29 years). Interviewed on 17th December, 2020. Benue State

The Prelate, His Eminence, Dr S.C.K. Uche in the preface to the compendium of Books of Resolutions avows that it is to guide the Church at all levels and to keep all Methodist people everywhere informed about the position of the Church on all matters dealing with its life and polity. The book of Resolutions as a matter of fact, forms part of the constitutional development of the Church. In the 2006 Constitution it is clearly spelt out that “The Schedules to this Constitution contained in the Book of Resolutions to be published by Conference from time to time shall be part of the Constitution and shall be deemed to have been made by the Conference Connexional Council and dully approved by the Conference.”¹³⁶ In the same vein, the Secretary of Conference at the time of the publication of the Book of Resolution, is of the view that the Book of Resolutions “come second in importance to the constitution in the running of the Church.”¹³⁷ In fact, the book of Resolutions is meant to consolidate the Constitution, not against it.

Considering the fact that the 2006 Constitution aimed to reposition the Church, all policy drive focused on modalities to achieve this aim. As a result of this, the prelate, His Eminence, S.C.K. Uche rightly says, “we are still on the path of repositioning as we continue to push the drive towards Church growth through aggressive evangelism we must not lose sight of our policies and practice which are our peculiar characteristics as Methodists. It is these principles that the Book of Resolutions seeks to expound and it is our firm belief that as we seek to understand and apply these resolutions we are indeed showing our strong determination to move forward.”¹³⁸

Notably, since the adoption of the 2006 Constitution to 2015, up to 137 resolutions have been made by the Church. While some of the resolutions concern rules governing certain aspects of Christian life, others deal with guidelines on acquisition, development and management of Church property. In addition, there are resolutions in respect to the creation of Local Churches, Circuits, Dioceses and Archdioceses. The Prelate’s addresses to Conferences are accepted based on resolutions before matters arising from them are discussed and adopted. Some Prelates addresses are considered below.

¹³⁶ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006. The Constitution of Methodist Church Nigeria. Section 57. 24

¹³⁷ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2016. The Book of Resolutions. 11

¹³⁸ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2016. The Book of Resolutions. 10

4.5.6 His Eminence, Dr Sunday Ola Makinde, 2006-2013

While mapping out strategies for the actualisation of the vision and mission of the Church, the former Prelate, His Eminence Dr Sunday Ola Makinde, outlined ten points agenda which were in line with the Strategic Planning Team reports and recommendations. Prominent among the ten points agenda are two which are very germane to this research. Firstly is “the business-like and spiritual oriented meetings at all levels of the Church. Secondly is the manpower development of members. A follow-up address of the Prelate in 2010 to the 42nd/7th Biennial Conference resolves the extension of Prelate’s Scholarship grant to undergraduate students. In addition, the address advocates the need to establish a Micro Finance Bank. In another development, the Prelate’s address of 2012 to the 43rd/8th Biennial Conference led to a resolution that a memorial lecture be held annually in memory of the late Patriarch, His Pre-Eminence Bolaji Idowu. Also, ministers on One Year Service (OYS) are to be sent to open new Churches. The address equally empowered each Diocese to prepare order of service that will be attractive to the youths. All these issues raised in Prelate Makinde’s addresses were geared towards achieving the vision and mission social transformation through the Church.

4.5.7 His Eminence, Dr Samuel C. Kanu Uche

In resolution 0119/16, the Conference received and deliberated on Prelate’s address. After a careful consideration, the Conference resolved among others that “any member who goes into polygamy after the 44th/9th Biennial Conference should be sanctioned. In addition, members who belong to secret societies should be requested to renounce their memberships or face sanction by the Church. The same address also condemned gay marriage as abominable practice. Hence any minister or lay member caught in this act will be excommunicated by the Church. While also stressing the need to enhance the socio-economic well-being of members, the Book of Resolution proposed based on Prelate Uche’s address to establish Methodist Farm Limited.

The Prelate’s addresses which the Conference at her different meetings considered on made resolution on were centred on sanitising the Church for effective evangelization and socio-economic development of both Church as an institution and the members who made up the institution.

4.5.8 Other issues in the Book of Resolutions

Aside Prelates' addresses, in 2012 the Finance and Strategic Planning Committee realized the need to establish an Emergency Relief Agency with the functions among others "to assist the government of Nigeria and other International Organisations in relief and rehabilitation efforts throughout the Conference area." It is also "to provide for and rehabilitate persons living in most inhuman conditions and scavengers on dustbins and rubbish dumps in the Conference area. This recommendation which conference accepted and made resolution on it is to see to the Church being at the forefront in humanitarian services which was paramount in John Wesley's agenda.

While taking into cognizance the Methodist model of simplicity, the Conference Liturgy Committee re-examined the regalia of all categories of ministers, Church Workers, Lay Preachers, Choristers and Church functionaries with a view to achieving conformity with the universal Episcopal practices, uniformity, decorum as well the reflection of seasons of the Christian Calendar and special occasions. Policy in respect of this resolution¹³⁹ has since introduced the use of vestment and regalia for all cadres of ministers, lay and choristers. The aim of the resolution is to ensure that the liturgical life of the Church tallies with global practices of Christian liturgy and correcting indecent and wrong modes dressing.

The Book of Resolution equally addressed the issue of drugs and intoxicants. It directed that there should be regular teaching in all Local Churches especially during Christian Social Responsibility Week and in classes of preparation for Baptism and Full Membership towards the edification of the whole person and the cultivation of Christian character and standards in such a way as to live a wholesome life and avoid those things which militate against the attainment of Christian standards such as the misuse and/or addiction to drugs and intoxicating liquors. On the use of money, the book stipulates that "members shall be urged to avoid all forms of gambling including betting, sweepstakes, pools and raffles, as incompatible with the Christian stewardship on money".

In relation to the training of Minister in then theological school, Resolution Number 0004 provides that depending on the availability of fund, "the cost of Ministerial training shall be borne by Conference". Equally, that allowances shall be paid to

¹³⁹ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2016. The Book of Resolutions. 289-294

Minister on Trial while in training and to his wife and children, at rates fixed by Conference.”

In a bid to explore the rationale of the Book of Resolution, a former Secretary of Conference was interviewed.¹⁴⁰ He expressed his views as follow:

The current Book of Resolution shows the ignorance of the Church. I engineered the idea of the Book of Resolution which I conceived to be a book of constitutional practice of the Church; but the way we are using it is confusing. This should be where the Church document how each section of the Constitution is put into practice without leaving anything to chance. Hence, the Book of Resolution is bigger and more comprehensive than the Constitution since it explains or serves as a guideline to the constitution. Such Book of Resolution is to be given to all Ministers so that if they are presiding over any activity or taking any action, they could be properly guided on the position of the Church in such matters like marriage, burial, baptism and many other issues. In fact, what they have done here in Nigeria as Book of Resolution is absolute trash and a waste of resources. It does not help Ministers and members to understand the practice of the constitution. The lack of this has resulted in the blame game on Ministers that they do not know the Constitution.

(IDIs/ Adult/ Male/ Retired MCN Archbishop of Ibadan/ 2020)

He further pointed out that the current Book of Resolution did not meet up standard because the administration that started the operation of the 2006 did not want to have anything to do with the previous administration. Hence, the lack of basic desire to allow for continuity of policy remains a serious challenge to policy development in the Church. Noting that in the instances where the languages of top leaders reflect political, not ecclesiastical traditions make the Church to assume a political status than religious. You hear such things as “my administration”, “my time” is totally unacceptable. He concluded that the Book of Resolution would have been helpful to researchers if properly done because one can easily know the practices of the Church based on the different volumes produced annually or biannually. Ladigbolu¹⁴¹ expressed his view that while the Constitution gives strength and backbone to the

¹⁴⁰ M.K. Stephen. *Interview Respondent*. Secretary of Conference, 1996 to 2006, and retired Archbishop of Ibadan. Interviewed on 11th November, 2020. Sagamu, Ogun State.

¹⁴¹ L.S. Ayo Ladigbolu *Interview Respondent*. (82 years), Retired Archbishop of Ilesa and a serving member, Board of Trustee. Oyo, Oyo State. Interviewed on the 11th October, 2020. Oyo, Oyo State.

Church, the Book of Resolutions is the outcome of the mandate of the Constitution. Hence, it is the practicality and concretisation of the Constitution. In the same vein, what the Constitution empowers the people to do are recorded in the Book of Resolution to show their synergy.

4.6 Purpose of policy development in Methodist Church Nigeria

A living organisation must be sensitive and responsive to what is going on in the society. Indeed, policies arise out of needs as the Church interacts with the society.¹⁴² Methodist Church Nigeria has over the years shown commitment to initiatives that enable organisations to measure up to social realities. In the opinion of Akinwale, “progressions in Constitutional development have come largely as a result of an increasingly sophisticated and dynamic congregation; and in the light of the modern march of the Body of Christ. In this wise, policy formulation and implementation are aimed at responding to, and contributing to changes in the society; which some are of the view that the lack of proactive step to change is responsible for dwindling membership and exodus of youths to other denominations.^{143, 144} According to Taiwo, “Methodist policies have always been focusing on changes and dynamics of the society as such changes are both community and individual based, and an indicator of progressive development in the Church as the society evolves.”¹⁴⁵ He gave instances of the popular zoning formula and Federal Character in Nigerian democracy which had over the years influenced the Church to put into consideration the different ethnic groups and regions in the appointment and election into the different offices at the Conference level in order to carry everybody along. In the same vein, a respondent¹⁴⁶ concurs with the fact that the society is in flux and that any institution within the society that refuses to change will be swept away by the forces of change. To him, the Church as an intelligent institution has no choice on the issue of change, and this inform the responses to the demands of social change.

¹⁴² I. Olawuyi, *Interview Respondent*. (Most Rev). Archbishop of Lagos. Interviewed on 29th November, 2020. Lagos State

¹⁴³ Anonymous (Rev), Methodist Priest, Sagamu, Ogun State. Aged 27. Interviewed on the 18th June, 2020

¹⁴⁴ Anonymous, (Rev) Deacon. Sagamu, Ogun State. Aged 33. Interviewed on the 19th June, 2020.

¹⁴⁵ B.A. Taiwo. *Interview Respondent*. (Rt. Rev), Bishop of Elekuro Diocese, Ibadan, Oyo State. Interviewed on 26th November, 2020.

¹⁴⁶ S.E. Akor *Interview Respondent*. National Patron, Boys Brigade and former Cathedral Steward, Enone Diocese. Interviewed on the 2nd October 2020. Odoaba, Otukpa, Benue State.

An enquiry into policy direction of the Church attests to the fact that over the years policies are aimed at contributing to and responding changes in the society. Take for instance, after a period of about 27 years of Episcopacy, the Church saw the need to re-examine the journey so far in the light of current realities. Therefore, in July 4, 2003, the General-Purpose Committee in full realisation of the urgent need to reposition the Church to cope with the challenges of the 21st Century set up a committee known and called “The Strategic Planning Team”¹⁴⁷. Since then, the need to reposition the Church has been at the front burner among policy makers and the members of the Church. In the light of this development several adjustments have been ongoing. For example, the committee reviewing the 2006 Constitution recommends that the condescending phrase in section 20 of the 2006 Constitution which refers to the Tent Making Ministry as auxiliaries to the Full-Time ministerial staff should be change since it is not in line with reality and modern trend¹⁴⁸. Furthermore, it was felt that the use of “class”, though a Methodist heritage, should be improved upon in line with present realities of Church and Fellowship. With the advent of House Fellowships, it is felt that there is need to qualify “Class” with Fellowship to capture the essence of assembly and align with modern trends and reality of the gathering¹⁴⁹. Also, it was noted that the phrase, “order and form of Conference business” in section 101 of the 2006 Constitution has become archaic; therefore, it was recommended that the phrase should simply read, Agenda of Conference¹⁵⁰.

If one goes back to the time of the introduction of Episcopacy, the argument for the need to re-order the Church was hinged on two issues. In the first instance, the head of the country is a president just like heads of other countries have the same title. As noted by Idowu, the President of Conference, in a sister country, the State President invited the President of the Methodist Church and told him that there could not be two Presidents in a country; hence, either of them has to seek another title. As a result, the President of the Methodist Church had to change his own title to ‘Presiding Bishop’¹⁵¹. In the second instance President Idowu argued that “the titles, President, Chairman, and Superintendent, even though were relevant and convenient escape from treason in the time of John Wesley, did not hold the same respect and recognition in our

¹⁴⁷ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006. The Constitution of Methodist Church Nigeria. 2

¹⁴⁸ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2016. Review of Amended Constitution. 12-13

¹⁴⁹ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2016. Review of Amended Constitution. 16-17

¹⁵⁰ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2016. Review of Amended Constitution. 31-32

¹⁵¹ M.M. Familusi. 1992. Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992). 147

contemporary Nigeria”. He went on to say, “our Ministers, Superintendents, Chairman and the President could not find appropriate places when there were procession of clergymen in interdenominational services¹⁵².” It was felt that the re-ordering became necessary because contemporary Nigerians did not understand the language and it was imperative we talk to them in a language they can understand¹⁵³. The outcome of such drive by the Church, particularly, Patriarch Bolaj Idowu made the World Methodist council at Nairobi in Kenya in 1988, to commend Methodist Church Nigeria for reflecting the rich Nigerian culture in Christian behaviour at worship¹⁵⁴.

In fact, policy development in Methodist Church Nigeria has largely been a response to changes in the society. The Church took the move for autonomy at the very time Nigerian nationalists were equally agitating for independence. While the country got her independence in 1960,¹⁵⁵ the Church became autonomous in 1963, just three years after. The British Methodist Church was very conscious of these changes taking place across different nations under their missionary control and so set out to before things fall apart to manage the situation. In January 1954 when the entire six West African Districts were asked by the Overseas Missionary Committee to give a careful consideration to a circular which raised the question of changes in the constitution under which the Methodist Church in West Africa works. The various suggestions pointed to the fact that autonomy and independence would enhance God’s work.¹⁵⁶ This stand by the West African Districts to which Nigeria was a part could not be far at all from the current of nationalists’ agitations to end colonialism in Nigeria and other parts of Africa.¹⁵⁷ In the same vein, the 1976 Constitution was enacted at a period of military rule, ethno-religious crisis that culminated in Nigerian Civil war. Following the declaration of the ‘State of Biafra’ the Methodist Church in the East made a move to break away. This is not unconnected with the fact that the ethno-religious crisis in addition to the declaration of State of Biafra would have weakened the earlier union of the largely Western Wesleyan Methodism and largely Eastern Primitive Methodism.

¹⁵² M.M. Familusi. 1992. Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992). 147.

¹⁵³ M.M. Familusi. 1992. Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992). 148.

¹⁵⁴ M.M. Familusi. 1992. Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992). 183

¹⁵⁵ O. Olasupo, I.O. Oladeji, & E.O.C. Ijeoma, 2017. Nationalism and Nationalist Agitation in Africa: the Nigerian Trajectory. In *Rev Black Polit Econ* 44, 261-283. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12114-017-9257-x>.

¹⁵⁶ M.M. Familusi. 1992. Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992). 112

¹⁵⁷ J. Gunn, 2018. African Nationalism from the Colonial Period to the Post Colonial Period. In *Social Sciences Studies Journal*. Vol. 4, Issue, 20. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326709682_AFRICAN_NATIONALISM_FROM_THE_COLONIAL_PERIOD_TO_THE_POST_COLONIAL_PERIOD. on 5/11/2020.

The President of the Church, Rev'd Professor E.B. Idowu, while painting the picture of the Church and the society in his Presidential Address¹⁵⁸ to the Conference emphasised that,

The Church which came into being in 1962 was made up of two separate bodies which, until then, had had little relational contact with each other, ... Each of the two bodies happened also to embrace several ethnic groups, each with its own peculiar orientation, tradition or political... for as the nation was given to fratricidal quarrels and political cannibalism, so did it become obvious that the Church had not enough spiritual and moral stamina to sustain her and, consequently, she was afflicted with internal conflicts and dissension... which has wasted her spiritual energy so much so that she has been rendered insensible to the needs of the moment, cause to forget her responsibilities, leave her essential duties undone, and allow opportunities for witness to slip by.

This could have prompted why they came up with a letter to the 1967 Conference, asking that Methodist Church Nigeria be broken into two and that the Eastern part be separately administered.¹⁵⁹ Consequently, the tenure of the President, Rev. Salako 1968 to 1972 was a turbulent and trying period because of Nigerian Civil War, which prevented him from having complete oversight of a large portion of the Church.¹⁶⁰ More so that the Church at this time had not yet developed a Constitution that could effectively manage prevailing national issues. Rev. Idowu, while reminiscing on his predecessors made it plain that

Very often, the success or failure of a leader may depend, not only upon his own ability or inability, but also largely upon the situation with which he has to grapple. As I review, dispassionately, the circumstances through which it was the lot of these two former Presidents to lead the Church, I find that I can have nothing else but regard and sympathy for them: they did their best in situation of sore trial, which often proved impossible or next to impossible.¹⁶¹

It was therefore expedient that the Church be organised and well-structured to remain effective in such conditions, hence, the adoption of Episcopacy in a Constitution that

¹⁵⁸ E.B. Idowu, 1973. Restoring the Years that the Locust has Eaten. A Presidential Address delivered at the Representative Session of Methodist Church Nigeria Conference. Sagamu: Ojo-biri-Kale Press. 4-5

¹⁵⁹ J. Fatokun 2009. Methodist Witness in Nigeria. Ibadan: Positive Press. 55

¹⁶⁰ J. Fatokun 2009. Methodist Witness in Nigeria. Ibadan: Positive Press. 55

¹⁶¹ E.B. Idowu, 1973. Restoring the Years that the Locust has Eaten. A Presidential Address delivered at the Representative Session of Methodist Church Nigeria Conference. Sagamu: Ojo-biri-Kale Press. 5

was contextual and indigenous. The contextualisation of the Church has made it to be widely accepted as a community Church, but has also weakened the interest of a good number of others particularly those outside same community that regard the Church as too local and traditional.

The 1990 Constitution resolved internal issues that nearly paralysed the Church as a result of the division that resulted from the 1976 Constitution. At the end the Presidential and the Patriarchal were reconciled and reunited as one for effective and efficient witnessing. The 2006 Constitution as earlier noted was to reposition the Church to witness effectively in the 21st century. The wake of the year 2000 witnessed a serious religious revival particularly among the Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria. As a result of this development, many youths started leaving the Church for these New Generation Churches. To address this problem, it was resolved that the Church be repositioned with a well spelt out vision and mission that will enable her to meet up with the expectation of her members and the society at large. It was this Reposition thrusts that led to the adoption of the 2006 Constitution. While agreeing to the fact that the Church adapts to changes in the society, Adeogun¹⁶² affirms that the Church is not ready to adapt to negative changes within the society. He gave the instance of gale marriage which the Church specifically frowned at, though it is an acceptable norm in many parts of the Western world. He further notes that the Church has over the years maintained a strong stand against widespread polygamy as well as Secret Societies in Nigeria. One could substantiate his claims with the recent emphasis on these matters in the Book of Resolutions which provides that, “Any member who goes into polygamy after the 44th/9th Conference should be sanctioned and that known members of secret Societies should be requested to renounce their memberships of such societies or face sanction by the Church.” further provision has it that “Conference viewed Gay Marriage as an abominable and intolerable satanic practice that should not be even mentioned.” Others such as gay marriage, homosexuality, lesbianism were condemned in their entirety. Hence, Conference resolved that any member, Minister or Lay caught in these practices would be excommunicated by the Church.¹⁶³

In a message to Methodist Church, New Zealand, the General Secretary of World Methodist Council, Rev. Dr George Freeman, notes that “the Methodist movement is

¹⁶² J.O. Adeogun. *Interview Respondent* (Rt. Rev), Bishop of Ereko Diocese. Interviewed on the 27th November, 2020. Ibadan, Oyo State

¹⁶³ Methodist Church Nigeria, Book of Resolutions 2016. 296

alive and well, and it is growing particularly in the developing world where evangelism is a priority.” relating the progress of Methodist Church Nigeria, he particularly said, “the Nigerian Methodist Church is a very strong evangelical Church. It has launched a ministry of evangelism under the leadership of a Bishop whose responsibility is nothing but evangelism”. He went further to say, “a former Prelate of the Church, Rev. Sunday Mbang, has done a lot of work to develop relations with people of other faiths. His leadership has enabled Christians and Muslims in Nigeria to live together in peace. He has been outspoken against corruption in government and has been a leader in movements that seek to avoid civil strife”.¹⁶⁴ One can therefore say the Church, as a matter of fact, absorbed social change where it enhances and promote norms of Christian values but resist any change that pose danger to Christian doctrines or values. Hence, Maria remarked that Methodist Church Nigeria remains a reference point in evangelical faith because of strong policies against developments considered inimical to Christian faith and human procreation.¹⁶⁵

4.7 The contributions of Methodism to Nigerian society

While expressing his view on the Church and social change, Archbishop Oliver Ali Abah opines that both the society and theology are living organisms and that transformation takes place from time to time. Hence Church policy cannot operate outside the society. He notes that from ages the Church has always dictated for the society, particularly when theocracy was practiced. He equally agreed that though the society today is secular with democratic principles the Church has remained a potent force in the transformation of the society¹⁶⁶.

In line with this assertion, record has it that Thomas Birch Freeman, an Anglo-African missionary stepped his foot in Badagry on September 24, 1842 to become the first Methodist minister to arrive Nigeria.¹⁶⁷ From there he ventured into the creeks of what is today regarded as the beacon of Western civilisation and Christianity in Nigeria. Not too long after his arrival, the mission stepped into the enterprise of establishing schools

¹⁶⁴ TOUCHSTONE, 2009. Methodist Churches on Upswing in Global South. Retrieved from http://www.methodist.org.nz/touchstone/lead_article/2009/june_2009/methodist_churches_in_upswing_in_south. Accessed on 5/5/2020.

¹⁶⁵ O.M. George. *Interview Respondent*. Central Circuit President, Ladies and Girls Fellowship, Kaduna Diocese, and personnel, Nigerian Air Force, Kaduna State. Interviewed on 13th October, 2020. Kaduna State

¹⁶⁶ A.O. Abah, (Most Rev), Archbishop of Benue Archdiocese. Interviewed on 12th December, 2020. Otukpo, Benue State

¹⁶⁷ F.D. Walker, (nd). *Thomas Birch Freeman the Son of an African*. London: Student Christian Movement 32 Russell Square, W.C.1. 152

and hospitals while penetrating the hinterlands with the gospel. Hence, Ayo Ladigbolu¹⁶⁸ noted that Methodist Mission did not just provide religious education like Islam when it stepped on the shore of Nigeria but carried along with it Western education that have contributed in no small measure to the transformation of Nigeria. Also, in the area of health, the Church is reputed to be a pioneer in providing health services, particularly in the treatment of the dreaded leprosy and rehabilitation of the mentally deranged persons. He was specific about the central role played by the Wesley Guide Hospital Ilesa which till date remains a strong research centre for treatment of patients and training of doctors. He sees all these as deliberate policies of the Church to respond to the needs of the people. Aside the area of health and education, he pointed out that the publication of the Daily Reflection, a devotional book of Church was a response to social change within the religious circles when it became popular among different denominations, Methodist Church had to arise to the need of publishing for those within her denominational fold and those outside of it.

Some of the contributions of the Church are discussed below:

4.7.1 Education

Religion and education are like Siamese twins as often time, wherever any religion exists as a living, vital experience, its adherents wish to guarantee its continuation. Education is the means most often utilised for initiating both the mature convert and the young into the practices and beliefs, of the religious fellowship. Hence, as soon as the missionaries came, they began to build churches where they preached and schools where they taught these converts the rudiments of Christian life and Western Education. Instruction was given basically in reading, writing, arithmetic and religious knowledge.¹⁶⁹

The Methodist Mission pioneers Western Education in Nigeria, beginning with a nursery school in Badagry in 1842¹⁷⁰ for the purpose of Christianising and civilising.¹⁷¹ As the enrolment increased, and in order to reach many children from

¹⁶⁸ L.S.A. Ladigbolu *Interview Respondent* .(Most Rev), Retired Archbishop of Ilesa and a serving member, Board of Trustee. Oyo, Oyo State. Interviewed on the 11th October, 2020.

¹⁶⁹ S.E.U. Ngwu, 2002. *Basics of Education, Emphases on Christian Education*. Ibadan: Abake-Ade Prints. 119

¹⁷⁰ E.O. Frank 2012. *Celebrating 170 Years Of Christianity In Nigeria*
<http://www.thenewswriterng.com/?p=4951>

¹⁷¹ M.A. Oduoye, 1992. *Leadership Development in Methodist Church Nigeria 1842-1962*. Ibadan: Helicon Press. 60

non-Christian families, the Church established primary schools at central places to help draw children from neighbouring communities. As the established schools keep growing at unprecedented rate, the need of post primary school was felt as it was believed the graduates of these schools would be used as teachers for the Primaries. Among them are Wesley Boys' High School, and Girls' High School established in 1878 and 1879 respectively.¹⁷² These schools became centres for Christianising and civilising in addition to training personnel for the colonial administrators. Consequently, the four Anglo-vernacular schools in Lagos were described as being a blessing to the Church as well as the community at large.¹⁷³ The Church proceeded to establish a Teachers' College¹⁷⁴ in Ibadan to train African personnel both for teaching in schools and assisting the missionaries.

Just as the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society was aggressively involved in Church planting and building of schools in the West, so also, the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society in the East equally championed the cause of education. When Rev Fairley sent Rev. J. Marcus Brown, a Bubi Christian couple, Mr. and Mrs. Knox to Achibong Town in 1893; they were able within a short time to set up a Church, a school and a Mission House.¹⁷⁵ By 1895, there were ten members in the Church, sixty pupils in the day school and ninety Sunday School Scholars.¹⁷⁶ Further efforts led to the establishment of Oron Boys High School in 1905, and the Girls Institute in 1911.

The population of Methodist schools continues to grow every year with the establishment of more schools. From that humble beginning in 1842, the Church at the celebration of 170th anniversary in Nigeria in 2012 made a public statement of achievement in education. There were 95 Nursery and Primary Schools and 72 Secondary Schools of international standard in different parts of the country in addition to a university in Ondo State named, Wesley University Ondo.¹⁷⁷

The schools contributed immensely to the education and training of many illustrious past and present leaders of our nation, including the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Dr.

¹⁷² J.O.I. Okocha, 2013. *Yet Alive Methodism, A Historical Reflection*. Aba: Onyii Graphic Press. 93

¹⁷³ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. *Leadership Development in Methodist Church Nigeria 1842-1962*. 61

¹⁷⁴ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. *Leadership Development in Methodist Church Nigeria 1842-1962*. 44

¹⁷⁵ F. Anyika, 1997. *Methodism in Igboland, Eastern Nigeria 1910-1932*. Onotsha: Cape Publisher Internal Ltd. 17

¹⁷⁶ G.E. Igwe, 2000. *Christianity Comes to Africa*. In J.O.I. Okocha, 2013. *Yet Alive Methodism, A Historical Reflection*. Aba: Onyii Graphic Press. 93

¹⁷⁷ E.O. Frank 2012. *Celebrating 170 Years Of Christianity In Nigeria*
<http://www.thenewswriterng.com/?p=4951>

Nnamidi Azikwe, Chief Alvan Ikoku and Pastor Daniel Kayode Olukoya. Others included the former Lagos State governor, Mr. Babatunde Raji Fasola (SAN), who announced during his goodwill message at the opening ceremony of 43/8th biennial conference of Methodist Church Nigeria that he attended Methodist schools for his elementary and secondary education (Birch Freeman High School, Surulere, Lagos.)¹⁷⁸ One of our respondent pointed out that his community (Odoaba) with over ten thousand population would have remained backward educationally had it not being the effort of Methodist Church to establish a High School in 1981. According to him, this remains the only Secondary School till date and has helped to bring education to the door step of countless children that would have remained illiterate.¹⁷⁹

It could be noted that most of the people who passed through the mission schools from its cradle had sound moral and capacity development training which stands them out in their various chosen careers. Up till the present time, Methodist Church Nigeria is not relenting in her effort to bring education to the doorsteps of every household of this great nation. According to Adeogun¹⁸⁰, the establishments of these educational institutions are aimed at instilling the fear of God, the Church doctrines and sound knowledge to students in order to contribute positively to the society.

4.7.2 Health

The saying, “health is wealth” implies that health is a major indicator of development in all the nations of the world, just as ill-health prevents people from contributing meaningfully to development and nation building.¹⁸¹ The Church from the onset understood the central place of good health; hence, was not only concerned with Christianising the people but their total wellbeing. The pioneering efforts of the missionaries included the establishment of Wesley Guild Hospital, Ilesha by The Wesley Guild Britain in 1912 in response to the dire healthcare needs of the people in the area. The same hospital has continued to cater for prenatal and antenatal, childcare

¹⁷⁸ V.O. Adetona, 2018. Social Action as Medium of Church Contribution to National Development. In Opeke R.O., Familusi O.O. and Berekiah O.O (eds) *The Heart of the Act: Church, Politics and Social Transformation. A Festschrift in Honor of His Grace, Most Rev M.K. Stephen.* Ibadan: University Press Publishing House. 254

¹⁷⁹ G. Onaji. *Interview Respondent.* Distance Member, Rev Kelso Cathedral, Odoaba Otukpa, Benue State. Interviewed on 17th October, 2020. Lagos State

¹⁸⁰ J.O. Adeogun, *Interview Respondent.* (Rt. Rev) Bishop of Ereko Diocese. Interviewed on 27th November, 2020

¹⁸¹ A. J. Oluwabamide and J. O. Umoh, 2011. An Assessment of the Relevance of Religion to Health Care Delivery in Nigeria: Case of Akwa Ibom State. In *J Sociology Soc Anth*, 2(1): 47-52 (2011). Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268383402>. on 5/11/2020

as well as general health problems. It was registered by the Nursing Council of Nigeria for the Nigerian Registered Nurse in 1950; by the end of 1962, there were seventy girls in training for both nursing and midwifery.¹⁸²

Jide Fatokun,¹⁸³ extracting from C.A. Pearson's book, *Front-line Hospital, Ilesha, Nigeria*, gives a succinct record of the hospital, noting that in 1961, it was inspected and found suitable for a six-month training of Pre-registration doctors from the University of Ibadan. It was consequently recognised in 1962 by the Nigerian Medical Council for Pediatrics, while by 1970, it was also registered for the post-registration specialist surgical training in 1970.

Furthermore, the 1972 statistic of the hospital gives a good impression of the level excellence of the hospital before it was taken over by decree by the Federal Government in 1975. It had 197 beds, 7 Doctors, 7 Nurses/Midwives. Other staff in pharmacy, laboratory, administration, maintenance, catering and Chaplaincy were 100 while clerical and technical staff were 45 in addition to 100 artisans, maids and labourers. Also, annually, it recorded nearly 7000 in-patients and about 300000 outpatients. Operations both major and minor stood at about 5000 while delivery was about 1000. Equally, it had seven outstations in the rural areas, where eleven Midwives recorded another 200000 attendance and 500 deliveries.

It was a frontline in the revolution of childcare as the methods used in Ilesa spread to other parts of the country, particularly in the inauguration of Christian Health Association of Nigeria (CHAN) which owed much to the idea generated from Wesley Guild Hospital. Also, the training programmes pioneered which included the Nursing School, the training provided for Medical Students as well as General Practitioners has given Nigeria a cadre of dedicated health workers. Indeed, the hospital made significant contribution to the society and helped to raise the profile of the Church in the area of quality health service. In addition, the promotion of a balanced view for healing carried out in the hospital helped the society to overcome cultural fears caused by illness, enabling people to experience the reality of God's loving care.¹⁸⁴

It is worthy of note that beyond the Wesley Guild Hospital, the Church has a medical centres of international standard, the Royal Cross Methodist Hospital, Nkechi Colwil

¹⁸² J. Fatokun, 2009. *Methodist Witness in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Positive Press. 144

¹⁸³ J. Fatokun, 2009. 144-148

¹⁸⁴ J. Fatokun, 2009. 147

Memorial Hospital, Uzuakoli, and Chijioke Osogho Memorial Hospital, Apuanu all in Abia State. Other hospitals include the Methodist Hospital, Ifaki, Ekiti State and Andrew Pearson Hospital, Igbo-Ora in Oyo State among others. Apart from regular hospitals, there are Social Institutions¹⁸⁵ carrying out health related treatments. These are:

1. Centre for the Mentally-ill Destitute, Amaudo Itumbauzo, Abia State
2. Uzuakoli Leper Colony Welfare Centre, Abia State
3. Motherless Babies Home Uzuakoli, Abia State
4. Uzuzu Oke Centre for Spiritual Direction
5. Bethesda Community Based Orphan Care, Ikachi, Igede, Benue State
6. Bethesda Hospital and Clinic, Ikachi Igede, Benue State
7. Comprehensive Community Mental Health Programme, Otukpo, Benue State
8. Edawu Community Mental Healthcare Centre, Oyongo, Benue State
9. Health and Restoration Centre for Psychiatric Illness, Agboke, Benue State

It is worthy of note that such centre like Motherless Babies Homes cater for children who could have contributed to social nuisance. More so, following the stigma of leprosy then, the Church established Leprosy Centre where people afflicted by the dreaded disease were kept far away from the rest of the society. The record shows that over 7,000 lepers were treated and rehabilitated.¹⁸⁶ This obviously made the Church very instrumental to the elimination of several ailments to pave way for a strong and virile society. The psychiatric hospitals cater for patients with mental health challenges. The value of these Psychiatric Hospitals can only be seen in the number of mentally retarded human beings roaming about without any tangible care from the government. However, the Church took the initiative to undertake this important but neglected area. According to one of our respondents, these institutions have helped in the restoration of lives to those that found themselves in hopeless and helpless situations.¹⁸⁷ Another of our respondent, Babalola,¹⁸⁸ a beneficiary of the Church health programs attests to the contributions of the Methodist Maternity Home, Ikole, Ekiti State where he was born. He noted that the health centre contributed immensely

¹⁸⁵ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2020 Diary. Lagos: Wesley House, 21/22 Marina

¹⁸⁶ S.O. Mankinde, 2012. Prelate's Reflection on 170th/50th Anniversary of Methodist Church in Nigeria and Autonomy.

¹⁸⁷ O. Oscar, *Interview Respondent*. Kubwa Circuit Youth President, Kubwa Diocese, Abuja. (35 years). Interviewed on 16/9/2020. Kubwa Abuja

¹⁸⁸ R.O. Babalola. *Interview Respondent*. (Rt, Rev), Bishop of Edo/Delta. Interviewed on 10th December, 2020. Benin City.

to reduction of complications during delivery as well as infant mortality rate. One good aspect of the Maternity Home like other health institutions owned by the Church was that people from different denominations or other religions benefitted from the services rendered. Another respondent who is a beneficiary of the Church health programme is Iorlam¹⁸⁹ testified that he had mental disorder at a tender age of 9 and as a result was thrown out to roam about for many years until the Health and Restoration Centre for Psychiatric Illness Agboke, Benue State picked him from the road for rehabilitation. Today, he is in his sound mind and contributing to the Church as a drummer and engaging in farming activities. The researcher visited this same centre and interviewed the Welfare Officer, Very Rev. Ugo Onoja, who responded that between October 2019 and October 2020, the centre had treated and discharged 686 cases.¹⁹⁰

4.7.3 Female child education and women empowerment

A historical records of minutes and other issues related to females compiled by Mercy Amba Oduyoye¹⁹¹ gives a more detail and accurate information of the Church placement of women generally and young ladies in particular.

The work shows that as far back as 1909, the Minutes of the Local Committee of the Missionary Committee affirmed the Girls' School Scheme as laudable. It specifically penned down that the possibility of stable and lasting missionary work lies in the Christian training and influence the girlhood and womanhood of the country. This demonstrates the Missionary Society interest in the development of the women and the girl child in particular. One could only measure the missionary insight by the role of women in the contemporary Church.

In 1871 the girls were taught Needlework for two hours a day by Mrs. Marshall. Further effort led to the establishment of Girls' High School, Lagos, in January, 1879 to train the womenfolk like their male counterpart who already had a Boys' High School. One important thing about the quality of girl child education provided by the Church was its emphasis on literacy, singing and trade which produced satisfactory

¹⁸⁹ Iorlam. *Interview Respondent*. Member, Carew Memorial Methodist Church Gari, Diocese of Otukpo, Benue State. Interviewed on 20th December, 2020.

¹⁹⁰ U. Onoja, *Interview Respondent* (Very Rev) Presbyter, and Welfare Officer, Health and Restoration Centre for the Psychiatric Illness, Agboke, Otukpo Diocese, Benue State. Interviewed on 17th November, 2020.

¹⁹¹ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. *Leadership Development* 63-88

results at public examinations in literacy and needlework held at the request of parents and teachers.¹⁹²

Besides the Girls' High School opened in Lagos, other efforts at educating girls were made when another institution was founded in 1927 at Sagamu for training in Laundry, Needlework, Personal Hygiene, Cookery, Care of the Home and Mother craft. This institution developed into Sagamu Girls' Boarding School which was opened in 1930. In addition, there was Methodist Homecraft Centre in Ilesa which was officially dedicated by J.P. Shrimpton and opened by Owa of Ilesa in 1937. The centre had a capacity to accommodate 25 girls for the half-a-year course.¹⁹³ To raise the standard of education of girls, Sagamu was again chosen to train women as teachers along with United Missionary College, Ibadan (jointly owned by Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and Church Missionary Society).

All these efforts yielded good results as the wake of the 21st century witnessed the emergence of formidable women organisations such as Women's Guilds involving both African and European women's leadership in Lagos. There is also the Faji group called Women's Working Guild equally, there were African women Class Leaders in Olowogbowo in addition to a Band of Hope, a Women's Christian Association and a Ladies Guild. The Ilesa Women Christian Association led by Princess Adenibi was reputed to have undertaken open Air Services. Hence, the 26th Annual report of the Missionaries in Lagos District for the year 1903 was able to highlight these women efforts as quiet and effective.¹⁹⁴

The findings of Oduyoye further show that the gradual building of the women's department gave opportunity for them to serve in leadership positions. Among them is Duncan Leith who became secretary for the West Africa and West Indies section. She did all within her effort to ensure an existing structure in which men had to give report on women matters were changed. In 1928 she wrote to the Nigerian Synod to "appoint a woman representative to collate minutes relating specifically to women's work". This she said would give a woman in the Synod both the inspiration and pleasure of responsibility¹⁹⁵.

¹⁹² M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. Leadership Development in Methodist Church Nigeria 1842-1962. 63

¹⁹³ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. Leadership Development in Methodist Church Nigeria 1842-1962. 86

¹⁹⁴ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. Leadership Development in Methodist Church Nigeria 1842-1962. 72

¹⁹⁵ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. 73-74

More so, at a meeting of Wives of Missionaries at Sagamu Girls' School, the women returned to arrange and supervise a scheme of daily Bible reading for every woman member. They organised rallies, processions, retreats and open-air preaching.¹⁹⁶ One could say Methodist Church Nigeria has contributed immensely to the development of women generally. A good number of young girls who passed through institutions solely established for women have variously contributed to the development of the Church and the society.

In recent times, wives of ministers who serve as Women Fellowship Presidents at every level of the Church have continued to organise different programmes aimed at empowering women and young ladies. As part of measures to strictly guide young ladies, two fellowships have been carved in to the Women Fellowship. They are, Girls' Fellowship (5-16 years), Ladies' Fellowship (17-30 years).¹⁹⁷ These girls and ladies are empowered through skill acquisition such as making of soap and detergent, perfume, baking of cake, bead making, handbags and many more during their Annual Week celebration.¹⁹⁸ Corroborating on women empowerment, our respondent, Deaconess O.M. Abah¹⁹⁹ confirms that the programme of the Women Fellowship tagged "Filling the Jar" has brought relieve and succour to the less privilege, widows and orphan as a lot of food items and skill acquisition are major features of the program. Beside this laudable program, she notes within the Benue Archdiocese where she is the Women Fellowship President, they normally train over one thousand young ladies and women annually, particularly during the Women Work Week, Young Girls and Ladies Week and other special women programs. All these are geared towards building them to be self-employed and contribute positively to the society.

The Church equally contributes to women empowerment by taking a bold step in accepting women into Priesthood. Today such women are in great number. According to Ani²⁰⁰ "the policies of the Church in response to social change have over time brought dynamism and inclusive ministry, particularly, the ordination of women. This has positioned the Church as a model for others." Another of our respondents

¹⁹⁶ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. 85

¹⁹⁷ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2016. Report of Women Work Committee. In Compendium of Minutes of 1st -33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council 2011. 189

¹⁹⁸ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2016. Report of Women Work Committee. In Compendium of Minutes of 1st -33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council 2007. 29

¹⁹⁹ O.M. Abah. *Interview Respondent*. (Deaconess). Benue Archdiocesan Women Fellowship President. Interviewed on 12th December, 2020. Otukpo, Benue State

²⁰⁰ M.C. Ani. *Interview Respondent*. (The Rev). Interviewed on 23rd October 2020. Ibadan, Oyo State

buttressing this point expressed his view that the marginalisation of women was an age long social problem which the Church is taking a leading role to correct by giving them sense of belonging and recognition.²⁰¹ Also, Oscar²⁰² sees the admission of women into the Ordained Ministry of the Church as an impact of social change in line with women emancipation being conversed across the globe. He sees the possibility of ordained female Priest becoming Bishop in no distance time as a good number of them are already Presbyters.

4.7.4 Social services

Social service, also called welfare service or social work, deals with any of numerous publicly or privately provided services intended to aid disadvantaged, distressed, or vulnerable persons or groups.²⁰³ This has been a great concern to the Church especially in this era of myriads social problems. According to a respondent, Methodist Church has held a valuable place in the society when it comes to social services that brings relief to the individual and the society at large. He gave instance of how his Local Church, Christ Methodist Church Banjoko provides borehole for the immediate environment to alleviate the problem of water faced by the people.²⁰⁴ To make social services more effective in contemporary time the 2006 Constitution provides that at least five percent 5% of funds for appropriation shall be set aside for welfare of Ministers and members and that such funds be used for scholarship aimed at educational advancement in addition to allowance for widows, orphans, the unemployed, the homeless and the disadvantage in the society.²⁰⁵ The same Constitution mandates the Welfare Committee of the Local Church to co-ordinate all welfare activities in the Church like visit to orphanages, hospitals, Old Peoples' home, collection for clothing and other items for the less privileged.²⁰⁶ The Church takes social matters seriously and has a platform for it; the Christian Social Action Committee²⁰⁷ vested with the assignment to advise, deals with and assist in training in

²⁰¹ M.S. Dookon *Interview Respondent*. Youth President, Bori Diocese, Gokana Local Government Area, River State. (25 years). Interviewed on 12th November 2020.

²⁰² O. Oscar. *Interview Respondent*. Kubwa Circuit Youth President, Kubwa Diocese, Abuja. (34 years). Interviewed on 16th September, 2020.

²⁰³ R.A. Pinker, (nd). Social Service. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-service>. accessed on 5/14/2020

²⁰⁴ E.E. Chukwu. *Interview Respondent*. (Very Rev). Presbyter in charge of Christ Church Circuit, Oshodi, Diocese of Lagos North, Lagos State. Interviewed on 13th October 2020

²⁰⁵ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006 Constitution. 151

²⁰⁶ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006 Constitution. 142

²⁰⁷ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006 Constitution. 62-63

Social Responsibility with particular reference to Christian character and stewardship of the entire Christian life. It is also to assist in the establishment and development of Agriculture work and for the improvement of rural area, particularly, training of local people in scientific farming, cattle rearing, and similar enterprise designed to improve conditions of spiritual and social life in each locality.

Furthermore, in the spirit of social change to which the Book of Resolutions covers; the Welfare Policy of the Church was reviewed to establish an Emergency Relief Agency. Therefore, at the 44th/9th Conference, the Representative Session ratified the resolution of Conference Connexional Council establishing the Methodist Emergency Relief Agency (MERA) with functions²⁰⁸ among others to

- (a) Organise and provide relief and succour for all distressed persons or communities displaced by war, conflict, strife and disasters throughout the Conference area
- (b) Mobilise resources and raise funds to be utilized for effective relief and rehabilitation of all persons or communities distressed or displaced in the entire Conference area
- (c) Assist the Government of Nigeria and other International Organisations in relief and rehabilitation efforts throughout the Conference area
- (d) Provide relief for and rehabilitate persons living in most inhuman conditions and scavengers on dustbins and rubbish dumps in the Conference area
- (e) Establish storage facilities to keep relief materials.

In accordance with the mission statement of the Church, which centres on evangelism and social actions involves winning people for Christ, linking them with the church and instructing them in the scriptures. The social actions are services which the church renders to the society.²⁰⁹

Suffice to say, prior to the formulation of policies the Church has been responding to distressed situations of her members and the society. Right from time in memorial, the offering received during Holy Communion popularly called Relief Fund is reserved for the aid of the poor.²¹⁰ Though, during the Nigerian Civil War, communication ceased

²⁰⁸ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2016. The Book of Resolutions. 268.

²⁰⁹ E.O. Frank 2012. Celebrating 170 Years Of Christianity In Nigeria
<http://www.thenewswriterng.com/?p=4951>

²¹⁰ V.O. Adetona, 2018. Social Action as Medium of Church Contribution to National Development. In Opeke R.O., Familusi O.O. and Berekiyah O.O (eds) The Heart of the Act: Church, Politics and Social Transformation. A Festschrift in Honor of His Grace, Most Rev M.K. Stephen. Ibadan: University Press Publishing House. 257

between Eastern Methodist and Methodist Church Nigeria after the latter had constituted herself as the Methodist Church of Biafra with the Rev F.C. Vincent as President until the end of the war in 1970.²¹¹ However, in a letter received from the Rev F.U. Ekanem, Secretary of Port Harcourt District, revealed that the District had been badly affected by the Civil War. The President and Secretary of Conference were directed to obtain a military clearance for the delegation appointed to go to Eastern Nigeria with relief items already collected.²¹² Familusi further added that,

Mr. T.R.B. Macauley who was the Conference Treasurer at that time and Mr. Francis Inikute, Conference Accountant, went on an extensive tour of the Churches in the war-torn area to assess the damages that had been done and the need to help resuscitate the work. They mixed up with the people there in order to experience the deprivations of the ravages of the war with them. They came back with exciting stories of their experiences. A good number of the men, whom we thought were dead or missing, were really alive. Steps were taken to rehabilitate them within the Church limited resources. The British Methodist Church helped by given financial and material support.²¹³

From the policy framework, the Church has been responding to issues accordingly. In a report to Conference Connexional Council in 2015, the Church through the Prelate, His Eminence, Dr S.C.K. Uche supported families affected by Boko Haram insurgency in Chibok, Borno State. The report urges the Church to reach out to members and the less privileged in disadvantaged circumstances²¹⁴. At the same meeting, Council resolved that each Diocese should pay the sum of fifty thousand naira (50,000), while Archbishops should pay minimum of twenty five thousand naira (25,000) and Bishops ten thousand naira (10,000) towards emergency relief fund.²¹⁵ To cushion the impacts of crisis suffered in Jos, the Conference in 2010 forwarded the over two million naira to the Diocese as immediate response. In addition, each Diocese paid a minimum of fifty thousand while offering was collected from all the Churches throughout the

²¹¹ M.M. Familusi, 1992. *Methodism in Nigeria 1842-1992*. Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers Ltd. 141

²¹² M.M. Familusi, 1992. *Methodism in Nigeria 1842-1992*. Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers Ltd. 142

²¹³ M.M. Familusi, 1992. *Methodism in Nigeria 1842-1992*. Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers Ltd. 142

²¹⁴ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2016 *Compendium of Minutes of 1st -33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council*. 309

²¹⁵ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2016 *Compendium of Minutes of 1st -33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council*. 309

Conference area to support the people. For long term planning on how to assist the people, an eight members committee was constituted to visit Jos in order to see the physical damages done.²¹⁶ In another report on contributions in aid of victims of Northern Crises;²¹⁷ the Conference gave the sum of four million naira (4, 000, 000.00) to Bukuru Methodist Church. another one million, six hundred and fifty thousand naira (1,650, 000.00) was given to Ebenezer Methodist Church while Archdiocese of Umuahia gave Kafancha Methodist Church the sum of eight hundred and thirty nine thousand naira (839, 000.00) while Diocese of Uyo gave one hundred and fifty thousand naira (150,000.00) to the same Church.

The Church also responded to the plights of Internally Displaced Persons in Benue by donating two trucks and two buses of assorted food items and other sundry.²¹⁸ The prelate at the occasion declared the support of the Church for the Anti-Open Grazing and Ranches Establishment Law 2017 saying it was the sure way to end the nonsense killings in the state. He said that the enactment of the law was the right step in the right direction because moving about with cattle was an obsolete way of animal husbandry. In a report transmitted on Channel Television²¹⁹ the Church beyond assisting her members took a giant step to donate relief materials to Lagos State Government to cushion the effects of Corona virus (COVID 19).

Owing to the challenge faced by National Youth Service Corpse (NYSC), the Church has taken steps aimed at assisting both members and non-members of the Church in their service year. To this effect, there are State Coordinators who are to work with Dioceses and Archdioceses to assist Corps members in their areas especially in providing hostels and other form of accommodation.²²⁰

In pursuance of the Church target on agriculture, the 44th/9th Biennial Conference approved the establishment of Wesley Farms Ltd. Equally; Conference has since 2015 commenced a sponsorship of twenty students studying Agricultural at Wesley

²¹⁶ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2016 Compendium of Minutes of 1st -33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council. 126

²¹⁷ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2016 Compendium of Minutes of 1st -33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council. 205

²¹⁸ B. Basse, 2018. Methodist Church Nigeria Donates Relief Materials to IDPs. Retrieved from <https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/in-benue-methodist-church-of-nigeria-donates-relief-materials-to-idps/2jgrnt8>. accessed on 5/22/2020.

²¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9aFyZSLiYI>

²²⁰ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2016. Recommendations of the Conference Connexional Council for Evangelism. In Compendium of Minutes of 1st -33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council 2014. 296

University Ondo who on graduation were employed in the existing Methodist farms Ltd.²²¹

4.7.5 Economic development

In the area of economic development, the Church has equally contributed immensely as there are human development centres and programmes for skill acquisition and poverty alleviation aimed at economic development. At the Conference level, the Church had established a Micro-Finance Bank with the target of rendering financial services that will assist and empower the youths and women of the Church and the society at large. The establishment of Methodist Tailoring Factory has not only helped in sewing Ministers robes but choir robes, academic gowns for tertiary institutions and school uniforms for secondary and primary schools. With branches spread across the country, it is one of the largest tailoring companies in Nigeria today²²² and a hub for skill acquisition to a good number of people. The Church also contributes to economic development in the area of Job creation. It is estimated that over eight thousand Ministers including the including Evangelists and Pastors have been gainfully employed by the Church. In addition, there are staffs of the Church carrying out administrative functions from the Conference Headquarters to the Local Churches including others like drivers, security personnel, cooks, launderers and cleaners. It is estimated that over twenty thousand people are directly employed by the Church. The Church in her sensitivity to the plight of widows ensure that wives of deceased ministers are on the payroll of Conference in order to cater for the family left behind by the late Ministers.²²³ If one is to go back the memory lane, beginning from 1842 till date, the schools and hospitals established by the Church have been hub of employment to thousands if not millions of people directly or indirectly. The establishment of Wesley University, Ondo, no doubt has contributed to the employment of a good number of people. The Church did not overlook the problem of employment ravaging the nation and the campaign for diversification of economy. Hence, she has been a vanguard in the establishment of skill acquisition programs and the campaign for the return to agriculture for food sufficiency and job creation. The

²²¹ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2016 Compendium of Minutes of 1st -33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council. 294

²²² V.O. Adetona, 2018. Social Action as Medium of Church Contribution to National Development. In Opeke R.O., Familusi O.O. and Berekiyah O.O (eds) *The Heart of the Act: Church, Politics and Social Transformation. A Festschrift in Honor of His Grace, Most Rev M.K. Stephen.* Ibadan: University Press Publishing House. 257

²²³ S.C.K. Uche, 2020. *Prelate's Address to Conference.* Lagos: Methodist Printing Press. 11-12

Church has Methodist Farms spread across the Conference area in the different Dioceses, Circuits and Local Churches that have been doing well. All these efforts are geared towards economic development which is instrumental to social change. While expressing his view on the contribution of the Church to social change, Nginikanma²²⁴ noted that the Church efforts in evangelisation has directly or indirectly yielded good result by providing employment to numerous people.

4.7.6 Politics and democratisation

Methodist Church Nigeria has always advocated, encouraged and mobilized members and Nigerians to actively participate in politics. In the wake of democracy in 1999 after a period of military rule,²²⁵ the Church through the then Prelate, His Eminence, Dr Sunday Coffie Mbang threw their weight behind the transition programme since it would usher in democracy and bring to an end military regime. He also called on Christians at large, who are transparently honest and called by God, to dedicate their lives to the selfless service of the people; and those who have not done so to take part in active partisan politics.²²⁶

It is worthy of note that the contribution of the Church to democracy stems from the fact that the Church strongly believes and practice democracy right from autonomy till date. The Constitutions developed so far and other policies formulated followed due process of democratisation. As a matter of Constitutional provision, virtually all strategic offices occupied by lay members are tenured. At the Ministerial level the position of Bishop, Archbishop and Prelate is democratic as one has to be elected by secret ballot determined by a two-third majority of the total membership of the Electoral College.²²⁷ Hence, owing to the free, fair and transparent process of elections

²²⁴ C.K. Nginikanma. *Interview Respondent*. Circuit Youth President, Diocese of Owerri. (39 years). Imo State. Interviewed on the 11th October, 2020.

²²⁵ E.O. Frank and W.I. Ukpere, 2012. The Impact of Military Rule on Democracy in Nigeria. In *J Soc Sci*, 33(3): 285-292 (2012). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261672856_The_Impact_of_Military_Rule_on_Democracy_in_Nigeria. accessed on 5/22/20

²²⁶ V.O. Adetona, 2018. Social Action as Medium of Church Contribution to National Development.

²²⁷ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006 Constitution. 168

within the Church system, Nigerian Government has been urged to learn from her electoral process to curb election mal-practice that has bedeviled democracy.²²⁸

4.7.7 Social movements

Social Movement is a persistent and organized effort aimed to bring about change on a public issue. It involves the mobilisation of large numbers of people to work together to either bring about what they believe to be beneficial social change or resist or reverse what they believe to be harmful social change.²²⁹ Social movements are among the most dramatic events the world has ever known and the Church has not been left out in this regard. It is on record that on October 31st, 2004, the Prelate, His Eminence, Dr Sunday Coffie Mbang called all Methodists out to carry placards and demonstrate peacefully on the streets of major state capitals in Nigeria to ask Nigerians to say “No!” to corruption. In fact, a customised polo shirt with an inscription, “Methodists Say No to Corruption” was produced and worn by members. The Prelate was the front runner to the Lagos demonstration with a good number of thousand Methodists behind him to the office of the governor of Lagos State where he personally delivered an address to condemn corruption in Nigeria.²³⁰ In the wake of terrorism and kidnapping in Nigeria, the Church organised a solidarity rally in the Tunubu area of Lagos State to advocate the release Chibok Girls and to express their displeasure of the abduction.²³¹ Such dastardly acts were condemned while appeal was made to Nigerians not to play politics with the lives of the citizenry. The statement also called on government to treat security issue with the outmost seriousness it deserves.²³²

A flashback into the early period of the Church shows that both members and leaders have been vocal against any perceived social injustice. In fact, at a time when many cultural practices stood as obstacles to women’s right to the extent that women were

²²⁸ I. Onyechere, 2013. Elections of Pope Francis & the new Prelate of Nigeria’s Methodist Church: lessons in building enduring religious & political transition processes. Retrieved from <https://emotan.wordpress.com/2013/10/04/elections-of-pope-francies-the-new-prelate-of-nigerias-methodist-church-lessons-in-building-enduring-religious-political-transition-processes-ike-onyechere/>. Accessed on 5/29/2020

²²⁹ A. Giddens and P.W. Sutton, 2013. Sociology (seventh Eddition). Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 995

²³⁰ O. Osayemi and O.O. Babalola, 2006. His Eminence Sunday Coffie Mbang a foot Print of a Pelican. Lagos: Asaba Communication.

²³¹ C. Abiaziem, 2014. Nigeria: Release Chibok Girls or Face God's Wrath, Cleric Tells Boko Haram. Lagos: Daily Independent. Retrieved from <https://allafrica.com/stories/201406030113.html>. Accessed on 5/19/2020.

²³² Methodist Church Nigeria, 2016 Compendium of Minutes of 1st -33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council. 278

left with no option but to use traditional coping device such as smiling at the insensitivity of husbands and brothers and sons and bosses;²³³ yet Rebecca Lloyd, a brave Christian woman stood resolutely before the house of Matthew Grimmer, the besieged Wesleyan Missionary in Abeokuta, and confronted the marauders to dare touch one timber of the house. In response to their threats she announced; “You have driven away the minister, but God will send him back to us and he will want his house to live in”.²³⁴ This goes a long way to demonstrate how the Church prepares the mindset of people against actions considered unhealthy to social development. Mercy Amba Oduyoye equally reports on the active role of women at such a time when civilization was at its lowest ebbs. She said “the women through the coordinated efforts of wives of Missionary did organise rallies, processions, retreats and open-air preaching as methods for breaking the heritage of inferiority and paganism”.²³⁵ It is therefore appropriate to say the Church has never been at the backseat in pressing for and insisting on just society, good governance and respect for human right which are essential for social transformation.

4.7.8. Honorific awards

The significance of merit awards could be seen from the example of Nigerian Government in the public recognition of citizens who have contributed immensely to national growth. Such awards include²³⁶:

Grand Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic
(GCFR)

Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger (GCON)

Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic (CFR)

Commander of the Order of the Niger (CON)

Officer of the Order of the Federal Republic (OFR)

Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON)

Member of the Order of the Federal Republic (MFR)

Member of the Order of the Niger (MON)

²³³ H.A. Labeodan, 2002. A Philosophical Appraisal of Some Cultural Practices Infringing on the Rights of Women in Yorubaland. In D. Akintunde and H. Labeodan (eds), Women and the Culture of Violence in Traditional Africa. Ibadan: Sefer. 69 & 71

²³⁴ F.D. Walker, (nd). A Hundred Years in Nigeria: The Story of the Methodist Mission in the Western Nigerian District, 1842-1942. London: The Cargate Press, 58

²³⁵ A.M. Oduyoye, 1992. Leadership Development in Methodist Church Nigeria 1842-1962. Ibadan: Sefer. 85

²³⁶ O.C. Okoro, 2008. Nigeria, her Woes and True Remedy. Bloomington: iUniverse. 279

These awards are conferred on well deserving citizens to boost their morale for higher responsibility and expectation.²³⁷ Such awards at the same time pass a message across to other citizens that the society encourages and rewards quality services that contribute to social change.

In the same vein, the Church felt the need to have a system of recognition and appreciation for devoted and faithful members and non-members who have served or serving in various capacities. The issue was first tabled for discussion at the Conference level in 1990. The General-Purpose Committee (GPC) which was later replaced with Conference Connexional Council (CCC) appointed Archbishop J.N. Dimoji to head the exploratory committee on the matter while Bishop Ayo Ladigbolu was appointed as the secretary. Following the recommendations from the committee, Conference decided to adopt an Appraisal and Merit Committees as one of its statutory working committees.²³⁸

At the 31st Annual Conference held at Port Harcourt Civic Centre from the 6th-16th April 1992, the Church accepted to give various awards which include, Knight of John Wesley (KJW), Knight of Charles Wesley (KCW), Officer of the Order of Wesley (OOW), and Member of the Order of Wesley (MOW). The awards are given on the bases of merit to well-deserved members and non-members who have track records of service to God and humanity. The first batch of the awards was given in 1993; since then, service of Investiture is usually organised once in two years at the Archdiocesan level. While the male Knight is addressed as ‘Sir’, the female counterpart is addressed as ‘Dame’ while the wives of Knights are addressed as ‘Ladies’.²³⁹

Emphasising the integrity of the awards in 2009, the then Prelate, S. Ola Makinde, made it clear that there are not for sale or for highest bidder, rather, on the bases of spirituality, commitment, charity and faithfulness and regardless of sexual or tribal

²³⁷ J.K. Ayantayo, 2009. Fundamentals of Religious Ethics. Ibadan: End-Time Publishing House Ltd. 108

²³⁸ L.S.A. Ladigbolu, 2009. Ethics of Methodist Conference Awardees. In Methodist Church Nigeria Discover to Recover Seminar for all Ministers, Lay Presidents, Stewards and Treasurers of all Local Churches, Circuits and Dioceses and Orientation Seminar for Conference Awardees. Retrieved from <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/11548813/methodist-church-nigeria-online-study-bible>. Accessed on 5/26/2020. 61

²³⁹ J.N. Coker, 2009, Understanding your Call as a Conference Awardee and an Agent of Church Stability. In Methodist Church Nigeria Discover to Recover Seminar for all Ministers, Lay Presidents, Stewards and Treasurers of all Local Churches, Circuits and Dioceses and Orientation Seminar for Conference Awardees. Retrieved from <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/11548813/methodist-church-nigeria-online-study-bible>. Accessed on 5/26/2020. 52-53

discrimination. It can therefore be said that the awards are predicated on laudable contributions of the awardees to religious and social developments with the intent that their morale will be boosted to do more for the transformation of the Church and the society.

Despite this hefty and fulfilling evangelical mission laced with numerous social accomplishments, the Church still believes the best is yet to come. As Prelate Makinde rightly said,

We simply cannot afford to rest on our oars, not when our country, Nigeria is in desperate need of qualitative change and transformation. The poverty level in the country is deepening just as unemployment is at an all time high. Social justice has become a mirage while the gap between the rich and the poor is at an unprecedented state... we are committed, more than ever to join forces with the progressive elements in the land in ensuring that we have a safe landing. We have a passion which is renewed towards forming a progressive partnership with Governments at all levels, Communities and Neighborhoods at ensuring that we bequeath a lasting legacy to our Children's Children and the generation unborn just as we inherited from our fore-fathers who fought with everything in them to give us a Nation full of hope, equal opportunities, safety and shared prosperity. One of the clear evidence of this commitment is found in our foray into the area of science and technology with the setting up of a Wesley University of Science and Technology, in Ondo town, where we are partnering with government to build capacity in many young minds. We believe that technological advancement is the future and that Nigeria cannot afford to be left behind.²⁴⁰

The Methodist Church has seriously contributed to the social transformation of Nigerian society in every aspect possible. Beside the provision of social amenities, the Church through her evangelical outreaches has in many ways contributed to the drastic reduction of social vices in Nigeria. While accepting the tremendous contributions of the Church to social transformation in the past, Agada²⁴¹ insisted that the Church has seriously lost her pride of place in the society and among other denominations. According to him, "Methodist was a pacesetter in education, health and economic

²⁴⁰ E.O. Frank 2012. Celebrating 170 Years Of Christianity In Nigeria
<http://www.thenewswriterng.com/?p=4951>

²⁴¹ A.S. Ameh (PhD), Knight of John Wesley (KJW), Archdiocesan Lay President of Kaduna, Kaduna State. Interviewed on 13th December, 2020

development which are keys to social change; however, the current realities on ground show that she is not able to cope with social change.” He pointed out that when Nigerian talks about religious influence today the Church is nowhere to be mentioned as other denominations have since overshadowed her. Furthermore, he maintains that the Church is economically weak as she cannot be numbered among Churches that have economic capacity that drive the society. In the area of political influence also, he remarked that the Church is not at the forefront like her counterparts, Anglican and Roman Catholic. Hence, he advocates a holistic restructuring of the Church to a sustainable and result oriented one.

4.8 Prospects of policy development

4.8.1 Introduction of new methods

The rationale behind policy formulation is to usher in new methods of doing things for better results. It is also to meet the requirement for legal recognition, describe the governing rules by which the church is organised and administered, and to describe their beliefs and mission.²⁴² These drives have been paramount both in the Church and the society. As a notable fact, the society is always on the path of progression to something new or better or a progression stemming from a response to a social problem. For Methodist Church therefore to remain a potent voice in Christendom and the society in particular, policies are made with the aim of bringing into the Church, methods or systems that are abreast with social progress. In view of this one of our respondent, Regina²⁴³ opined that the Church as a social institution has changed and is still changing for the better not the worst. She particularly mentioned the recognition and value the Church gives to women empowerment to the level of allowing them into the Ordained Ministry. According to her, the joy of seeing a fellow woman performing Priestly function has been an inspiration to her. This she predicate on the fact that they cannot be doing well in other areas and be useless in Church Ministry. In the view of Oliver Abah, “the preaching of the Church can only be effective in the society if she is

²⁴² D.A. Robins. 2015. Why Do Many Churches have a Constitution and Byelaws? In What Do People Ask About the Church. Nashville: Victorious Publication. Retrieved from <https://www.victorious.org/cbook/chur38-constitution-bylaws>. Accessed on 8/18/2020.

²⁴³ R.E. Ogali, (KJW, Lay President of Item Diocese. (Female) PhD, Professor, and Lecturer at the Department of Pure and Industrial Chemistry, University of Port Harcourt, River State. Interviewed on 1st December, 2020

current with social dynamics.”²⁴⁴ Also, Ijiga²⁴⁵ agrees that the Church is a living organism that must like other living things respond to change which Methodist is not an exception. He particularly pointed out the formation of Youth Fellowship, Young Men Fellowship, Ladies/Girls Fellowship and Wesleyan Daughters as ways of giving young people chance to participate in the life of the church and to also harness their talents and potentials for Church growth just as the society places high premium to the people within this age bracket.

In a keynote address to the Conference of 1991, Justice S.D. Adebisi acknowledges that from the period of 1842 to 1960, that is, from the arrival of Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to Independence; the Church was actively involved in activities aimed at social transformation such as education, health and many others which culminated in the training of human resources for national development to the extent that those who took the responsibility of governing the different regions were mainly products of Missionary Schools.²⁴⁶ A great accolade to the Church one could say, but he goes further to show how these colossal contributions were soon overshadowed in the mid 50s with the approach of National Independence. Further developments after the Independence could buttress his claims as the Nigerian government later took over mission schools and hospitals.²⁴⁷ This act of the government invariably reduced or curtailed Church influence and dominance in these sectors that were instrumental to evangelisation and promotion of Christian values.²⁴⁸

This instance shows that, if the Church must survive government policies and the avalanche of social change, it must be proactive in the area of policy formulation and implementation to be on top of situations. Hence, immediately the country got her Independence, the Church also took the move to become autonomous from the British Methodist Church. This was realised in the year 1962. The outcome of this new direction was the emergence of the first indigenous President and the gradual move

²⁴⁴ O.A. Abah. *Interview Respondent* (Most Rev) Archbishop of the MCN Archdiocese of Benue, Benue State. Interviewed on the 12th December, 2020

²⁴⁵ S. Ijiga. *Interview Respondent*. Former Youth President, Orokam Circuit. (40 years). Benue State. Interviewed on the 13th December, 2020

²⁴⁶ S.D. Adebisi, 1991. Methodist Church Nigeria Conference 1991 Keynote Address. In Conference Minutes. 124

²⁴⁷ M. Ajah, 2015. Religious Education and Nation-building in Nigeria. In Stellenbosch Theological Journal Vol. 1. No 2. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.17570/STJ.2015.V1N2.A12>. Accessed on 8/18/2020.

²⁴⁸ C.O. Daniel. *Interview Respondent*. Steward, Methodist Church Ojilegbe, Kogi State. Interviewed on 19th December 2020.

towards indigenisation of foreign infested Church. Subsequent developments led to a mega shift from the Presidential system of Church governance to Episcopacy when the former could no longer minister adequately in the native context.²⁴⁹ Other changes that came along with Episcopacy were the new structure and hierarchies for the Church. Formerly it was Conference, District, Circuit and Society.²⁵⁰ But with Episcopacy, Conference and Circuit were retained while Districts and Societies were changed to Diocese and Local Churches respectively. In addition, Archdiocese, comprising some Dioceses within a geographical location was introduced. In the same way, President, Chairman and Superintendent which were titles in the Presidential system were changed to Patriarch, Bishop and Presbyter to head Conference, Diocese and Circuits respectively while the newly introduced Archdiocese was to be headed by the Archbishop.²⁵¹ It is worthy of note that irrespective of the position occupied within the Presidential system, be it the President at the apex of leadership or a minister in-charge of Society; an ordained minister was addressed as “The Rev.” while probationer ministers, that is, Deacons were addressed simply as “Rev.” However, Episcopacy only retained “The Rev.” for ordained Priest and “Rev.” for Deacons. All other hierarchies upward were modified in the following order: Very Rev. for Presbyters, Rt Rev. for Bishops, Most Rev. for Archbishops and His Pre-Eminence for Patriarch. Later development led again to the change of the office of Patriarch to Prelate and the title from His Pre-Eminence to His Eminence. Hence, from autonomy to the time of this research, the head of the Conference area has changed from President to Patriarch and currently Prelate with the respective attendant title of “The Rev., His Pre-Eminence and His Eminence.

The question that comes to mind is that, to what extent has these changes brought new method of doing things? The answer is in the positive. In the argument of The Rev E.B. Idowu, the President of the Conference area, 1972 to 1976, “True development and growth for a Church cannot be a matter of prefabricated, made-from-abroad specifications..., something inchoate and, in many ways, unworthy of a Church of our age and status. He went further to assert that “the ministry in Methodist history had been defined almost entirely by circumstance and that practical necessity had dictated

²⁴⁹ Methodist Church Nigeria Conference 1972 Minutes. 11-12

²⁵⁰ The Methodist Church Nigeria Deed of Foundation and Deed of Church Order for the Constituting of the Nigerian Conference. London: Waterlow and Sons Ltd. 17-23

²⁵¹ Methodist Church Nigeria Constitution 1975. Lagos: Woodfree Comm. Enterprises. 11-13

theology as well as determined polity and devised the strategy of mission. Maintaining that, the ministry, as much as any other element or entity in Methodism is the result of improvisation.”²⁵² Hence, the new developments in Methodist Church Nigeria brought a system that replaced the “ad hoc arrangement” which some people were referring to as “simplicity of Methodist worship.” In his submission, “Methodism throughout the world is still in search of bona fide liturgies, and experiments are going on everywhere, including Britain.”²⁵³

Hence, beginning from 1972 after his election as President, he was consecrated rather than inducted. Chile Ogan, the Chairman of Umuahia District succinctly puts it, “sometime in November, 1972 I received a circular from the Conference Office about Consecration of the President. The word underlined gave me a terrific jolt; until then, we had been perfectly content to induct the President of Conference or the Chairman of Districts.”²⁵⁴ It is to be noted that since 1976 when full Episcopacy was introduced till date, Ministers elected to the Episcopal rank are ratified with a divine service of Investiture and Consecration. Equally, Dioceses created are inaugurated while Bishops and Archbishops are enthroned. Service of Dedication and Commissioning is conducted for Ministerial Candidates in training who have satisfactorily completed their period of College training, while service of Ordination for Minister who have satisfactorily completed the period of their in-service training. In addition, a Minister newly appointed to a Local Church, Circuit or Diocese, is formally received by a special service of Induction. What this means, is that Induction of President and District Chairmen is now reserved for Ministers below the rank of Bishop.

In another development, the birth of Methodist Evangelical Movement was a new method of doing Evangelism as it led to great awakening in open air crusade, house to house evangelism and retreats. The result of the development was the retention of those who were leaving the Church for new religious movements now found semblance of what they were looking for in Methodist Evangelical Movement.²⁵⁵ As an evolving Church, later developments led to repositioning. The outcome of this was

²⁵² E.B. Idowu, Methodist Church Nigeria, “You Shall Know the Truth and the Truth Shall Make you Free”. Lagos: Woodfree Comm. Enterprises. 22

²⁵³ E.B. Idowu, Methodist Church Nigeria, “You Shall Know the Truth and the Truth Shall Make you Free” 23

²⁵⁴ C.O. Ogan, 1980. Crisis in the Methodist Church Nigeria, Where I Stand. Umuahia: Cartographic Press. 16

²⁵⁵ C.C. Ekebuisi, 2010. Renewal Movements Within Methodist Church Nigeria. Aba: Soul Winner Publication. 161

the re-organization of Evangelism Department to a Directorate with a Bishop in charge at the Headquarters. The Directorate is to ensure the production of Bible study guide, modify Church liturgy to a uniform standard to accommodate all the fruit of the Spirit. From that time onward, the Church places emphasis on Altar calls, testimonies, manifestation of the spirit, youth involvement in revival programmes and frequent use of electronic media.²⁵⁶ Equally, the Directorate of Administration was introduced which helps to manage the administrative demands of the Church. According to our respondent, Aluko Sunday²⁵⁷, “before the introduction of the Directorate of Administration, you go to Conference and everybody queue around the Secretary of Conference for administrative issues but this has been resolved with the new directorate.”

The good aspect of these developments is that changes are not at the prerogative of an individual but a collective resolution by the Conference, the highest decision-making body of the Church. These new methods have helped the Church in many ways as the introduction of new things through Constitutional review and new resolutions have upgraded the Church to thrive and compete favourably in dynamic society. Buttressing on this point, Mary Akor responded that “the introduction of new policy bring new initiatives and make the Church dynamic and also help in resolving existing problem” She added that the announcement of such policy during divine worship often receive overwhelming acceptance.²⁵⁸ It is expedient to state here the view of the Prelate, S.C.K. Uche that the cherished tradition of Methodist Church as regard policy formulation is to send the draft through to the Local Churches for inputs then sent back through Circuit to Diocese, to Archdiocese and then to Conference before it will finally be released for operation. He gave instance of the 2021 Constitution which travelled through the Conference area for seven years because they want to carry everybody along.²⁵⁹ This means that the formal introduction of such policy is just a confirmation of a draft already known to a good number of the members.

²⁵⁶ C.C. Ekebuisi, 2010. *Renewal Movements Within Methodist Church Nigeria*. 181

²⁵⁷ S. Aluko. *Interview Respondent*. (Rt. Rev) Bishop of Ifaki Diocese. Interviewed on the 17th October, 2020. Ekiti State

²⁵⁸ M. Akor, (35 year female) BSc. Women Fellowship member and Staff, Nigerian Fire Service, Auja. Interviewed on 12 August, 2020.

²⁵⁹ S.C.K Uche. *Interview Respondent*. (His Eminence) Prelate, Methodist Church Nigeria. Interviewed on 13th May 2020. Marina, Lagos

4.8.2 Church growth and expansion

The nuclei of the present-day Methodist Church Nigeria could be traced to the little but significant beginnings of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society. While the former concentrated her missionary work in the West of the Niger, the later was in the East. The works of these two missionary bodies show that at the time of autonomy, there were two Districts²⁶⁰, the equivalence of today's two Dioceses. This was evidence by the fact that Synod was the highest decision-making organ of each District.

However, the attainment of autonomy and new policy direction resulted in growth of the two Districts to eight. That is, the Western District with its headquarters in Lagos grew to be divided into three Synods which are Lagos, Ibadan and Ilesa. The Eastern Nigerian District equally expanded and was divided in three which are Umuahia, Calabar and Port-Harcourt while the work in the Northern Nigeria formerly under Lagos was made a District with its headquarters in Jos.²⁶¹ The chain of growth continued to the extent that by 1982 there were twelve Dioceses with 67 Circuits, Lagos alone had twelve Circuits.²⁶² Today, the Church can boast of 17 Archdioceses, 80 Dioceses with 631 Circuits and 4260 Local Churches.²⁶³ Attesting to the growth and expansion, Idowu echoes that, "Methodist Church Nigeria has been expanding rapidly and will continue to expand. She now stands remarkably conspicuously as witness to the glorious victory of the Living God".²⁶⁴ The Prelate, S.C.K Uche also lends his voice that the Methodist Church is not kidding when it creates new Dioceses and Archdiocese. Rather, that such is done to "bring the gospel to the doorstep of everybody."²⁶⁵ Tracing the propellant of this growth and expansion, Sunday Aluko²⁶⁶ opined that it had its root in the introduction of Episcopacy. According to him, prior to Episcopacy the Church was lagging behind as the system of Church governance was inimical to the cultural context of Nigeria where the people see their spiritual leaders

²⁶⁰ C.O. Ogan, 1980. *Crisis in the Methodist Church Nigeria, Where I Stand*. Umuahia: Cartographic Press 7

²⁶¹ M.M. Familusi, 1992. *Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992)*. Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers Ltd. 123.

²⁶² E.B. Idowu, 1982. *Methodist Church Nigeria, "You shall Know the Truth and the Truth shall Make you Free"*. Lagos: Woodfree Comm. Enterprises. 40.

²⁶³ *Methodist Church Nigeria, 2020 Conference Strategic Planning/Research and Documentation Interim Report of Church Membership Presented to 47th/12th Biennial Conference.*4

²⁶⁴ E.B. Idowu, 1983. *Patriarch's Address to the Annual Conference of the Methodist Church Nigeria*.

²⁶⁵ S.C.K. Uche, 2018. *Kerygma of a Prelate*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited. 19

²⁶⁶ S. Aluko. *Interview Respondent*. (Rt. Rev), Bishop of Ifaki Diocese. (68 years). Interviewed on 17th October, 2020. Ifaki, Ekiti State

as final authority. But in the case of Presidential system the lay had the upper hand and actually ruled the Church with fist hand. Hence, Ministers were not actually in charge and most of the time their welfare was not a concern to the lay. This, he notes hindered evangelism and expansion as the lay were happy to maintain their local hegemonies.

In terms of expansion, the Church has equally done well both at the local and international levels. As earlier stated, the two Missionary Societies had their area of concentrations which are Western and Eastern Nigeria while both Societies differently evangelised some parts of the North. That is, the Primitive evangelised Idoma while the Wesleyan had a handful of their presence in Jos, Kaduna and Kano. One can say the mission in the North was not widespread. However, with the move of Federal Capital Territory from Lagos to Abuja, the Church made frantic efforts to expand her jurisdiction in the area.²⁶⁷ The Abuja missionary project which could be said to be part of growth and expansion is today an Archdiocese comprising of three Dioceses of Abuja, Nyanya and Kubwa.²⁶⁸ According to Olorche, a Minister serving in Abuja, “Methodist presence and impacts are felt virtually in every nook and cranny of the city and in governance.”²⁶⁹

The Church has equally expanded beyond the shore of Nigeria to neighbouring African countries and even outside the African continent. The foreign mission includes Benin Republic, United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirate and in the Caribbean. The record of the Church shows that in 1989, the Patriarch, His Eminence, Dr Sunday Coffie Mbang informed the Conference about the request of Methodist Church in the Caribbean and America for Nigerian Methodist Ministers to serve as Missionaries in the Caribbean. He equally announced the names of two ministers who would go as first missionaries with effect from 1990.²⁷⁰ While inaugurating the Nigerian Methodist Chaplaincy, United Kingdom in 2014, the Prelate, S.C.K. Uche expressed his joy that Methodist Church Nigeria had grown to the extent of coming to work within the government and Conference of the British Church, the rock from which the Nigerian Methodist was hewn.²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ L.S.A. Ladigbolu (ed), 1989. Methodist News Vol. 1 No 1. 11

²⁶⁸ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2015/2016 Stationing of Ministers booklet. 18

²⁶⁹ S.J. Olorche, *Interview Respondent* (The Rev), 47 years Priest serving in Cathedral Circuit, Cathedral of Unity, Wuse, Abuja. Interviewed on 18th October, 2020

²⁷⁰ L.S.A. Ladigbolu (ed), 1989. Methodist News. Vol.1. No. 1.

²⁷¹ S.C.K. Uche, 2018. *Kerygma of a Prelate*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited. 31

Another area of growth and expansion is in planting of more Churches in areas where Methodist presence is already felt. According to Fagbiye, the terms of reference given to the Strategic Planning Team of the Church at the commencement of Repositioning were to identify reasons why the Church was not growing as expected and map out strategies on how the Church could increase her membership, through Church planting drive. His research findings show that in the South-West alone the Church has been able to plant 236 Churches from 1962 to 2012. The policy drive that enhances this giant stride includes Revival/Crusade Strategy with 80 Churches, House Fellowship, 73, Building of Manpower, 42, Humanitarian/Social Strategy with 36, and Electronic/Print Media with 5 Churches.²⁷² This shows that policy drive has helped in the growth and expansion of the Church. One of our respondents however noted that though the Church has a strong policy on evangelism and Church planting, much is not achieved because it is not pursued aggressively. He also noted that arbitrary posting of Ministers without regard for the specific area of gifts and abilities make their contributions towards evangelism and Church planting very minimal.²⁷³

4.8.3 National impacts

The invaluable position of Methodist Church right from inception of mission in Nigeria remains a reference point in the anal of the country. This is first noticeable in the area of education as the first Nursery of the Infant was established by the Church in Badagry.²⁷⁴ It was from this little beginning that Western Education spread to every parts of Nigeria. In the same way, the Wesley Guild Hospital, Ilesa was ranked next only to the University of Ibadan Teaching Hospital, the best hospital in Nigeria at the time.²⁷⁵

The Church has remained strong in contributing to national development. Beside the observable contributions such as school and health, the Church works to ensure that members are well developed to contribute meaningfully to national development. In the 29th Annual Conference Theme, ‘the Church and national development’, emphasis

²⁷² D.K. Fagbiye, 2016. Church Plating Strategies in Methodist Church Nigeria Since Autonomy in 1962 to 2012. A PhD Thesis submitted to the University. 2, 39-40

²⁷³ Anonymous. *Interview Respondent*. (The Rev) Postgraduate Student, Methodist Theological Institute, Sagamu, Ogun State. Interviewed on 19th November, 2020.

²⁷⁴ E.B. Olejurulo, 2018. Historical Analysis of Educational Policies in Colonial Nigeria from (1842-1959) and its Implication to Nigerian Education Today. In, *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, Vol. 11(3), 392-410. 393. Retrieved from [http://www.ij sre.com/assets/vol.%2C-11\(3\)-ethel--bunting.pdf](http://www.ij sre.com/assets/vol.%2C-11(3)-ethel--bunting.pdf). Accessed on 8/19/2020

²⁷⁵ M.M. Familusi, 1992. *Methodism in Nigeria (Revised Edition) 1842-2012*. Lagos: Methodist Publishing Company. 84

was laid on the need for members to contribute meaningfully to national development. Part of the Prelate's address to the Conference caption this emphasis.

The ministry of Jesus Christ was a ministry of liberation... therefore; the Church must always link the message of the Gospel and the comfort of the Holy Spirit not only to the needs of the sinners but also to the requirement of the poor, the lonely, the motherless. The holiness of the Church of Jesus Christ must always consist of two elements namely: justification of the ungodly and the liberation of the oppressed and the disadvantaged. Therefore, in any development programme in a nation which the Church is a part, the issue of liberation as the goal of such development exercise cannot be ignored.²⁷⁶

Such thought-provoking themes and addresses have motivated the Church to remain very active in contributing to national development.

One cannot but mention the important central role of the Church in the transition from military to democratic rule in Nigeria. This is well pronounced in interreligious dialogue, national peace and partisan politics. In the same address to Conference, the Prelate said, "I have always advocated and encouraged all our members and Nigerians to support this programme not withstanding their reservation and disapproval of some aspects of the programme."²⁷⁷ He called members of the Church and Christians at large with the exemption of ordained ministers and Church workers to dedicate their lives to the selfless service of the land and to take part in partisan politics; insisting that politics is a must for Christians today in this nation.

4.8.4 Global relevance

The giant stride of the Church has been recognised by the World Council of Churches. In their report of the Church, they acknowledge that,

The Methodist Church Nigeria (MCN) has been at the forefront of spiritual and social transformation, by spreading spiritual holiness and investing in medical-health services and social-economic welfare of the people. The church has established various institutions like the leprosy centre, mentally ill-destitute centres, and an orphanage centre, for children orphaned by

²⁷⁶ S.C. Mbang, 1991. Prelate's Address to the 29th Annual Conference of Methodist Church Nigeria. In, Minutes of Conference. 109

²⁷⁷ S.C. Mbang, 1991. Prelate's Address to the 29th Annual Conference of Methodist Church Nigeria 116

HIV/AIDS. These centres reach out to the rejected and less privileged members of society. They also ensure reintegration of those previously treated as outcast and subjected to various societal abuses. ... Throughout the country the church has established numerous schools... which have produced men and women who have contributed and are still contributing very significantly to all spheres of human endeavour.²⁷⁸

The Church is not left out in matters of religion and leadership. The reconciliation, reconstruction and reunification of the factions, and the drafting and approval of a new Constitution which resolved all the provisions of the 1962 and 1976 Constitutions brought the Church to the limelight at the local and international fronts. The Prelate, His Eminence, Dr Sunday Coffie Mbang was appointed as the President of the World Methodist for a period of five years while the model used for the reconciliation became a reference point in World Methodist Council for resolving crises in several parts of the Pacific, the Caribbean and Africa.²⁷⁹

While congratulating the Prelate on his appointment as the President of World Methodist Council, the then President, Olusegun Obasanjo has this to say,

I am personally overwhelmed with joy, to learn of your well-deserved appointment as President of World Methodist Council for the next five years. This singular recognition of one of Nigeria's leading spiritual leaders of all times has brought to Africa and Nigeria in particular, a renewed sense of hope that contemporary world community is prepared to give honour to whom honour is due, irrespective of our geo-political differences.... I have no doubt in my mind that as usual, you will put in the best of your God-given talents and intellectual capacity to lead the Methodist World to make greater contribution to the development of a more humane, just and prosperous world community, where the ideas of Christ our Saviour will continue to bring about total transformation.²⁸⁰

It is worthy to note that the Nigerian Methodist Prelate was the second African and Black to lead the World Methodist Council. He was at the same time the Chairman,

²⁷⁸ World Council of Churches report on Methodist Church Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/methodist-church-nigeria>. Accessed on 7/19/2020

²⁷⁹ M.M. Familusi, 1992. Methodism in Nigeria (Revised Edition) 1842-2012. Lagos: Methodist Publishing Company .231-232

²⁸⁰ L.S.A. Ladigbolu (ed), 2001. Methodist News. 15

Methodist Leaders in Africa.²⁸¹ National President, Christian Association of Nigeria, and Co-chairperson of Nigeria's Inter-Religious Council.²⁸²

It is also important to mention here that the relevance of the Church at the international front led the *Iglesia Methodists De Guinea Equatorial* to write the Conference, requesting for assistance in training of their ministers in Methodist Theological Institution. In addition, Methodist Church Nigeria was to assist in evangelism, Church planting, and posting of vibrant and evangelical ministers to them and paying such ministers stipends.

4.8.5 Adjustment to social realities

Policy developments have greatly helped in adjusting and readjusting the Church for efficient social output. The crux of adjustment lies in the fact that a transformations in one sector triggers adjustments in other sectors.²⁸³ Hence, the Church as a social institution equally tries to adjust to changes in the society. In a view expressed by a respondent²⁸⁴,

Methodist Church is not isolated from the macroscopic society and as such, changes in the society have their ways of affecting the policies of the Church over time. Hence, she has moved from a local setting to sophisticated auditorium with modern sound system and well decorated edifices. Equally, the use of modern form of music in addition to hymns and other key areas of public worship like extemporaneous sermons and prophetic utterances have become constant features of the Church as a result of impacts in modern age.

Adogo²⁸⁵ attested to the impacts of social change on the Church in the area of worship. According to him, formerly in Methodist Church things like clapping, beating of drums and singing choruses were not encouraged. But now, these things are features

²⁸¹ L.S.A. Ladigbolu (ed), 2001. Methodist News.

²⁸² M. Omonijo, 1998. His Master's Will: A Biography of His Eminence Sunday Mbang. Lagos: Linear Communication. Retrieved from https://books.google.com.ng/books?redir_esc=y&id=SlqQAAAAMAAJ&focus=searchwithinvolume&q=Christian+association+of+nigeria. Accessed on 8/19/2020

²⁸³ R. Sablonnière, L. F. Bourgeois and M. Najih 2013. Dramatic Social Change: A Social Psychological Perspective. In, Journal of Social and Political Psychology. Vol.1 No 1. Retrieved from <https://jspp.psychopen.eu/article/view/14/30> Accessed on 8/20/2020

²⁸⁴ I.P. Ikpuho. *Interview Respondent*. (Student Minister) Children and Youth Fellowship Coordinator, Ikono Diocese, Akwa Ibom State. Interviewed on 20th November, 2020.

²⁸⁵ U.I. Adogo. *Interview Respondent*. (34 years). Circuit Quarterly Meeting Secretary. Sokoto State. Interviewed on 12th November, 2020.

one can easily identify with almost if not all Methodist assembly. This shows that African social life brought some adjustments to the life of the Church.

The transformations and innovations of the 1976 Constitution were aimed at adjusting the Church to changes that have so far taking place or was taken place at the time just as Repositioning is still another phase of attempt in adjusting the Church. Patriarch Ebenezer Idowu was of the view that Methodist Church Nigeria came into being almost simultaneously with the independence of Nigeria from British colonial rule and that while the nation was celebrating her independence; the Church had almost reached the end of the process of her coming into birth. He went further to assert that the celebration of the autonomy of the Church coincided with the beginning of the period when the teething trouble of the country was beginning to show itself. Naturally, but unwittingly, she was immediately caught up, not only in the problems of her own birth-throes and concomitant ailments of babyhood, but also in the inevitable predicaments of the new nation. Furthermore, that as the national situation deteriorated in consequence of the diverse forces of political and ethnic alignments and loyalties, so was she as an organism within the larger national organism adversely affected; for she was made up of citizens of the country who, naturally, were drawn, severally and in groups, towards various conflicting camps.²⁸⁶

His analysis brings to mind that as Nigeria gained her independence, which by implication brought nationalists to the helms of affairs, the Church too deemed it good to seek autonomy, a term meaning self-government like political independence. Also, the problems mentioned and other situations both within and outside the Church led to the 1976 Constitution that gave her the dignified Patriarchal Episcopacy, overhauling of the structure, and re-ordering of the ministry and liturgy of the Church to faithfully minister to the spiritual needs of Nigerian worshippers.²⁸⁷

Social adjustment is well pronounced in the 2006 Constitution; though, previous Constitutions have in one way or the other adjusted the Church. However, from the Deed of Constitution Reform Order 3, the drive of the 2006 Constitution was repositioning deliberately designed to bring up the Church to a vantage position of social significance in the 21st century. This agrees to a large extent with the concept of

²⁸⁶ E.B. Idowu, 1973. Restoring the Years that the Locust has eaten. A Presidential Address to the Twelfth Annual Conference. Sagamu: Ojoko-Biri-Kale Press. 4

²⁸⁷ E.B. Idowu, 1973. Restoring the Years that the Locust has eaten. A Presidential Address to the Twelfth Annual Conference. Sagamu: Ojoko-Biri-Kale Press. 8

social adjustment. To achieve the repositioning agenda, some practices that were considered outdated were set aside while new approaches considered relevant to the modern age were introduced.²⁸⁸ For instance, Methodist Evangelical Movement pulled weight in the late 1980 to the middle of the year 2000. However, in a bid to reposition the Church, the activities of this movement were reviewed in the light of some practices considered unhealthy to the growth of the Church.²⁸⁹ Commenting on their activities, the Prelate remarked in his address to the Conference of 1996.

Many of the leaders and members of Methodist Evangelical Movement have metamorphosed themselves into Pharisees of our Church and the Christian religion. The self-styled holy Methodist...considered themselves far more righteous than Jesus Christ, the Son of God... Recently, I have been rather sad at the activities of these 'modern' evangelists. The letters I received about them are rather depressing. They are proud, very insulting, all-knowing and extremely disrespectful. They try not to be under any authority... I am forced to think that there is more to it than meets the eye. Our experience of antics of the Deeper Life movement must not easily be forgotten...we must watch out all these 'hidden agendas'.²⁹⁰

Eventually, the same movement was upgraded to a Directorate. That is, Directorate of Evangelism and Discipleship with a Bishop as the Director.

According to the Prelate, "the Church is not static but dynamic in operation; when the Missionaries were with us, it was a taboo to beat drums, clap hands and employ so many African cultural elements in the worship of God. But the Church came to discover their importance in worship, hence their wider acceptance."²⁹¹

4.9 Problems

It is the immanent law of nature that change is inevitable; therefore, any organisation that must remain relevant will as a matter of expediency make policies that engender change. Though the Church has done well in the area of policy formulations, it has also created some problems that need to be given scholarly attention. Hence, attempt will be made to critique policies in respect to problems emanating from them. One of

²⁸⁸ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006 Constitution. 3

²⁸⁹ C.C. Ekebuisi, 2010. *Renewal Movements Within Methodist Church Nigeria*. Aba: Soul Winner Publication. 164

²⁹⁰ S.C. Mbang, 1996. Prelate's Address. In, *The Minutes of the 35th Annual Conference*. 59-60.

²⁹¹ S.C.K. Uche. *Interview Respondent*. (His Eminence) (68years). Prelate, Methodist Church Nigeria. Interviewed on 13th April, 2020. Marina, Lagos

our respondents²⁹² expressed his dissatisfaction with the problems emanating from the Church response to changes in the society. He said,

Changes in the society have really influenced policy development in Methodist Church Nigeria. This could be seen in the introduction of Episcopacy, women ordination, and Ministers' regalia. For instance, the adoption of Episcopal system is highly burdensome to the congregation as it is costly to manage with the Church meager resources. This has turned many Ministers to modern beggars in a bid to source for funds needed for assessment and side levies. Secondly, the introduction of women ordination has created some fundamental problem with African culture where women are more engaged in home management. The Church should have improved on the Deaconess Order which is more concerned with the women folk than Ordination of women as Priest and Presbyters over Local Churches and Circuits.

IDIs/ Adult/ Male/ Student Minister/ 2020

4.9.1 Erosion of Methodist heritage and tradition

In ecclesiastical traditions, particularly among the Evangelicals, Methodist stands out in its simplistic form of leadership, administration and worship.²⁹³ Though these claims have been objected in the light of the fact that what is termed "simplicity of Methodist worship" was an ad hoc arrangement for those who went to hear the preaching and edification of the Spirit during meetings, and that the "accidental variations" of Church government within the World Methodism was acknowledged by John Wesley.²⁹⁴ Despite the objections, it is obvious whether ad hoc or not that the traditions, pattern of worship and governance handed over to Nigerian Methodism by the unified Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists was aged long. One can therefore say, from 1842 to 1963, precisely, 121 years of witnessing in Nigeria, the Church operated a Presidential system of governance with simple mode of worship. While the President administered the whole Conference area, the Chairmen controlled the Districts while Superintendents were in-charge of Circuits. One notable heritage was that the entire ordained ministers, whether President or one in charge of Society were addressed with

²⁹² Anonymous. *Interview Respondent* (Student Minister). (39 years) Samonda, Ibadan. Interviewed on 20th November 2020.

²⁹³ C.O. Ogan, 1980. *Crisis in Methodist Church Nigeria, Where I Stand*. Umuahia: Cartographic Press. 5

²⁹⁴ E.B. Idowu, *Methodist Church Nigeria, you Shall Know the Truth and the Truth Shakk Make you Free*. Lagos: Woodfree Comm. Enterprises. 18-19

the title of “The Rev” or sometimes, simply “Rev.,” but at the introduction of Patriarchal Episcopacy in a democratic set up aver not to have existed anywhere in Nigeria,²⁹⁵ has Deacons (addressed as “Rev.), Priest (addressed as The Rev.) and Presbyters like the Presbyterian Church (addressed as Very Rev.). Then it has Bishop (addressed as Right Rev.) and Archbishops like the Anglican and Roman Catholic Church (addressed as His Grace). There are no Archdeacons and Cardinals. At the head was the Patriarch (addressed as His Pre-eminence).

From the above indicators, the system that came on board was drastic deviation from a fundamental heritage of over a century and two decades. Though contextual institutional change is essential for social relevance in Nigerian situation; the change that happened in the Church was considered drastic. In the view of Michael Okpara, “there is no room for indecent haste, denominational changes must be evolutionary and must be based on a broad consensus otherwise the seeds of dichotomy and denominational conflict are sown.”²⁹⁶ In other word, a desirable change must be a gradual evolution from what has been to what should be. In such a situation, the possibility of retaining the heritage of the past, and at the same time, injecting new methods is the mark of organisational ingenuity.²⁹⁷ Chile Ogan equally asked, “Why such hurry? It took less than twelve months to push through the Patriarchate Constitution for the people called Methodist.”²⁹⁸

The drastic change therefore brought crisis, inconsistency and erosion of cherished heritage bequeathed at autonomy. Take for instance, from autonomy in 1962 to 1990, the title for the President of Conference had changed three times in the following order:

- The first and second head of the Church were addressed as Presidents (1962-1972)
- The third was equally addressed as President (1972-1975) but later changed to Patriarch till retirement in 1984

²⁹⁵ M.M. Familusi, 1992. *Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992)*. Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers Ltd. 164

²⁹⁶ M.I. Okpara, foreword to C.O. Ogan, 1980. *Crisis in Methodist Church Nigeria, Where I Stand*. Umuahia: Cartographic Press. 6

²⁹⁷ J. Lampel, I. Drori, B. Honig, 2014. *Organizational Ingenuity: Concept, Processes and Strategies*. Retrieved from

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261099805_Organizational_Ingenuity_Concept_Processes_and_Strategies. Accessed on 8/21/2020

²⁹⁸ C.O. Ogan, 1980. *Crisis in Methodist Church Nigeria, Where I Stand*. Umuahia: Cartographic Press. 59

- The fourth head of the Church answered the title of Patriarch (1984-1990) then, changed to Prelate, 1990 till date.

We can extract from these developments that two heads of the Church, that is, Ebenezer Bolaji Idowu and Coffie Sunday Mbang had answered President and Patriarch, and Patriarch and Prelate respectively. Though Mbang retired as Prelate to be addressed as Prelate Emeritus, late Idowu retired as Patriarch and so addressed as former Patriarch of the Church. In a nutshell, the Church has had retired Presidents and Patriarch, and retired Prelate or Prelate Emeritus.

The issue here is that if an ecclesiastical nomenclature that sprang up at a time in the history of the Church could be used, then, it would have been fair if Methodist heritage is rather promoted until it finds wider acceptance in Nigeria; bearing in mind that, as first Missionary Society in Nigeria, she should be a pacesetter. Take for instance, among the Protestant and Roman Catholic Church, Venerable being in charge of Archdeaconsy is known with the Anglican and later adopted by the African Church, while Rev. Father in charge of Parish is known with the Roman Catholic. In the same vein, while the designation of ‘Pastor’ is for lower cadre of un-ordained minister in the Anglican and Methodist, the same could be used for the highest hierarchy of some Pentecostal Churches. Despite their different usages, an overseer Pastor can be at the round-table with the Prelate, Primate or Cardinal in ecumenical gatherings such as Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).

While accepting the fact that change within a system is essential for social relevance, it is equally expected that such change should be a supplement to existing heritage or tradition. In this wise, change should solidify, not erode a system. In line with problem one of our respondent notes that lack of originality is a challenge to Methodist policies as they are often not borne out of the experiences of Church life, rather, are often borrowed from other Churches. Hence, most of the policies are foreign to the Church life.²⁹⁹

The structure of the Church specified in the Deed of Foundation included the Conference, Districts, Circuits and Societies.³⁰⁰ The Conference which is the governing body of the Church comprises of the whole area covered in Nigeria. The

²⁹⁹ Anonymous. *Interview Respondent*. Church Member. (38 years). MCN, Bodija, Ibadan. Interviewed on 13th December, 2020.

³⁰⁰ The Methodist Church Deed of Foundation and Deed of Church Order for the Constituting of the Nigerian Conference, 1962. London: Waterlow and Sons Limited.

District consisted of numbers of Circuits grouped in an area designated by Conference with the Synod as the decision making body. The idea of the Circuit was based on a system whereby the Conference listed numbers of Churches and institutions as Circuits, while Societies consisted of members in various localities. Though, the number of Circuits to makeup a Districts or Societies to makeup a Circuits were not specified; the records available shows that between the inception of Wesleyan and Primitive Missionary Societies to 1950, the Western District had 331 Churches while the Eastern District had 769.³⁰¹

At the inception of Episcopacy, the Constitution did not specify the number of Circuits to make up a Diocese but for Archdiocese, it must comprise of at least four Dioceses. Also, a Circuit could consist of one or more Societies.³⁰² However, the 2006 Constitution was more precise, it specified that a Diocese should be made up of at least four Circuits, while Circuit should comprise of at least three Local Churches.³⁰³ In addition, section 280 of the 2006 Constitution maintains that “In accordance with the tradition of Methodism, a Circuit is a distinct authoritative unit within a Diocese in which usually several Local Churches, conveniently situated for the purpose are grouped together for pastoral oversight, mutual support and Christian service.” It will be good to consider two phrases, “tradition of Methodism” and “several Local Churches”. In the tradition of Methodism in relation to Circuit, there is usually a Circuit Rider, who is expected to go through the many Societies grouped together under his jurisdiction for Pastoral oversight. In other word, the Circuit Rider in what is now called a Presbyter was an overseer. William Powell succinctly explains this tradition

The ministry of a traveling preacher covered a large geographic region called a circuit... The circuit was also known by the length of time it took the itinerant to complete a single round. Circuits varied from two weeks to six weeks and were from 120 to over 600 miles in length, but most circuits were four weeks and from 300 to 500 miles long. Each of these regions included many communities where a minister had “appointments” or previous commitments to preach.³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. Wesleyan Presence in Nigeria. Ibadan: Sefer. 136

³⁰² Methodist Church Nigeria Constitution, 1975. Lagos: Woodfree Comm. Enterprises. 38, 47

³⁰³ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006 Constitution. 79, 102.

³⁰⁴ W.A. Powell jnr, 1977. Methodist Circuit Riders in America, 1766-1844. A Thesis submitted to Richmond University. 64-65

If one is to compare the above evidence with the required numbers of Local Churches for the establishment of Circuit today, it is grossly inadequate. In a situation where there is one Local Church Circuit with either one or two Preaching Station makes the office of a Presbyter or a Local Church affair. A related report of this nature given by the Secretary of Conference to the Connexional Council leaves much to be desired. He drew the attention of the Council to the request from Archbishop of Ilesa asking Conference Headquarters for new codes in respect of certain Local Churches which he claimed were formerly in the Awomolo Circuit in the Diocese of Ilesa North but wish to revert to Otapete Circuit in the Diocese of Ilesa. When the matter was investigated, a foul game was discovered. What actually happened was that a Circuit named Halleluyah Awomolo was created in 2009 comprising Awomolo Methodist Church, Thomas Ogunwusi Methodist Church, and John Olabode Memorial Methodist Church. Subsequently, when Ilesa North Diocese was created in 2012 the new Circuit formed the heart of the new Diocese as its headquarters. The issue that transpired was an agreement that once this Circuit was used to achieve the dream Diocese the two Local Churches, Thomas Ogunwusi Methodist Church and John Olabode Memorial Methodist Church would be returned to Otapete under Ilesa Diocese. Hence, after the creation of Ilesa North Diocese, Otapete requested that the Churches be returned. That is not all, in another development, Methodist Church Oke-Opo GRA Ilesa and Wesley Guild Chapel withdrew from another newly created Imo Circuit, thereby leaving the Circuit with one Local Church. These two acts which were done with the knowledge of leaders from the Local Church to the Archdiocesan level show how the Church has deviated from the standard of the Wesleyan. It is no wonder that when the matter got to the Conference, the developments were considered as ecclesiastical fraud and acts of dishonesty.³⁰⁵ In this wise, one can say Methodist heritage is being eroded.

One can only measure the present situation with what obtained in the past to be able to access the level of departure from a great heritage. While pushing for the adoption of Episcopacy, the President, Professor E.B. Idowu gave an example of how a Methodist Church Superintendent once fell in line with Archdeacons of the Anglican Church and was asked to fall out of the place as they said, the place was too high for him. Then he remarked, but this was a Methodist functionary whose nomenclature ‘Superintendent’

³⁰⁵ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2007. Minutes of the 22nd Conference Connexional Council. In, Compendium of Minutes of 1st-33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council. Lagos: Wesley House. 238-239

is a Latinised word for Bishop and could have normally ranked with Bishops in procession.³⁰⁶ What this meant was that a Methodist Superintendent in charge of a Circuit by Latin standard is a Bishop which by implication oversees a Diocese. Therefore, a Superintendent was higher than an Archdeacon by far. In fact, it was the Superintendent that was upgraded to Bishop at the time of Episcopacy. To a large extent, the Circuit under the leadership of Superintendent (Bishop) would have remained a unique feature of Methodist Episcopacy and a brand in ecclesiasticism that other denominations could have adopted. However, the 1976 Constitution merged Circuits together to become Diocese under the leadership of Bishop (Superintendent). So, one could be made to believe that the quality of Dioceses and Bishops in 1976 Constitution was better and stronger than many other Dioceses in some denominations. But the reverse is the case today. Hence, one respondent advocate a return to Patriarch Bolaji Idowu's vision for the Church and reintroduction of Methodist Evangelical Movement.³⁰⁷

In line with ecclesiastical traditions, the Bishop is a Presbyter of Presbyters. This brings to mind that the office of a Presbyter adopted by Methodist Church is attached with the responsibility of oversight of other Churches. In the same vein, the office of a Bishop in Ecclesiastical tradition, and as intended by Methodist Church is higher than Presbyters. This accounts for Presbyters as subordinates to Bishops. In fact, in Monarchical Episcopacy, the Bishop is the diocesan as he is the Diocese personified.³⁰⁸ Though one may accept the stand of the Church that her Episcopacy is corporate, not monarchical; this however, does not reduce the Episcopal See, functions and paraphernalia of a Bishop. But in a situation where a Circuit is either one Local Church affairs or three to five Local Churches, then a Diocese made up of four Circuits may not have up to twenty Local Churches. Expressing his view over recent development, Olorode opined that the rationale behind the adoption of Episcopacy was to raise the image and dignity of the Church among other denominations like the Roman Catholic and Anglican because Methodist Ministers of the same rank with Ministers from these Churches were treated as though far below them, particularly at

³⁰⁶ M.M. Familusi, 2012. *Methodism in Nigeria (Revised Edition) 1842-2012*. Lagos: Methodist Publishing Company. 153

³⁰⁷ Anonymous. *Interview Respondent*. (Student Minister) (45 years). Methodist Theological Institute, Sagamu. Interviewed on 19th October, 2020

³⁰⁸ D. Kolawole, 2015. *The Lay President and the Methodist Church Nigeria Constitution*. In, *Methodist Lay President: A Book of Readings in Honour of Sir Jimmy Nath Coker*. Lagos: Methodist Church Nigeria Publication. 41

Ecumenical services. He affirmed that such intent from inception points to what may become of such Episcopacy later. Hence, the 120 years before the adoption of Episcopacy, that is, from 1842-1976, recorded more achievements in terms of social contributions than what has been contributed from 1967 till date.

It is obvious today that the Church's Episcopal system and structure are becoming weak than strong. Many Dioceses created are just areas formerly known to be Circuits. In some instances, former area covered by a Circuit is now made up of two to three Dioceses. While accepting that a Circuit can grow to become a Diocese, it should be measured by expansion and growth beyond former boundary of the Circuit. Lamenting the situation, Prelate Sunday Mbang while addressing the 29th Annual Conference says,

Experience has shown that Conference has created some unviable Circuits and Dioceses over the years. These Circuits and Dioceses have not fared very well financially and infrastructurally. The effect of this has been felt within and without the Diocese. Conference will need to take a fresh look at this exercise in order to save Methodist Church Nigeria from the attendant and unnecessary embarrassment and disgrace.³⁰⁹

These and many more show that the current system has eroded the valued place accorded earlier standard. These developments are coming up at a time when the society has changed for good. Take for instance, in the former time it was practically impossible to monitor the entire area covered by a Diocese or Archdiocese because of poor road network, communication and shortage of ministerial staff; the reverse is the case today, modern technology and availability of manpower has reduced these problems to the barest minimum which should have helped to increase area of jurisdiction and improve the structure. Instead, the reverse is the case. In line with this development, a respondent opined that Methodist Church Nigeria is seriously losing her pristine position because her cherished heritages are being bequeathed to the altar of Episcopacy.³¹⁰

In the tradition bequeathed to Methodist Church Nigeria, “the President of Conference (at Conference level) or a District Chairman (at the District level) is nothing more than

³⁰⁹ S.C. Mbang, 1991. Prelate's Address to the 29th Annual Conference of Methodist Church Nigeria. 110

³¹⁰ C.M. Okoro. *Interview Respondent*. (Pastor). Pastoral Agent, Diocese of Ngbo. Interviewed on 23rd December. 2020

first among equals".³¹¹ What this implied was that the office of a President, District Chairman or Superintendent is tenured and one who occupies it can finish his tenure of office and return to his former position. In fact, each Chairman stays wherever the election into office overtakes him and remains, at the same time, Superintendent of Circuits and minister in charge of congregation in addition to being the pastoral and administrative head of a District.³¹² That is, there was no specially designated place as District Headquarters. In other word, it could be compared to the democratic practice where a Governor or President finishes tenure of office and loses the paraphernalia of office. The office was not permanent but Ordination. The same practice is found in the Church of Nigerian Anglican Communion at the Episcopal level. The office of an Archbishop is not permanent and any Bishop elected as Archbishop remains in his Diocese. Hence, there is no Archdiocesan headquarters and at the expiration of tenure, an Archbishop returns to the office of a Bishop. In this practice, it is the office of a Bishop that is permanent.

The new system introduced at Episcopacy made the office of a Presbyter (Superintendent), Bishop (Chairman), and Archbishop Permanent as against the former tenure of office. Ekebuisi posits that Idowu who championed the transition to Episcopacy opined that what necessitated the permanence was that the condition of the office of Superintendent, Chairman and President as ephemeral makes the officer holder weak and could be sacked from the position at the at the whims and caprices of collection of influential persons.³¹³ Hence, there was no security of office and as such the minister can be treated as messenger in certain quarters. As much as one can agree that security of office is helpful in effective service, the system where the office of Presbyters, Bishops and Archbishops or even Prelate are permanent make the system monarchical as against the claim that Methodist Church Nigeria's Episcopacy is not Monarchical. Again, this system is a total abolition of a whole system as a Prelate (President) for instance cannot finish his tenure and returns to either Archbishop or Bishop as was the case in the 1963 Constitution.

One can further take a cue from the modern democratic system where political offices and appointments are tenured. Take for instance, all executive offices in Nigeria from

³¹¹ C.O. Ogan, 1980. Crisis in the Methodist Church Nigeria, Where I Stand. Umuahia: Cartographic Press. 60

³¹² C.C. Ekebuisi, 2009. Renewal Movements within Methodist Church Nigeria. Aba: Soul Winner Publication. 74

³¹³ C.C. Ekebuisi, 2009. Renewal Movements within Methodist Church Nigeria. 75

the President to Governors and Council Chairmen are for two terms and no more. In the same vein, all leadership positions available for lay officers of the Church are tenured. The 2006 Constitution specifically spelt out in section 139 that “a Lay President of Conference shall hold office for a term of three years from the beginning of Conference which elects him and shall be eligible for re-election for another term of three years and no more.”³¹⁴ It is to be noted that this provision applies to all other lay officers of the Church. What comes to mind is, if democratic offices in government and that of lay officers of the Church are tenured; that is, non-permanent, does that affect the effectiveness of the office holders? If this system has been working effectively in the democratic system, why should the Church conclude that such system is ephemeral and makes the officer holder weak? We may equally assume from such conclusion that democratic system of governance makes office holders weak and ineffective. What that means for the Church is that all lay offices are weak and ephemeral. However, we have seen over the years that both democratically elected officers of government and lay officers of the Church have performed creditably well within their tenure of offices. Therefore, the claim that democratic system of the Church practiced in the 1962 Constitution does not guarantee security of office negate the principle of true democracy which the Church now claims to practice in Corporate Episcopacy. The view of Okocha sums up this misnomer, he asserts,

As we “think and let think” we may not assume that what we have achieved in 1976 is unalterable creation... Episcopacy has come to stay but its practice must pass through processes that will refine it to serve the present age of Nigerian Methodists. Anything which robs Methodists of the vital elements of democracy...is an error.³¹⁵

He therefore suggests the setting up of a Commission to study the current application of Episcopacy that is power drunk. Arguing that, “this might even help the Church to return to proper Methodist Episcopal pattern which limits the duration of period of service to a term either of five or ten years at most.”³¹⁶ In contrast to this view, Olorode opined that “Episcopacy is not actually a bad system of Church governance adopted by the Church but calling it Corporate Episcopacy is at variance with the tenets of Episcopacy which should be monarchical. Hence, the practice of democracy

³¹⁴ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006 Constitution. 51

³¹⁵ J.O.I. Okocha, 2013. Yet Alive Methodism, A Historical Reflection. Aba: Onyii Graphic Press. 144-145

³¹⁶ J.O.I. Okocha, 2013. Yet Alive Methodism, A Historical Reflection. 145

in Episcopacy is impracticable and as such a mockery of it.” He gave an instance of the way Diocesan Bishops are translated even under a year contravenes what Episcopacy stands for. Also, that the vestment, Episcopal ring and enthronement are symbolic of the Bishop being inducted on a permanent basis to the See of the Diocese. But in the case of Methodist practice, same Bishop could soon be translated any time. He therefore concluded that the Church took the paraphernalia of Episcopacy but not the tenets of it.³¹⁷

4.9.2 Crisis

It is an undeniable fact that though people desire better conditions, they find it difficult to break with the status quo for the desirable change to be a reality. The Church had had experience in this regard, particularly at the time of transition from Presidential to Patriarchal Episcopacy. Chile Ogan came up with a fact that, “the real beginning of the crisis in the Methodist Church Nigeria was after the Conference 1972 when the Rev Prof. E. Bolaji Idowu emerged President. A circular from the Conference office in November 1972 about Consecration of the President gave him a terrific jolt. He asked, why Consecration this time? Claiming that until then, the Church had been perfectly content to induct the President of Conference or the Chairman of Districts. Hence, he strongly objected to such a change which had never been discussed by any competent body.”³¹⁸

In other word, as a matter of policy, the Conference should have discussed and passed a resolution accepting consecration in place of induction. The ambiguity of the whole matter is based on the fact that though induction was a traditional practice since autonomy, it has no legal backing. This lacuna in the Deed of Foundation and the Deed of Church Order coupled with the awareness being created on the implication and set up of an Episcopal Methodist Church since 1972 made it possible for the service of consecration and investiture to take place at the Trinity Methodist Church Tinubu on Sunday 20th January 1973.³¹⁹ It was therefore the 1976 Constitution that actually spelt out the different services of reception for the different Episcopal hierarchies.³²⁰

³¹⁷ S.O. Olorode. *Interview Respondent*. (Very Rev). Presbyter and lecturer at Immanuel College of Theology Ibadan. Interviewed on 17th December, 2020. Samonda, Ibadan.

³¹⁸ C.O. Ogan, 1980. *Crisis in the Methodist Church Nigeria, Where I Stand*. Umuahia: Cartographic Press. 16

³¹⁹ M.M. Familusi, 2012. *Methodism in Nigeria (Revised Edition) 1842-2012*. Lagos: Methodist Publishing Company. 152, 166

³²⁰ Methodist Church Nigeria, 1976 Constitution. 12

Understandably, if there was an objection to the circular passed on from the Conference about consecration in 1972, one will not be surprised at later development in a Constitution that upheld same.

Another root cause of the crisis could further be traced to a retreat held from 1st to 3rd February, 1974 at Asaba Rural Training Centre. During this retreat, the President on behalf of Conference, presented a document that boils down to the Life of the Church, Faith and Order which were discussed and subsequently circulated throughout the Conference area for prayerful and careful study at the Societies, Circuits and Districts levels. Ostensibly it was from the Asaba retreat of 1974 that the idea of the new Constitution emerged.³²¹ It is to be noted that the said document was a built up to the work already started by his predecessors.³²² The document was deliberated and suggestions emanating from it were sent back to the Conference. Again, the Conference sent another document on ‘Church Structure and the Ordering of the Ministry’ to clarify issues raised from the earlier document. Hence, the developments from these documents led to the Draft of the new Constitution which was discussed exhaustively and necessary amendments made at the Thirteenth Annual Conference held at Immanuel College of Theology Chapel, Ibadan from November 27 to December 3, 1974. The draft new Constitution in the amended form was adopted as the proposed Constitution of Methodist Church Nigeria subject to confirmation by Conference of the subsequent year. Furthermore, a committee was set up to read through and ensure that all amendments were effected and same sent to different sections of the Church for further study and comments. According to Chile Ogan, “this afforded the Methodists the first real opportunity of studying Idowu’s Constitution and expressing meaningful views on it.”³²³

It was within this period of downward study that Umuahia District took the matter very seriously. As a result of their assiduous labour, a document was equally produced based on the proposed new Constitution but embodying numerous amendments. This document was also presented at the next Annual Conference held in the campus of the University of Calabar from 2nd to 12th September 1975. According to Chile Ogan, the

³²¹ S.U. Eriwo, Structure and Church Polity in Methodist Church: The Nigerian Experience. In S.O. Abogunrin, I.D. Ayegboyin, (eds). Under the Shelter of Olodumare. An Essay in Memory of Professor E. Bolaji Idowu. Ibadan: John Archers Publishers Limited. 255

³²² M.M. Familusi, 2012. Methodism in Nigeria (Revised Edition) 1842-2012. Lagos: Methodist Publishing Company. 152

³²³ C.O. Ogan, 1980. Crisis in the Methodist Church Nigeria, Where I Stand. Umuahia: Cartographic Press. 25

crux was the new title for the President as “Patriarch” to be addressed as “His Pre-eminence”. But in contrast, the alternative document produced by Umuahia District proposed “Archbishop” or “Presiding Bishop” as title for the President which they considered absolutely essential in order to keep Nigerian Methodism intact. However, the suggestion was rudely brushed aside by Idowu who argued that such titles did not at all reflect the dignity of the head of an autocephalous Church.”³²⁴ The Conference therefore set aside Umuahia District document completely, while all the other amendments to the draft New Constitution suggested by other Districts was given careful consideration before a motion for the adoption of the new Constitution by the Representative Session of Conference was read by Justice S.O. Sogbetun while Rev. F.U. Ekanem moved the motion and was seconded by Rev J.A. Famonure. The Conference voted with total number of 118 in favour, 1 against and none neutral.³²⁵ Hence, those of Umuahia District were displeased and disappointed. In the word of Ogan, “the crisis had fully begun.”³²⁶ Familusi also voiced out that the Conference was not fair and considerate in the spirit of Methodism. He argued that,

In Methodist Church Nigeria the democratic rule of majority ‘carries the vote’ does not hold sway in every case... dissentient voice are many and sometimes effective... this should teach the Church authorities a lesson that they should allow all to speak on an important motion before passing it either way, so that ‘all will carry the vote.’³²⁷

It is to be noted that immediately the Constitution was adopted in 1975, the same Conference created Dioceses and Archdioceses and equally elected the Patriarch, Bishops and Archbishops. The Patriarch was to be received by a service of investiture on the Appointed Day while another service of Consecration and investiture of Bishops and Archbishops was to take place on 21st January 1976 at the Patriarchal Church of the Trinity, Tinubu Lagos. In the same way, Lay Presidents were to be dedicated while Dioceses and Archdioceses were to be inaugurated and their Bishops and Archbishops enthroned.

³²⁴ C.O. Ogan, 1980. Crisis in the Methodist Church Nigeria, Where I Stand. Umuahia: Cartographic Press. 24

³²⁵ M.M. Familusi, 1992. Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992). Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers Ltd 152

³²⁶ C.O. Ogan, 1980. Crisis in the Methodist Church Nigeria, Where I Stand. Umuahia: Cartographic Press. 26

³²⁷ M.M. Familusi, 1992. Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992). Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers Ltd 160

As a result of this, crisis ensued in which all sorts of violent tactics, were employed to push Methodist Church out of the Eastern States. The Church workers were beaten up, put to court on flimsy charge or another, and one of the Presbyters was ejected from the Church manse with a rent tribunal order... This hostilities and misunderstanding continued till 1978 when the Conference met at Enugu. The dissidents were so violent that they broke down the fence around the Church to be used for Conference service and removed the harmonium. The Police had to give the Conference delegates special protection throughout.³²⁸ Edoke Amuta rightly notes that in the early days of the Church, Methodist was known as evangelical and holiness Church among other Churches until the 70s when the crisis affected the spiritual and evangelical zeal of the Church thereby leading to a dwindling of members since then.³²⁹

Chile Ogan was of the view that Idowu himself most strongly believed that he was the brain behind all opposition to his movement and himself but that there was nothing within his power that he left undone to prevent a crisis from erupting and that when it started, there was anything within his power that he had not tried to do in an attempt to bring the crisis to an end. To him, the controversy did not centre on the importation of Episcopacy into Methodism as John Wesley himself never objected to Episcopacy as such.³³⁰ Rather, what he considered as problems was expressed in the following personal objections³³¹, though reflecting the stand of the majority of the emerging faction.

1. The Patriarchate Constitution was ill-motivated since the Methodist Church was not established to claim pride of place among Christian denominations but appointed by God to spread Scriptural Holiness throughout the world
2. Why Patriarch? If it was appropriate for Nigerian Methodism, why was it not appropriate for Kenyan Methodism? This is because when the Kenyan Methodist Conference was compelled to seek a different title and they approach Nigeria for suggestion, the Patriarch offered him "Prelate". Then, why not Prelate for Nigerian Methodism. It was therefore upheld that the Patriarch thought of the

³²⁸ M.M. Familusi, 1992. *Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992)*. Ibadan: 163

³²⁹ E. Amuta. *Interview Respondent*. (Rt. Rev) Bishop of Ito Diocese, and former Connexional Secretary of Evangelism and Discipleship. Interviewed on 12th November, 2020.

³³⁰ C.O. Ogan, 1980. *Crisis in the Methodist Church Nigeria, Where I Stand*. Umuahia: Cartographic Press. 54-55

³³¹ C.O. Ogan, 1980. *Crisis in the Methodist Church Nigeria, Where I Stand*. Umuahia: Cartographic Press. 56-64

title solely reserved for himself, not only as a Methodist Church leader, but as also one and only “Theologian and Ecclesiologist” in all Africa.

3. As to the idea of referring to a man as “His Pre-eminence”, I regard it as naked and unashamed blasphemy... Does any doubt remain then that what the Patriarchate Constitution has actually done is to push Jesus Christ aside and install the so-called Patriarch in His place.
4. Why all the hurry? It took less than twelve months for the so-called Patriarchate to push through his Patriarchate Constitution for the people called Methodists. I am not aware of any Conference resolution authorizing the complete replacement of the Foundation Constitution which is based on the long and rich experience of British Methodism itself, as well as of Methodist Missionary endeavour in West Africa. If a complete change was considered necessary or desirable, surely, a formal decision to that effect was the prerogative and duty of Conference, which should then set up appropriate machinery for the drafting of a new Constitution. That would have been orderly and commonsense way of going about so important a matter. This point was also buttressed by M.I. Okpara, Premier, former Eastern Nigeria when he wrote, “Change as fundamental as was made to the 1962 Constitution must occur with the full agreement of all.”³³²
5. While true Methodism cannot really be opposed to truly New Testament Type Episcopacy, it insists on its ordained Ministry being one and only one order. The President of Conference (at Conference level) or a District Chairman (at District level) is nothing more than the first among equals. Instead, the Patriarchate Constitution has arbitrarily created multiplicity of orders. It has done even more; it has introduced a less-than honest distinction between an order of Priests and an order of Presbyters- a distinction entirely foreign both to the New Testament and to the main stream of Christianity. It is correct to have Priests or Presbyters, not Priests and Presbyters.

These objections in addition to some fallout in the West led to polarization of the Church with some groups practicing the 1962 Constitution (properly called Deed of Foundation and Deed of Church Order while another group practiced the 1976 Constitution. While the factions who practiced the 1962 Constitution was referred to as

³³² C.O. Ogan, 1980. Crisis in the Methodist Church Nigeria, Where I Stand. Umuahia: Cartographic Press. 5-6

the Presidential and, the dissidents;³³³ those of the 1976 Constitution was called the Patriarchal Conference. The polarisation according to Patriarch Sunday Mbang, “brought the Church to a wretched and disgraceful position” as people were fond of asking them, ‘which side of Methodist do you belong’.³³⁴ Aside that, according to the President of the 1962 Constitution, Rev. J.D. Aluko, the crisis was an “ill wind which brought gloom and darkness, bitterness, rancour and hatred.”³³⁵ From the expressions of the leaders of the two factions, that is, the Presidential and the Patriarchal, it is evident that the crisis which rocked the Church left her badly affected both within and without. This would not have been avoided as it is consequent that wherever occurs, it has tendencies to bring along with it national disintegration, insecurity, discrimination, mutual distrust, slow economic, institutional and manpower development.³³⁶

However, in 1989 an Assembly of Methodists representing all the Conference areas in Nigeria met at Sagamu to effect reconciliation of all the factions in order to end these problems. During the Conference, the process was set in motion by the appointment of a Constitution Review Committee with the aim of providing a new Constitution. So, in May 1990, Conference at its Representative session revoked the Deed of Constitution Reform Orders of 1962 and 1976 Constitution. It was in their place that a Deed of Constitution Reform Order Number 2 and enacted the Constitution known and cited as The Constitution of Methodist Church Nigeria 1990.³³⁷ The achievement of the 1990 Constitution was the reunification of the different factions after a period of 14 years of crisis.

4.9.3 Financial burdens

Policy development has the tendency to bring about change in a system. Such change could bring along with it financial burdens when there is a wide gap between the status quo and the new change. Though, Akin-Akinlade is of the view that “it is virtually impossible for the Church to have complete financial security.”³³⁸ It is then expected

³³³ M.M. Familusi, 1992. *Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992)*. Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers Ltd 186

³³⁴ M.M. Familusi, 1992. *Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992)*. 188

³³⁵ M.M. Familusi, 1992. *Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992)*. 190

³³⁶ S.M. Nwaomah, 2011. Religious Crisis in Nigeria: Manifestation, Effects and the way forward. In *Journal of Sociology, Psychology and Anthropology in Practice* Vol 3, No. 2. 101. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259042019_Religious_Crises_in_Nigeria_Manifestation_Effect_and_the_Way_Forward. Accessed on 10/5/2020.

³³⁷ *The Constitution of Methodist Church Nigeria*, 2006. 1-2

³³⁸ R.A. Akin-Akinlade, 2011. Pastor and Church Fund Management. In O. Adeogun, R. Idialu and S. Adegbite (eds), *The Pastor and the Challenges of 21st Century Ministry. A 60th Anniversary Commemorative Publication*, Methodist Theological Institute Sagamu. Ibadan: En-joy Press & Books. 122

that the Church operates within her financial output. In this sense, the Missionary Societies though being financed by foreign mission, operated within the available resources and as such did not create financial burdens for the members. Except during the period of World War II and the influenza that affected the finance of the missionary societies, there were no serious records of financial burden because the mission was aggregately carried out on the basis of available fund.³³⁹ Hence, though the growth was not widespread, it was steady and did not pose much financial problem on the members. But beginning from autonomy, things changed as the grant from the British Methodist Church had reduced, and, yet, more money was needed as a result of responsibility which autonomy had placed on her. As a result, the Class Fees of two shilling and a penny was increased to two pounds ten shillings.³⁴⁰

Right from the autonomy till date, financial burdens on the Church keep increasing. The reason for the rise in financial demands could be traced to policies that add more financial responsibilities without aggregate financial growth. The compendium of minutes of 1st-33rd meetings of Conference Connexional Council reported on the financial constraints of the Church several times. Some of the extracts are presented below:

- a. A house for the Prelate Emeritus was purchased at the cost of sixteen million naira and renovated at the cost of two million naira. A debt of two million naira was still outstanding. Dioceses that had not paid two hundred- and fifty-thousand-naira levy were directed through their Archbishops to pay up.
- b. Fifteen Dioceses were listed as still being indebted to the Committee in respect of Prelate's retirement house. Defaulting Dioceses were urged to pay up without further delay.³⁴¹
- c. The Secretary of Conference stated that the outstanding bills, salaries and allowances owed by Conference stood at fifty-eight million three hundred and fifty-seven thousand six hundred and fifty four naira fifty kobo³⁴²

³³⁹ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. *The Wesleyan Presence in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Safer. 97

³⁴⁰ M.M. Familusi, 1992. *Methodism in Nigeria (1842-1992)*. Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers Ltd 124

³⁴¹ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2007 Minutes of the 2nd Conference Connexional Council. In, *Compendium of Minutes of 1st-33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council*. Lagos: Wesley House. 13

³⁴² Methodist Church Nigeria, 2007 Minutes of the 1st Conference Connexional Council. In, *Compendium of Minutes of 1st-33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council*. Lagos: Wesley House.8

- d. Council resolved that all Archdioceses should, as a matter of urgency, work out the possibilities of sending to the Conference Office special donations as relief for the immediate payments of backlog of salaries and pensions at the Headquarters.³⁴³
- e. At the Diocesan level the same problem is noticeable. It was recently discovered that a lot of Dioceses owe their clergy several months of stipends due largely to perceived non viability of such Dioceses. This ugly trend has caught the attention of the Prelate, who, at several fora, had expressed his concern and the need to nip the trend in the bud.³⁴⁴
- f. In 2014, the Prelate informed the Council of the indebtedness in respect to Wesley University to the tune of N634 million was due was payment in 2013³⁴⁵. If the Church does not have the financial power to manage a university, why did she venture into it?

Lamenting the financial problems of the Church, Mbang during his Prelacy said,

Methodist Church Nigeria ought not to be a poor Church financially judging from the calibre of sons and daughters whom God in His infinite mercy has blessed this Church with. But the reality on ground is that she is very poor. It is indeed shameful to tell this kind of story anywhere. Apart from some Local Churches and Circuits, Methodist Church Nigeria at all levels compared to other sister denominations...is very poor.³⁴⁶

The cause of this financial problem could be traced to policies that add financial burdens than reduce it. In the same address, Mbang notes that members donate their monies to other denominations which deceive them with vague promises rather than give to the Church... for such people the Church is preserved for birthday thanksgivings, marriages and funeral. What the Church fails to address is, why do these calibers of Methodist's children prefer giving to other denominations but leave the Church in lack? Some of our respondents were of the view that the continuous creation of Circuits or Dioceses placed various financial demands on the members and

³⁴³ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2007 Minutes of the 1st Conference Connexional Council. In, Compendium of Minutes of 1st-33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council. Lagos: Wesley House. 11

³⁴⁴O.O. Odejayi, 2019. Archbishop's Address. Ibadan: Eltim Prints. 42

³⁴⁵ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2007 Minutes of the 22nd Conference Connexional Council. In, Compendium of Minutes of 1st-33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council. Lagos: Wesley House. 270

³⁴⁶ S.C. Mbang, 1998. Prelate's Address to the 36th/1st Biennial Conference, Methodist Church Nigeria. 10

particularly the Local Church as all the different structure need management and maintenance. Hence, unending levies that encourage compromise in giving.³⁴⁷ Ladigbolu³⁴⁸ The Church is working in pari passu the Federal Government of Nigeria where they have been clamour for the creation of more states when the existing ones are not well managed. A noticeable issue is that the creation of a Diocese today in an area is the beginning of the quest for another Diocese by another section of new Diocese who desire to be independent and to have their own Cathedral. Take for instance the case of Ibadan Diocese which in the 1980s extended as far as Ijebu but today have five Dioceses in Oyo State alone with three in Ibadan Metropolis. In this situation, most of them are not viable in social impacts like building new schools, hospitals or maintaining old ones. Equally, such things as empowerment scheme for members of the Church or the general public are rare just as the payment of Staff Emoluments, booking of spaces on the media for Christian programmes or visit motherless babies' home are no easier to come by.

One of our respondents particularly suggested a hard fist rule on the creation of Circuits, Dioceses and Archdioceses and the need for support to Local Churches from the top as against the current practice of continuous levies to the Local Churches.³⁴⁹ Also, another respondent is of the view that the perennial financial constraints of the Church is as a result of continuous resort to the colonial method of assessment, levies, financial appeal and fundraising which have outlived their relevancies in an age where social institutions attain self-sustenance through investment and efficient financial management. Noting that, no Church of this age can survive on assessment and levies.³⁵⁰

According to Very Rev Udoh,³⁵¹ there should be deliberate policies to encourage downward communication of finance against the continuous upward increase

³⁴⁷ O. Ali. *Interview Respondent.*, Church Council Secretary, Methodist Church Nigeria, Sabon Gari Otukpo, Benue State, (34 years). Interviewed on 15/9/2020.

³⁴⁸ L.S.A. Ladigbolu. *Interview Respondent.* (Most Rev). Retired Archbishop of Ilesa and a serving member, Board of Trustee. Oyo, Oyo State. Interviewed on the 11th October, 2020

³⁴⁹ O. Ali. *Interview Respondent.* Church Council Secretary, Methodist Church Nigeria, Sabon Gari Otukpo, Benue State, 34 years. Interviewed on 15/9/2020.

³⁵⁰ Anonymou. *Interview Respondent.* (Pastor) Pastoral Agent aged (34 years). Ibadan, Oyo State. Interviewed on 23rd March 2021

³⁵¹ M. Udoh. *Interview Respondent.* (Very Rev). Presbyter, MCN Ikot Ekpene, and lecturer, Akwa Ibom State University. Interviewed on 7/9/2020. Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State.

demands. Oscar³⁵² though, applauding the connexional system laments its adverse impact on the Local Church as it has retarded meaningful development at that level as the resources generated for development are channeled to the Circuit, Diocese, Archdiocese and Conference leaving the Local Church empty. He sees continuous splitting of the Church in response to policy in that direction as a challenge the Church.

4.9.4 Partial implementation and non-compliance

The Church is very good in policy formulation like Nigeria but not implementation. The hierarchical and connexional system presupposes that before actions are taken, collective decisions to that regard should be reached and followed. For instance, policies on the creation of Circuits, Dioceses and Archdioceses just as well as ministers' welfare, evangelism, promotion and many more were made collectively. However, a good number of times, these policies are not implemented as they are supposed to be. According to Oscar, an interview respondent, a lot of Methodist policies are beautiful but that many times a good number of ministers do not key into it and as a result, suffer implementation. Taiwo also lend his voice that "our policies are our challenges as many of them are unrealisable and often hijacked by the cabals working against the leadership of the Church for selfish interest."³⁵³ Equally, Ote Amuta³⁵⁴ opines that "the Church has over the years committed much time to policy formulations which in many instances do not see the light of the day or are counterproductive. He made mention of the case of age stipulation for an aspiring Prelate which must be sixty years. To him, such policy is largely counterproductive as it denies the Church the opportunity to get the best hand among the Episcopates. He asked, "what if God-anointed one at the time of vacancy for the post is below sixty." Ariyo³⁵⁵ also agree that the Church is at the forefront in policy development but people pay lip services to such policies and many times ended in a locker.

In response of this problem, Ladigbolu, aligns himself with the view of a United Methodist Bishop,

³⁵² O. Oscar. *Interview Respondent*. Kubwa Circuit Youth President, Kubwa Diocese, Abuja. (34 years) Interviewed on 16/9/2020.

³⁵³ B.A. Taiwo. *Interview Respondent*. (Rt. Rev), Bishop of Elekuro Diocese, Ibadan, Oyo State. Interviewed on 26th November, 2020.

³⁵⁴ A. Ote, (Engr), Member, MCN Adum Oko. (40 years). Interviewed on 27th November, 2020. Orokam, Benue State

³⁵⁵ E.I Ariyo. *Interview Respondent*. (Very Rev) Presbyter, Methodist Church Nigeria, lecturing at Immanuel College of Theology Ibadan. Aged 55. Interviewed on 12th December, 2020. Samonda, Ibadan

Our Wesley inspired dream and directive was to spread scriptural holiness across the continent. Now we are tired, listless, fuelled only by the nostalgia of former days, walking with a drop, eyes on the ground, discouraged, putting our foot ahead of the others like a tired old man who remembers but can no longer perform.

According to him, the above description may even fit Nigerian Methodist Church better than the American counterpart. Recollecting that, even the noise of Repositioning does not go down well as most of the leaders appointed /elected few years after the kickoff lack any knowledge of the body of materials assembled for Repositioning. He laments that “implementation of the recommendations were observed more in the breach than in reality.”³⁵⁶ Equally, David Kolawole expresses concern that “the Conference has policies on various issues, but that many of these policies tend to be forgotten in the general running of things”.³⁵⁷ These claims can be established based on the facts on ground. Take for instance; the issue of Central Payment of ministers’ stipends has been a long-standing policy of the Church.³⁵⁸ Prelate Mbang described it as a thorny issue that has seriously been opposed and as a result, no implementation. This non implementation led to the constituting of a six-person committee to work out a system/modality for the implementation of the Central Payment for Ministers.³⁵⁹ In the recommendations of the committees of Conference for the year 2012 it is mentioned that ‘the Methodist Connexional system of the stronger Church helping the weak cannot be said to be overly successful now compared to the previous time.’³⁶⁰ Taiwo³⁶¹ expressed reservation over the possibility of Central Payment in Nigerian context which is a departure from British Methodist, the Rock from which Methodist Church Nigeria was hewn. To him, the word, ‘central’ should be a Conference core responsibility since it is the central pool of Methodist Church

³⁵⁶ L.S.A. Ladigbolu, 2018. Methodist Church in Identity Crisis within the Context of politics, Security, and Injustice in Contemporary Nigeria. In R.O. Opeke., Familusi O.O. and Berekiah O.O (eds) *The Heart of the Act: Church, Politics and Social Transformation. A Festschrift in Honor of His Grace, Most Rev M.K. Stephen.* Ibadan: University Press Publishing House. 41

³⁵⁷ D. Kolawole, 2015. *The Lay President and the Methodist Church Nigerian Constitution.* In Allwell A.O. et al. *The Lay Presidency and Methodist Church Nigeria.* Nigeria: Methodist Church Nigeria. 46

³⁵⁸ S.C. Mbang, 1998. *Prelate’s Address to the 36th/1st Biennial Conference, Methodist Church Nigeria.* 11

³⁵⁹ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2007 *Minutes of the 22nd Conference Connexional Council.* In, *Compendium of Minutes of 1st-33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council.* Lagos: Wesley House.231

³⁶⁰ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2007 *Minutes of the 26th Conference Connexional Council.* In, *Compendium of Minutes of 1st-33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council.* Lagos: Wesley House. 235

³⁶¹ B.A. Taiwo. *Interview Respondent.* (Rt. Rev), Bishop of Elekuro Diocese, Ibadan, Oyo State. Interviewed on 26th November, 2020.

Nigeria. But a situation where Conference core responsibility as it is with the British Methodist who still practises Central Payment at the Conference level is shifted to Dioceses will remain a bottleneck in the Church. It is therefore obvious that failure to implement policies may be as a result of their impracticability. According to Oliver Abah,³⁶² the Central Payment is not effective up till date because it is unproductive like the communist ideology. He further opined that noncompliance to Church policies could be as a result of instability of policies. He mentioned a situation where a policy is made today and before you know it is either changed or not practiced a test run on few people or group. He also identified personal interest against a collective interest as a great obstacle to non-implementation. Equally, Olorode is of the view that the Constitution is not yielding the desired result because many times the leaders close their eyes to constitutional provisions or employ the inconsistency of the Book of Resolutions to manipulate the Constitution. Also, that the courage, ability, boldness and authority to affirm the policies of the Church regardless of the people involved is lacking. He went further to state that “most of the time, there is a manipulation called ‘the policy of the Church’ to favour some preferred people and disfavour others and after achieving their intent such policy is thrown to the dustbin.” He gave the instance, of a policy that preferment of Priest to Presbyter should be ten-year post-ordination after a written examination; but before long the policy had disappeared as Priests who were far below the benchmark without any written examination were preferred and that now one could be preferred a Presbyter automatically at an ongoing service. He concluded that until the Church gets to the level of upholding the sanctity and supremacy of the Constitution, she will go nowhere.

Another of our respondent, Edoke Amuta gave an instance of a method closely related to Connexional System which he as a Bishop of Evangelism introduced during his tenure. He calls it ‘Mission Adoption’ whereby strong Churches and Dioceses adopt weak ones particularly in places where Methodist presence is not well felt. But unfortunately it never worked. He concludes that the Connexional System in many ways did not work.³⁶³ Another of our respondents opined that many times policies are made without proper understanding of the needs of members of the Church or the

³⁶² O.A. Abah. *Interview Respondent*. (Most Rev), Archbishop, MCN Archdiocese of Benue, Benue State. Interviewed on 12th December, 2020.

³⁶³ E. Amuta (Rt. Rev) Bishop of Ito Diocese, Benue State. Interviewed on 12th December, 2020

policy makers failed to first carry out a feasibility study; hence, it is often a “copy and paste” approach and at the long run suffers set back.³⁶⁴

There are other instances of noncompliance to the policies at some levels of the Church. For instance, in the 19th Conference Connexional Council minutes, twenty two Dioceses were indicted for being irresponsible to Conference directives on finance.³⁶⁵ Also, reports of the Conference Income Monitoring Team show among other things that the level of compliance with Conference directives on remittances of 10% of other collections was below average and that some Diocese which used to have high level of compliance are beginning to slow down the pace.³⁶⁶ In the same vein, Onuh lend his voice that many of the Church policies are not practicable in all areas of the Conference as some there are peculiar issues pertinent to different areas³⁶⁷

In response to this development, Udoh,³⁶⁸ advised that there be deliberate policies to encourage downward communication of finance noting that with over 80 Dioceses he expects Conference levies to organisations and fellowships to reduce as against the continuous increase. Also, that the welfare policies of the Church should obey the socioeconomic indicators to avoid many Ministers from resorting to begging.

4.9.5 Conflict of interests

The idea of conflict of interest happens when an entity or individual becomes untrustworthy as a result of a clash between self-serving interests and organisational or professional responsibilities. Such a conflict occurs when a company or person has a vested interest such as money, status, knowledge, relationships, or reputation which puts into question whether their actions, judgment, and decision-making can be unbiased.³⁶⁹ The policies of the Church over the years have witnessed low implementation as a result of self-serving interest of some individuals who were bent

³⁶⁴ S.A. Akinleye. *Interview Respondent*. Circuit Youth President, Badagry Diocese, Lagos State. (27 years). Interviewed on 15th December, 2020. Badagry, Lagos State

³⁶⁵ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2012 Minutes of the 19th Conference Connexional Council. In, Compendium of Minutes of 1st-33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council. Lagos: Wesley House. 202

³⁶⁶ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2007 Minutes of the 26th Conference Connexional Council. In, Compendium of Minutes of 1st-33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council. Lagos: Wesley House. 267-268

³⁶⁷ E. Onuh. *Interview Respondent*. (The Rev). Priest in charge, Owukpa Circuit, Diocese of Enone. 36 years. Interviewed on 15/9/2020. Owukpa, Benue State

³⁶⁸ M. Udoh, (Very Rev), Presbyterian, and lecturer, Akwa Ibom State University. Interviewed on 7/9/2020

³⁶⁹ T. Segal. Conflict of Interest. Retrieved from <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/conflict-of-interest.asp>. Accessed on 5/4/2021

on enforcing their interests against the interest of the Church. In a situation when their interest is defeated, they hardly support such policy.

Conflict of interests could be accounted as one of the reasons behind the fourteen years Methodist crisis. As noted, Familusi, during the move to transform the Church from Presidential to Episcopal, all efforts were made from 1972 to 1975 to educate the people on the implication and set up of Episcopal Methodist Church. But to the surprise of the Conference a group of Ministers and members in one of the Districts in Eastern Nigeria who wanted the Church to feel their weight, brought an alternative Constitution. On rejecting the alternative Constitution, “those who brought it were, understandably displeased and disappointed. As a result, even though the Archdioceses and Dioceses were inaugurated with pomp and pageantry, things were not at all easy in the east.”³⁷⁰ While expressing his view, Ikwuta opined that “the crisis was heated not because of ecclesiastical abuse but personality clash between the top leaders of the Church who felt their security were threatened.”³⁷¹ While addressing the Conference, the former Prelate, Mbang has this to say,

It has alleged that some of our leaders in the Local Churches and Circuits stand in the way of the Church Pension Scheme. These leaders are usually unwilling to contribute to this scheme from the Church money under their care. This is a little unfair because their attitudes suggest that they only like their Ministers or Church Workers while young and energetic and do not really care about what might happen to them when they are old.³⁷²

It is obvious that the clash of interest of the leaders with the Church policy on Ministers and Church Workers’ Pension Scheme made them to be adamant to organisational policy that is widely practice both in the Church and in the public sectors.

³⁷⁰ M.M. Familusi, 2012. *Methodism in Nigeria, 1842-2012*. Lagos: Methodist Publishing Company. 167

³⁷¹ P.J. Ikwuta, *Interview Respondent*. Retired Presbyterian, Enone Diocese. (74 years) Interviewed on 17th November, 2020. Otukpo, Benue State

³⁷² S.K. Mbang, 1991. *Prelate’s Address to the 29th Annual Conference*. 111

4.9.6 Weak church structure

The structure of the Church specified in the Deed of Foundation included the Conference, Districts, Circuits and Societies.³⁷³ The Conference which is the governing body of the Church comprises of the whole area covered in Nigeria. The District consisted of numbers of Circuits grouped in an area designated by Conference with the Synod as the decision-making body. The idea of the Circuit was based on a system whereby the Conference listed numbers of Churches and institutions as Circuits, while Societies consisted of members in various localities. Though, the number of Circuits to makeup a Districts or Societies to makeup a Circuits were not specified; the records available shows that between the inception of Wesleyan and Primitive Missionary Societies to 1950, the Western District had 331 Churches while the Eastern District had 769.³⁷⁴

At the inception of Episcopacy, the Constitution did not specify the number of Circuits to make up a Diocese but for Archdiocese, it must comprise at least four Dioceses. Also, a Circuit could consist of one or more Societies.³⁷⁵ However, the 2006 Constitution was more precise, it specified that a Diocese should be made up of at least four Circuits, while Circuit should comprise of at least three Local Churches.³⁷⁶ In addition, section 280 of the 2006 Constitution maintains that “In accordance with the tradition of Methodism, a Circuit is a distinct authoritative unit within a Diocese in which usually several Local Churches, conveniently situated for the purpose are grouped together for pastoral oversight, mutual support and Christian service.” It will be good to consider two phrases, “tradition of Methodism” and “several Local Churches”. In the tradition of Methodism in relation to Circuit, there is usually a Circuit Rider, who is expected to go through the many Societies grouped together under his jurisdiction for Pastoral oversight. In other word, the Circuit Rider in what is now called a Presbyter was an overseer. William Powell succinctly explains this tradition

The ministry of a traveling preacher covered a large geographic region called a circuit... The circuit was also known by the length of time it took the itinerant to

³⁷³ The Methodist Church Deed of Foundation and Deed of Church Order for the Constituting of the Nigerian Conference, 1962. London: Waterlow and Sons Limited.

³⁷⁴ M.A. Oduyoye, 1992. Wesleyan Presence in Nigeria. Ibadan: Sefer. 136

³⁷⁵ Methodist Church Nigeria Constitution, 1975. Lagos: Woodfree Comm. Enterprises. 38, 47

³⁷⁶ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006 Constitution. 79, 102.

complete a single round. Circuits varied from two weeks to six weeks and were from 120 to over 600 miles in length, but most circuits were four weeks and from 300 to 500 miles long. Each of these regions included many communities where a minister had "appointments" or previous commitments to preach.³⁷⁷

If one is to compare the above evidence with the required numbers of Local Churches for the establishment of Circuit today, it is grossly inadequate. In a situation where there is one Local Church Circuit with either one or two Preaching Station makes the office of a Presbyter or a Local Church affair. A related report of this nature given by the Secretary of Conference to the Connexional Council leaves much to be desired. He drew the attention of the Council to the request from Archbishop of Ilesa asking Conference Headquarters for new codes in respect of certain Local Churches which he claimed were formerly in the Awomolo Circuit in the Diocese of Ilesa North but wish to revert to Otapete Circuit in the Diocese of Ilesa. When the matter was investigated, a foul game was discovered. What actually happened was that a Circuit named Halleluyah Awomolo was created in 2009 comprising Awomolo Methodist Church, Thomas Ogunwusi Methodist Church, and John Olabode Memorial Methodist Church. Subsequently, when Ijesa North Diocese was created in 2012 the new Circuit formed the heart of the new Diocese as its headquarters. The issue that transpired was an agreement that once this Circuit was used to achieve the dream Diocese the two Local Churches, Thomas Ogunwusi Methodist Church and John Olabode Memorial Methodist Church would be returned to Otapete under Ilesa Diocese. Hence, after the creation of Ijesa North Diocese, Otapete requested that the Churches be returned. That is not all, in another development, Methodist Church Oke-Opo G.R.A. Ilesa and Wesley Guild Chapel withdrew from another newly created Imo Circuit, thereby leaving the Circuit with one Local Church. These two acts which were done with the knowledge of leaders from the Local Church to the Archdiocesan level show how the Church has deviated from the standard of the Wesleyan. It is no wonder that when the matter got to the Conference, the developments were considered as ecclesiastical fraud and acts of dishonesty.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁷ W.A. Powell jnr, 1977. *Methodist Circuit Riders in America, 1766-1844*. A Thesis submitted to Richmond University. 64-65

³⁷⁸ Methodist Church Nigeria, 2007. *Minutes of the 22nd Conference Connexional Council*. In, *Compendium of Minutes of 1st-33rd Meetings of Conference Connexional Council*. Lagos: Wesley House. 238-239

One can only measure the present situation with what obtained in the past to be able to access the level of the weak structures. While pushing for the adoption of Episcopacy, the President, Professor E.B. Idowu gave an example of how a Methodist Church Superintendent once fell in line with Archdeacons of the Anglican Church and was asked to fall out of the place as they said, “the place was too high for him.” Then he remarked, “but this was a Methodist functionary whose nomenclature ‘Superintendent’ is a Latinised word for Bishop and could have normally ranked with Bishops in procession.”³⁷⁹ What this meant was that a Methodist Superintendent in charge of a Circuit by Latin standard is a Bishop which by implication oversees a Diocese. Therefore, a Superintendent in charge of a Circuit was by far higher than an Archdeacon in charge of Archdeaconry in the Anglican Communion. In fact, it was the Superintendent that was upgraded to Bishop at the time of Episcopacy. To a large extent, the Circuit under the leadership of Superintendent (Bishop) would have remained a unique feature of Methodist Episcopacy and a brand in ecclesiasticism that other denominations could have adopted. However, the 1976 Constitution merged Circuits together to become Diocese under the leadership of Bishop (Superintendent). So, one could be made to believe that the quality of Dioceses and Bishops in 1976 Constitution was better and stronger than many other Dioceses in some other denominations. But the reverse is the case today. Hence, one respondent advocates a return to Patriarch Bolaji Idowu’s vision for the Church.³⁸⁰

In line with ecclesiastical traditions, the Bishop is a Presbyter of Presbyters. This brings to mind that the office of a Presbyter adopted by Methodist Church is attached with the responsibility of oversight of other Churches. In the same vein, the office of a Bishop in Ecclesiastical tradition, and as intended by Methodist Church is higher than Presbyters. This accounts for Presbyters as subordinates to Bishops. In fact, in Monarchical Episcopacy, the Bishop is the diocesan as he is the Diocese personified.³⁸¹ Though one may accept the stand of the Church that her Episcopacy is corporate, not monarchical; this however, does not reduce the Episcopal See, functions and paraphernalia of a Bishop. But in a situation where a Circuit is either one Local

³⁷⁹ M.M. Familusi, 2012. *Methodism in Nigeria (Revised Edition) 1842-2012*. Lagos: Methodist Publishing Company. 153

³⁸⁰ Anonymous. *Interview Respondent*. (Student Minister). Methodist Theological Institute, Sagamu. Interviewed on 19th November, 2020

³⁸¹ D. Kolawole, 2015. *The Lay President and the Methodist Church Nigeria Constitution*. In, *Methodist Lay President: A Book of Readings in Honour of Sir Jimmy Nath Coker*. Lagos: Methodist Church Nigeria Publication. 41

Church affair or three to five Local Churches, then a Diocese made up of four Circuits may not have up to twenty Local Churches. Expressing his view over recent development, Olorode opined that the rationale behind the adoption of Episcopacy was to raise the image and dignity of the Church among other denominations like the Roman Catholic and Anglican because Methodist Ministers of the same rank with Ministers from these Churches were treated as though far below them, particularly at Ecumenical services. He affirmed that such intent from inception points to what may become of such Episcopacy later. Hence, the 120 years before the adoption of Episcopacy, that is, from 1842-1976, recorded more achievements in terms of social contributions than what has been contributed from 1967 till date.

It is obvious today that the Church's Episcopal system and structure are becoming weak than strong. Many Dioceses created are just areas formerly known to be Circuits. In some instances, former area covered by a Circuit is now made up of two to three Dioceses. While accepting that a Circuit can grow to become a Diocese, it should be measured by expansion and growth beyond former boundary of the Circuit. Lamenting the situation, Prelate Sunday Mbang while addressing the 29th Annual Conference says,

Experience has shown that Conference has created some unviable Circuits and Dioceses over the years. These Circuits and Dioceses have not fared very well financially and infrastructurally. The effect of this has been felt within and without the Diocese. Conference will need to take a fresh look at this exercise in order to save Methodist Church Nigeria from the attendant and unnecessary embarrassment and disgrace.³⁸²

These and many more show that the current system has eroded the valued place accorded earlier standard. These developments are coming up at a time when the society has changed for good. Take for instance, in the former time it was practically impossible to monitor the entire area covered by a Diocese or Archdiocese because of poor road network, communication and shortage of ministerial staff; the reverse is the case today, modern technology and availability of manpower has reduced these problems to the barest minimum which should have helped to increase area of jurisdiction and improve the structure. Instead, the reverse is the case. In line with this development, a respondent opined that Methodist Church Nigeria is seriously losing

³⁸² S.C. Mbang, 1991. Prelate's Address to the 29th Annual Conference of Methodist Church Nigeria. 110

her pristine position because her cherished heritages are being bequeathed to the altar of Episcopacy.³⁸³

In the view of Elaigwu Pita,³⁸⁴ the policy of the Church has rather brought the administrative running of the Church closer to the people. He spoke in retrospection of their youthful time when it was nearly impossible to see an Ordain Minister in their rural Church let alone the Bishop. But today he attested that Bishops and Presbyters can now be easily seen and reached. In the light of this view and the one expressed by 52% of our respondents, it will be good if the Church strike a balance of bringing the administration closer to the people and equally ensuring the structure is strong enough. Any of the extreme remains a problem to the Church progress. This is because in situations where the split of the different structures to make the Church closer to the people amount to weak structure will definitely hinder any meaningful progress. On the other hand, if the Church also left a large area that should be a Diocese for instance to remain a Circuit, there is every possibility that so many things like the policies of the Church may not be easily known let alone implementation. Hence, there should be serious examination and cross-examination until a place is certified before creation as a Circuit or Diocese.

4.10 Conclusion

There is no doubt that policies are keys to the growth and advancement of both the society and the institutions within it. This is because it gives directions, and place limit that guarantee the overall success of the people. This chapter therefore critique policy development in the Methodist Church Nigeria from the autonomy in 1962 to 2020. It discovered that policies have helped the Church to be a major contributor to societal development in the areas of educational and health institutions, and other social service. In the same vein, the Church is abreast with changes that occur in the society as policy has greatly contributed in the introduction of new methods, enhanced growth and expansion and national relevance. The appraisal shows that policy has contributed to the global relevance of the Church and social adjustment. On the other hand, policies of the Church have led to financial burdens, generated crisis and eroded Methodist heritage. The prospects and burdens of policies were evaluated qualitatively

³⁸³ C.M. Okoro. *Interview Respondent*. (Pastor). Pastoral Agent, Diocese of Ngbo. Interviewed on 23rd December, 2020

³⁸⁴ P. Elaigwu. *Interview Respondent*. Circuit Men Fellowship President, Eupi. Diocese of Otukpo, and a Lecturer, College of Education, Oju, Benue State. Interviewed on 21st December, 2020.

and quantitatively. The views of our respondents sought through structured and unstructured interview support that policies of the Church come with prospects and burdens but, that the benefits of the prospects outweighed the burdens. Hence, policy has been a major means of responding to issues in the society.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The study examined policy development in Methodist Church Nigeria from 1962 to 2020. It investigated the outcome of policy on the internal and external life of the church. The research discovered that the Church is responsive to issues within and without through policy formulation, just as this has enhanced the church's contribution to the transformation of the society.

It was a historical event that two years after Nigeria got her independence from the British that Nigerian Methodist Church too got its autonomy from the British Methodist Church. It is worthy to note that the words "independence" and "autonomy" connote same ideology. Both emphasise self-governance; hence, the independence of Nigeria marks the time when Nigerians started to exercise political freedom just as autonomy conferred on Nigerian Methodists to exercise ecclesiastical authority over the Church. The body of laws that therefore established Methodist Church Nigeria, popularly called Deed of Foundation forms the nucleus of this thesis and extending to the year 2020 which closed with the end of the 2006 Constitution after fourteen years of being in use. The Deed of Foundation was an agreement document that constituted the Methodist Church Nigeria as an autonomous body of World Methodism. It was supposed to last for a short period of time as the Church was mandated by the same to hold a 'Foundation Conference' in order to adopt what is termed the "Deed of Church Order" which shall be the Constitution of the Church. However, the Church continued the use of this Deed of Foundation for over a decade. What this implied was that the Church was so patterned after the British Methodist Church with an operational basis that is largely at variance to Nigerian context. Hence, a loss of public image, and many internal leadership problems between the lay and the Clergy.

The Church landscape received a new dawn only at the election of The Rev Bolaji Ebenezer Idowu as the President in 1972. Consequent upon the problems posed by the continuous use of the Deed of Foundation, he set out to produce a new Constitution that is to be indigenous in nature. The outcome of the move gave birth to the 1976 Constitution. The Constitution was a clear departure from the British Methodist ecclesiastical system. It set aside Presidential system of Church governance for Episcopacy; this brought in new titles for the functionaries of the Church such as Patriarch, Archbishops, Bishops, Presbyter, Priest and Deacons. The Vice-President of Conference office reserved for the lay was change to Lay President. These titles were considered to have scriptural and ecclesiastical origins which make them popularly accepted among Nigerian populace. Furthermore, the structure of the Church was changed from Conference, District, Superintendent, Circuit and Society to Conference, Archdiocese, Diocese, Circuit and Local Church respectively. The changes brought a good public image and a very strong internal system. Though the tremendous changes introduced by this Constitution were welcomed by some parts of the Church, it was not accepted in other parts. This brought about a period of crisis that polarised the Church to two major factions. One faction was practicing the 1962 Deed of Foundation, while others practiced the 1976 Constitution for a period of fourteen years.

The rejection of the 1976 Constitution and the prolonged crisis rocking the Church were laid to rest when after much attempt to resolve the problem brought the two factions together to fashion a new Constitution that will be generally accepted. This gave birth to the 1990 Constitution that resolved amicably the problem, particularly several litigations and media propaganda that dragged the public image of the Church to the mud. The core target of this Constitution was to reconcile and reunify the warring groups. The Constitution achieved this by making some adjustments to the 1976 Constitution, the most important of which was the title of Patriarch changed to Prelate, and his designation as Pre-Eminence changed to Eminence. The achievement of this Constitution was.

After thirteen years of practising the 1990 Constitution, that is, 2003, it was felt that the Church urgently need to be repositioned to cope with the 21st century challenges affecting religious institution; particularly, the Mainline Churches. Ensuing from the above, the 2003 General Purpose Committee set up a steering committee known as the Strategic Planning Team with the term of reference was to examine “where the Church

was, where it is now, where it hopes to be and how to get there.” The report of this committee indicated that there was a significant drop in Church membership especially the youths while those who remained complained to be spiritually starved. In addition, it was reported that there was unfaithfulness on the part of the members to remit monies appropriately to the different coffers of the Church. These have made the Church to be internally and externally weak. To stem the tide, the Church at its 39th/4th Biennial Conference held between 4th and 12th August 2004 took far-reaching decisions on the re-organisation of Methodist Church Nigeria and accordingly passed a resolution accepting the recommendations of the Strategic Planning Team and directing that committees be inaugurated to examine the various aspects of the proposed re-organisation and make recommendations to be incorporated, where appropriate into the new Constitution of the Church. At the 40th/5th Biennial Conference held in 2006 the Constitution was enacted in line with repositioning agenda.

Repositioning which is synonymous to readjustment shows that the Church as against former position readjusted to a new vantage position aimed at ministering effectively to the 21st century Church and the society. Part of this repositioning is the establishment of a Directorate of Evangelism and Discipleship, and the election of a Bishop to oversee this Directorate. Consequent upon this, evangelism and outreach to the general public was given a priority through a fiscal policy of 20% funding. Equally, the provision of scholarship for educational advancement, allowance for widows, orphans, the unemployed, the homeless and the disadvantaged in the society were to be catered for with at least 5% of the Church funds. The 2006 Constitution was in use for a period of fourteen years before it was revoked in a unanimous vote by the Conference on the 3rd day of December 2020 and in its place enacted a new Constitution to be referred to as The Constitution of Methodist Church Nigeria, 2021. Many of our respondents, including the Prelate of the Church, His Eminence, S.C.K. Uche agree that though a new Constitution has been enacted it only covers certain challenges encountered in the operation of the 2006 Constitution and to also reflect some important developments since 2006. That aside these, the Church is still in the period of repositioning captured in the 2006 Constitution.

In a nutshell, the chapter one of the thesis covered the general introduction. It has background to the study, statement of the problem and purpose of the study. Others

include the scope of the study, significance of the study, and research method. Information was gathered for this work through scholarly books and journals as well as the use of questionnaire, and both structured and unstructured interview. The review of scholarly work in chapter two identified a gap in scholarship which was filled through this research work. The chapter three examined the concept of social change, its process and features. It also considered the factors that propel social change. At the end it was discovered that social change is a feature of every given society. Chapter four looked at the historical context of policy development within the scope of our study.

It found out that the autonomy of Methodism in Nigeria ushered in the development of Constitutions that have been navigating the life of the Church in a dynamic society to the period of time covered in this research. In chapter five the policies of the Church were reexamined in the light of their prospects and burdens. It was discovered that policies have enhanced introduction of new methods, Church growth, and relevance at local and international fronts as well as social adjustment. On the other hand, the policies of the Church have eroded a good number of the Church heritage and tradition. It equally brought crisis and financial burdens. It was also discovered that partial implementation and non-compliance constitute problems to the policies of the Church. The last chapter of this work which is chapter six did a summary and general conclusion of the work. It also offered some recommendations that will enhance the policies of the Church.

5.2 Conclusion

So far, this research has been able to examine policies developed in Methodist Church Nigeria from 1962 to 2020. Like any other living social institution, the Church has remained potent through the instrumentality of policies despite the various changes that have happened in Nigerian society. Policies have assisted in the injection of new methods that engender growth and expansion. The image of the premier Church that was nothing to write home about has seriously improved as a result of policy formulation. Despite the fact that new policies have come with burdens of financial demands, loss of some heritages and even sometimes crisis; it is without doubt that the Church would not have been better if it had remained static in a dynamic society.

Therefore, we can say the Church has toed the path of relevance by utilising the instrument of policy to navigate through social dynamics.

This study has helped us to identify the flexibility of the Church in adapting to new developments in the society without commotion. This is achieved through the Book of Resolution which is next to the Constitution. It empowers the Church to respond to matters of urgency without breaching the Constitution, document same and report to Conference for a simple majority vote in favour or against. When such is accepted it becomes a resolution of Conference and it is deemed to have bidding power as the Constitution. It therefore shows that the Church is not rigid its operation. It further points to the renewed nature of the Church despite being the first surviving Christian Mission in Nigeria since 1842; it still remains strong, vibrant and relevant in today's Nigerian society. It is important to state as this work is concluded that the Church has never completely set aside any of the Constitution since autonomy. What is done from time to time is a review of Constitution considered to be getting outdated by removing and inserting what will best suit the age. More so, the Constitutions developed over the years has left intact the doctrinal standard of Methodist Church which is based on the Scripture. This is considered Supreme rule of faith and practice. This stand of the Church agrees with the work of Aubrey Malphurs who discussed the theology of change with three 'F', which are functions, form and freedom. The 'function' he asserts are the timeless, unchanging, nonnegotiable precepts that are based on scripture and are mandates for all Churches to pursue and accomplish. Unlike the function, the 'form' is temporal, changing and negotiable practices which all Churches are free to choose to accomplish their functions. He therefore concluded that since forms are used to accomplish functions, every Church is free to choose the form it deems fit to accomplish the functions. For the Church therefore to accomplish its 'functions' which are timeless, and non-negotiable, policies which could be regarded as 'form' are made from time to time. On this note, Anthony Giddens Structuration Theory that "people actively make and remake structure during the course of their everyday activities and that, both structure and social action are interrelated" is germane to this study.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:

1. Besides the fact that every organization makes its policy to serve as guide in its day-to-day activities, policy is a potent instrument in achieving organisational goal and continuous relevance. Therefore, the Church should put up adequate mechanism of rewards and sanctions for every policy. This will reduce the level of noncompliance and partial implementation.
2. There is a need to be proactive in policy formulation, which projects into the future where the Church should be and how to get there. In this wise, there should a consultative committee of experts that serves as think tank in areas that require policy to drive through the dynamics of the society. In addition, just as the Church has been at the forefront in contributing to social development in Nigeria since 1842; effort must be made to sustain this position which is gradually diminishing in some many areas like health, education, production of frontline national leaders, Church planting and media programs. It is essential that the policies of the Church put these projectors as priority in the scale of preference to remain socially relevant.
3. The policy requirements for the creation of Diocese³⁸⁵ and the realities on ground are grossly inadequate for Episcopal status. A situation where the population of a Diocese is just a fraction above one thousand³⁸⁶ shows that each of the four Circuits that make up the Diocese is between two to three hundred populations of members. This is against the status of a Diocese in Episcopal tradition of the Churches who were into this system of Church governance before Methodist adopted it. By implication, many of the Church's Dioceses cannot compete with their counterpart Dioceses in other Episcopal Churches in terms of membership strength, infrastructure and social influence. The Church needs to reexamine the current policy for the creation of Diocese in order to correct this development which was the hall mark for changing from Presidential to Episcopacy.
4. Much still need to be done to drive the vision and mission statements of the Church. This is because, the growth rate does not reflect the vision and mission statement borne out of repositioning. The Church is yet to be one of the largest Churches in Nigeria as the recent report published by the Department of Research and Documentation puts the population of the Church below one million in a

³⁸⁵ *The Constitution of Methodist Church Nigeria, 2006.* 79

³⁸⁶ Methodist Church Nigeria Headquarters Interim Report of Church Membership Presented to the 47th/12th Biennial Conference from 2nd to 4th December 2020. 5

country of over 200 million.³⁸⁷ What this implies is that the Church population is approximately 0.4% of the population of Nigeria. This is against the expected population of twenty million within ten years envisioned in the repositioning which would have after fourteen years put the population of the Church at the approximate of 3.25% of the entire population of the country. The reason for this wider margin is that policies of the Church are mostly observed in the breach than in practice. Take instance; there is hardly any Diocese or Conference that obeys the 20% budget for evangelism which could have boosted the growth and expansion of the Church to at least 1% of Nigerian population.

5. It was also gathered that policies of the Church have contributed significantly to financial burdens of the members. The administrative cost and travelling expenses drain the finance of the Church as well. This has made some to withdraw from the Church to other denominations or stay away from the Church most of the time. Profoundly, policies are meant to proportionally aide or ameliorate organization and particularly the Church to better service. A situation where the policies of the Church add to financial burdens need to be revisited. Such outcomes that add to financial demand without aggregate financial benefits require the Church to expunge before it cripples totally the Church financial base and power.
6. Though the Church has contributed to the growth of Methodist Church in other countries of the world, there is a need to make her relevance more definite by establishing a Mission Board which will manage Foreign Mission to the neighbouring countries and beyond just the same way the British Methodist sent Missionaries to Nigeria to evangelise. This will go a long way to encourage the members of the global relevance of the Church. In the same way the Mission Board can also handle Local Mission to the different states where Methodist presence is almost completely absent. This can easily achieved by converting the Directorate of Evangelism and Discipleship to a Mission Board or Directorate of Mission while evangelism and discipleship can be departments under it.
7. Despite the tremendous changes happening in every phase of the society, the Church's fiscal policy has remained largely unchanged. From our findings, the Church still practise the payment of levies which annual levies, development levies, organ levies and so many others. In the same way, the practice of

³⁸⁷ S. Varrella, 2020. Population of Nigeria 1950-2020. Retrieved from www.statistic.com. Accessed on the 20/2/2021

assessment has defied change. Just as it was since autonomy, the major source of financing the Church from even Local Church to the Conference level is through assessment. When the Conference levies Archdioceses, the money is shared among Dioceses and each Diocese goes on to levy Circuits while the Circuit equally levy Local Churches. In the end it is the Local Churches that actually shoulder the payment. In other word, the other structure of the Church, beginning from the Circuit to the Conference depend greatly on the Local Church to bears the load of financial demands. In the light of modern-day reality of financial independence, this practice needs to be addressed so that each level of the Church can have some level of financial independence.

8. The Church has been able to adjust in certain areas to meet up with the Nigerian society, particularly in the adoption of Episcopacy, however, the federal system rooted in the Presidential form of Church governance remain a strong opposition to Episcopacy adopted in the title and structure of the Church. In Episcopal system, each Diocese is autonomous, though there is a central authority. This practice enhances easy adaptation to contextual matters as against the practice of Methodist where the Diocese is not autonomous. In fact the Bishop of the Diocese is very much subject to itinerary. It will be ecclesiastical integrity if either the Church go into true Episcopacy or Presidential system than the current merging of the two which has made Dioceses weak as it is only the Conference that has ecclesiastical authority.
9. There is a need for the Church to empower Ministers in the area of welfare, capacity development in terms of training and retraining which will enhance the overall performance of many for social relevance. Also, the welfare policy rolled out in 3013 needs an upward review in line with the economic realities of the country as recurrent inflations have skyrocketed prices of goods and services above 100%; yet the stipends of Church workers has defied upward review. As the Church make policies to respond to social change, this area must not be ignored since it is also part of social progress.
10. Though the Constitution set aside 5% for welfare of Ministers and members and another 20% for evangelism, there is no percentage of income accruing to the Church set aside for investment. Living investment to chance is unhealthy for the future life of the Church. It is recommended that the Church set aside a specific percentage for investment. We believe that if this is religiously done from the

Local Church to the Conference within a space of ten years the financial woes of the Church would have been reduced to the barest minimum

11. The number of meetings for deliberation and introduction of new policies is too many. This is because most of the time the same leaders attend all these meetings throughout the year. Hence there is hardly any time left to work on implementation. A cursory look at the Conference Calendar of Events followed by that of Archdioceses and Dioceses let alone Circuits and Local Churches show a whole lot of meetings from January to December. We recommend that the Church set aside the first quarter of the year, either annual or biennial for all major meetings while the rest three quarters are used for implementation. The advantage of this is that the Church will be left with no option than to implement within these periods. Situations where meetings interpolate throughout the year create no window for implementation than piles of issues unattended to. This recommendation is in line with early Methodist practice when Conference was introduced. The practice was for the Wesleyans to come together once a year to examine the level of progress made in revival, evangelism and outreaches in order to fashion out better ways of launching out again.
12. There is need for the Church to remove the limitations placed on Tent Making Ministers. Our findings show that the Tent Making Ministers are not permitted to serve in full time capacity unless they shed their tents and undergo one-year mandatory training. In addition, Tent Makers are not eligible to be elected into the Episcopal rank. These limitations are unnecessary since such people had previously been ordained into the ministry of word and sacrament. It is therefore expedient that Tent Making Ministers who are found capable be allowed to be elected into the Episcopal rank.
13. Besides the educational and health institutions, the Church also needs to design policies that enhance active partnership with both government and Non-Governmental Organisations. This will bring the Church closer to the society. Such bodies like Federal Road Safety Corpse, Fire Service, Media Houses, Law Enforcement Agencies, and Correctional Service could enhance both the image and relevance of the Church in terms of services. Also, NGOs committed to humanitarian services could also partner with services of the Church.
14. The Church has a well spelt out policy on inter-Church-relationship; this needs to be extended to other formidable institutions such as the government and inter-faith

relations. When the Church comes up with a policy on its relationship to the government it will go a long way to give members focus and commitment to the drive of the Church towards governance. In the same way, the pluralistic society the Church finds itself calls for inter-faith relationship; this equally should not be left blank. There is a need to state what the relationship of the Church is to people of other faiths.

15. There is a dearth of awareness on many policies of the church. It is expedient that the Church put in more efforts in policy education. Interactions with some of our respondents show that many are not aware, or do not understand certain policies that have been made several years ago.
16. Warring parts of Nigeria, and other denominations going through crisis need to learn from the approach used by the Church to resolve the 14 years crisis amicably. The Church employed “no winner, no vanquish” approach, reconciled and reunited warring sections with a new Constitution that was acceptable by all.
17. It is recommended that other Christian denominations adopt Methodist approach of utilising policies such as the Constitution and the Book of Resolutions to remain viable in a dynamic society
18. The underlying reason for many religious crises in Nigeria is as a result of fanaticism and fundamentalism. Religious institutions where such are prominent can turn the unfortunate stories of fundamentalism around if the power of policy initiation is understood. It is therefore recommended that such religious institutions make policies as addendum to their scripture for proper guide to their adherents.
19. Specifically, the democratic model of the Church popularly called corporate episcopacy has enhanced good interface between the members of the episcopate and the laity as well as smooth transition from one leader to the other. This can consolidate Nigerian democracy if policies could be made to curtail the excessive dichotomy between the leaders and the led in Nigeria. In the same way, the age stipulation for those engaged in active Church work has always keep leaders of the Church fit for the job. This can be a model for Nigerian politics that is currently laced with the aged.

5.4 Contributions to knowledge

This research has contributed to knowledge in many ways. Firstly, it brought to the fore the strategic roles of policy in institutional development, particularly the Church. Policy developed by Methodist Church Nigeria has helped her to remain vibrant and active in serving humanity right from autonomy in 1962 to 2020. Therefore, the research will further serve as a reference point to other denominations on how to develop policies that will enhance efficiency and relevance in the society.

In the same vein, the research demonstrates a better model of sustaining and managing fundamental issues such as doctrines and practices in a fast-changing society. These are core areas that have generated most of the religious crises in Nigeria. Therefore, Nigerian government, international organisations, and people of other faiths will find this research on policy development useful in handling religious fundamentalism which have been poorly managed previously.

Lastly, policy development is key to the success of organisations that aim to remain socially relevant. This research has advanced the valuable contributions of policy development to organisational growth, particularly, the Church.

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Primary Source

List and information of oral interview respondents

NAME	AGE	STATUS	PLACE OF INTERVIEW	DATE INTERVIEWED
Abah,A.O.	61	Archbishop of Benue Archdiocese.	Otukpo, Benue State	12 th Dec., 2020
Abah O.M.	53	Benue Archdiocesan Women Fellowship President.	Otukpo, Benue State	12 th Dec., 2020
Adeogun J.O.		Bishop of Ereko Diocese.	Lagos	27 th Nov., 2020
Adogo. U.I.	34	Circuit Quarterly Meeting Secretary. Sokoto State.	Ibadan	12 th Nov., 2020
Agbese D.	47	Bishop of Enone Diocese	Odoba, Benue State	7 th Dec., 2020
Akinleye S.A.		Circuit Youth President, Badagry Diocese	Badagry	15 th Dec., 2020
Akor, M.	35	Women Fellowship member and Staff, Nigerian Fire Service, Abuja.	Abuja	12 th August., 2020
Akor, R.F.	44	member and staff, Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corpse, FCT, Abuja	Abuja	15 th Nov., 2020
Akor, S.E.	72	National Patron, Boys Brigade and former Cathedral Steward, Enone	Otukpa, Benue state	2 nd Oct., 2020

		Diocese.		
Alagbada, O.B.	45	Church member and business tycoon, Olode, Osun State.	Olode, Ife	18 th Dec., 2020
Ali O.	34	Church Council Secretary, Methodist Church Nigeria, Sabon Gari Otukpo, Benue State.	Otukpo, Benue State	15 th Sept., 2020
Aluko J. S.	68	Bishop of Ifaki Diocese.	Ifaki, Ekiti State	17 th Oct., 2020
Ameh A.S.	51	Knight of John Wesley (KJW), Archdiocesan Lay President of Kaduna	Kakuri, Kaduna State	3 rd Dec., 2020
Amuta E.	56	Bishop of Ito Diocese, and former Connexional Secretary of Evangelism and Discipleship.	Ito, Benue State	12 th Nov., 2020
Ani M.C.		Priest serving in Agodi Diocese	Sagamu, Ogun State	23 rd Oct., 2020
Anonymous	35	Circuit Steward, Enone Diocese	Benue State	15 th April, 2020
Anonymous	27	Priest studying at Methodist Theological Institute Sagamu,	Sagamu, Ogun State	18 th June, 2020
Anonymous	45	Undergraduate Student, Methodist Theological Institute, Sagamu.	Sagamu, Ogun State	19 th Oct., 2020

Anonymous	38	Church Member, MCN Bodija, Ibadan Diocese	Ibadan, Oyo State	13 th Dec., 2020
Anonymous	33	Deacon, Methodist Theological Institute, Sagamu	Sagamu, Ogun State	19 th June, 2021
Anonymous	34	Pastoral Agent Agent, MCN Bodija, Ibadan, Oyo State	Ibadan, Oyo State	23 rd August, 2020
Anonymous	27	Postgraduate Student Minister, Methodist Theological Institute, Sagamu	Sagamu, Ogun State	18 th Nov., 2021
Anonymous	39	Student Minister, Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan	Ibadan, Oyo State	20 th Nov., 2020.
Ariyo, E.I	55	Presbyter, Methodist Church Nigeria, lecturer, Immanuel College of Theology Ibadan.	Ibadan, Oyo State	12 th Dec., 2021
Ladigbolu, L.S. A.	82	Retired Archbishop of Ilesa and a serving member, Board of Trustee.	Oyo, Oyo State	11 th Oct., 2020
Babalola, R.O.		Bishop of Edo/Delta	Edo State	10 th Dec., 2021
Barnabas, J.	27	Youth member	Benue State	7 th June 2020

Chukwu, E.E.		Presbyter in charge of Christ Church Circuit, Diocese of Lagos North	Oshodi, Lagos	13 th Oct., 2020
Daniel, C.O.	45	Steward, Methodist Church Ojilegbe, Kogi State	Ojilegbe, Kogi State	19 th Dec., 2020
Dookon, M.S.	25	Youth President, Bori Diocese	Bori, River State	12 th Nov., 2020
Ede C.N.	56	Archbishop of Enugu	Enugu State	27 th Nov, 2020
Elaigwu, P.	64	Circuit Men Fellowship President, Eupi. Diocese of Otukpo and a Lecturer, College of Education, Oju, Benue State	Otukpo, Benue State	21 st Dec., 2020
Etim U.E.	Adult	Archbishop of Ikot Ekpene	Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State	29 th Jan., 2020
George, O.M.	39	Central Circuit President, Ladies and Girls Fellowship, Kaduna Diocese,	Narai, Kaduna State	13 th Oct., 2020
Ijiga, S.	40	Former Circuit Youth President, Orokam Circuit. Benue State	Orokam, Benue State	13 th Dec.,2020
Ikeazota, C.O.	38	Pharmacist, and Church Evangelist	Abia State	23 rd of Nov., 2020
Ikpuho, I.P.	39	Children and Youth Fellowship Cordinator, Ikono Diocese,	Ikono, Akwa Ibom State	20 th Nov., 2020

Ikwuta, P.J.	74	Retired Presbyter, Enone Diocese.	Otukpa, Benue State	17 th Nov., 2020
Iorlam A.	40	Member, Carew Memorial Methodist Church, Gari Otukpo Diocese	Mbamar, Benue State	20 th Dec., 2020
John O.	33	Member, All Saints' Methodist Church, Sabon Gari Otukpo.	Otukpo, Benue State	20 th Dec., 2020
Kubiat, D.	38	Undergraduate Student Minister, Immanuel College of Theology, Ibadan	Samonda, Ibadan, Oyo State	23 rd Oct., 2020
Nginikanma, C.K.	39	Undergraduate Student, Immanuel College of Theology Ibadan, and Circuit Youth President, Diocese of Owerri	Samonda, Ibadan, Oyo State	11 th Oct., 2020
Enuwa R.E.	45	Women's Fellowship member, Enone Diocese	Benue State	17 th August, 2020
Oche, J.	68	Archbishop of Abuja.	Wuse, Abuja	15 th Nov., 2020
Ocheni, J.S.	38	Church Evangelist, Enone Diocese	Otukpa, Benue State	19 th December 2020
Ogali, R.E.	57	KJW, Lay President of Item Diocese. (Female) PhD,	Item, Abia State	1 st Dec., 2020

		Professor, and Lecturer at the Department of Pure and Industrial Chemistry, University of Port Harcourt, River State.		
Ogunbisi, F.A.O.		Presbyter and Lecturer at Immanuel College of Theology Ibadan.	Samonda, Ibadan, Oyo State	1 st December, 2020
Okoh,O	37	Church Steward, Methodist Church Nigeria, Ojilegbe, Kogi State	Ojilegbe, Kogi State	11 th Dec. 2020.
Okoro, C.M.	32	Pastoral Agent, Diocese of Ngbo.	Ngbo, Imo State	23 rd Dec., 2020
Olawuyi, I.		Archbishop of Lagos.	Lagos State	29 th Nov., 2020
Olorche, S.J.	47	Priest serving in Cathedral Circuit, Cathedral of Unity, Diocese of Abuja	Wuse, Abuja	18 th October, 2020
Olorode, S.O.	50	Presbyter and lecturer at Immanuel College of Theology Ibadan.	Samonda, Ibadan, Oyo State	17 th Dec., 2020
Onaji, G.	45	Staff, COSCHARIS group, and a Distance Member, Rev Kelso Cathedral,	Lagos State	on 17 th October, 2020

		Enone Diocese		
Onoja, F.A.G.		Otukpo Central Circuit, and the Synod and Archdiocesan Secretary, Otukpo Diocese and Benue Archdiocese respectively.	Otukpo, Benue State	12 th August 2020
Onoja, J.S.	29	Former Northern Cordinator, Methodist Campus Fellowship	Okpoga, Benue State	17 th Dec., 2020
Onoja, U.		Presbyter, and Welfare Officer, Health and Restoration Centre for the Psychiatric Illness, Agboke, Otukpo Diocese	Agboke, Benue State	17 th November, 2020
Onuh, E.	36	Priest in charge, Owukpa Circuit, Diocese of Enone	Owukpa, Benue State	15 th Sept., 2020
Oscar O.	34	Kubwa Circuit Youth President, Kubwa Diocese	Kubwa, Abuja	16 th Sept., 2020
Ote, A.	40	Member, Enone Diocese	Lagos State	27 th Nov., 2020
Stephen, M.K.	72	Retired Archbishop of Ibadan, and Secretary of Conference, 1996 to 2006	Sagamu, Ogun State	11 th Nov., 2020
Taiwo, B.A.		Bishop of Elekuro Diocese	Ibadan, Oyo State	26 th Nov., 2020
Uche, S.C.K.	68	Prelate, Methodist	Marina, Lagos State	13 th May, 2020

		Church Nigeria		
Udoh, G.W.	56	Former Lay President, Diocese of Enone	Obu, Benue State	12 th Sept., 2020
Udoh, M.		Presbyter, and lecturer, Akwa Ibom State University	Uyo, Akwa Ibom State	7 th Sept., 2020

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Structured Interview Guide

Introduction

Dear Respondent,

This structured interview guide is designed with the intent of knowing your opinion on policy development in Methodist Church Nigeria. It is purely an academic exercise and your responses will be treated confidential. We therefore solicit your sincere and objective response.

A. Socio-demographic details

1. Name- Optional
2. Official Position in the Church
3. Age
4. Sex
5. Level of Education
6. Occupation
7. Location
8. Date of interview

B. Questions

1. What is your opinion of the impact of changes in the society on policy development in Methodist Church Nigeria?
2. To what extent do you think changes in the society have impacted Methodist Church Nigeria?
3. Beginning from the autonomy to the present time, do you think Methodist Church Nigeria has evolved as the society changes?
4. Do you see constitutional developments in the Church as instrumental to her transformation?
5. Considering the structure of Methodist Church Nigeria, do you see the connexional system helpful in policy development?
6. Since the Church changed from the Presidential to Episcopal system of Church governance, do you think the Episcopacy has improved the Church more than Presidential?
7. In a bid to minister to the society effectively, the Church came up with Repositioning. How has this fared so far?
8. Do you think the current social placement of the Church achieved the target set out in the repositioning?
9. What informs the Book of Resolutions in addition to the constitution?
10. What do you think are challenges with the Church policy?
11. Can you identify some key policies that have transformed the Church?
12. Can you suggest areas you think the Church needs to concentrate in future policy development?