ETHIOPIANISM AND SOCIAL ECUMENISM: CHRISTIAN IDEOLOGIES FOR INDEPENDENT MOVEMENTS AND SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA.

Nwadialor, Kanayo Louis
Department of Religion and Human Relations
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
nwadialorkanayo@yahoo.com
&
Nweke, Charles Chukwuemeka
Department of Philosophy
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Abstract

The question of sustainable development calls for a reflection on how various groups and individuals have contributed in giving Nigerian nation the shape it has today, not only as a multi-ethnic nation rich in both human and natural endowments, but as a sovereign independent state. Such important reflection brings to the fore the ideology known as Ethiopianism, developed towards the end of the nineteenth century within the Church circle but which was a significant instrument in the hands of Nigerian educated Christians for the realization of their political goals and national integration. The significance of this reflection lies in the fact that not so many studies in the recent time have focused on this almost neglected aspect of Nigerian history. This is the gap that this present study has filled. The study advocates that in the present quest for more sustainable development and national integration in Nigeria, attention must not be lost on the contributions that such biblical ideologies can offer in the actualization of this noble cause. Neo-colonialism came and precipitated a social disintegration, leaving the people in the hands of neo-colonial exploiters and their black accomplices. The Churches, in their scandalous disunity, seem not to be able to offer any solution to the ugly situation. However, a united Church, on the principle of social ecumenism, can still be a veritable instrument for sustainable development and unification.

Introduction

The history of Christianity, like the history of all great religions and social movements, is fraught with the wrecks of words, wrenched from their original meaning, widened or narrowed, and forced into a bewildering variety of vessels that chum their ways in seas of semantic confusion. According to Shapperson (1978), the Church in Africa south of the Sahara has acquired and added to the many Christian verbal transmogrifications that came originally from the west. In its turn, it has produced its own eccentric ecclesiastical etymology, of which, perhaps the most striking example is the story of Ethiopianism. Ethiopianism was a religious movement adopted among Nigerian educated Christians of the 19th century which embodied the earliest stirring towards religious and political freedom in the modern colonial period, and which

laid the very foundation that gave birth to the modern nationalist movements that gained independence for Nigeria. However, after the attainment of independence in 1960, and following the failure attempt at Church union movement in Nigeria, Church leaders tend to de-emphasize this concerted effort that earned the Church in Nigeria the appellation of the voice of the oppressed. There was lack of interest as attention shifted to resurgent inter-denominational rivalry. Denominationalism then bred new tribes in Christ with vested interests whose powers threaten the strength of the social relevance of the Church. The rivalry often spills over into political and social issues thereby reflecting the wrong image of ecumenism which the man-in-the-pew entertains. It is for this that this present study is conceived to highlight the achievements of the Church in 19th century Nigeria and to challenge the contemporary Church to wake up to her political and social responsibility through the rediscovery of the efficacy of social ecumenism. It was on the strength of such unity that the Ethiopian movement, with no denominational axe to grind, and probing beneath the upper stratum of "tribe" to utilize the basic oneness in the substratum, that partially explains their amazing success.

Ethiopianism, Ecumenism and Social Ecumenism
It is necessary at this point to identify some conceptual premise upon which we anchor our discussion. Some of them, as specified above, include Ethiopianism, Ecumenism and Social Ecumenism. These concepts will be undertaken in their succession.
One of the earliest evolvement of the term Ethiopianism stems from a Judeo-Christian perspective. In the biblical passage of Psalm 68: 31, it is written "Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God". Christians have interpreted this Bible verse to mean a time when Africa, (symbolized by the word Ethiopia, because of the belief that Ethiopia was the first African nation that received Christianity through the contact of the Ethiopian Eunuch with the gospel in Samaria with reference to Acts 8:26-38)), would beckon to God for deliverance from the oppression and suppression of the Europeans. The word therefore represented Africa's dignity and place in the divine dispensation and provided a charter for free African Churches and nations of the future. The ideology was initiated in the 1880s when South African mission workers began forming Independent All African Churches, such as the Tembu tribal Church (1884) and the Church of Africa (1889). An ex-Wesleyan minister, Mangena Mokene, was the first to use the term when he founded the Ethiopian Church in 1892 (Shapperson, 1978). Among the main motives for the formulation of the ideology were the frustrations felt by Africans who were denied advancement in the hierarchy of the mission Churches and racial discontent encouraged by the colour bar. Other contributing factors were the desire for a more African and relevant Christianity, for the restoration of tribal life, and for political and cultural autonomy expressed in the slogan "Africa for Africans" and also in the word Ethiopianism. Turner (cited by Omoyajowo, 1982) further sees Ethiopianism in connection with African independent Churches and defines African independent Church as "a Church which has been founded in Africa by Africans primarily for Africans" (p. xiv). These Churches broke away from the "mother Churches" or developed outside them. They separated because they wanted their own indigenous leadership. They usually kept the doctrine and forms of worship of their "mother Churches". They are called Ethiopian or African Churches and they began at the end of the 19th century and flourished especially in the first decades of the 20th century.

Ecumenism is a large issue with an enormous amount of literature. The point, however, is to relate the central aspects of it to contemporary Nigeria. This could be done by picking certain concerns to the neglect of others and to the neglect of details. Ecumenism is from the Greek word *Oikoumene*, which means the whole inhabited earth. It is a movement aim at the unity of the whole Church to form a common front in the task of taking the gospel to the end of the earth as desired and directed by the founder of the church, Jesus Christ. The symbol of the modern ecumenical movement is the rudderless ship on the sea with a cross as a mast. This means the gospel for the whole world. Church authorities find support for the present ecumenical movement in the prayer of our Lord in John 17: 11b, "That they may be one, even as we are one". It should be pointed out that ecumenism does not mean Church union, Church unity or the lost of denominational identity. It simply means an affirmation of God as the creator, provider and sustainer of the whole inhabited earth. It does not refer to a Church or a religious group; rather, it refers to the subjection of common humanity and unity of human family under the seal of God's covenant. In the contemporary ecumenical movement some have tended to consider the Church in its function rather than in its essence, emphasizing its social and ethical dimensions. These dimensions of ecumenism are what are regarded in this study as social ecumenism.

Social ecumenism is the ecumenical movement as pertaining to the relation between the Church and society, rather than the relation of Churches among themselves. It consists of collaboration among Christians in attempting to solve the baffling secular problems of our time such as neo-colonialism, corruption at the leadership level, widespread poverty in the midst of abundance and the blight of the slums. Thus, instead of worrying about the organic unity of the Churches or the reconciliation of their doctrinal differences, it sees growing unity only in the Church's service or mission-the very ideal of Life and Work dictum. It is based on the conviction that doctrine divides while services unites. This approach has caused a lot of interest in Nigeria. People appeal to it as a solution for the continuing deadlock in negotiations of unity. It therefore deserves our attention. It raises the theological issues of God's presence in the secular world and produces the commitment of the Church's role as servant of the whole secular man. Kalu (1978:11) captures the relevance of this ideology in Nigerian context when he states that:

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

In this way the man-in-the-pew will found cooperation in social action as a liberating force, freeing him from the limitations of denominationalism and those arid rancours over vertical and horizontal conceptions of unity in diversity that characterized our pluralistic Nigerian society; it is partly in this way that we can talk about the relevance of the Church in our contemporary quest for a meaningful sustainable development and national integration in Nigeria.

The origin of Ethiopianism and its implications for national integration in Nigeria

Britain and France somewhat shamefully sold Ethiopia to Italy (Webster, 1964). This betrayal appeared to indicate that in any clash between the races, 'White people' would stand together regardless of moral issues or international agreement. The betrayal of Ethiopia convinced some 'Blacks' that colour was the unbridgeable gulf and that the great struggle of the future was between Blacks and Whites. The Ethiopian war was in reality a prelude to the Second

World War. In 1935 Benito Mussolini, an ally of Adolf Hitler, instigated a border dispute with Ethiopia which led to the Italian invasion of that ancient empire. The issues surrounding the crisis were of major world significance. Mussolini chose to base his arguments on the claim of the racial superiority of Italians over Ethiopians. The universal black protest which followed resulted in riots and disturbances in almost every city in the world with Black populations. In Nigeria the reaction was unique because it was the first time that her larger ethnic groups – Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo – had ever united in protest. Thus, Ethiopianism provided a new focus of loyalty and interest apart from the ethnic groups. It brought Nigerians together for a common cause, trained them for a common action, and created an organized followership for Nigerian leaders.

The champions of Ethiopian movement in Nigeria brought to the attention of the colonial masters what they felt should be the goal of their colonial policy; a multi-ethnic Nigerian state controlled by an elite drawn from all ethnic groups and bound together by a patriotism rooted in a common educational experience, the English language and devotion to the modernization of Nigerian society. Thus, the Ethiopian movement in Nigeria was designed to be multi-ethnic and Nigerian in membership and scope. They had been inspired by the example of independent churches among the Nova Scotia in Sierra-Leone and Afro-American settlers in Liberia. They thus resisted the temptation to found ethnic churches after the pattern of the Zulu Churches of South Africa. They wanted a Nigerian or multi-ethnic church, much as they wanted a Nigerian or multi-ethnic state. They generally believed that a major bond among the nationalities of any future Nigerian state would be their common Christianity. Their major political interest, therefore, was informed to aid the spread of Christianity. Thus, Christianity was to be the new cohesive force binding all Nigerians together in brotherly love and unity. While the European missionaries emphasized the individual nature of Christian life, the African or Ethiopian Churches stressed its communal responsibilities. The missions preached "come off from among them and be ye separated'; the Ethiopian or African Churches sought to unite the people together for a common course (Webster, 1964). Christianity should serve as a superstructure upon which the modern Nigerian nation should be founded. The Ethiopians argued about the future of Nigerian society, and their policies were conditioned by their view of it. They worked for the massive ingathering, 'the national Church'. They envisioned an African Christianity which would incorporate suitable aspects of African religion, adopt its own language, hymns and liturgy, and create a Christian nation because for them, the European Church is not their own. The prayer book, they said, was to be one in which prayer for the European Princess would be replaced with prayer for native rulers. They considered the Ethiopian movement as an acceptable means to these goals. Thus, began a movement of independence in religious matters which there-after resulted in the foundation of several new religious groups that asserted that Nigerians must adapt Christianity to local conditions. Some called for the formation of a national Church whose creed was to be 'No cross, No crown'. This racial anti-clericalism appeared to be strongest among the group of nationalists who organized themselves into a party known as the National Council of Nigerians and Cameroons, and which had its largest support in south-eastern Nigeria. Its members were most vociferous in this plea for a national Church, and it is instructive that the name of this Church was to be the National Church of Nigeria and Cameroons, an obvious attempt to make the name similar to that of the party (Afigbo, 1980). They saw in the Ethiopian movement infinite possibilities for the emancipation of Nigeria from alien rule and the training of Nigerians in the European art of self-government. It was for them an institution that would achieve several worthy ends for the glory of Nigeria and Africa at large. According to

Ayandele (1970), it would become a training ground for Africans in the cultivation of virtues such as self-dignity, self-reliance and desire for self-government. Thus Ethiopianism was a movement of crucial significance for Nigerian Christians of the 19th century because it was capable of creating and diffusing the principle that creates and sustains an independent Christian nation.

Ethiopianism and the growth of independent movements in Nigeria

The period from 1890 to 1928 may be called the classical period of Ethiopianism in Nigeria because it was at this time that it exercised its greatest political influence and was most widely noticed in the African press. The formation of independent Churches, either by secession from established Churches or by relatively indigenous growth, appeared to threaten European domination in the Church and colonial administration. Ethiopianism in Nigeria arose primarily from the need for political outlet of some sort. This is particularly so because in a country where religion was the cement of the society, the guarantor of moral principles and the basis of secular authority, renunciation of the mission authorities implied renunciation of the moral, civil and political obligations of the colonial administration as well as a new consciousness for national identity. Thus, Nmah (2010) describes Ethiopianism as a missionary factor which denotes a struggle between those who recognize the claim to equal participation in social and political rights with others and those who for themselves and their order assert a certain superiority of race, and claim for it as a consequence of causes, however accidental, exclusive and special privileges. In this way, Nigerian educated Christians not only imbibed a new set of religious beliefs but began to nurse alien ideas, economic ambitions and political aspirations of their own and as such the Church became the first political organization in Nigeria to codify in its resolutions the idea of independent movement and national integration because when the relationship between any movement for national independence and that of Ethiopianism are examined, we see at once the logic in the assertion that Ethiopianism was an act delimiting the territorial sphere of influence of this new movement. It was an act that called for the transference of an individual's loyalty to these new ecclesiastical organizations called the African independent Churches. It could also be understood to mean a step toward the delimitation of a new nation called Nigeria. A nation is here defined as a political-territorial unit which contains a collection of cultural units with a set of cultural traits such as customs, beliefs or languages, and having functional inter-dependence. It is not necessary that these units be homogenous. What is imperative is that there must be a sense of inter-dependence. Implicit in this definition is the existence of an external force which enables the cultural units to accept themselves as having an identity of shared fate. This identity of shared fate is expressed in the consequences of colonialism, imperialism, deprivations, exploitations, discriminations, dehumanization, oppressions, and other forms of tyranny. It is this identity of shared fate which sets the boundary for independent movements, or which differentiates one national group from another. Thus, Ethiopianism describes the type of Nigerian nationalism expressed through the medium of the Church. According to Ayandele (1966:178):

> In practical terms Ethiopianism expressed in terms of racial antagonism between the white missionaries and their wards represented the African struggle for power and position in the Church government. It also had parallel in the struggle by Africans for the

higher positions in the civil service, and it awakened the dream of nation state to be controlled ultimately by Africans.

Olanisebe (2006) submits further that "intricately tied to the Ethiopian concept was the slogan "Africa for the Africans" (p. 315). Indeed, among Nigerian Christians of the 19th century, the word Ethiopia was given a much wider significance than the modern Ethiopia and was often used for sub-Sahara Africa as a whole. They began to cherish all Ethiopian references in the Bible which had a libratory promise and which, when contrasted with the indignities of colonialism, showed the black man in a dignified and human light. Christianity represented salvation for the Nigerian peoples both as individuals and as a society. For the individual it was to bring freedom from fear and superstition. For the society it was to bring freedom from economic and socio-political domination.

It may now not be a surprise that Europeans in Nigeria should have seen this gallimaufry of Ethiopian Church movement between 1890 and 1928 a concerted danger to their rule. Nigerian witnesses of Ethiopianism noticed particularly its political importance. Ola (1978) says that it was a yearning for democracy and self-government, especially the desire to ensure that Church government is in the hands of the majority (laity) as opposed to the clergy; resentment at what can be described as unscriptural racial behaviour of white missionaries. There is also the natural and logical desire to found Christianity more firmly in African culture by the acceptance and encouragement of Nigerian clergy. Their struggle to hold their own in the face of white domination was aided by the missionary propaganda which was by its very nature a producer of the struggle for political independence.

Ethiopianism is therefore explained chiefly in terms of Nigerian opposition to colonial paternalism, being interpreted as the religious strand of Nigerian nationalism preparing the way for political independence. Its origin and motivations in Nigeria are therefore basically the same as those that led to the formation of practically all other national Churches in Europe and elsewhere in the world. Anyone who is familiar with the history of the Church of England (Anglican) or the Lutheran Church Germany and central Europe, would appreciate the common desire on the part of these movements to free themselves from foreign domination of Rome and to establish or strengthen their sovereignty by placing Church bureaucracy within the management of national governments. These manifestations may be deplored by some on ethical or theological grounds but that does not in any way alter the basic truth about this aspect of the history of the Church; it is essentially an expression of independent movements.

In a sense the Ethiopian Church movement in Nigeria was the struggle for national identity and political independence. The movement's basic aim had been to prove the ability of African leadership to the Europeans who had rejected it as ineffective. They wanted the indigenous Christian Church to be the founder of Nigerian political independence, with the freedom of the Church before political independence. The Ethiopian Church movement therefore satisfied the aspirations of many Nigerians who expected the Church to be the leader in all plans for the ending of outside control of their country. Webster (1964) confirms that the Ethiopian Church movement was partly religious and partly political, just as many of the newly recruited English missionaries who were deployed to Nigeria in the 1880s were activated by mixed religious and imperialist interest. The movement was a response to a new wave of imperial expansion. Unlike the more traditional oriented nativistic movements of some traditional rulers like Jaja of Opobo and Olomu of Itsekiri, they were led by educated Nigerians who had been under Christian and European influence. Some of the leaders of these groups were active in all

the early protest movements in Lagos which had a definite political character-the land tenure question, the seditions ordinance bill, the extension of the franchise, and the national congress of British West Africa. J.G. Campell, organizer of the West African Episcopal Church, for example, was a prominent figure in pre-world war 11 Lagos politics and assumed the leadership of the National Congress of British West Africa immediately after the war (Coleman 1986). These groups were African associations which gave race-conscious leaders an outlet for their energies, a platform for their ideas, and an organized followership. Despite their small number, the groups brought Nigerians together in a common cause and provided a milieu in which they could feel that they were masters of their own destiny. Though Coleman believes that none of the groups caused the British administration serious apprehension, but they were symptomatic of an undercurrent of frustration and grievances which ultimately found an outlet in political nationalism. The rancour produced by the official measures and the political awakening that accompanied demonstrations of popular resentment, helped not only to foment distrust of British intensions, but also to lay the ground work for a more pragmatic form of nationalism. It represented the coming of age of the Nigerian Christians. They were engaged in a more subtle campaign. They produced a stream of books, pamphlets and newspapers in defense and justification of African customs such as Nigeria had never before witnessed. It was a necessary preliminary to the success of later political nationalism. Webster (1964) confirms that the nationalist, Nnamdi Azikiwe, publicly paid tribute to the role which the Ethiopian Churches played in the quest for national identity. Zik acknowledged that in policies, expansion of African Churches sought a massive ingathering of Nigerian peoples. Their struggle was not just one of ecclesiastical or religious independence, but one that would ultimately lead to political independence.

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

The results of the Ethiopian movement in the commercial sphere as well as in the administration was that on the Niger, until the advent of Taubman Goldie and his amalgamated company (United African Company), and in Lagos until the 1890s, the big firms left the retail trade largely in the hands of the educated Nigerians, which many Nigerians like R.B. Blaize, J.J. Thomas, C.J. George and J.P. Heastrup, to name a few held their own in the commerce of the Lagos colony as independent traders. In the civil service educated Nigerians held positions of responsibility and in many cases they filled posts which Nigerians were never to occupy again until the attainment of independence.

The reaction of the European missionaries to the growth of the spirit of nationalism in the Ethiopian movement showed that it was a rebel against constituted authority. However, the flaw in their thinking was that their attitude was illogical; they ought to have remembered that Anglicanism, Lutherianism or Gallicanism themselves were products of the principle of nationalism against the ecclesiastical imperialism of Rome. In this sense the Champions of Ethiopianism in Nigeria were asking for nothing more than that the same principle of nationality

that the Europeans had claimed for themselves should be recognized and extended to Nigerians as well.

Neo-colonialism and the imperative of social Ecumenism in an independent Nigeria

Nigeria as a nation emerged from the shackles of colonialism in 1960. Thanks to the independent movement pioneered by Nigerian educated Christians under the umbrella of Ethiopianism. But Nigeria's human and material resources were largely exploited or largely left underdeveloped and which, in consequence, is faced with serious and urgent economic, social, technological and perhaps political problems. Under this condition, the basic needs are obvious: food, clothing, shelter, security and sense of dignity. The Churches, by their scandalous disunity, contributed to the confusion, while foreign cultures were thrust into the very being of the society. Integral development, therefore, must be vigorously pursued as essential for our national integration to be a sustainable one. This means the comprehensive uplift of the whole society in all its many wants and needs unto a recognizable higher and better plane than before. This is not an easy task because the situations created during the colonial days make the task almost impossible. To this, Omoyajowo (1978) observes that:

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

More worrisome is the fact that neo-colonialism and corrupt leadership have become prominent features of African societies. What happened in Nigeria immediately after independence was the appearance of local schemers and economic gluttons who have replaced the colonial exploiters. Instead of an honest sharing of equitable opportunities for everyone's self-fulfillment and self-realization, these local leaders in politics, business, education, and so on, try very often to take the shortest route to acquire for themselves the maximum personal gain, prestige, and immense wealth, however dirtily acquired, and they become oppressive, totalitarian and anti-Christian in their behaviour. Thus, centuries ago, we lamented the evil of white colonialism, today; we are lamenting the neo-colonialism of Nigerians by their brother Nigerians. Decades ago, we rejoiced as we celebrated our independence from the white man; today, we have come to realize that the freedom we were celebrating was no freedom at all but a mere exchange of slave masters. We drove away the white man only to be ruled by Nigerian dictators. We blamed the white man for looting our natural resources. Today, it is our own Nigerian Heads of state and their henchmen who carry our natural resources to the white man' country, sell them to the white man at the white man's own price, and deposit the money in the white man's bank in a secret account to be inherited by the white man when they die. According to Odey (1996), Africa suffered under the colonial masters who came as innocuous seekers of fortune but proved to be harbingers of Africa's doom. Today, the same Africa is going through the challenge and horror of leadership in the hands of Africans. People are suffering in

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

In the colonial days, the form of political subordination was obvious. Under neo-colonialism, the domination takes up a subtle form. Former colonial masters now set up black puppets who collaborate with them to exploit and destroy Nigeria. Our leaders now connive with Europe and America, suck the nation dry and dump the money in foreign banks for the benefit of those who already have everything they need while people die here in abject poverty, misery and want. These factors have continued to create situations of unrest, instability and disintegration in Nigeria. There can be no meaningful and sustainable development under this situation. The question now is: Where is the Church and the Nigerian educated Christians who championed the course of political movements that gave Nigeria her independence? Omoyajowo (1978) hazards an answer to the above question when he states that:

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

Suffice it to add that by deliberately pursuing a narrow goal, by carving out spheres of influence for themselves in different parts of the country and its consequent notorious quest for membership, by shameless appeal for financial assistance from foreign organizations, and by refusing to cooperate effectively with one another and those outside the bounds as done by the 19th century Ethiopian movement, the Church lost the chance to be a prophetic voice in the midst of the studied neo-colonialism and corruption that have engulfed Nigeria since independence. This is the invidious effect of Church proliferation and rivalry in contemporary Nigeria. This needs to be emphasized because as this process continued, the Church lost her social significance which is manifestly obvious in her loss of grip on power bases as a pressure group. The Church lost the opportunity quite early to transcend it and be a national integrating force because mutual suspicion is still not lacking, and since tribalism is the stuff from which Nigerian politics was made, its effects in Church politics could always be assumed. The Church that will pursue the course of sustainable development and national integration in Nigeria cannot identify itself with a particular social class or prefer a particular political philosophy or party. The Church which gives room for Christians to adjust the spirit of the gospel to humanistic thinking calls for urgent examination. However, in spite of the embarrassment and frustration created by the above studied situation, Kalu (1978) still believes that God is feeding the Church in Nigeria with the manna of humiliation, the manna of considerateness for one another, and the manna of hope based on the Christian experience of "ecumenism". Obviously ecumenism, like the 19th century Ethiopianism, has captured the imaginations, not only of the leaders of the Church, but the process has been in part a growing recognition of the secularized society because the cooperation of Churchmen of different persuasions will be meaningful only as those Churchmen have recognized their essential responsibility to the society. Ecumenism in Nigeria must therefore emphasize its social and ethical dimensions so as to stress the wholistic approach which sees

mission as both spiritual and physical healing. Christ came for the poor in spirit and in body. Contemporary neo-colonialism and inhuman economic policies are widening the gap between the rich and the poor and increasing the challenge to the Church; so ecumenism in Nigeria should constitute an effort to restore the role of the Church as a prophetic voice amidst the encircling gloom characterized by unemployment, retrenchment, rationalization, economic stringency, insecurity, religious killing and the marginalization of large sections of the society. In this way the Church will be answering the question of the meaning of the gospel in our own cultural context through the medium of social ecumenism. Such social ecumenism should take the advantage of our own local cultural pattern in the discussion of national integration. The importance of this cultural pattern which is evident in the widespread existence of the clan structure among Africans is of great ideological value in fostering group solidarity. Beneath the tribal marks and geographical boundaries, the identical dynamics of the clan structure provide a cultural bond among Africans. The All African Conference of Churches (cited by Kalu, 1978) spelled out the implication of this for Christian Africans at Kinshasa thus:

> We declare that the Ecumenical Movement in Africa is part of the recovery of our own history; it is part of the renaissance of the African personality. In Jesus Christ God has rescued us as a race of man to reexamine the root of our existence in the light of His good news to man. (p. 45).

Kalu (1978) continues to say that the common clan structure among us is a paradigm of the nature of the bond that binds us together. The clans form the proper units for our consultation assemblies. Social ecumenism in Nigeria, therefore, should be a meeting of a people with an urgent task, not as representatives of denominations engaged in jealous rivalry to defend doctrines formulated in the past history of Europe. These issues are crucial to understanding the meaning of Christ in our midst. The various Christian denominations may not agree on doctrines but can serve together in social problems as a form of social ecumenism which turns service to the society as a theatre for cooperation.

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

Conclusion

The present study has tried to explore the concept of Ethiopianism in Nigerian as bases for independent movements and national integration. The emphasis is on the reactions of various sections of Nigerian communities, especially the Christian educated Nigerians, to European activities in Nigeria both as missionaries, traders or administrators. The study tried to give due prominence to the ideological views for which the native agents of the missions, in spite of their religious inclination, pursued vigorously the course of the political and economic liberation of the Nigeria people from colonial subjugation and their desire for the integration of various ethnic groups in Nigeria towards national development. The struggle, it must be noted, took outward courage coupled with inner conviction and spirituality and was largely successful basically

because of the spirit of oneness in them. It reflects a desire for liberation from the oppressive paternalism of some western missionaries. It posses for Nigeria the new vision of a new order of relationships free from the injustices and congruities of foreign institutions and domination. The mission Churches witnessed revolutions which secured for Nigerians firm control of their Churches under indigenous leaderships and with a guaranteed financial support. In this way, before the era of the 20th century Nigerian nationalism and independent movements, Nigerian Church men, under the umbrella of Ethiopianism, had already settled the issues of indigenous leadership, selfhood and self-government. Ethiopianism as an ideology expressed through the medium of the Church procured self-determination and self-support in Church government, created avenue for lay leadership and promoted cultural renaissance and paved the way for economic and political independence. Hodgkin (1969) corroborates that:

> The Church had succeeded in transferring to the spiritual and ecclesiastical plane opposition to European authority in general, and to make possible, on this plane, the reconstruction of African communities under African leadership: a process which particularly liable to occur under an authoritarian colonial system, where religion is the only field within which emancipation is possible. (pp. 104-105).

In the final analysis, it can be argued that Ethiopianism did not only sowed the seed for independent movements and national integration in Nigeria, but has tried to sustain its spirit by doing things in the ways acceptable to Africans in order to demonstrate their Africanness and to prove that they are as good, if not better than the Europeans if given equal opportunities in the same circumstance.

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

References

Ayandele, E.A. (1966). *The missionary impact on modern Nigeria, 1842-1914: A political and social analysis.* London: Longman.

Ayandele, E.A. (1970). *Holy Johnson: Pioneer of African nationalism, 1836-1917*. London: Frank Cass.

Coleman, J.S. (1986). *Nigerian background to nationalism.* Benin City: Brobury and Wistron.

Hodgkin, T. (1969). *Nationalism in colonial Africa*. New York: York University.

Kalu, O.U.(1978). Protestant Christianity in Igboland. In O.U. Kalu (Ed.). *Christianity in West Africa: The Nigerian story* (pp. 308-322). Ibadan: Daystar.

Nmah, P.E. (2010). The rise of independent African Churches, 1890-1930: An ethical genesis of Nigerian nationalism. *African Research Review: An International Multi-Disciplinary Journal*, 4, 17, 482-493.

Odey, J.O. (1996). *Africa, the agony of a continent: Can liberation theology offer any solution*? Enugu: Snaap.

Ola, C.S. (19778). Foundations of the African Church. In .O.U. Kalu (Ed.). *Christianity in West African: The Nigeria story* (pp. 337-342). Ibadan: Daystar.

Olanisebe, S. O, (2006). The role of the church in the development of nationalism in Nigeria: Past and present. In S.Akinrinde, D. Fashina & D. O. Ogungbile (Eds.).*The humanities, nationalism and democracy* (pp. 311-326). Ile-Ife: Cedar.

Omoyajowo, J.A. (1982). *Cherubim and seraphim: The history of an African independent Church*. New York. Nok.

Omoyajowo, J.A. (1978). Christianity as a unifying factor in a developing country. In A. Shorter (Ed.). *African Christian spirituality* (pp. 95-98). London: Geoffrey Chapman.

Rodney, W. (1981). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. Abuja: Panaf.

Shepperson, G. (1968). Ethiopianism: Past and present. In C.G. Baeta (Ed.). *Christianity in tropical Africa*. London: Oxford University.

Webster, J.B. (1964). *The African Churches among the Yoruba, 1888-1922*. Oxford: Clarendon.