

# **HE DESCENDED INTO HELL AND ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN**

***AS A METAPHOR FOR PASTORAL CARE FOR A  
DYSFUNCTIONAL IGBO FAMILY, WITH  
EMOTIONAL DEPRESSION AS THEIR CRISIS.***

**BY**

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***Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Master  
of Theology in the School of Theology at the University of Natal,  
Pietermaritzburg.***

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**Under the supervision of**

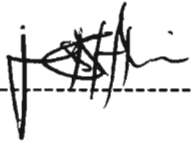
**EDWINA WARD.**

## DECLARATION

This work unless otherwise stated, represents the writer's own original work. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

Christopher Chinedu Ozodi (Revd.)

Signed-----

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Ozodi', written over a dashed line.

March 2001.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my newly elected Archbishop, The Most Revd. Maxwell S. C. Anikwenwa, Archbishop, Province II, Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion and to my beloved twin children, Chidimma and Chidiebele who we left behind in Nigeria during the period of this study.

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I pray that God's unending blessings will be upon everyone in Jesus' name. Amen

**Revd. Christopher Chinedu Ozodi**

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is concerned with the restoration of relevance of the Church ministry into the family system, in a given cultural area. The Igbo people of Nigeria are the principal foci for the research. They have experienced difficult times which this research considers to be the source for their emotional depression.

One of the greatest problems which a family can face is being in crisis. Under this condition, it is completely disorganized. Such a family cannot think constructively nor plan together as a family for ways ahead, unless they are assisted. The joy and happiness of family life is lost. This study considers emotional depression to be a crisis faced by a dysfunctional family.

Despite the presence of many Churches in Igboland, more families are still facing crisis. This points to the idea that the Church is not yet responding well to the caring needs of her members. The researcher believes that if the Anglican Church in Igboland can adopt the concept of the death and resurrection of Jesus after three days, which she teaches, in her caring ministry her services to the families will be more relevant. To succeed in this, the socio-cultural background of the people must be put into consideration.

The main discussion on the crisis faced by the Igbo families is in chapters four and five. Chapter two gives the social, political, religious and economic background responsible for the crisis of the Igbos within Nigeria. Chapter three deals with the family system, highlighting both the functional and dysfunctional family system. Chapter six looks into the meaning of the Church and pastoral care by the Church, while chapter seven considers ways and means of restoring hope to a depressed family.

The researcher believes that a sincere giving of pastoral care and counselling within the Anglican Church in Igboland will bring about the healing, sustaining, reconciling and restoring of the already depressed families. This will mean resurrection of family life. There will be true reconciliation among individuals within a family and between the family and God.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

BCP: Book of Common Prayer

CPE: Clinical Pastoral Education

CPSA: Church of the Province of Southern Africa

HIV: Human Immune Deficiency Virus

RSV: Revised Standard Version

SPCK: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge

Pc1 Duarte: Name given to a mutant gene discovered by Dr. David Comings believed to be responsible for biological depression (Fairchild 1980:38).



## TABLE OF CONTENT

Declaration-----	i
Dedication-----	ii
Acknowledgment-----	iii
Abstract-----	vi
Abbreviations-----	vii

### CHAPTER ONE

#### INTRODUCTION

1.1	Statement of the Problem-----	1
1.2	Motivation for the Study-----	4
1.3	Delimitation-----	4
1.3.1	The Pastoral Study of Depression: a further delimitation-----	5
1.4	Methods and Procedures for Data Collection-----	5
1.5	Anticipated Problems-----	6

### CHAPTER TWO

#### NIGERIA AND THE IGBO PEOPLE

2.1	Introduction-----	7
2.1.1	Historical Influence-----	7
2.1.2	Historical Background-----	7
2.2	Nigeria-----	9
2.2.1	Some Factors Affecting the Igbo Family Life in Nigeria-----	10
2.3	Background to the Crisis of the Igbo People-----	10
2.4	Religious Situation-----	11
2.5	The Igbo People of Nigeria-----	11
2.5.1	Geographical Location-----	12

2.5.2	Igbo Religion before the Advent of Christianity-----	12
2.5.2.1	Christianity (Anglican Church) in Igboland-----	14
2.5.3	The Response of the Igbos to Christianity-----	16
2.5.4	Conflict between Christian Values and Igbo Traditional Values-----	17
2.6	Conclusion-----	18

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE IGBO FAMILY LIFE

3.1	Introduction-----	19
3.2	The Extended Family-----	19
3.3	The Nuclear Family-----	21
3.3.1	The Polygynous Family-----	21
3.3.2	The Monogamous Family-----	23
3.4	Family Life in Igbo Community-----	24
3.4.1	The Igbo Marriage-----	25
3.4.1.1	The Marriage Rituals in Igbo Culture-----	26
3.4.2	The Igbo Spouse Subsystem-----	28
3.4.3	The Parental Subsystem-----	28
3.4.4	The Sibling Subsystem-----	31
3.5	Functional and Dysfunctional Family System-----	32
3.5.1	Functional Family System-----	33
3.5.2	Dysfunctional Family System-----	34
3.5.2.1	The Dysfunction in Igbo Family System-----	36
3.6	Conclusion-----	39

## CHAPTER FOUR

### HE DESCENDED INTO HELL *As a Metaphor*

4.1	Introduction-----	40
4.1.1	Descending into Hell-----	40
4.1.1.1	The Idea of <i>Descending</i> -----	41
4.1.1.2	The Concept of Hell-----	41
4.2	Emotional Depression-----	43
4.2.1	Depression in the Family Circle-----	44
4.2.2	Emotional Depression and Social Relationships-----	44
4.3	The Identified Causes of Emotional Depression to Igbo Families-----	46
4.4	Circumstances Surrounding the Emotional Depression Encountered by Dysfunctional Igbo Families-----	50
4.4.1	The Pre-colonial Structure of Igbo Society-----	50
4.4.2	Attitude of Other Kingdoms that Later Made up Nigeria-----	51
4.4.3	Incompatibility of Different Peoples of Nigeria-----	51
4.4.4	Unfortunate Attitude of Nigerian Indigenous Administrations-----	51
4.4.5	Political Tension-----	51
4.4.6	Colonial and Post Colonial Influences-----	52
4.4.7	Civil War and Post Civil War Influences-----	53
4.4.8	Influence from the Political, Economic and Social Sectors-----	54
4.4.9	Other Areas of Emotional Depression in Dysfunctional Igbo Families-----	54
4.5	Conclusion-----	55

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**CONSEQUENCES OF EMOTIONAL DEPRESSION IN A DYSFUNCTIONAL IGBO FAMILY.**

5.1 Introduction-----56

5.2 Crisis-----56

5.3 Emotional Depression as Crisis-----59

5.4 The Consequences of this Crisis Faced by the Emotionally Depressed  
Dysfunctional Igbo Families-----60

5.4.1 Intra-Family Conflicts-----60

5.4.2 Drug Abuse-----61

5.4.3 High Rate of Social Banditry-----61

5.4.4 High Level of Prostitution/Harlotry-----61

5.4.5 Increasing Menace of Secret Cults-----61

5.4.6 Suicide-----62

5.4.7 Juvenile Delinquency-----62

5.4.8 The Social Stigma on HIV/AIDS-----62

5.5 Conclusion-----63

**CHAPTER SIX**  
**THE CHURCH AND PASTORAL CARE**

6.1 Introduction-----65

6.2 The Caring Ministry of the Church-----65

6.2.1 The Church-----66

6.2.1.1 The Expected Role of the Church in the Caring Ministry-----67

6.2.1.2 The Church as Family of Families/Community of Believers-----71

6.3 The Pastor-----73

6.4	Pastoral Care-----	75
6.5	The Present Outlook of Pastoral Care in the Anglican Church in Igboland-----	79
6.6	Conclusion-----	84

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **...AND ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN: *As a Metaphor***

7.1	Introduction-----	85
7.1.1	The Idea of Resurrection-----	86
7.2	In the Name of Jesus Christ, Walk (Acts 3:6)-----	87
7.2.1	Some Practical Ways of Care Giving Especially to an Igbo Family in Order to Facilitate Healing and <i>Resurrection</i> -----	88
7.2.1.1	Traditional Form of Care-giving-----	89
7.3	Care-giving Method to an Igbo Family-----	89
7.3.1	Special Religious Worship/Liturgy-----	90
7.3.2	Use of Sacred Music-----	91
7.3.3	Family Altar-----	92
7.3.4	Pastoral Visits-----	93
7.4	The Facilitating Role of the Pastor-----	93
7.4.1	Church Elders, Title Holders and Family Heads-----	94
7.4.2	Empowerment of the Family-----	94
7.4.3	Co-operative Bodies-----	94
7.4.4	Enlightenment Campaign-----	94
7.4.5	Referrals-----	94
7.4.6	Discussion Groups-----	94
7.4.7	Seminars and Workshops-----	95
7.5	Other Ways Forward-----	96

7.5.1	Family Support Group for Emotional Depression-----	96
7.6	Pastoral Counselling and Skills-----	97
7.6.1	Counselling Skills-----	98
7.6.1.1	Basic Stages which the Pastor will Bear in Mind while Caring for the Family in Crisis-----	100
7.6.1.2	The ABCD Method of Counselling-----	101
7.7	A Suggested Traditional Model Therapy-----	102
7.8	Integrating Westernized Form of Pastoral Counselling Skills with the Suggested Traditional Model Therapy-----	103
7.9	<b>CONCLUSION</b> -----	105
7.9.1	Summary of the Research Findings-----	105
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> -----	108
	<b>APPENDIX I</b> -----	113
MAP I:	Area Occupied by Nigeria in Africa-----	114
MAP II:	Where the Igbo People Live within Nigeria-----	115

## SKETCHES AND PICTURES

### SKETCHES

Sketch I:	Residual Inheritance-----	8
Sketch II:	Relationship in Extended Family System-----	20
Sketch III:	The position of a Married Daughter in Extended Family System-----	20
Sketch IV:	The Relationships in a Polygynous Family-----	23
Sketch V:	Channel of Communication in a Monogamous Family-----	24
Sketch VI:	Line of Responsibility in a Monogamous Family-----	24
Sketch VII:	The Idea of Descending to Lower Level-----	41
Sketch VIII:	Process of Emotional Depression-----	43
Sketch IX:	How Social and Personal Systems Cause Emotional Depression-----	45
Sketch X:	Family Crisis Caused by External Pressure on Residual Inheritance-----	64
Sketch XI:	The Facilitating Role Expected of the Pastor in the Unity of Different Families that Make up the Church, as One Body of Christ and with God as the Father-----	73
Sketch XII:	The Family Support Group/Cell for Emotional Depression-----	97
Sketch XIII:	Process of Resurrection for an Emotionally Depressed Dysfunctional Family-----	104

## PICTURES

Picture 1:	All Saint's Cathedral Church, Onitsha-----	15
Picture 2:	The Polygynous Family-----	21
Picture 3:	Masquerade Group-----	25
Picture 4:	A Spinster Kneeling Down to Hand Over Palm Wine to Her Hopeful Husband-----	27
Picture 5:	The Sibling Subsystem-----	31
Picture 6:	A State of Being in Hell-----	42

- ☐ Outside Sketch IX, all other Sketches were originally created by the writer to illustrate his points.
- ☐ The pictures are the writers personal ones on family matters and the ones he took by himself.
- ☐ All Scriptural passages are quoted from the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible.



**INTRODUCTION****1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has been undergoing a series of internal crises marked by political, social, economic and religious instability. The military coup of 1966 exhibited a great deal of ethnic and tribal undertones. Since then, there has been a high level of segregation at all levels. People from the south-eastern part of Nigeria were treated with utter disrespect, humiliation and were assaulted. This was especially true of the Igbo people.

The above conditions led to a civil war which lasted from 1967 up to the early part of 1970, in which the Igbos were severely maltreated. Economic progress slowed down tremendously. Major ethnic groups who controlled the political and religious scene became more interested in the affairs of their own pockets. The high income earned from the rich mineral resources ended up in the private pockets of politicians from these ethnic groups and thereafter were deposited in foreign banks, leaving the rest of the Nigerians suffering in poverty.

This state of affairs, has made life for a great majority of Nigerians uneasy and full of struggle. Each adult and child must struggle in order to survive. Failure to succeed after much struggle has led to an upsurge of many vices within the society. People were gripped with fear of either failing in their struggles for survival or being ill-treated at the hands of bandits.

The weight of these poor living conditions falls on the families that make up the nation. Both spouse and sibling subsystems of the family face this problem of uneasy living. In Nigeria, especially among the Igbos where the extended family system is practised, the parental subsystem of the family suffers much. Families therefore become dysfunctional. This means that they could no longer carry out the functions and family roles expected of them properly.

Families as well as individual members of the family are emotionally depressed. There is a high level of stress within the society. Very many people fall sick everyday without anybody to care for them. Parents are faced with the task of providing the basic food requirements for their families and

still take the sick ones to the hospital. In most cases hospital bills are so high that many families are unable to meet them. The majority of the families therefore don't send their sick members to the hospital for financial reasons. Families, to this effect are unable to carry out their expected functions for their members. A crisis therefore sets in.

This research therefore assumes that :

- (1). Most of the problems experienced in Igbo society today originated from the historical, political, economic, social and religious conditions in Nigeria.
- (2). The whole weight of the problems within the Igbo society in Nigeria is borne by the various families that make up the society.
- (3). The solution to the problems of the society therefore starts with the care for the individuals and families within that society.
- (4). The Anglican Church in Igboland has a great role to play through her caring ministry in restoring hope and assurance to the despairing and depressed families.

The researcher has used the metaphor "He Descended into Hell", to describe the highest level of suffering which a human being can face. This does not mean physical hell but a critical condition which a suffering person can find him/herself at any time. This dissertation therefore assumes emotional depression to be a state of being in hell while still living.

The Metaphor goes on to say "And on the Third Day, He Rose Again". This gives the hope that the period of depression may not last for ever if proper care is offered. Since Jesus descended into hell and rose again on the third day, people who are depressed should be aware that no matter the magnitude of their crisis, there is still hope for resurrection. Good pastoral care can make a dying person accept death with fortitude.

The researcher's use of the word 'metaphor' in this research can be noted. By this word he means a figure of speech in which one class of things is referred to as if it belongs to another class (Chernow, Barbara A. and George A. Vallasi (eds) 1993 p. 1756). From this point of view, some people see themselves as being in hell when they face serious painful situation. The psychological

pains which people experience when they are depressed is seen here as hell, while the hope of regaining a sense of worthwhile, is seen as resurrection.

The problems to be discussed therefore are:

- (1). Many Igbo families of Nigeria are dysfunctional as a result of the social, economic, political and religious circumstances around them caused by their colonial, pre-war and post-war experiences.
- (2). One of the crises which the dysfunctional Igbo families face is depression.
- (3). The Church does not play her expected role to the dysfunctional families, by reassuring them of a brighter future. Some pastors in the Church are willing to offer pastoral care, but they are insufficiently trained to handle the crisis situation which confronts depressed members of their parish.
- (4). Some Church ministers are not interested in the pastoral caring ministry to the families and the sick within their church setting. Some of these ministers perform other priestly duties, but ignore the deep pastoral needs of their members.

In an attempt to investigate these problems and attempt to offer solutions to them, the researcher has divided the problems into five sub-topics. These sub-topics are:

- (i). The historical background of the depressive circumstances of the Igbo people.
- (ii). The Igbo family and how they respond to and resolve crises facing them.
- (iii). “He descended into hell”, as a metaphor (The concept of depression and crisis from a pastoral caring perspective).
- (iv). The extent to which pastoral care is provided by the Church and how this can reassure families in crises that God can be found in their depressive conditions.
- (v). “And on the third day He rose again”, as a metaphor for methods through which the Church in Igboland can minister healing to her depressed members.

## **1.2 Motivation for the Study**

The ministry of the Church is channelled towards the restoration of hope and reassurance of a brighter future to the depressed. Pastoral care is one of the means through which the Church performs this function. The Church being a family of families (Wynn 1982 :14), has the duty of caring for these various families within its setting.

Unfortunately, in spite of the growing number of Churches and Church ministers/pastors, many families are increasingly experiencing emotional depression to a crisis point. This is evident in dysfunctional families among the Igbo people of Nigeria. Most of them are likely to lose their belief in the real existence of God in their situation, because the Church through lack of pastoral care has not proved it otherwise.

My main motivation in this research therefore is to find out how the Church can transfer her teaching, about Jesus descending into hell and His resurrection after three days, which is the profession of Christian faith recited in the Apostle's creed by the Church (BCP 1959:11), into her effective pastoral caring ministry, in a practical life situation, to those who are depressed. The Anglican Church in Igbo society will also be challenged to transfer what they are preaching from the pulpit into a real life situation. To do this, the Church has to take into consideration, the cultural background of the people whom they serve. Dysfunctional families can then begin to see the presence of God, even in the worst crisis situations of their lives. If they are told that Jesus descended into hell, and on the third day He rose again, they will begin to receive the message meaningfully and with greater hope.

## **1.3 Delimitations**

This research is more contextual to the present Igbo society of Nigeria. Similar problems may exist elsewhere, but I don't intend to go beyond this, as my research is limited to the Igbo society. I am aware that circumstances today, make many families not only within the Igbo society of Nigeria, emotionally depressed. I shall try as much as possible to restrict the research to the problems which dysfunctional families face.

The focus on pastoral care will be more on how the Church will transfer the message of Jesus descending into hell and rising after three days as metaphor, in offering pastoral counselling to the

emotionally depressed.

### **1.3.1 The Pastoral Study of Depression: a further delimitation.**

This is a further delimitation to be noted. The intention of this research is not by any means exploring of the psychological depths, causes and therapies of depression, rather, the pastoral aspects experienced by a family. On this, Fairchild says:

In a biblical metaphor, depression can be conceived as a wilderness journey, symbolizing the experience of being lost in a desert place, lonely, without water flowing and in great danger from thorns and beasts. But it is also a place where angels minister, where persons have found transformation, a new identity and direction. Depression is a painful spiritual condition out of which much growth can come (1980:viii).

Depression here, is seen from the spiritual perspective, as Fairchild indicates above. It is also seen as the crisis point within a dysfunctional family. Examples of pastoral care and counselling will be highlighted from different sources.

## **1.4 Methods and Procedures for Data Collection**

Since no research work has been done on depression as a crisis in Igbo society, I shall depend so much on the following sources:

- (1). Written Sources: Books, journals and research work of other scholars from the library written about others societies in Nigeria.
- (2). Personal Experience: Being a member and a product of Igbo society and having experienced the Nigerian civil war as a little child and also having been a pastor in Igbo society for six years, I have counselled many families. I shall refer to these experiences. I shall use them as points of reference in my criticisms, views and suggestions towards solving the problems of family depression as a crisis.
- (3). I shall try to create a model which will combine the already existing rituals and symbols in the traditional method of healing and doctrinal practice of the Anglican Church in Igbo land, in solving the problem.

- (4). Personal Involvement: I shall also draw a lot of insight from my own personal involvement in family life.

## **1.5 Anticipated Problems.**

As I pointed out earlier, no research has been done in the area of depression concerning the Igbo families and society of Nigeria. I therefore anticipate two major problems which may limit my chances of getting the exact feelings of the very families facing crisis among them.

- (1) I shall rely more on memory and the books written about other societies in Nigeria concerning depression as proof to my hypothesis.
- (2) I may not have any existing literature on depression concerning the Igbo people. I shall therefore rely on the historical, anthropological and sociological books written about them.

## **1.6 Hypothesis**

- (1). There is a way of Christian hope for Igbo people who are experiencing deep emotional depression as a result of the circumstances within their environment.
- (2). The Anglican Church in Igboland can offer a theology of hope to emotionally depressed Igbo families.

**NIGERIA AND THE IGBO SOCIETY****2.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims at exploring some of the factors that affect the Igbo family system and some of the factors that have led to dysfunction in many of their families. It proceeds with the notion that external social influences as well as historical experiences play a great role in a people's way of life. This has greatly led to dysfunction and depression in Igbo family systems. Historical influences and backgrounds are discussed in this chapter as are some of the factors that shape the family life of the Igbos.

**2.1.1 Historical Influences.**

The past experiences of the Igbos in their Nigerian environment is believed to have influenced their family system. In this regard, Richard Simons, says that unconscious conflicts and maladaptive learning can affect an individual's psychological functioning and interaction with the environment (1985:781). If a society can be seen as an organism in line with Durkhemian school of thought (Dixon, Keith 1980:111), it then continues to change influencing and being influenced by the environment. The past experiences of the Igbos and particular events in their history which will be discussed in this chapter are believed to have consequently influenced their family systems.

**2.1.2 Historical Background.**

The world around the family system of the Igbos which shapes their life include the Nigerian environment where they live, historical background and other external influences.

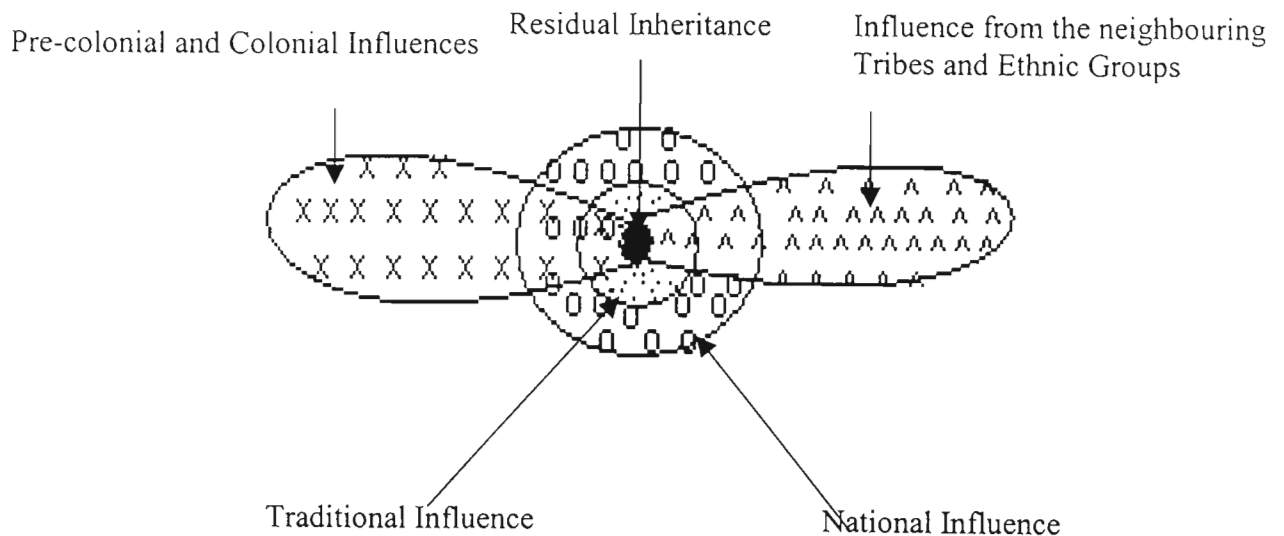
At present, there is no typical Igbo culture nor typical Igbo family life. What could be considered

as typical Igbo culture has undergone many changes as a result of outside influences. Ilogu, says that Igboland would definitely be different without the influence from their contact with other parts of

Nigeria (1974:4). The Igbos also have many cultural differences among themselves.

After all these intervening variables, the Igbos are left with what the researcher may call residual inheritance. I want to use this term 'Residual Inheritance' to represent the left over after the interaction of many cultures. In this case, when the people embrace foreign culture, culture of Nigerian society as a whole, culture of the neighboring tribes in addition to their own culture what they will be practicing will no longer be purely their own culture. It is this way of life which the people are left with that I refer to as 'Residual Inheritance'. Failure of the family to meet up with this residual inheritance leads to crisis within the system. This is represented in sketch I, which is an original creation of the researcher to further elaborate his point.

### SKETCH I: RESIDUAL INHERITANCE



xxxx : Influence of the Pre-colonial and Colonial experiences

oooo : Influence of the political, economic, social and religious situations in Nigeria.

^^^ : Influence from the neighbouring tribes and communities

::: : The main cultural inheritance of the people

• : What the people are left with (residual inheritance).



## 2.2 Nigeria.

The founding of Nigeria as a unitary state is associated with the European religious and commercial enterprises in the West African territories around fifteenth century (Shed Adiele 1996:295). Prior to this time, the various tribes and ethnic groups that make up the present Nigeria, existed as independent kingdoms and city states, without serious political dependence on each other (Balogun1983:68).

The British government assumed responsibility for the administration of this area on New Year's day of 1900, as three different administrative areas called Protectorates. In 1914, the three protectorates were disbanded and joined as one entity, with Sir Frederick Lugard as the first Governor General (Balogun 1983). Earlier before this time, in 1898, Flora Shaw, who later married Lugard, suggested in an article for *The Times* that the several British Protectorates on the Niger area be known collectively as Nigeria (Burns 1958 :217).

Nigeria, located in West Africa has the Gulf of Guinea and Benin Republic on her Western boundary, Chad and Niger Republics on the Northern boundary, Republic of Cameroun on the Eastern boundary and Atlantic ocean in the southern boundary. Nigeria has a population of about 120 million citizens and is said to be the third largest land mass which is about 923,770 sq km, in Africa. It lies between latitudes 4 and 14 degrees within the tropical zone. There are about 434 ethnic groups speaking almost 500 different languages and over 1000 dialects (Ilogu 1974:5).

Ottenberg, points out that Nigeria is composed of three major cultural groupings which are the Yoruba in southwest about 15 million, the Hausa and Fulani, predominant in the north and numbering more than 30 million people and the Igbos in the southeast numbering about 12 million (1997:3). At the moment, Nigeria has 36 states with her capital at Abuja. Out of these 36 states, the Igbos occupy 6 which are Anambra, Enugu, Abia, Imo, Ebonyi and Delta states. They are also found in great number in Rivers, Cross Rivers, and Akwa-Ibom states (Balogun 1983:88). Maps I and II, on pages 113 and 114, show the area occupied by Nigeria in Africa and where the Igbo people live within Nigeria.

### **2.2.1 Some Factors Affecting the Igbo Family Life in Nigeria.**

The pre-colonial, colonial, political and history of various kingdoms that made up Nigeria have a lot of influence on the family life of the Igbos. Crowder, notes that the area now called Nigeria was formally made up of multiplicity of pagan tribes and a number of great kingdoms. These kingdoms had evolved a complex system of government independent of contact with Europe (1966:21). These kingdoms still want to retain their pre-colonial identity. In effect, Nigeria has not shown any sign of being one nation since its creation. This accounts for incessant riots, demonstrations, killings, civil unrest and social disturbances. Moslems of the north feel that they have exceptional right over the control of the nation. Crowder, therefore says:

When Lugard finally amalgamated the Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria, it might have seemed, as it often did to him, that he was merely lumping together under the same administration, groups of mutually incompatible peoples (1973: 253).

The Colonial administration therefore left Nigeria as a perpetually divided nation which kept on living in suspense and in suspicion of each other. This has not been so helpful to family life.

## **2.3 Background to the Crisis of the Igbo People**

The foundation of Nigerian independence was not solidly built like that of other African countries thus the traditional antagonism among tribes and ethnic groups continued. Political tension in Nigeria started to take an upward dimension from 1966. Politicians escalated ethnic tension in order to maintain themselves in power. Most of the politicians were rotten and corrupt. There was absolute deprivation, injustice and neglect. Finally, on January 15, 1966, a group of young army Majors overthrew the First Republic (Isichei 1983:470f).

There was a bloody massacre in the northern cities, of Igbos, in May and September 1966 (Isichei 1983:472). In a riot that took place in the north, Isichei, notes that in the military camp, 245 Igbo officers were killed (1983:472). In July 29, 1966, the Igbo military Head of State, General Ironsi, was assassinated. He was succeeded by a young military officer from the north, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon. In order to ensure the peaceful co-existence of all the tribes in Nigeria, the Military

Governor of the east, Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu and the Head of State, Col. Gowon met at Aburi, Ghana, in January 1967. The Aburi Accord proposed the administration of Nigeria as a confederation. According to Balogun, Gowon's failure to implement the Aburi Accord led to the threat of Col. Ojukwu to secede (1983:88). Instead of implementing the accord, Gowon announced the creation of twelve states of Nigeria in May 27, 1967. Three days later, Ojukwu announced the secession of the 'Republic of Biafra', from the Nigerian Federation. This action later broke into a very bloody civil war which lasted for three and a half years, with a threat to exterminate all the Igbos (Crowder1973:315).

## **2.4 Religious Situation**

Religion is one of the areas that tears Nigerians apart. There are three major religions in Nigeria. They are Traditional religion, Islam and Christianity. It is declared a secular state because of the presence of these religions. There is a high level of religious intolerance in Nigeria. The worst is between Moslems of the north and Christians of the south. This intolerance has been a big threat to the unity and continuous existence of Nigeria as a nation. The Moslems have always found it very hard to live together with the Christians especially in the northern part of Nigeria where they dominate (Crowder 1973:92). The three religions have proved to be the source of social unrest, violence, crime, discrimination, assassinations, fear and uncertainty among the citizens. Millions of people are killed as a result of religious unrest. This has a negative influence on the stability of the family system in Nigeria, as many families are torn apart by religious belief and even intermarriage.

## **2.5 The Igbo People of Nigeria**

The Igbos are one of the 434 ethnic groups that make up Nigeria. Forde and Jones, note that they work very hard and have farming as their chief occupation (1950:10). Nwabara, says that they have a strongly developed commercial sense and a practically unromantic approach to life (1977:16). They abhor people who don't work hard in their midst and exhibit a tendency to materialism. This

results in a high competitive and economically stratified society. Canon A. E. D. Mgbemene<sup>1</sup>, says concerning them:

The Igbos are courageous and resilient and these qualities still distinguish them in business, politics and religion (Adiele 1996:366).

### 2.5.1 Geographical Location

They are largely found in south-eastern part of Nigeria which was then known as the Niger Coast Protectorate. The record of Perkins and Stenbridge, says that in eastern Nigeria, the largest tribe is Igbo whose people amount to a little short of three-quarters of the entire population (1966:103). Dr. G. T. Basden, has this to say:

These occupy very considerable area in South-Eastern corner of Nigeria and of later years, their influence have extended further afield. They are making a marked impression on the adjacent tribes, the Efik, Ibibios and others (Basden 1938:4).

The Igbos were divided into sub-cultural groups by Forde and Jones. The division takes this form: Northern or Onitsha Igbos, Southern or Owerri Igbo, Western Igbo and North East Igbo. (1950:10). Ilogu, also agrees to the above division of the Igbos into sub-cultural groups (1974:2f).

### 2.5.2 Igbo Religion Before The Advent of Christianity.

Before the advent of Christianity in Igboland, they believe in the existence of one God whom they call *Chineke*<sup>2</sup>, or *Chukwu*<sup>3</sup>. There is no particular house set aside for the worship of God. They don't also worship God directly. They believe that He is too great to be approached directly, as such they worship Him through other lesser gods which they call *Arusi*<sup>4</sup>. The Igbos show their belief in God by the way they name their children. Some of these names are: *Chinedu* (God takes the lead), *Chidimma* (God is good), *Chidiebele* (God is merciful), *Chukwuebuka* (God is so great) etc. They believe that people should be very careful in whatever they do whether in the open or in secret,

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<sup>1</sup> One time Administrative Secretary of the Diocese on the Niger.

<sup>2</sup> The Spirit that creates

<sup>3</sup> The Great Spirit

<sup>4</sup> Smaller deity in Igboland.

because the unseen beings are everywhere. Gerhardus Cornelis Oosthuizen, looking at the African traditional context sees this idea as affecting the whole of Africa. He says:

In the context of Africa, people are surrounded not by things, but by beings—the metaphysical world is loaded with beings (Olupona 1997 :40).

A person can be possessed by either a good or bad spirit. They believe that other smaller gods have the capability to destroy and to save. Villages as well as households and families have their own shrines which perform specific functions for them. The Igbos either seek for blessings from these gods or to avert dangers through them (Ilogu 1974:17f).

Another feature of Igbo traditional religion is the religious personnel. These include the diviners, herbalists, deity priests/ priestesses, soothsayers and sorcerers. These people altogether are called *Dibia* . They are believed to be servants of the deities and as such possess special divine and mysterious powers (Ilogu 1974:25). They are believed to be capable of killing or saving a person. The *Dibias* are dreaded because of their link with both good and bad spirits.

The Igbos strongly believe that there is no crisis without an evil spirit behind it. They believe that diviners interact with the supernatural forces and beings in order to find out the cause of any crisis and what the solution will be. Up till today many Igbo Christians still consult the diviners secretly when they have serious problems. Ilogu, says:

The Diviner uses *Ofo* as one of the apparatuses of divination, as it is generally believed that the ancestors whose spirit the *Ofo* represents, are always helpful in determining a successful result of the particular subject for which a client seeks divination (1974:17).

*Ofo*, mentioned by Ilogu, is one of the religious objects in Igbo traditional religion. This shows that the Igbos believe that their ancestors are also consulted during the process of divination. Their ancestors who are now in the spirit world will always fight to protect their interests. This accounts for why some people will prefer to consult a diviner rather than a pastoral counsellor who applies the westernized form of counselling. They believe that a diviner, in consultation with their ancestors can work out the solution to their problems. The *Dibias* work more as local counsellors.

### 2.5.2.1 Christianity (Anglican Church) in Igbo land

The Igbos had their first experience of Christianity on 27<sup>th</sup> July, 1857. This resulted from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century efforts of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) of the Church of England (Nwakalo Onyeka 1999:19). It was through the efforts of the Igbo slaves combined with the evangelical zeal of the Church of England through the CMS that Igboland was successfully evangelized. They succeeded because the Igbos in the group knew how to reach their people. They knew the culture as well as the language of the people. The Igbo chiefs also helped so much in this spreading of the Good News of Jesus Christ to other parts of Igboland (Ilogu 1974:56).

It was said that when they arrived with some white missionaries, people saw them and ran away thinking that they were spirits. They came by boat, well clothed, putting on shoes and helmets. The Igbos had never seen human beings appearing like that before. Because of their clothing, helmet and shoes they said that they were without human body and had no heads and limbs and some of them speak through their nose. They would only listen to them because of the Igbo members in their team.

They had their first religious service that day beside the River Niger. Almost every citizen of Onitsha came out to see these spirits that came through the river. In this process they all joined in this first Christian service. It was said that more than 90% of the people who attended the worship were naked. The Igbos had not started wearing clothes at that time. Only very few elders covered their private parts with animal skins. The first hymn which was sung in the worship was:

- (1).     The Great physician now is near  
          The sympathizing Jesus  
          He speaks, the drooping heart to cheer  
          Oh! Hear the voice of Jesus

CHORUS:     Sweetest note in seraph song  
               Sweetest name on mortal tongue  
               Sweetest carol ever sung, Jesus blessed Jesus

The remaining stanzas of the song are contained in Appendix I. It is believed that the power in

this hymn turned the heart of the Onitsha Igbos to Jesus Christ immediately and also empowered them to go on with the gospel into the remaining parts of Igboland.

The song was translated into Igbo by Revd. John Christopher Taylor, who was one of the leading Igbo missionaries among them, before their arrival to Onitsha. It was therefore sung in Igbo. A great physician translated into Igbo means a great *Dibia*. This does not mean just a physician, but all those powerful and dreadful diviners, medicine men, sorcerers, priests/priestesses to deities and all those mystical practitioners who worked with supernatural powers. They were believed to be very wicked and the Igbos dreaded them so much. When the missionaries sang– The Great physician now is near..., the people looked around and saw one of their mostly dreaded *Dibias* standing by. Knowing that the *Dibia* was one of the most wicked and feared evil workers in their community, they felt that the missionaries with their own mysterious powers had identified him. This strengthened the belief of the people in the missionaries. The *Dibia* immediately disappeared from their midst fearing that these people would destroy him. They therefore won the people's heart and afterwards, a great majority of the people especially those seeking for protection followed them. This first impression also won the heart of the traditional ruler of Onitsha and consequently, he signed an agreement that day that a Christian mission station would be established at Onitsha. Hectares of land was given to them for this purpose (Oral source from an Onitsha clergyman; Adiele 1996:40). Picture 1, shows All Saints Cathedral Church Onitsha, built in the site where the first Christian Missionaries to Igboland had their first Christian worship, in July 27, 1857.

**PICTURE 1: ALL SAINTS CHURCH, ONITSHA: *Influence of Christianity in Igbo family system***



Christianity through the Anglican mission started in Onitsha and spread to other areas of

Igboland. The first indigenous President of Nigeria, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe notes that the translation of the Bible into Igbo by Christopher Taylor helped to quicken the spread of Christianity to the Igbos. Concerning Christopher Taylor he says:

Revd. John Christopher Taylor, arrived at Onitsha on July 27, 1857, realized the need to speak to Nigerians in their own language in order to facilitate the task of evangelization...Revd. Taylor, who was the first agent in charge of the CMS compound at Onitsha, proceeded to translate Ibo reading books and portions of the scripture (Adiele 1996:327).

With the help of their new converts, the missionaries challenged most of the barbarous practices of the Igbos. Some of them included: human sacrifice, burying a dead husband with his most beloved living wife, burying chiefs with many living slaves, killing of twins and babies who started from the upper gum to develop teeth, killing of babies who came out from their mother's womb with legs instead of head first etc (Oral source). These positive changes made by the Church became a big relief package for the Igbo families.

### **2.5.3 The Response of the Igbos to Christianity**

The Igbos can be said to have responded positively to Christianity. The land filled with the belief in spirits, deities and gods was full of religious activities. Many Igbos were in religious bondage due to superstitions, before Christianity arrived. It therefore became a freeing experience of the human spirit through their belief in Jesus Christ. Mothers and their twin children were saved by Christians. There was no more fear of being the victim of sacrifice to any deity in a person's life. (Ilogu 1974:198).

The Church preached love, forgiveness, perseverance, hope, gentleness etc for one another instead of the wicked and heartless pronouncements of the traditional religion. They had a very clean and clear way of worship devoid of too many sacrifices. Christians had missionary education and in the end were employed by the trading companies, government and the Church (Ilogu 1974:90ff). All these attractions and some others drew the Igbos away from their traditional religion to embrace Christianity (Oral source).



#### **2.5.4 Conflict Between Christian Values and Igbo Traditional Values.**

Conflict soon set in between Christian values and Igbo traditional values. Christianity had succeeded in destroying most of the inhuman practices in the Igbo traditional society. It also provided security for the victims of inhuman practices of the Igbos. Truly, the Igbos had seen the liberating power of Christianity and good things which it could offer to them yet these new ideas had not separated them from their environment and culture. They still had their old mentality as Igbo people. Some of these factors led to conflicts between Christian values and Igbo traditional values. It was hard for the Igbos to leave their traditional way of life completely.

In an interview with the researcher's father, Mr. T. N. Ozodi, who worked with the European missionaries and has since then remained faithful to the Church and Chief Nweke Okonkwo who also served the white missionaries but refused to be converted to Christianity some of these areas of conflict were identified:

- (1). The attack of Christianity on polygamy: This was one of the first areas Christianity attacked on arrival. The missionaries were pleased to see their converts denying all their wives and living only with one. This was a very difficult task for the Igbos because they married many wives for economic reasons. The Church also had no means of taking care of these extra wives who were denied by their husbands. Some of them had children and were loved so much by their husbands. They were put in a very difficult position.
- (2). Consultation of diviners, native doctors, local priests/priestesses and herbalists were condemned by the missionaries. It was not easy however for the Igbos to avoid living without consulting diviners. This gave rise to their search for alternative means of having these things back, though in a more reformed manner.
- (3). Christianity opposed the use of shrines (where oaths were sworn), oracles and taboos as means of social and political control. The Church could not provide an alternative to these things. Since the Igbos were not used to the Europeans system of enforcing laws, crime in the society increased.
- (4). The traditional way of marriage, burial, funeral and naming of children was condemned by the Church. This condemnation however did not prevent members of the Church from practicing them. Instead of leaving some of these things they would prefer to leave the Church and probably join another religion.

(Interview with Mr. T. N. Ozodi and Chief Nweke Okonkwo, December 1999).

These prohibitions and condemnations by the Church were on the grounds of preventing Christians

from any form of idolatrous practices. When the people saw that they could not do otherwise, they made up their mind to accept any action taken by the Church which include excommunication. Many people went back to their traditional religion while some people insisted on doing what they want not minding what the Church was saying.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has so far attempted to identify some of the historical factors that have influenced the family system of the Igbos. These historical, political, economic, social and religious backgrounds surveyed so far are believed to have shaped the Igbo family life. John Hall, thus says:

Worse corruptions of the political process, pollution of the environment, disfigurement of public space and individualist and apathetic dissociation from others are all readily evident in different proportions and configurations in most societies. In some cases an underclass is denied the very material and cultural means to be civil (1995:153).

John Hall's observation can be said to be evident in Nigerian society in a very high proportion. Most of the Igbo families, from the above historical evidence fall into the underclass who are denied the very materials and means of being civil. The result is the high rate of crime and social banditry, disrupting many families of their functions.

Only those aspects that are informative to the causes of crisis in Igbo family life were looked into. Subsequent chapters will examine the influence of these experiences and their good and bad aspects on the Igbo family life.

### THE IGBO FAMILY SYSTEM

#### 3.1 Introduction

The family system in Igboland is based on patriarchy. The male members of the family hold most of the power within the system. They also have a high degree of attachment to their families of origin. This attachment gives rise to a long line of extended family systems. Ottenberg, confirms this by saying that the Igbos are generally patrilineally organized (1997:4). This kind of togetherness in the Igbo society is called in the Igbo language *Umunna*<sup>5</sup>. In this relationship, there is a common allegiance to an ancestor 'father' from whom other nuclear families emerged. This chapter looks into these various aspects of the family system within Igbo community, what influences them and how they relate to each other.

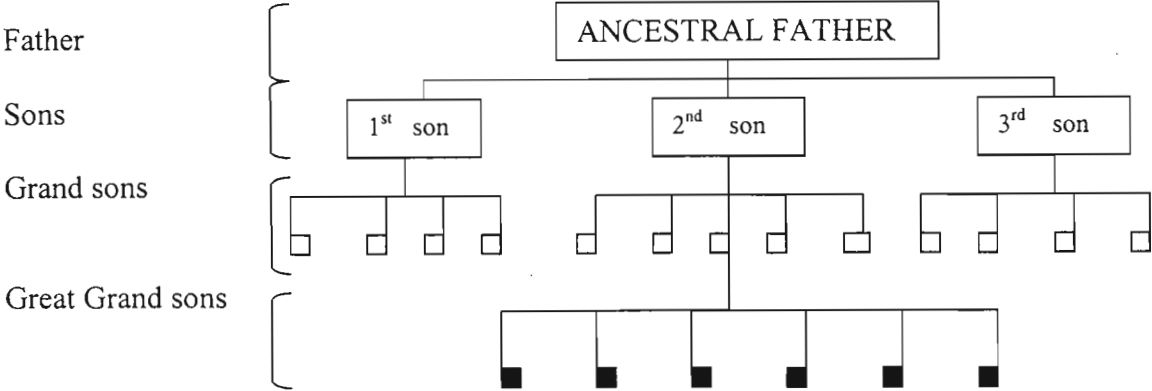
#### 3.2 The Extended Family

The family relationship here is made up of male descendants of the founder ancestor. The extended family members often go by the name of this ancestor. At the bottom of this line of family relationship are nuclear families made up of a man, his wife/wives and children. Farmer, in line with this concept sees the extended family as vertical relationships between the generation an extensive range of collateral relationships and also some affinities which include those by marriage or by blood (Farmer 1970:33). Minuchin, says that a human being is not an isolate. He/she is influencing and being influenced by his/her social context (1974:2). McCubbin and Figley, also comments that experience in ones family of origin affects how one functions in marriage 'nuclear family' (1983:29). The extended family therefore influences the life style of the nuclear families that make it up. This is represented in sketch II.

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<sup>5</sup> Descendants from one father.

**SKETCH II: RELATIONSHIPS IN EXTENDED FAMILY SYSTEM**

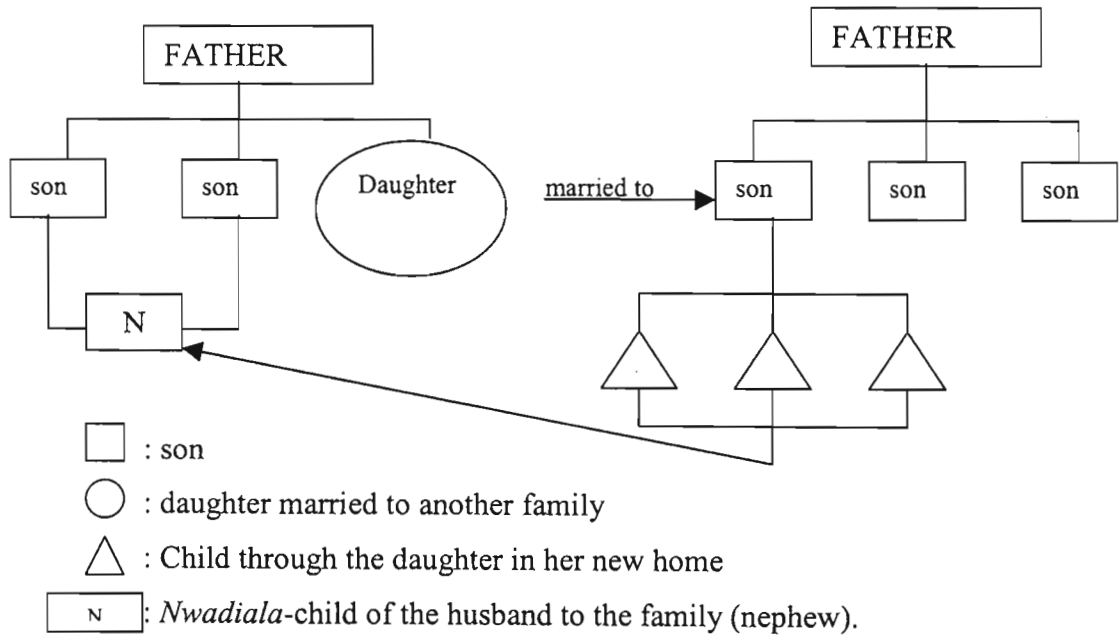


Each of the progenies from the ancestral father represent a nuclear family.

(1) The nuclear families join together under the same ancestral father to form the extended family.

It can be seen from sketch II that the family relationship in Igboland is mostly traced along the line of male members of the family. Female members are believed to share from the inheritance of their husbands or their children. Sketch III shows the relationship of a daughter married outside the family to her original family.

**SKETCH III: THE POSITION OF A MARRIED DAUGHTER IN THE EXTENDED FAMILY SYSTEM.**



The *nwadialas*, who are the grand-children/nephews from the female side can receive shares from their grandfathers and uncles but cannot inherit land or any other property. Their mother who is a daughter in the family is described as *nwada*<sup>6</sup> if married outside their clan, or *nwaokpu*<sup>7</sup> if married within their clan. If there is a very serious case within their family of origin, *nwada* or *nwaokpu* is consulted as a final resource. Any stand they take is also seen as final.

### 3.3 The Nuclear Family

The nuclear family is the last level of family relations in the extended family system. Traditionally, an Igbo nuclear family comprises of one husband, one wife or many wives and their children. It is not strictly the group consisting of a husband, one wife and their children as Farmer sees it (1970:33). The nuclear family of the Igbos can be seen in two ways viz: the polygynous and monogamous families.

#### 3.3.1 The Polygynous Family

**PICTURE 2: POLYGYNOUS FAMILY:** *Wives in a polygynous family can range from two to any number the man is able to marry.*



The polygynous family in Igbo society is made up of one husband and many wives. The wives can range from two to any number the man is able to afford (See picture 2). Each wife works

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<sup>6</sup> Literally means daughter to the family probably married in another clan.

<sup>7</sup> Literally means daughter to the family married within her clan

very hard to see that her own children are well maintained and cared for. This marriage of many wives, in most cases is for economic and security reasons. All the wives married to a man and their children join hands in agricultural work or any other family trade. It is believed that outside enemies cannot easily overcome a big family. Phillips, commenting on polygynous family says:

This is the only one aspect of a system where co-operation in tilling the fields and herding the cattle is provided by a group of people bound by the obligations of kinship and marriage and not by the relationship of wage-earner to employer. The larger the co-operating group, the greater the possibilities of wealth and defense against enemies (1953:1).

The Igbos also love having many children. They believe that marrying many wives will enable them to have a lot of descendants. Phillips, thus observes that the polygynous joint family, consisting of a man, his wives and their children, is the ideal of most Africans. He goes further to say:

The more children are born to a group, the greater its hopes for expansion in future. Legitimate children are secured by marriage in due form and the importance of seeing legitimate descendants account for the most characteristic features of African marriage law. Women have their own share, an important one, in the division of labour and both the wealth of the group and its hopes of progeny are greater in proportion to the number of wives (1953:1).

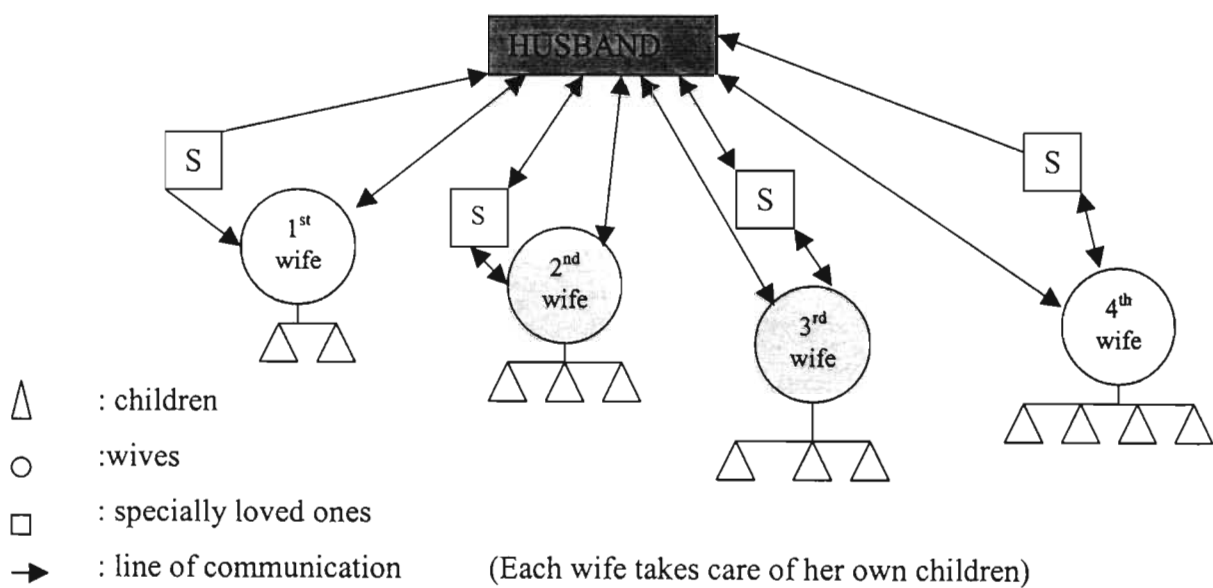
Each wife in the polygynous family has her own hut where she lives with her own children. Each wife also has a day when it will be her turn to feed their husband. Their husband also has his own day for sleeping with any of his wives. There is always competition of whom the husband loves most. This aspect also brings about rivalry within the family. The children of each wife keeps to their mother's side always. On this Phillips, says:

When the family is polygynous, there is differentiation within it between the children of different wives and it has often been observed that only full brothers go on living and working together after the death of their father. Each wife has her own hut and with her children usually forms a recognized group often called by the word "house" to which the father allots its distinct property— in a patrilineal society (1953:2).

From sketch IV which the researcher has made, it can be seen that each wife is independent of the other. Their husband occupies the top position of authority while his wives and children fall in below. Each wife has a direct communication link with their husband. None of the wives has good communication or relationship with each other. Though the first wife maintains a high

position in the family than other wives, she has no authority over them. That does not also make their husband love her more than the others. Each wife has parallel communication channel with their husband. This may be more peaceful than when they cross-communicate with each other. It could also be noticed from the sketch that each wife takes care of her own children, while their husband remains in a neutral position to all his wives and children. Problems arise when he starts showing preferential treatment to a particular section of his family.

**SKETCH IV: THE RELATIONSHIP IN A POLYGYNOUS FAMILY.**

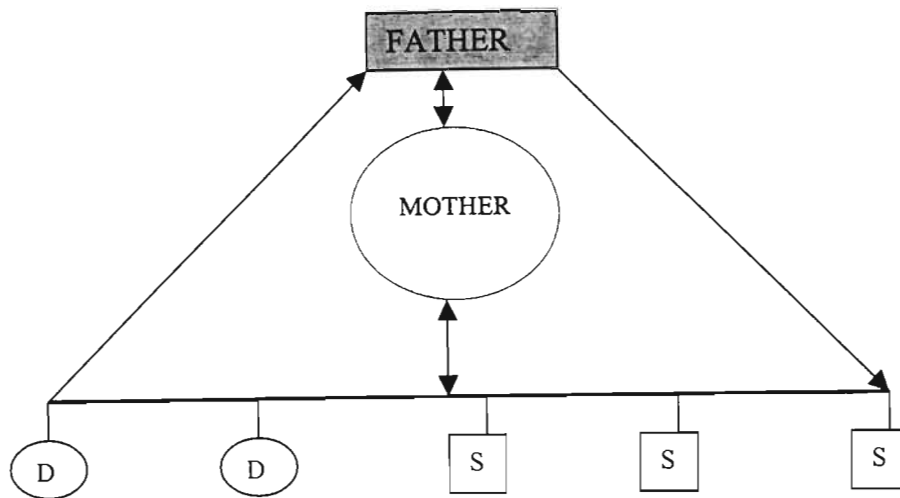


### 3.3.2 The Monogamous Family

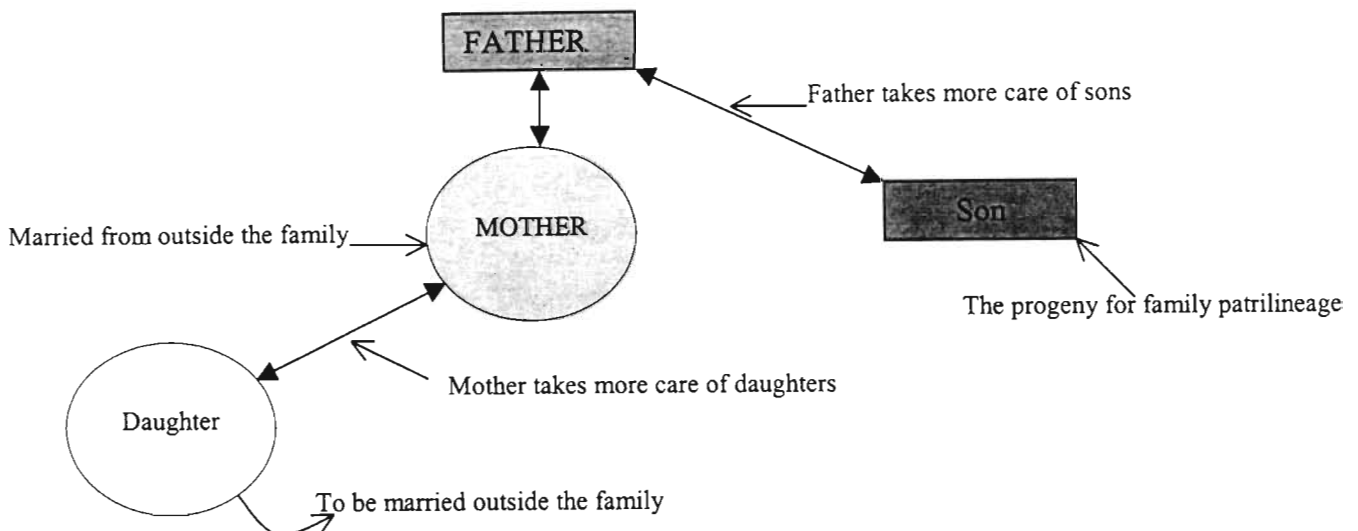
This is the practice of having only one husband and one wife at a time. Unlike the polygynous family, the upbringing of children is a joint responsibility between husband and wife in a monogamous family. They also join hands together in working for the survival of the family. Sketch V shows the channel of communication in a monogamous family, while sketch VI shows their line of responsibility.

From sketch V and VI , it could be seen that the children are closer to their father and mother than in a polygynous family. There is also a shared responsibility between husband and wife in this family than in a polygynous family.

### SKETCH V: CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION IN A MONOGAMOUS FAMILY



### SKETCH VI: LINE OF RESPONSIBILITY IN A MONOGAMOUS FAMILY.



## **3.4 Family Life in Igbo Community**

The center for social, economic, political and religious life of the Igbos is based on the family. Balogun, notes that the Igbos practice the 'house' system of political control. In this system, powerful families exercised influence over other families. He therefore notes that the British colonial administration first had a problem with administering the Igbos because of lack of centralized political and administrative institutions (1988:71). The authority was in the hands of the elders, age-grades, secrete societies, extended families and kinship groups. Law and order is enforced by masquerade groups whose members belong to different families (See picture 3).



**PICTURE 3: MASQUERADE GROUP:** *Enforcing law and order in Igbo traditional society.*



The elderly men meet together in the village play ground to decide on important issues affecting the village. Each extended family guides their members and settle disputes within their own extended family. Settlement of disputes can be carried further to the elders of the village who are representatives of different families. They can then appoint a native court to look into the matter. Balogun, notes that the British High Commissioners who took control of the Niger Coast, Sir Claude Mac Donald and Sir Ralph Moore made extensive use of these traditional institutions in administering eastern Nigeria. They schooled these institutions in the British concept of 'natural' law and morality and in 1900, Moore brought all the native courts under the supervision of a local British supreme court and repealed all 'unjust and barbarous' laws (1983:71). The Igbos therefore face the conflict of either doing things in Igbo traditional way or in British way.

Minuchin, divides the family system into three subsystems namely the spouse subsystem, parental subsystem and sibling subsystem (1974:56ff). For purposes of clarity, the researcher wishes to adopt this method to discuss the system of functioning, role playing, rituals and crisis within the Igbo family system. The spouse subsystem however starts with marriage rituals.

### **3.4.1 The Igbo Marriage**

Most of the ideas here are experiences reflecting on the rituals the researcher has personally undergone. The Igbo marriage is seen as a relationship for satisfying variety of needs. These needs have child bearing as the first. However, some marriages still survive in spite of the absence of child bearing. Some couples understand each other and resolve to ignore every shame and bad comments

from the community. This agrees with Walker's idea that if marriage is to succeed, the two people who have agreed to live together and enrich each other's lives require much give and take (1954:92). Hurding, sees this as partnership in marriage in which each partner is one half of a significant relationship (1992:133ff). Hurding, also sees friendship between the couple as being very significant because a friend loves at all times (1992:134). There is friendship between married Igbo couples, but at times pressure from outside regarding child bearing and other material things threaten this friendship.

The attitude of Igbo people in marriage is quite contrary to Walker's idea, that love relationship in marriage is a personal one existing between husband and wife and such love resent rules and regulations imposed upon it by some outside authority (1954:77). The Igbos believe that one person does not marry a wife. By this, it means that a wife owes respect and domestic service to every member of her husband's family though only the true husband has the sexual rights.

Walker, also points out that there is need for harmony on three different planes in marriage. These planes as he points out are intellectual, emotional and sexual planes (1954:92). In Igbo marriage, where intellectualism is not emphasized in their culture, the intellectual plane may not be a serious factor. They think more of the ability to work hard, both in domestic affairs and in ensuring more earning for the family.

#### **3.4.1.1 The Marriage Rituals in Igbo Culture.**

The researcher has tried to reflect on his own personal involvement in Igbo marriage ritual adding also his own personal pictures in this section. Marriage in Igbo culture involves a series of rituals before it is finally contracted. To get married involves the entire extended families and kindred of the two parties. Because of limited space, only the most essential rituals will be discussed.

A suitor starts negotiating for a spinster to marry after series of inquiries. This concerns the type of family the girl comes from, the temperament of that family and of the girl, the type of sickness which exist or existed in that family, the flow of child birth in her family, how friendly and hospitable her family is etc. This takes a long period. They don't attach much importance to facial

appearance of a hopeful marriage partner. If by the end of the investigations, the family says that the girl is worthy to be married, they will give their approval for her and the next step will be taken. At this point if the girl is finally married to the man, the whole family will see her as their wife because they all approved the marriage. The same thing is done on the side of the suitor.

Official declaration of the suitor's intention to the spinster's family then follows. On that day, the suitor's father or uncle, the suitor himself and their middle man will carry a keg of palm wine, seven balls of kola nut and a bottle of local gin and visit the family of the spinster. They will present these things to the father or uncle of the girl through their middle man and through a proverb, they will tell them their mission. Such proverb may be *"we saw a ripe fruit in your family and it seems good to us and we have come to pluck it"*. The spinster's family may pretend not to understand them because if they quickly admit, it may seem as if they are tired of living with their daughter. This family in pretense may reply *"do you feel we are not worthy to have that ripe fruit ?"*. The bargaining will through this way ensue. Finally the spinster's father will invite her to ask her openly before their visitors whether that suitor is the man she is truly willing to marry. If she agrees, they will also ask the same question to the man. On accepting this before them, the father to the spinster will pour out palm wine from the wine they brought, in a cup and give to her to give to her hopeful husband. She will sip it a little and kneel down before him and with her two hands give it to him in confirmation of her acceptance. (See picture 4). If she gives it back to her father it means she has not agreed. The suitor will out of joy and happiness accept it from her and finish up the remaining. The two families will on this occasion fix a date when the suitor will come with his larger family.

**PICTURE 4: A SPINSTER;** *kneeling down to hand over palm wine to her hopeful husband.*



This wine drinking ritual is repeated up to four times before the spinster finally follows her husband. Her kneeling down before him shows that they are going to live in complete harmony. The two families are now linked up together. Ilogu, thus says that a married woman maintains link in two lineages, her husband's and her father's (1974:30).

The community however recognizes a marriage that passed through all these traditional rituals without Church wedding more than the one that went straight for Church wedding. They hold marriage that passed these stages sacred. Lots of vows are made during the period of these rituals. It is believed that violation of any of these marriage vows attracts the wrath of the gods.

### **3.4.2 The Igbo Spouse Subsystem**

The Igbo spouse subsystem is made up of a matured male and a female/females who get married (Husband and wife/wives). It is not completely the same with Minuchin's idea of one male and one female (1974:57), which is the ideal western pattern. A family starts when marriage is contracted. They therefore see marriage as being sacred, being the beginning of a new generation.

Despite Christian influence and the Western culture, the very traditional rituals which make Igbo marriage legitimate still stand. This is because the community still have the psychological feelings that they are not yet legitimately married if these rituals are by-passed.

### **3.4.3 The Parental Subsystem**

A married couple remains under the spouse subsystem until the first child is born. Farmer, says that it is only when the meaning of family is stretched to include three or more generations and their collateral relations, that family functions and roles are easily distinguishable from those of marriage (1970:10). By this time, the duty of parenting comes in. They have additional duties to perform when a child arrives. McCubbin, concerning this says:

For large majority of adults, one of the sharpest changes in life is having the first child. The major transition from adolescence to adulthood especially for a woman, is not marriage but parenthood. The roles and tasks of parenting

are acquired abruptly (1983:59).

There are social expectations about what they should do and which the new baby compels them to do. No Igbo spouse will like to be called by their first name again. The couple will now prefer to be called by the name of their child- *mama Chinedu* (Chinedu's mother), or *papa Chinedu* (Chinedu's father). This is just to let people know that they have now climbed to the level of parenting. Farmer therefore maintains the stand that marriage is 'the licencing not of sexual intercourse, but of parenthood', which is an important distinction in many societies who have legitimate ways of achieving sexual satisfaction outside marriage (1970:11). Ilogu, comments that it is unacceptable to the Igbo that a man should live and not have children. He goes on to say that one of the causes for Christians taking additional wives to the one married according to Church rules, is this question of childlessness (1974:155). They believe that the life of the spouses is continued in their male as well as female children (Ilogu 1974:130).

With the arrival of a child, the relationship which used to be only between two people is extended to the child. One spouse may be more inclined to the child than the other and spend more of his/her time on the child at the expense of the other. This relationship of one spouse to the other and to the child forms the bases for the parental subsystem. McCubbin, commenting on this says:

A number of studies have shown that the division of labour within couples follows a more traditional sex-role pattern following the birth of the first child. Whereas many of the family tasks and responsibilities may have been shared before the birth of the first child, there tends to be a growing separation and perhaps alienation between male and female roles with the advent of parenthood (1983:64).

This observation is typical of Igbo society. In most cases, a mother is busier and more attentive to the new baby than to her husband. The common feeling among the Igbos is that coming closer to a husband will attract him to a sexual union while still breast-feeding their baby. They see it as an abomination both on health and religious reasons. McCubbin, on this says:

The woman's physical involvement in pregnancy, delivery and postpartum recovery along with a possible commitment to breast-feeding also increase her involvement with parenting roles during the transition into parenthood... This can often lead to poor communication (1983:66).

To McCubbin, this separation on the part of a mother is the tendency of women to 'embrace' the role of parenthood while men establish 'role distance' (1983:66). To an Igbo woman, the joy that she

has escaped the ugly experiences of childlessness within the community in her marriage, makes her to try her best to enable the child to live. A husband is therefore unhappy for the denial of sexual relationships. The true stand of the Igbos on the above idea is more of religious and social grounds. Phillips, thus says:

The key to the attitude of Africans towards sexual activities is that the religious values associated with sex are concentrated on procreation (1953:3).

An Igbo wife will not like to contradict any of the religious laws of procreation, so that her chances of bearing more children will continue, in order to ensure stability in her marriage. Disagreements and quarrels may ensue not minding that the presence of the new baby is a blessing to the family. Bowley, says:

Jealousy, of course, is likely to arise when the child wants his/her mother all to him/herself and resents his father's claims on her. This is a natural phase of emotional development following the Oedipus situation. To love the mother and hate the father is a normal stage of boy's growth, but the intensity and duration of such feelings depend greatly upon emotional relationships within the family especially those of husband and wife (1946:3).

Some men can resort to beating their wives or maltreating them without openly telling people the real cause of their actions. A husband may keep on inventing non-existent reasons to justify his actions for this maltreatment while the main reason remains denial of sexual relationship.

Commenting on marital relationship in Igbo culture, Phillips says:

Submissive behaviour is expected of a woman towards her husband, also there is generally recognized right of a man to beat his wife and the notion that marriage involves little companionship between spouses (1953:7).

Minuchin, points out that spouse subsystem must differentiate in order to perform the task of socializing a child without losing mutual support that should characterize the spouse subsystem (1974:57). In other words, in as much as the spouses perform their functions of parenting, they should still remember that they are spouses as well as parents and not just parents alone. Parenting should not preclude the importance of love and sexual fulfilment (1970:12).

As their children grow, the relationship within the parental subsystem also continues to change. This may be caused by the new developmental needs coming from the children. From this, Minuchin, says that parents are expected to understand children's developmental needs because as the children grow, their developmental demands both for autonomy and guidance impose demands on the parental

subsystem, which must be modified to meet them. They should also draw a boundary which allows the children access to both parents while excluding them from the spouse functions (1974:57). In the Igbo family system where many children are expected, this situation is worse because all the children in the family will be expecting all their demands to be met by their parents. This brings about great pressure on the parental subsystem.

Some parents, in the event of disagreement within the parental subsystem, try to seek support from their children. Concerning this, Minuchin, says that in some families the child may be drawn into the problems of spouse subsystem (1974:57). A division therefore ensues among parents and their children with some children supporting one parent and others supporting another. This is so common in Igbo society where large families are emphasized. Bowley, on this idea comments:

Over-emotional parents, who have unsatisfactory marital lives, may seek to gain and hold their child's affection exclusively, as they have failed to do with their marriage partner (1946:45).

From her idea, what leads parents to seek the support of their children is an unsatisfactory marital relationship. They try to use their children to fill the vacuum of love created by their differences.

#### **3.4.4 The Sibling Subsystem**

**PICTURE 5: THE SIBILING SUBSYSTEM**



The sibling subsystem is brothers and sisters within the family who interact at their own level (See

picture 5). To the Igbos, any marriage without this subsystem is better not contracted. Farmer, quoting Gorer, defines marriage as 'living together, making home together, making a life together and raising children together (1970:12). She goes further to say:

The desire for love and sexual satisfaction, the principal components of childless unions are in reality secondary in importance to the fact of marriage itself, the common life and presence of children (1970:12).

The first community where these siblings find themselves is the family. The parents in the family give them the required protection which is one of the important functions performed by the parental subsystem. Farmer therefore says that the protection of the interest of children forms the principal argument for permanent monogamous unions (1970:12).

The siblings start from the time of birth to imitate what they see the adult members of the family doing. Bowen on this says that important personality characteristics are determined by the family configuration in which the child grows up. Parental undifferentiation is projected to one or more children (1978:206). The Igbos have a saying that it is what the children see the adults doing that they also do. On his own part, Minuchin, says that the first social laboratory in which children can experiment with peer relationship is the family (1974:59). The family as a system therefore has an overruling influence on the life of the siblings.

Both the traits acquired from the family and those from extra-familial communications contribute to the emotional development of the siblings. These determine their demands and pressure on the parental subsystem. Minuchin, thus says that as the child matures, especially during adolescence, the demands made by parents begin to conflict with the children's demands for age-appropriate autonomy (1974:58). A family becomes dysfunctional when it cannot meet up with the demands of the various subsystems that make it up (McCubbin 1983:57).

### **3.5 Functional and Dysfunctional Family System.**

Functional and dysfunctional family systems of any people depends largely on their cultural context. What may constitute a functional family in one culture may be seen as dysfunctional in another culture. Minuchin, says that family as a social unit differs in functions along the parameters of



cultural differences, though they still have universal roots (1974:16). A functional family in the Igbo cultural context, may be a dysfunctional family in another cultural context. For instance, Bowen, sees the achievement of little differentiation in one's family, which he described as 'undifferentiated family ego mass' as a dysfunction in a family (1978:107). In this case spouses may be so attached to each other that separation of one from the other may be so difficult or else it will cause a problem for either of them. Also parents may be so fond of their children that their attachment may hinder their children from thinking or taking any decision of their own independent of their parents, no matter the age and status of their children. In the Igbo cultural context, such central family oneness is advocated for and where it lacks, the family may be seen by the Igbos as being dysfunctional.

### **3.5.1 Functional Family System**

A functional family system may fall in line with Switzer's theory of the last level of the family system continuum, which he called *negentropy* (1974:182f). This is an open system which is seen as a healthy family system. Such a family is well socialized within its society. In line with the above thought, the primary function of an Igbo family system is a socialization process. It interacts with every aspect of community life and links its members to other major institutions of the society. According to Farmer, the family which is fully functional as a social institution tends to be extended vertically to include three or more generations and horizontally to include collateral relations (1970:14).

A functional family enables its members to participate in more general social activities and provides a sense of legitimacy for the group life of the society. Farmer, thus says:

The power of the family as a social institution can be measured by the effectiveness with which it carries out functions which are essential for the maintenance of a society or it would collapse if they were not performed (1970:14).

Farmer, goes further to emphasize that the first priority of the family is the continuity of the society and in the replacement of the population (1970:14). To the Igbos any family which is not able to perform this duty of replacement of the population is not functional at all. They see a functional family as one which participates fully in the building of a healthy, progressive and crime free society. The progenies of such a family carry on the good examples they acquired from their homes to the wider community. They also participate fully in the developmental and recreational activities within their community and are always ready to contribute to the well-being of other members of the

community (Oral interview).

Bowley, says that happy families are those which ensure affection and security to their members and are yet endearingly human (1946:5). The atmosphere in a functional family under the above notion, is peaceful and attractive. Every member of the family is happy and proud to belong to the family, because the family assures them of love and security.

### **3.5.2 Dysfunctional Family**

A dysfunctional family is described by Collins as a family that fails to show characteristics or fulfil the purpose accepted as normal or beneficial (1995:242). Clinebell, sees pain in a marital relationship as a source of dysfunction. He points out that a disturbed child is the family member who is most obviously affected by the pained marital relationship. He also notes that dysfunctional 'parenting' produces dysfunctional families, which perpetuate distorted communication patterns (1966:125). It is also the idea of Clinebell, that a dysfunctional person will deliver conflicting messages, be unable to perceive the 'here and now' accurately because of distortions from the past and will not be able to 'check out' his perceptions to see if they tally with the actual situation or the intended meaning of another. A dysfunctional person lacks the communication tools for handling conflict constructively (1966:126f). When communication fails to flow in a family system, members of that family may hardly work successfully together and as such their expected functions will also fail.

In any family circles, what affects one part of the system affects other parts. If one member of a family is dysfunctional, other members of the family are affected. The whole family system therefore becomes dysfunctional. This is also true with the Igbo people. For example, Ufondu, notes in his book, The Family Curse, as follows:

Amadi was happy for appeasing the wicked gods of *Ajana* to secure the recovery of his son, Chike, even though he had spent much money in the process. He was happy for two reasons. First he got a clue to the cause of his son's illness through the fortune teller. The gods of *Ajana* didn't normally reveal to people if they are behind an ill-fortune... Since the return of Chike, Amadi had been thinking how he could cool down the temper in his house... Amadi then called his children together in the evening to talk to them...(1996:23).

In this story, Ufondu, tries to portray how Igbo family members react when ill-fortune affects any of

their members. The family was completely in crisis. The family head, Amadi, had to spend all his earnings from wine-tapping, in order to buy chickens for sacrifices, to appease the wicked gods of *Ajana* (name of a shrine). Eventually, the fortune tellers gave him a clue as to what to do. The next problem he faced was restoring the family unity, which was destabilized by the crisis (1996:23).

A dysfunctional family who is lacking effective communication often experiences low self-esteem and distorted parent-child communication. The marital problems of an Igbo couple can distort communication patterns of the family and this can affect their children. For example, in the writer's parish ministry, he met so many families with such problems. His encounter with one of them goes as follows:

C1. : Mrs. M, I observe that you are no longer as cheerful as you used to be. I hope nothing has gone wrong?

P1 : Pastor, your observation is quite right, thank you for that.

C2. : What must be the problem that keeps you so sad like this?

P2. : Pastor, I must tell you the truth because I cannot hide anything from you. I had a very serious quarrel which led to fighting, with my husband last week. I am so shocked that my husband could give me such a severe beating. Even my children did not show concern over what their father did. The most worrying part of it is that Emeka, my second son has since then been behaving abnormally as if he has gone crazy. None of our children listens to us again. Oh! Pastor, I don't really feel normal.

C3. : I can understand what you are saying and I do feel that we need to sit down and talk more about it.

The writer has used Mrs. M. to represent his parishioner in this discussion for the purpose of confidentiality. 'C' represents the Chaplain/pastor, while 'P' represents the parishioner (patient). Her communication problem with her husband affected their children. Her husband's attitude emanates from the distorted system in the community and this has affected the whole family.

The family represents one of the finest problem-solving units, to the point that even when the family is dysfunctional, it goes on handling some of its every day problems. This is why Mrs. M. in the above discussion goes on thinking about their children and the problem faced by her second son, Emeka. According to Wynn, some of these functions include: providing effective socialization to the

young, to be an example of loving togetherness, to act as a shock absorber to the world and to exhibit responsible and responsive parenting at all times (1982:17f). These functions have greatly altered in today's Igbo family. An average Igbo family of today feels overloaded. For example, the need to provide adequate feeding and pay hospital bills for so many children, is becoming too heavy for the parents. As a result, more is demanded from the family than it can deliver to its members and the wider society. Conflicts therefore set in within the family. In line with this, Wynn, sees a dysfunctional family as a conflicting family (1982:23).

Wynn, also sees disordered family behaviour as a reaction to a dysfunctional social system (1982:31). The social system of the Igbo has strong hold on their families. For example, in the family of Amadi, pointed out above, there was a breakdown because he couldn't contact the fortune tellers early enough to sort out the source of misfortune of one of their members. He had to spend all his earnings, buying materials for sacrifices, thus impoverishing the family (Ufondu, 1996:23). Though this belief is superstitious, its principles still control the life of many Igbo families.

### **3.5.2.1 The Dysfunction in the Igbo Family System.**

Many Igbo families are termed dysfunctional, based on the above concept of functional and dysfunctional family. The idea of dysfunction in Igbo families can be seen from different perspectives. In Igbo perspective, this relationship can range from social participation in a wider Igbo community to that within the nuclear family.

**Family Participation in the Affairs of the Clan:** Traditionally, the Igbo believe in communal efforts for the development of their community. Such efforts include fund raising for community projects, general meetings at clan's level, pulling efforts together for the defense of the clan etc. Only dysfunctional families within the clan cannot participate in these communal ventures. This is now affecting many Igbo communities, because many families are dysfunctional.

**Family Participation in Village Affairs:** Most Igbo communities live in villages (Ottenberg 1997:3). The village is maintained through the efforts of families within it. Mgbemene notes as follows:

Meantime, after catering for their immediate needs, they send the bulk of their gains to their homes to use for building better houses in preparation

for their return and to assist in schemes for general benefits of their own village communities. They are very generous in their gifts...(Adiele 1996:368)

The above idea of Mgbemene has always been the ambition of the Igbos. Today families are no longer able to meet up with these practices due to hardship. Also within the villages, the traditional moonlight plays, village dances and other festivities of the village which were acts of socialization within the village are vanishing, due to the inability of family members to participate. Unpeaceful situation in the families, poor finances and unemployment contribute to this lack of participation.

**Relationships in the Extended Family System:** Contrary to the Igbo traditional practice, nuclear families which used to be tied together by the extended family now feel that they can ignore this family relationships and stand alone on their own. The close attachment which existed within the extended family is therefore giving way. Homage which is often paid to the oldest members of the extended family is quickly phasing away. The extended family as well as the nuclear family are therefore dysfunctional (Interviews with Sir M. C. Emechebe, Mr. T. N. Ozodi and Chief Nweke Okonkwo, Dec. 1999).

**The Nuclear family Relationships:** The nuclear family is the main system where family relationship can fully be assessed. It includes both polygynous and monogamous families. These two nuclear family systems have their own peculiar dysfunctional patterns.

In the nuclear family, some spouses are quite incompatible and find it hard to live happily together. Some remain lonely even when their spouse is there with them. There is also lack of sexual satisfaction among some spouses. The cheated spouse tries to make it up by having extra-marital sexual relationships. In some other cases, both spouses may keep friends of the opposite sex outside, whom they visit secretly and enter into sexual union with them. The result is that each spouse tries to satisfy his/her outside friend at the expense of family peace and unity. This acts contribute to the dysfunction in the family. The researcher has personally settled cases of this nature in his parish.

In polygynous families, a husband's commitment to some of his wives at the expense of others, creates a lot of tension within the family. The ones who desire to be loved but are denied go on searching for outside lovers. Some of the wives are forced to enter into extramarital relationships due to the unavailability of their husband to them. The family is disorganized and cannot work together as a family. Any slightest provocation sets the family on fire. There is therefore very high level of

marital unfaithfulness in polygynous families.

Some parents hardly agree on economic matters within their family. At times they don't have enough money to provide food, clothing, shelter and other basic needs for the sustenance of their family. This often leads to long debates on how to manage the little available resources, what should be given priority attention and what should be ignored for the time being. There are other aspects of dysfunction within the spouse and parental subsystems, but due to limited space, the researcher may not go on listing them (Interview with Chief Nweke Okonkwo, Dec.1999).

Within the sibling subsystem, some children offer themselves to the opposite sex. They end up acquiring HIV/AIDS and other STDs and some give birth to a child while still in their parent's house. This brings about children having children and the family carters for them all. This kind of experience has been on the increase in Igbo society in recent years. There is therefore the problem of unwanted pregnancy, unwanted children and abandoned children everywhere in the Igbo society (Interview with Dr. Emma Akabike and Chief Nweke Okonkwo, Dec. 1999).

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF DYSFUNCTION WITHIN THE IGBO FAMILY SYSTEM.**

Some of the dysfunctions within the Igbo family system are centered on family expectations passed on from generation to generation. This includes the idea of who takes the lead in some family functions-father or mother? Who is subordinate and who is superordinate in family matters? The inability to handle these problems very well cause a lot of division within the family.

The spiritual life of some families is undermined due to their inability to work together. Since they have no time in their family schedule to revive their spiritual well-being they don't remember God nor think of bringing the idea of God into their family problems.

Some wives can leave their husbands and children and run away from their marital home because of one problem or the other. The other members of the family go on suffering because of her absence. This also affects the wider relationships which includes in-laws and the extended family. Poor communication in the entire extended family starts. Fear ensues within the extended family due to breakage of traditional marriage vows and the taboos of the land. In non-Christian families, there must be sacrifices to the gods of the land, before reconciliation can ever be made (Interview with Mr. T. N. Ozodi, Dec. 1999).

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has tried to look into the family system of the Igbo community from different perspectives. These perspectives include marriage, spouse, parental and sibling subsystems. These subsystems are part of the areas where the crises which families face are.

Emotional depression sets into a family when there is bickering and nagging and when the family becomes pernicious (Borley 1946:45). Such a family is never at peace. Within the Igbo family setting this is so common especially in the polygynous families.

The next chapter will look into the concept of descending into hell, as a metaphor. It will also discuss the emotional depression faced by dysfunctional Igbo family systems.

**HE DESCENDED INTO HELL *As a Metaphor*****4.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims at exploring the concept of descending into hell as it relates to emotional depression in the Igbo family system. The key ideas such as “descending into hell”, depression and crisis will be defined. It is assumed in this chapter that the factors that cause emotional depression in a family depends on a cultural context.

**4.1.1 Descending into Hell**

The idea of descending into hell in this dissertation is adopted to show the greatest conceivable level of suffering in human life. It is in the profession of Christian faith within the Apostle’s creed recited by the Anglican Church and some other Churches (BCP1959:11). The person being referred to in this Creed is Jesus Christ. Stevenson, identifies the statement with the creed of Aquileia in C.390 (1966:191). This is first found in the fourth creed of the Sirmium, commonly called the *Dated Creed* (Stevenson 1966:45). The original publication dated 22 May, 359 says:

...and was crucified and died and descended into the parts beneath the earth, and regulated the things there, whom the gatekeepers of hell saw and shuddered (1966:191).

Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of life Himself, from the above idea, descended to a place of greatest human suffering. This is an experience which human beings would like to avoid. If Jesus who is seen as the Lord of life can find Himself in such a place, any other person can equally have the same experience. This can be seen as a state of hopelessness experienced by many people in life. It is also seen as a state of separation from God and an awareness that ones relationship with the Almighty is severed. This points to the idea that in depression, a person is cut off and separated from the ability to have hope in life.



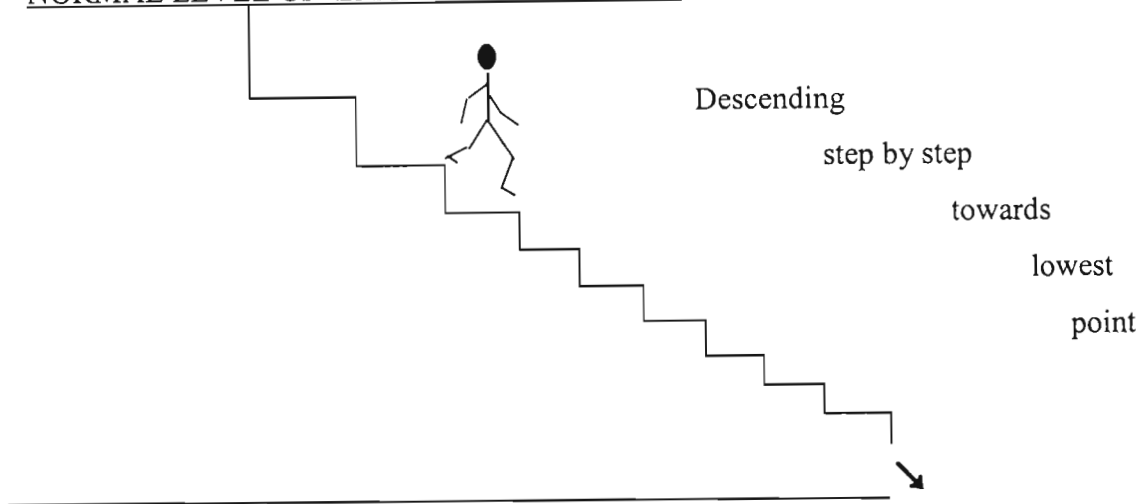
#### 4.1.1.1 The Concept of Descending

*Descending*, means moving downwards (a slope, staircase), to move or fall to a lower level (Collins 1995:205). This is a downward movement from a normal level to lower levels. The writer has represented it in the sketch below.

##### **SKETCH VII: SHOWING THE IDEA OF DESCENDING TO LOWER LEVEL**

(Original work of the researcher)

NORMAL LEVEL OF EMOTIONAL LIFE



This is a process of moving downwards from a normal level. The downward movement takes a gradual process to the lowest point. Almond, sees hell as a place within the fiery core of the earth where people could be cast down into (1994:112). This downward movement is a very bitter experience and a state of deterioration in human life. Such condition continues to move from bad to worse and finally gets to a crisis point.

#### 4.1.1.2 The Concept of Hell

The idea in this subheading is not for elaborate debate about hell. It aims at adopting the suffering concept of hell. Gross and Livingstone (ed), see the English word *hell* as representing both Hebrew *sheol* meaning place of the departed and Greek *Gehenna*, which came to mean the divinely ordained place of suffering for the wicked after death (1997:749). The suffering referred to in this dissertation is not for the wicked but for the depressed. Moore, on his own part describes hell as the ultimate horror of God's universe. He goes further to say that it is the Greek word *Gehenna* that always means

a place of separation from God and a place of suffering (1995:1). People commonly think of suffering when the word hell is mentioned.

While thinking of hell as the ultimate level of suffering, Crockett (ed), says that the image of heaven and hell are not to be taken literally as if there were real gates of pearl and material smoke and flames. He goes further to describe hell as a state of profound misery (1992:76). Bernstein, also says that the word 'torment' stresses suffering, the idea that the resident of hell experiences a fate contrary to what he/she wills (1993:3).

This dissertation assumes that there are Igbo families who experience this level of suffering. This is a condition of emotional depression and despair which form part of their family crisis. The researcher has adopted the picture below from Almond (1994:114), to describe the hopeless nature of the depressed, who may be said to be in hell.

**PICTURE 6:** *Illustrating a state of being in hell.*



The person has already descended into the lowest point, in the process of his/her suffering. The value of life is lost. A strong force like that of the eagle holds him/her on the ground. A sympathetic eye standing on the right looks at him/her and at the same time contributes to his/her suffering. The person on the left side contributes to the crisis and is unwilling to give up. On the steps through which he/she descended to that point still lies opposing forces which would not allow him/her resurface again. He/she therefore remains helpless and hopeless, down in the pit. The person is therefore cut off and separated from any ability to have hope in life again.

Can this illustration describe the condition of a person facing emotional depression? Can an emotionally depressed Igbo family be said to be represented in this picture? This is the questions this chapter tries to answer.

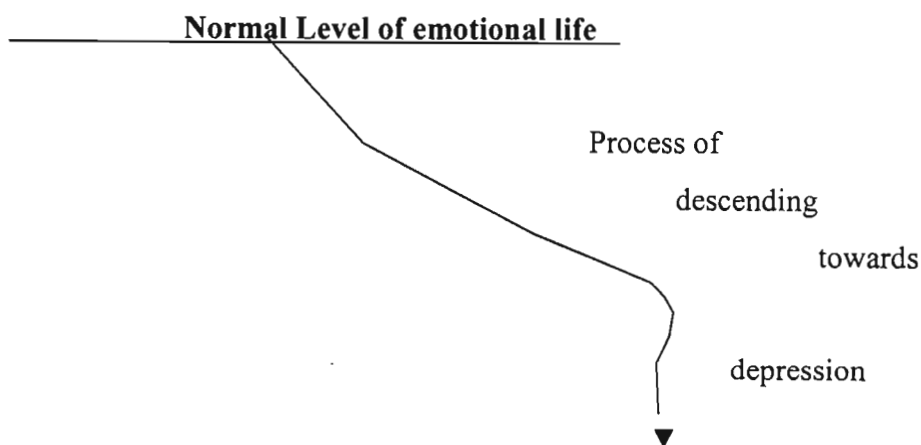
## 4.2 Emotional Depression

As noted in delimitation, the intention of this dissertation is not to explore psychological aspects of emotional depression. It is more concerned with some basic ideas which will help pastors in their day to day caring ministry of their parishioners. The definition of emotional depression here will not also go beyond the basic knowledge which a pastor will need for his/her pastoral care giving.

Emotional depression is seen as a mental state characterized by feelings of gloom and inadequacy. The person has a sunken place and a submerged condition. It is the abnormal lowering of the rate of a person's physiological activity or function. The spirit of such a person or family concerned is seen as being lower than the surrounding surface, pressed down, flattened and downcast. This is similar to the condition described metaphorically above, as descending into hell. The force or energy of the family in the physical level is weakened (Collins 1995:208). The researcher has represented this in the sketch below.

### **SKETCH VIII: ILLUSTRATING THE PROCESS OF EMOTIONAL DEPRESSION.**

(Original work of the researcher)



On their own view, Hjelle and Ziegler, say that depression represents a psychological disorder in which people attempt to construe their experiences from the opposite side of the dilation construction (1976:243). They see depression as another psychopathological response to anxiety. The depressed person according to them has profound difficulty in making even the simplest everyday decision. Overwhelmed by the immensity of his/her problems, the depressed person often contemplates suicide

(1976:243). Under the above condition, the depressed seems tired of this life and no longer find meaning in life.

Gilbert, says that some forms of depression are serious and deadly and are responsible for the majority of suicide deaths. He goes further to say that those most vulnerable to suicide are those who are depressed and have lost hope. Depression to him may well reduce life expectancy in certain physical disorders. Outside these physical and life threatening aspects, depression affects family life (1984:1). The aspect of the family is the main concern of this dissertation, because one depressed member of the family may likely influence all other members of the family.

#### **4.2.1 Depression in the Family Circle.**

Depression of one member of the family affects other members. Gilbert on this, points out that parents who are depressed or use various mechanisms to defend against depression, can have a disturbing influence on their children's attitude and subsequent vulnerability. He sees depression as one of the most serious encounters within the family circle (1984:1). Since individuals are likely to be depressed in a bad society, the family however will continue to descend downwardly.

Emotional depression brings a family down and it spirals downwards towards a helpless and hopeless situation. Such a family feels that it does not measure up to its expected functions in the society. They see everything in life as being at war with them. They cannot work together nor make the simplest daily decision as a family. Its members may be suffering to the point of contemplating suicide. With the idea of hell seen above, such a family may be said to be in hell in this world while they are still alive. They are separated from hope and reality of life.

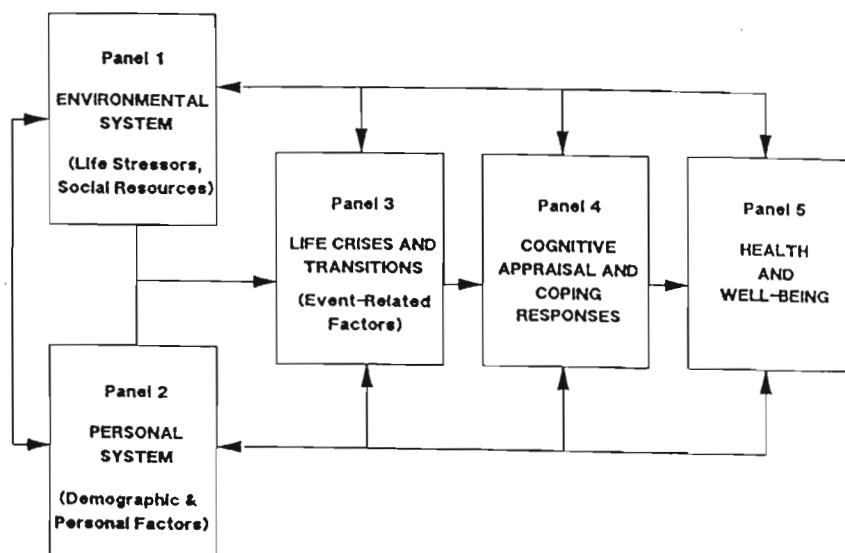
#### **4.2.2 Emotional Depression and Social Relationships.**

Again, to re-iterate non-psychological perspective of depression, as pointed out in page 5, this section looks at emotional depression and social relations. This can provide some of the tools which the

pastor needs for pastoral care and counselling. Emotional depression from this perspective is seen as the outcome of unhealthy human relationships. Fairchild, says that among the causes attributed to this condition were hidden anger and an imbalance among the bodily juices (1980:4). It starts emanating when a person/family feels inadequate within a wider social group. Joiner and Coyne, say that depression needs to be understood in its interpersonal context. They go on to say that interpersonal context affects greatly whether a person becomes depressed, the person's subjective experience while depressed and the behavioural manifestations and resolutions of the disorder (1999:3). This refers to daily interaction of a family with its members and with other people within their society. An individual/family may not therefore be seriously depressed outside a given social context. In other words, the social expectations heightens the level of depression.

The researcher agrees with Joiner and Coyne that environmental factors in addition to personal problems contribute so much to depression. These factors occur in the day to day operations of the family. The nature of the functioning of the family, the power of social context in shaping individual personality and behaviour, the interdependence of family members and dynamic interrelationships are among the variables that affect depression within the family circle. These stressors according to Joiner and Coyne also include severe life events, severe chronic difficulties, minor daily hassles, interpersonal problems and losses (1999:41). The sketch below, adapted from Joiner and Coyne explains this interactional force more.

**SKETCH IX: HOW SOCIAL AND PERSONAL SYSTEMS CAUSE EMOTIONAL DEPRESSION.**



Panel 1, is made up of ongoing life stressors like chronic physical illness, social coping resources and support from family members. Panel 2 is made up of personal coping resources and self confidence. Panel 3, is the outcome of both personal and environmental factors, which bring about changes in life circumstances. Panel 4, is the continuous mental process of stress which the family undergoes and which determines the ability of coping or not coping, while Panel 5 is the outcome of all the intervening variables which may finally result in depression (1999:41). The characteristics of a family system is brought into focus here and they all interact to determine how depressed a family can be.

A family living within a given social context in line with the above idea, can be depressed due to the nature of its interaction within that context. Psychological theories are increasingly recognizing the central role of life stressors in the etiology and cause of depression (Joiner and Coyne 1999:39). Stress and coping according to them are relevant to understanding depression (1999:40).

#### **4.3 The Identified Causes of Emotional Depression to Igbo Families.**

In line with the above discussion and sketch, there are factors within the personal, social, religious and historical stressors which contribute to depression within the Igbo family system. The researcher intends to adopt the ideas of Joiner and Coyne (1999), Fairchild (1980) and Gilbert (1984), in discussing these causes of emotional depression. Some of the factors which they point out as likely causes include: low self-esteem, hidden anger, fear, experience of loss, inadequate sorrow work, negative internal conversations, experience of guilt, exaggerated hopes and aspirations, the role of heredity and body chemistry. Fairchild however says that both biological events occurring in the brain of the patients and the life experiences of a person can cause emotional depression (1980:18).

**Low self-esteem:** According to Becker, self-esteem is “a cognitive-affective productive of self-evaluation process”. The end product of this self-evaluation is level of self-esteem, which is a dimension of how positive or negative a person’s feeling of self worth are (1979:319). It can be high or low self-esteem. The one that causes emotional depression is low self-esteem. In line with this idea, Tarlow and Haaga say that depressed individuals suffer diminished self-worth compared

with non-depressed individuals (1996:120). Also Joiner and Coyne point out that numerous investigations have found that individuals with episodes of clinical depression report lower levels of self-esteem than their non-depressed counterparts. This have been repeatedly correlated with interpersonal difficulties such as inadequate perceived social support, marital conflict and divorce, interpersonal skill deficits and perception of inadequate care during childhood (1999:149f). Umana et al, adds that couples with low self-esteem would experience any expression of disagreement with partner as negative. These couples are more prone to crises (1980:2). In line with the above ideas, the low self-worth imposed on the Igbo families by other Nigerian tribes have led to their being of low self-esteem. This contributes to their emotional depression.

**Anger:** Fairchild, says that one of the causes attributed to depression is hidden anger and imbalance among bodily juices (1980:4). Furthermore, Gilbert, says that “anger turned inward” results when the loved object is lost. There is negative feeling when the feeling of hostility is turned inward against the *ego*. This may manifest as rage, territorial or predatory attack or it may be defensive. He goes further to say that some depressive experiences are heightening of aggressive feeling and irritability (1984:206).

Hidden anger or anger turned inward within the Igbo family system may result from unsatisfactory marital unions, lack of sexual satisfaction within the spouse subsystem, anger from siblings because of denial of access and love from parents etc. This hidden anger can be one of the causative factors for their emotional depression.

**Fear:** Fairchild, points out that fear of failure and of independence and of perfectionism can contribute to depression (1980:19). Supporting the above idea, Gilbert says that fear-of-failure motivation, is associated with various unpleasant symptoms--fear of loving, support and protection, fear of loss of attachment and the need for assertive independent behaviour (1984:172). The researcher agrees with these ideas because, just as Fairchild noted in his own case (1980:viii), the researcher's occasional fears of his ability to complete his course due to financial constraints have often brought about depression to him.

On the part of the Igbo families, there is fear of any of their members contacting AIDS/HIV and other

STDs, fear of being exterminated as a people within their own Nigerian environment and fear of religious and political violence. There is also fear of economic and social instability, fear of loss of job, unemployment and low income, fear of inability to provide food, clothing and shelter for the family, fear of inadequate caring system and all other fears peculiar to Nigerian society. These fears make the Igbo families depressed.

**Experience of loss:** This is another factor that causes emotional depression to Igbo families. Fairchild, comes up with the idea that the experience of loss is the most consistent theme in the study of depression (1980:19). This experience includes failure at work and school, rejection, physical disability, marital conflict, financial difficulty, being severed from a familiar role. These are common “triggers” for depression. He goes further to explain that when a person has an inordinate attachment to another person or to a cherished goal and the person is severed from this, such as a severance may mean the loss of life’s meaning. Example of this is severing a person from familiar sources of support and comfort, unexpected change or loss, a sudden diagnosis of terminal illness and the shock for sudden death of a family member. These factors may leave a person without the emotional resources to meet the crisis (1980:19).

To the Igbos, the awareness that they are a defeated people, denies them a sense of support, protection and comfort. They have lost their tribal identity and are now dependent on what other tribes decide to be their fate. The condition of laboring so much without achieving much in order to earn a living gives them a sense of loss. They also feel unsafe and unwanted in their own country.

Another causative factor of emotional depression as mentioned earlier is inadequate mourning. This according to Fairchild, is an unresolved state of sadness and sorrow and it leads to depression. The sorrow remains unprocessed. This remains within, until some point in life when it is evoked again, perhaps by another symbolic loss (Fairchild 1980:23). Negative internal conversation also causes depression. This is the act of a person interpreting the loss and the statement made about him/herself to him/herself and his/her situation. The person harbors continuous or intermittent negative thoughts about him/herself and his/her future. Each negative dialogue, increases the apathy. Some of these statements of self may be misconception, but the depressed person may cling to them. This can lead to self reproach and self-hatred (Fairchild 1980:23).



The experience of guilt is also seen by Fairchild as one of the causes of depression. In this case, the depressed person is filled with self-blame because of the sense of guilt (Fairchild 1980:30). Exaggerated hopes and aspirations also lead to depression. Here, many dreams and hopes are not realized. A goal may be aimed at which seems to promise fulfilment, but the efforts to achieve it may lead to frustration and depression (Fairchild 1980:33). This can be evident in the frustration and depression of Igbo people in Nigeria. All their dreams and hopes to be reintegrated into the main stream of Nigerian socio-political system have not been achieved.

Another causative factor is the role of heredity. In this case, inherited factors are believed to play significant role in severe mental depression. Here, Fairchild refers to the discovery of a mutant gene called "Pc 1 Duarte". This discovery was by Dr. David Comings of City of Hope Medical Center in Duarte, California. This is said to be possibly related to alcoholism and multiple sclerosis and has been identified in people suffering from the type of psychotic depression which results in suicide (1980:38). Again within the Igbo society, Dr. Emma Akabike, comments that there is higher rate of suicide among alcoholics than non-alcoholics (Oral interview, 1999).

Body Chemistry is seen as another causal factor for emotional depression. This leads to dependence on antidepressant drugs (Fairchild 1980:40). This is associated with a terrible chemical imbalance or abnormal body metabolism. In this case, certain chemical substances cause biochemical changes in the body, which can lead to depression (Fairchild 1980:41f). This is why the symptoms of depression can often be relieved by pills and drugs. In this aspect, the depressed person must be referred to a physician (Fairchild 1980:42).

The above causes of depression can be seen in different ways in different societies. In Igbo society, they manifest differently as well. They lead to many broken marriages and homes. Some families are still wrapped in their old traditional beliefs that improper sacrifices to the deities contribute to their problems. They therefore prefer to seek for solution through diviners and witch doctors. Such beliefs lead them to any of the above causes of depression. As a result, they don't seek for modern scientific solutions of counselling and hospital medication. Fear of the wrath of the deities and the taboos of the land also restrict families from holding firm to pastoral care of the Church or even requesting for it. Joiner and Coyne see these factors as life stressors and social resource profile for depression (1999:49). These factors can through one family member affect others.

Chronic depression can also impair an individual's functioning as spouse and parent and can promote family conflict and also erode family cohesion (Joiner and Coyne 1999:50). On this McCubbin & Figley, say that depression in one spouse or the children is a common response to marital distress. They state as follows:

Spouses resort to blaming in order to obtain respite from a situation perceived as intolerable. The marital conflict escalates and the search for fault in other spouse often results in his/her being labeled the culprit (1983:107).

Factors causing depression in a family can also contribute to the dysfunction of that family. If a dysfunctional family is not given care, it may continue in the descending process towards the level of depression in view of the above causes.

#### **4.4 Circumstances Surrounding the Emotional Depression Encountered by Dysfunctional Igbo Families.**

It is not uncommon in Igbo society of today that some families suffer to the point of contemplating suicide. The society is already so bad that nobody cares to listen and help. The extended family system is also dysfunctional, so the extended family cannot lend a helping hand. What more? The family seeing no help coming from anywhere feels that the purpose of continuous existence is defeated. Due to the irrational nature which their suffering has subjected them, they feel that the only way out is quitting this world. They therefore resort to suicide as the only alternative outlet from their bitter situation. This kind of experience has been on the increase in Igbo society in recent years especially by individual members of different families. This acts falls in line with Nwabara's idea that the Igbos have a practically unromantic attitude to life (1977:16). The circumstances surrounding the emotional depression of the Igbos which likely may have led to the above causes can be seen as follows:

**4.4.1 The Pre-colonial Structure of Igbo Society:** The Igbos have not been known for living together as one political entity. Crowder, as such describes them as being politically decentralized but culturally homogenous (1966:21). Their struggle to fit into the new political system of central leadership has been so depressing to individuals as well as to families. This act subjects many people to a mental state characterized by feelings of inadequacy and gloom.

**4.4.2 Attitude of Other Kingdoms that Later Made up Nigeria:** The ancient kingdoms that make up Nigeria still discriminate against each other and against the Igbos. Crowder therefore notes that Lugard's system of indirect rule tended to preserve tribal consciousness among the people of Nigeria (1973:253). The Igbos find it very hard to unite with other Nigerians as members of one nation. This condition has led many families to suffer in silence without any body to speak for them in Nigeria as a nation. Being aware that they are alone in their struggle and even their immediate family being dysfunctional with a lack of communication, they become low spirited.

**4.4.3 Incompatibility Of Different Peoples of Nigeria:** There is lack of trust among Nigerian citizens. No one likes to help his/her fellow citizen especially when they are not from the same ethnic group. They see themselves as mutually incompatible people (Crowder 1973:253). This situation has made many Igbos not receive any attention when they are in dire need of help in other parts of Nigeria. They are always in fear of rejection while communicating with other Nigerians. They are seen as unwanted people within that community. This confirms Crowder's statement which says:

The union of these group of people was so sudden because there were such widely differing groups that not only the British, who created the nation, but even the inhabitants themselves have often doubted whether it could survive as a political entity (1966:22).

**4.4.4 Unfortunate Attitude of Nigerian Indigenous Administrations:** The indigenous Nigerian administrations don't prove any better. Good jobs and higher positions of authority in Nigeria are given to people from other major ethnic groups. An unqualified person from these ethnic groups will be considered for appointments to higher positions of responsibility than a highly qualified Igbo person.

**4.4.5 Political Tension:** The 1966 political tension in Nigeria still leaves an indelible mark on the Igbo family system. They were shown that they have no place in this physical existence. In the great massacre of the Igbos in other parts of Nigeria from 1966, no one spoke on their behalf (Isichei 1983:472). In the civil war that nearly exterminated all the Igbos, no one came to their rescue (Crowder 1973:315). This still gives them the notion that they are more like unwanted people in the world. Isichei, thus says:

Nobody loved the Igbos though they represent the little bit of wealth and education in Nigeria (1983:472).

**4.4.6 Colonial and Post Colonial Influences:** As noted earlier, despite little resistance which few areas in Igbo land made to colonialism, the Igbos as a whole openly received the British colonial administration, more than any other ethnic group in Nigeria. Up till today in some parts of eastern Nigeria there are people who are called by the name ‘Bloodyfool’, ‘Idiot’, simply because their parents heard the white-man say *bloody fool* or *idiot* or any other thing. Just because of the respect and love they have for the white-man they ignorantly christen their children with such derogatory names in remembrance of them. This is why the Igbo culture was mostly influenced by the British among all other cultures in Nigeria. Also as noted earlier, the British administrators of eastern Nigeria tried to school all the social institutions of the Igbos to the British pattern. The family system was greatly affected by these attitudes (Personal experience).

There is now a conflict between a ‘standard’ system of the British and that of traditional Igbo culture. The Igbos who lived and worked with the British try their best to imitate them. Any Igbo who does not follow the British ‘standard’ way of life is seen as being uncivilized. This mentality still lingers on today. Two Igbo people from the same village can stand alone, instead of discussing in Igbo language they will choose to converse in English, even if their English is not standard. In most Igbo schools of today, speaking of the vernacular language within the school is forbidden. The only approved language is English. Also in Nigeria as a whole the official language of communication is English. In some Igbo Churches, where all the members of the congregation are Igbos, the pastor may be preaching in English while someone interprets to the congregation in Igbo, in imitation of the early missionaries, not minding that it is only few people within the congregation understand English. They see it as the ‘standard’ way of doing things. (Personal experience).

This conflicting system of doing things, affects the family system so much. The influence is seen in their area of dressing, food and method of preparing their food, language spoken at home (at times some members of the family may be good at speaking English while others are not, their communication is therefore hindered). This also affects the way they see family life. Some want it in the British way while others in the traditional way. There is always conflict in their ideas and opinions. At times either of the couples may try to be more British than the other and start seeing the other spouse as being uncivilized. They are therefore neither British nor Igbo and as such continue to live with different approaches to life. Communication is lost in the family. Each member as a remedy to the situation starts looking outside for a person of the same understanding with him/her. This condition leads to waywardness, drunkenness and drug addiction in the family. It can also bring about severe conflict which will end up in divorce (Personal experience).

**4.4.7 Civil War and Post-civil War Influences:** The Nigerian civil war which took place between 1967 to 1970, had a great influence upon the Igbo spouse subsystem. All the matured males on the Igbo side were compelled to go to war. Women and girls were left behind to take care of their children. Some of these women later lost their husbands to the war. Some women had to befriend military officers in order to get life going, some befriended military officers in order to have an upper hand over their husbands. Women therefore had more influence in family matters than their husbands. Some of them had to hide their husbands so that they wouldn't go to war. In order to strengthen their act, they befriended the military officers, in order to give them the coverage they needed. These situations challenged the position of men as heads of the family. Men were silenced and most of them had to live at the mercy of their wives. Wives then realized that they could have power over their husbands. A phrase, *Di gbakwaa oku* (Husband can go to hell), evolved. It became a period for reversed role in the traditional Igbo family system. The rate of waywardness and competitive dressing became very high among the Igbo women to the displeasure of their husbands.

The attitude of *Di gbakwaa oku* and disrespectful behaviour of some siblings have continued even after the civil war and affects the Igbo family system greatly. It has been a cause for many family and marital problems in Igbo culture today. Fathers still want to play leading and dominant roles expected of them by the Igbo culture, within their family, while their wives and children will continue to feel that the time for that kind of role has passed. No one agrees with each other and trouble sets in. When trouble sets in, hatred, conflicts and disagreements start and gradually, depression or despair sets in (Oral source/personal experience as a parish priest).

**4.4.8 Influence From the Political, Economic and Social Sectors:** As part of the post war influences, the political, economic and educational factors play role in the instability of the Igbo family system. Women could win government contracts, where men have failed and as such they started becoming bread winners in the family. The slogan, *What a man cannot do, a woman can do it*, came up. Women could secure admissions to secondary schools and universities for their sons and daughters where men have failed. Children started according more respect to their mothers than their fathers. Wives who now have many connections outside their homes also feel that without their husbands they can still live very happily. Loss of jobs which brought about economic crisis, caused everyone to be in the struggle for survival. Each spouse runs about to search for means of survival. This gives them very little time to themselves and more role to play outside the family than within the family.

**4.4.9 Other Areas of Emotional Depression in Dysfunctional Igbo Families.** Other areas of emotional depression in Igbo society include conflicts between Christian standards and Igbo traditional standards, external influences, feelings of humiliation due to segregation etc.

At times some members of the family may be more inclined towards strictly adhering to Christian standards, while the others may still like to bring some of the traditional practices into their marital life. This has also generated a lot of troubles in marital homes. Some children, wives and husbands therefore call the members of the family who do not attend the same religious denomination with them, unbelievers. This attitude has torn many Igbo families of today apart. Some parents become emotionally sick when such attitudes come from their children.

Some external influences can cause emotional depression to a family system. These include imitating the system of other families and ethnic groups, listening to gossip and pressure from outside, social demands on the family and the pressure from the extended families (these social demands and pressure have been discussed earlier in this chapter). If these influences are not cut off or given the proper place, the family may continue to experience a problem.

In 1993, an Igboman who lived in one of the Moslem cities in northern Nigeria, was killed by them. They cut off his head and carried it about, dancing and rejoicing, round the city. No government either within Nigeria nor outside challenged this action. This action does not just flatten the spirit of the Igbo people but also lowers it below the surface, remembering how they are treated like ordinary animals in their own nation (Oral source/ personal experience).

## 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has so far looked into the concept of descending into hell as it relates to emotional depression in a dysfunctional Igbo family. The picture of hell and the idea of *descending*, were seen in the light of a family being depressed. This chapter sees the whole of the historical, environmental, and personal experiences of the Igbo families as the major contributors to their depressive experiences. Bill Seay and Nathan Gottfried, say:

Developing organisms continuously interact with the environment and their past experience always influences their present behavior. In some cases the particular time at which an experience occurs may have important consequences (1978:4)

In agreement with the above postulation, Corsini, Raymond J (ed), shares the view of Jung and Freudian schools of thought in psychoanalysis. He therefore says that “ powerful personal motives in each life history, as well as the historical moment, are determinants in the particular piece of reality, psychological or physical, seized by any discoverer” (1994:137). Sociologist Dixon also has this to say:

Social reality is general and external to the individual actor constraining him/her to behave in typical ways and forcing upon him/her certain modes of conceptualization...  
The construction of social realities or ‘enclaves’ of meaning depends upon the particular interests of the actor in his/her own immediate situation (1980:45).

Linking the above ideas with the present life of the Igbos, one can say that the way they think, see themselves and live their family lives are determined by the experiences around them. Also how they respond to stimulus, their crisis and depressive circumstances have connotations with their historical events. In his book on pastoral care, Roger Hurdin, agrees that our sense of who we are has to have some bearing in the world around us (1992:30). What the Igbos see themselves to be, from the findings of this chapter, has bearing with the world around them. The next chapter will look into the effects of depression in a dysfunctional family and how this forms their crisis.

## CONSEQUENCES OF EMOTIONAL DEPRESSION IN A DYSFUNCTIONAL IGBO FAMILY.

### 5.1 Introduction

So far, the depression faced by the Igbo dysfunctional families has been discussed. This has been shown to be in line with their social, cultural, religious and historical experiences. The level of conflict, stress, tension, emotional disequilibrium and trauma faced by families when they are emotionally depressed, have made this condition become a crisis for them. This chapter intends to discuss this crisis faced by emotionally depressed families and the consequences thereafter.

### 5.2 Crisis

Crisis is from the Greek word which stands for *turning point* (Reber 1995:173). It is a point in which change is inevitable. The person concerned cannot bear the situation any longer. According to Professor Lee Butler, crisis may not always be associated with a bad experience. Even a joyful experience which the person is unable to cope with at a particular moment can bring about a crisis (Lecture notes, 1999). In other words, any sudden interruption in the normal course of events in the life of an individual or a society, which necessitates re-evaluation of modes of action and thoughts, brings about crisis (Reber 1995:173). Good events can also necessitate re-evaluation of modes of action and thoughts. For instance, a girl leaving her parents for the first time to join her husband in marriage, may burst out in tears. This may be because she is leaving the companionship of her parents which she is so used to, in order to begin a new life experience. This feeling that makes her cry is the turning point of the event which she could not control.

Switzer, points out three categories of crisis which include:

(i) *Normal developmental crises*: These are crises that are inevitable in human life which are brought about by changing from one stage of life to another. Some of them are pregnancy, birth of a child, marriage, puberty stages, old age, death etc. When some people think about these experiences, it brings crisis in their life.



(ii) *Situational crisis*: These are crises that are caused by certain circumstances in which a person finds himself/herself. It may be a situation that is unavoidable. For example, shocking news of a bad event, disappointment from a spouse, child or parents, news of an accident, loss of job etc. Awareness of this may bring about crisis in the person's life. It may also be a situation that involves change of environment or temporary separation from one's family. Attempts to cope with the new experience may bring about crisis to the person.

(iii) *Intrapsychic conflict*: This is the type of crisis which occurs within the mind. The person is unable to resolve life experiences coming across him/her. This can occur in marriages, family life and other life experiences (1974:42).

Switzer, therefore says that developmental crises include the ones that occur as a result of adolescence, marriage, birth of children, ageing, bereavement, death. (1974:42). Situational crises are reactions to the serious frustrations produced by external events such as marriage disruption, business or job failures etc. Intrapsychic conflict includes the personality aspect of the individual that forms barriers to effective dealing with stressful events. In these three categories of crisis, there are periods of heightened emotions. The person involved becomes angry and unable to control her/his temper. The crisis can also have positive or negative outcome depending on coping mechanisms (1974:42).

Switzer, highlights some characteristics of crisis which include anxiety, self-blame and frequently a sense of personal failure and guilt, which lead to a constricted perspective on accumulating problems (1974:42). However, I do not wholly agree with Switzer on the above point. Crisis can be characterized by anxiety, self-blame and a sense of personal failure and guilt but I feel that these characteristics will lead to an exaggerated notion of the problem. It is this exaggeration of the problem that will produce a sense of guilt and failure rather than constricted perspective of the problems. In which ever case, the person concerned becomes highly disorganized and unable to give critical judgement of the situation.

What may lead to a crisis in one family may not, in another (Umana et al, 1980:2f). All these depend on one's manner of response to situations and ability to respond positively to shock. Cultural, economic, social and religious factors may play a part in this aspect. However, Butler, does not allude to only negative ideas about crisis. He says that many questions of uncertainty can put a person in crisis. Heightened possibilities of a new way to live especially when a person dies, or is newly married, or when a baby is born, can bring about crisis. In all these, Butler, says that there will be

increased possibilities of a crisis (Lecture notes,1999). In a family relationship, crisis will enable the members discover that they have gifts which they can develop. They discover new possible ways of dealing with their problems as a result of crisis. This perhaps accounts for why Edwina Ward, says that a person has to deal with his/her crisis instead of suppressing it (Lecture notes,1999). If crisis is suppressed it will continue to resurface in one way or the other, but when it is dealt with, new possibilities will be discovered.

In the African setting, what can bring about crisis depends on the culture of the people. In marital relationships, certain attitudes of either of the spouses can bring about crisis in that marital relationship while in some other places the same attitude will be their normal way of life. For example, if the Igbos see a male spouse cooking in their home while his wife is there watching him, they see it as an abomination. They may take it as a sign of crisis in that family. This in some cultures may be a normal way of life. To the extent it applies to some communities, especially African communities, depends on their culture. What is practiced in one culture may be abhorred in another culture. This determines the level of crisis which a particular family experiences. There are cultures that allow extra-marital affairs and don't see it as a very serious offence. There are cultures where the same issue can cause the death of the people concerned.

Max Gluckman, in Radcliffe-Brown and Forde, notes that in *Zulu* culture a man can help his brother's wife in domestic activities without any suspicion of adultery but this is forbidden in the culture of *Lozi* people of Northern Rhodesia (1962:166). Monica Wilson, also observes that in the culture of *Nyakyusa* people, the husband is justified to be annoyed to the extent of beating up his wife. The wife on the other hand can leave her husband and elope with a lover for reasons of sexual neglect from her husband (Radcliffe-Brown and Forde:133ff). In the *Tswana* tribe, Schapera, points out that there are a lot of marriage taboos. Breach of any of these taboos can cause a series of misfortunes to the guilty partner (Radcliffe-Brown and Forde:140f). Among the *Ashanti* of Ghana, Fortes, notes that the husband is obliged to provide food, clothing and a house for his wife and children. He must give his wife sexual satisfaction and take care of her in illness and must seek her permission if he wants a second wife. Chronic failure on the part of the husband to fulfil any of these can constitute grounds for divorce which both husband and wife have equal rights to demand. A wife on her own part must make herself available to her husband's sexual satisfaction whenever her husband needs her. She must ensure that her husband has food available so as to have enough strength to give her sexual satisfaction and to work for the provision of the family. A husband has exclusive sexual rights over his wife (Radcliffe-Brown and Forde:252f). Family conflict and crisis

may be so distressful among the *Ashanti* but it carries no moral stigma and no social penalties, while the Igbo see it as being a very serious affair.

Among the Igbo, similar family experiences are shared with other tribes in Africa, especially the *Ashanti* of Ghana. As in the *Zulu* culture, an Igbo husband's brother is free to assist his wife. In most cases, a brother-in-law can call his brother's wife "my wife". This does not permit him to have any sexual relationship with his brother's wife. It is believed that the wrath of the land will be upon any brother who indulges in that. If this is discovered, it creates an injury that will hardly be healed in the extended family. Unlike in *Zulu* culture, an Igbo husband cannot marry his sister-in-law. This will also be so injurious on the part of his wife and can bring about crisis in the family. Most of the times what brings about conflicts which often end up in fighting between married couples in the Igbo society is lack of sexual satisfaction. In most cases, the husband feels that he is cheated. His wife may not be readily available for him as he desires and this can be because of economic pressure, worries from the society, or about caring for the children. This can make him drink excessively. The consequences of this may be using force on his wife, and it will end up either in both of them fighting if he cannot beat up his wife or be beaten up by his wife. The entire family is then dysfunctional, emotionally depressed and ends up in crisis.

### **5.3 Emotional Depression as Crisis.**

It has been seen from chapter four that emotional depression can make a family spiral downwards. The family seems tired of this life and no longer finds meaning in life. When a family gets to this point, change becomes inevitable. This according to Reber's definition, becomes the crisis point (1995:173). Umana et al, therefore say that a crisis occurs when an individual is confronted with a problematic situation for which his/her typical way of operating in the world and his/her usual supports are not sufficient (1980:1). The resultant change can be positive or negative on the entire family or some members of the family. Their normal course of life is interrupted. They are disabled from dealing with stressful events effectively due to intra-psychic conflicts (Switzer, 1974:42). There may be heightened emotion within the family leading to some members of the family being so abusive and lacking in self control. Anger, physical manifestation of anger, anxiety, self blame, frequent sense of personal failure and guilt may ensue (Switzer, 1974:42).

In line with Gilbert's idea, some forms of depression are serious and deadly and responsible for the

majority of the suicide deaths (1984:1), Hjelle and Ziegler affirm that some depressed persons contemplate suicide (1976:243). Umana et al, say that some families in crisis can exhibit acute psychiatric symptomatology such as suicidal attempts or threats (1980:1). The family's normal problem-solving skills are no longer sufficient. They also lack a strong support network. Since emotional depression radiates some of the traits for which crisis is known, it is therefore one of the crises which dysfunctional families face (Umana et al, 1980:3).

#### **5.4 The Manifestations of the Crisis Faced by the Emotionally Depressed Dysfunctional Igbo Families.**

From the discussions so far, it could be said that the crisis which most of the dysfunctional Igbo families face is emotional depression. This is evident in some of their maladaptive attitudes and has some consequences within the family system and in the society at large. These consequences include:

**5.4.1 Intra-Family Conflicts:** Many families are in conflict within themselves. This ranges from individuals within a nuclear family and families within an extended family. There have been cases where both mother and children joined hands to kill their father due to family crisis. Death threats across members of the family are also becoming alarming. In Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo, had to shoot one of his wives to death because of her marital unfaithfulness (1964:46). These acts of unfaithfulness and killing of spouses are contrary to Igbo culture and are happening now because of crisis within the family system.

**5.4.2 Drug Abuse:** There is high rate of drug abuse within the Igbo society in recent times. Though the government sees this as a very serious crime, people still indulge in it. They have lost a sense of direction in life and find no meaning any longer. They therefore resort to the taking of hard drugs thinking that it will be a source of relief from their tension. This act still worsens the relationship within their family circle.

**5.4.3 High Rate of Social Banditry:** Social banditry is becoming high in Igbo community. This is characterized by young boys and girls moving about with guns and harassing innocent citizens and robbing them. They treat their victims as if they are ordinary animals. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of August, 1998, the writer himself personally encountered this kind of ugly experience. A group of six boys fully armed with rifles surrounded him in his own car and not minding that he was in priestly outfit, forced

him into the boot of his car at gun point. These bandits behave like wild animals and treat people as their preys.

**5.4.4 High Level of Prostitution/Harlotry:** Many people no longer agree with the traditional family system. The civil war and post civil war terminology of *Di gbakwaa oku* (Husband can go to hell), is assuming an upward dimension. The marriage vow of 'for better for worse' (BCP, 1954:442f), no longer holds. Akachi Ezeigbo, in her book, Echoes in The Mind , gives a rundown of civil war experiences of the Igbos. Egoro, who represents typical post war girls and young women of Igbo society, kept on jumping from one boy friend to another and from one husband to another looking for the place where things would be the best for her (1994:4ff). Some Igbo women and girls resorted to professional prostitution because they had no better examples from home.

**5.4.5 Increasing Menace of Secret Cults:** Many parents, in a bid to find comfort and security for their lives joined secret cults. Some of these cults require human sacrifices. This has led to incessant ritual killings. In October 1998, a man was discovered under a bridge at Lagos, Nigeria, roasting human flesh which he ate. One of his victims miraculously escaped and thereafter, his nefarious activities were discovered. Further investigation revealed that he sold most of the human parts to members of secret cults (Daily Guardian 28<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1998). Some of these adherents of secret cults present members of their family for sacrifice (Oral source). This act has also been strongly rooted almost in every Nigerian University and in secondary schools.

Students join secret cults in imitation of their parents. In a Magazine ' The Christian Student', Prof. F. O. C. Ndu says that all their efforts to fight secret cults in their University ( Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka), have not been productive. He attributes this failure to the involvement of parents of these students in various secret cults (1999:31).

**5.4.6 Suicide:** Many people commit suicide in recent times in Igbo society due to the inability to cope with their crisis. In November 23, 1999, a man from one of the Igbo communities deliberately jumped into a deep well filled with water and died there, because he was highly depressed (Eye witness). Some people for the same reason have hung themselves in their houses and on tree tops. Similar cases through other means are also rampant in Igbo society of today.

**5.4.7 Juvenile Delinquency:** The prevailing decline of discipline among youths and children in Igbo society is alarming. On Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> December, 1981, the Nigerian House of Representatives

Committee on Veteran Affairs and Social Welfare, gave a report to the entire House on juvenile delinquency in Nigeria. Part of the report which the Chairperson of the Committee, Hon. Kanu Oji presented says:

...surely, we can point to some causes of juvenile delinquency in Nigeria today: like the changing pattern of modern family unit which allows for working mothers; increasing incident of broken marriages; imported films and imported social habits heavily drenched in violence, immorality and pornography; and our mismanaged educational system that pays insufficient attention to functionality and ethical and motivational orientation (1982:137f).

Kanu Oji, also points out that juvenile delinquency in Nigeria is a reflection of social behavioral traits in the wider Nigerian nation. Youths and children of the households learn much of their habits in their environments (1982:137). This idea points to the extent crisis in families can contribute to juvenile delinquency. Igbo society where there are many broken homes as a result of family crisis has a very high proportion of this.

**5.4.8 The Social Stigma on HIV/AIDS:** The social stigma placed on HIV/AIDS, causes more crisis to the patients than the disease itself. Traditionally, the Igbos see such disease as an abomination in their society. They regard it as the expression of the anger and wrath of the gods of the land on the victims, for promiscuity. This is one of the taboos of the land and as such, any victim is stigmatized. Many spouses and youths have fallen victims of the ailment and because the society cannot forgive them, they commit suicide out of despair. In an interview with Dr. Adewusi of Greys Hospital, Pietermaritzburg, who is also a Nigerian, he says that, the most recent report about HIV/AIDS in Nigeria shows that the victims are increasing in alarming proportion. Many parents are dying of AIDS creating room for many orphans and orphanages (June, 2000). It is not just dying from the disease itself, but from the society stigma on the victims. Awareness of the existence of the disease within the family throws the entire family into crisis.

Other consequences of family crisis include the high death rate of parents. This gives rise to many widows, widowers and orphans in Igbo society. Those who are unable to face their crisis easily give up their lives while some die in the process of receiving treatment from the hospitals.

Divorce is also on the increase. Some couples feel that the harsh conditions around them may not allow them to continue their marriage union, so they terminate it. Butler, points out that couples go for counselling when they have made up their mind to divorce (Lecture notes, 1999). The crisis here is that they cannot tolerate each other any longer. The continuity of such family life may be so

traumatic and may lead to the death of either of the couples.

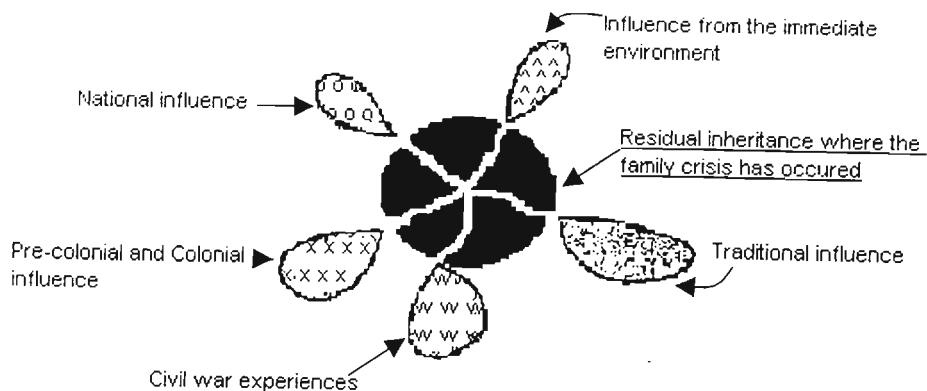
Family crisis has also led to drunkenness. Many parents and even siblings become drunkards and even alcoholics. In one remote Igbo community where the researcher has worked as a priest, both parents and children may continue to consume local gin until they completely go out of their senses. This situation has even created more problems for them since cases of mental disorder continues to increase in their community (Personal experience).

## **5.5 Conclusion.**

This chapter has, looked into the consequences of depression as a family crisis within the Igbo family system and the society at large. The key role players in this family crisis are the spouses. They project this crisis situation into their siblings. Clinebell, thus says that a disturbed child in the family is the family member who is most obviously affected by the pained marital relationship (1966:126f). Crisis in any subsystem affects the entire family system.

The historical, political, economic, social and environmental factors which cause dysfunction in a family also brings about emotional depression to the family members. These problems occur within the level of their *residual inheritance*. When the family or family members cannot continue bearing the burden of their crisis, this residual inheritance breaks. The family has no solid ground to stand upon again. The center can no longer hold. This therefore becomes the family crisis. The researcher has represented this diagrammatically below in sketch X.

**SKETCH X: FAMILY CRISIS CAUSED BY EXTERNAL PRESSURE ON THE RESIDUAL INHERITANCE.** (Original sketch of the researcher to make his idea clearer)



From the above sketch, a family or individual members of the family struggle to meet up with the social expectations created by their *residual inheritance*. It is further pressed hard upon by heavy loads of influences around it as shown in the sketch. The family, which is already dysfunctional, continues to descend towards emotional depression. With no adequate care given, the family breaks down, as a result of depression. This becomes the family's crisis point. Will this condition ever remain like this or is there any hope for a future happy family life again? This is the main consideration of the remaining chapters.



**THE CHURCH AND PASTORAL CARE****6.1 Introduction**

This chapter brings into focus the Christian belief that there is no condition in life which is extremely hopeless, if proper care is given. Since no human being is an isolate (Minuchin 1974:2), each person survives with the caring of others. Ashbrook, points out that everyone is born dependent. He goes further to say:

As the Rock, Yahweh God gives birth to each of us, no one is not birthed. We all come from that reality we neither create nor control. We find ourselves in a universe not of our own making... We are the recipients of three inheritances - one genetic with parochial constraints and one purposeful with its aspirational possibilities. In the language of philosophy we are made up of matter and spirit. In the language of the Bible, we are particles of dust into which God has breathed the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). Each of these languages of discourse emphasizes that who we are depends on a context or universe of influences we do not create. (1996:15).

Ashbrook's idea points to the fact that no human being can exist without dependence on communal and spiritual factors. The first community in which a human being finds him/herself is the family. The family is a micro-system within the bigger macro-system which is the society. The society, made up of different socio-political systems, has the ones which specialize in giving care to people. Most outstanding among these care giving social systems is the Church.

**6.2 The Caring Ministry of the Church.**

One of the descriptions of the Church in the Scripture is "the Body of Christ" (Rom. 12:4-5; 1Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:16; Col.1:18 [RSV]). These passages show the Church as a caring institution. Every part of the body depends on the other in order to function well. Clinebell, points out that what distinguishes the Church from other social systems and makes it a life saving station is Pastoral care. Pastoral care provided by the Church to her members gives relevance to the activities of the Church (1966:14). The Church has a great role to play in the healing ministry.

### 6.2.1 The Church

The Church will be defined here as it applies to the context. It has been seen and described in various ways. These include: the 'Body' of Christ (Rom.12:4-5; 1Cor.12:12-27; Eph.4:16; Col.1:18 [RSV]), God's building (1Cor.3:9; Eph.2:19-22; 1Pet.2:5 [RSV]), God's field (1Cor.3:9 [RSV]), a Holy nation (Phil.3:20, 1Pet.2:9 [RSV]), a Royal priesthood (1Pet.2:5,9 [RSV]), Community of believers (Acts.4:32-37 [RSV]), Cross of Christ (1Cor.1:18, 10:26 [RSV]), the Kingdom of God (Eph.3:10; 4:12-16 [RSV]). All these perspectives from which the Church is seen depicts the caring responsibility of the Church.

The Church in this sense is the Greek *ekklesia*, which ordinarily means a body or organization of devotees to a political, social or religious ideas. The religious usage of the term predominates now (Atkinson and Field, 1995:229). Atkinson and Field go further to describe the Church as that collection of human societies which is inspired by and seeks to represent, the significance of Jesus (1995:229). The Church from their description must mean to the people, what Jesus meant to the people during His earthly ministry.

Downey, sees the Church as God's community, guided by the Spirit and purchased with the Lord's blood (Acts 20:28). He also describes the Church of the New Testament as communities with different understanding of spiritual life. St. Paul's vision of the Church leads directly to his challenging call for ecclesial living which requires a constant dialogue with God, an appreciation of centrality of Christ in all life and a common vision of community (1993:164). From the above description, no member of the Church is expected to exist as an island nor ignore the company of others. There is need for mutual care and bearing the burden of one another as well as sharing the Christian love together.

Hunter, on his own part sees the Church as a living organism which can be healthy or sick. It can grow, reproduce, be ongoing and can also die. The Church is alive, natural and also supernatural. It has a living Lord who is in charge (1983:45). Hunter, goes further to say that another common understanding of the Church is as community of believers or community which is gathered by God through Jesus Christ. He presents various images of the Church as seen in the New Testament which are: the temple of God, the bride of Christ, the household of God, the flock of God, the royal

priesthood and the body of Christ (1983:46). These images of the Church show it as what requires and also gives a lot of care. From St. Cyprian's statement in Bercot, on Jesus's resurrection, Jesus is the living Lord in charge of the Church (1998:559). Hunter notes that He wants His flock to be instructed, guided and cared for (1983:46). Fr. Augustine Mringi describing the Church as a servant says:

Since the Church is in the world and with the world in the sense that it shares the "joy and hope, the grief and anguish of men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way," it is naturally obliged to "enter into dialogue with" the world concerning these problems and serve the whole of humankind in keeping with the teaching and examples of its Master and Founder who "came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." (1995:319f).

Service to humankind especially to a people who are suffering is of paramount importance in the Church. Without this, the mission of the Church can be said to be a failure. Since the Church belongs to God, it must be an avenue of conveying God's love and care to humanity. It is this aspect that gives relevance to the Church as a caring community. The leaders in these caring functions in God's community are the pastors. Through them the transparency of God's love and care to humanity must be seen.

### **6.2.1.1 The Expected Role of the Church in the Caring Ministry**

The Church seen as a household of God (Eph. 2:18-20 [RSV]), has a lot of roles to play for her members. As a household, all the members see themselves as brothers and sisters in Christ with God as their Father. This membership cuts across age, class, race and gender distinctions. Wynn in describing the Church as a quasi family says that the Church is the only organization that touches people at every possible age. He states as follows:

From birth until death, one can be part of the Church's mission and ministry. Nearly every other institution (school, employment, club or neighborhood) proves more temporary. The Church is unique as the sole body (outside the family itself) that can be touched with a person throughout life, as shared distinction that could draw family and Church closer than they now are. For the Church is also a family, the household of God (Eph.2:19). Its inter-generational composition makes possible programs and emphases often overlooked. (1982:13f).

This advantage which the Church has over every other organization as Wynn observes above, puts a lot of roles in its position in order to meet up with the demands of people of all ages within it. Fairchild, thus sees the work of the Church as “shepherding” or care-giving role of the whole congregation, led in most cases by the concerned professional clergy. This according to him, involves the mutual care of members for one another and an extension of care to those outside the fellowship who are in need. (1980:46). Reflecting on the service rendered by the Church, Hunter says that a living Church is a serving Church (1983:50). The troublesome circumstances surrounding human beings which Fairchild says have been known through all recorded history (1980:vii), must be the main focus in the caring ministry of the Church. This has necessitated the coming of Jesus Christ and thus the founding of the Church. Rowley, points out that from the beginning of the first Century AD, there had been a growing hostility within the Jewish community which aggravated their high expectation of a Messiah (1965:10). They could only see the type of caring system they needed, in the ministry of Jesus Christ. This perhaps might be why Jesus described the multitude following Him as sheep without shepherd. One such passage says:

When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them,  
because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep  
without a shepherd (Matt.9:36 [RSV]).

The Church is supposed to be a shepherd to her members. She should look at them with compassion when they are harassed by circumstances around them so that they don’t remain helpless.

Another feature of Jesus’ ministry is healing. This aspect predominated His ministry. The helpless crowd benefitted so much from it. Matthew thus says:

As He went ashore He saw a great throng; and He had  
compassion on them and healed their sick (Matt.14:14 [RSV]).

Mark says:

As He went ashore He saw a great throng and He had compassion  
on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He  
began to teach them many things (Mk.6:34 [RSV]).

The compassionate acts of Jesus to the helpless crowd included healing their sicknesses, teaching them and feeding them to their satisfaction. Jesus thus became a Shepherd to the helpless sheep.

The Church has Jesus Christ as her head. Without the life, teaching and examples of Jesus being

central in all the activities of the Church, its services become useless. Hurding, points out that Christ is both Lord of creation and Lord of the Church, Maker and Reconciler of all things. He should therefore be the central point of reference in all the activities of the Church (1992:10).

Some of the roles which the Church should play to her members are seen in the image, through which the Church is represented. These include:

**The Body of Christ:** St. Paul described the Church as the body of Christ to the Roman Christians (Rom.12:4-5 [RSV]). Just as different parts of the body perform different functions, members of the Church should have different functions but to the welfare of all others. To the Corinthians St. Paul says:

...If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together...(1Cor.12:12-27 [RSV]).

The suffering of one member should be felt by others and all should rejoice with the success of another. Every member of the Church should see him/herself as part of the corporate body of Christ, not as separate entity (Col.1:18 [RSV]). According to Hunter, the Church should nourish her members as a husband nourishes his wife (1983:53). From this, we see the Church as a symbol of love, compassion, care and kindness just as seen in Jesus Christ.

**The Community of Believers:** This is a community united by their oneness in Jesus Christ. Hurding says:

...we mirror God best 'as a community.' And this God-mirroring community is, in spite of all its faults, the Church, the 'body' of Christ (1992:32).

God should be mirrored in the Church. It should be a community where people in burden are relieved. Jesus, in one of His preachings says:

Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. (Matt.11:28-30 [RSV]).

Jesus as the symbol and head of the Church stayed together with His disciples. In the Acts of the Apostles, the first Christian community was described as follows:

... And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need... (Acts.2:44ff [RSV]).

The passage further says that this Christian community attended the temple together, broke bread together, partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all people (Acts.2:45-47 [RSV]). This passage gives the idea of the nature of caring community which the first Church was. The Church as a community of believers should be able to provide rest for the depressed souls.

**The Kingdom of God:** The Church is also seen as the Kingdom of God. This is a place or condition in which things are done according to the will of God (Downey, 1993:164). While Jesus was teaching His disciples how to pray, He said ‘... Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...’(Matt.6:10 [RSV]).

Jesus preached good news to the broken hearted, healed the sick and showed compassion to the dying because it is not God’s will that any person should be broken hearted or depressed. Downey says :

The central notion in the preaching of Jesus, namely, the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, implies a call to conversion and renewal of life and is motivated by the need to live differently in a new age the chosen people have been expecting. The early Christian faithful see their gathering as a way of becoming the reign of God that Jesus proclaimed (1993:164).

The emotionally depressed person still looks forward for the proclaimed reign of God, where suffering will be seen no more. The Church which preaches the power of God should be able to provide that freshness and renewal to her members. The transforming power of God being present in the Church shows the Church as the Kingdom of God. This is manifested in its compassion, righteousness, tolerance and genuine commitment to the life and teaching of Jesus Christ (Downey, 1993:165). Pastors in the Church could then be true representatives of God.

The Church is also portrayed as the household of God, flock of God, the bride of Christ, a living organism, God’s building, God’s field, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, the cross of Christ, the significance of Jesus, the people of God and the temple of God’s Spirit (Hunter, 1983:45ff; Downey, 1993:164f). All these images of the Church reflect God’s care for humanity. The Church is to be a place for liberation from suffering, a place of healing for the body and soul, a home for the broken and contrite heart, a place where God’s love is shared among God’s people and a place of true relaxation for the spirit and soul (Hurding, 1992:10ff). The Church can achieve this through her care giving ministry.

### **6.2.1.2 The Church as Family of Families/Community of Believers**

The Church is often pictured as the family of God. Jesus in His teaching refers to the Church as a family, with God as the Father. While referring to God as Father He said to His disciples:

... you, therefore, must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matt.5:48 [RSV]).

... for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him (Matt.6:8 [RSV]).

When He was confronted with the question of His mother and brothers, He replied:

... 'Who is my mother and who are my brothers'?... 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother' (Matt.12:48-50 [RSV]).

These sayings of Jesus depict the Church as one family with God as the Father. Members are brothers and sisters. God, who is the Father cares so much for His children and wants them to care for one another in like manner. Atkinson, on this says:

This is the ecclesial model that many evangelicals have primarily in mind when they refer to the Church as a 'family'. The virtue of this metaphor is that it holds forth appropriate ideals of intimacy, care and responsibility... (1995:231).

When the Church cares for its members, it is also caring for their respective families. The Church touches all the affairs of the family from birth, through the period of life till death (Wynn, 1982:13f). St. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, describing the Church as a household of God says:

So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (Eph.2:19 [RSV]).

As a family cares for its members in need, so shall the Church as a household of God care for various families that make it up. The Church should therefore have various supportive programs for the families. Wynn, cites Charles Stewart (1979), who argues that the contemporary Church congregation is a virtual extended family, because it gathers people of different generations within the parish, to become the household of God (1982:14). He goes further to say:

The Church as an extended family can reach out to the lonely, support the weak, help the helpless and love the unlovable. That's what families, when they are at their best, do for their members (1982:14).

From the above statement, Wynn sees the Church as a family of households. This makes it an extended family and as such, draws together people who are related to one another in Christ. Wynn is of the view that as extended families often assign care to some relatives, the Church should do so. The Church is challenged to call families anew to their vocation (1982:14).

The Church, as part of its pastoral care to the families is to remember that family life is part of God's institution from creation (Gen.1:27-28 [RSV]). God purposely sanctified family life for the continuity of the human race. The Church should therefore help parents to bring up their children in the fear of God. Wynn, points out that an isolated family is powerless, so the Church may assist families in the restoration of power. He therefore says:

Confronted by rapidly changing economic conditions, the vagaries of sexual freedom, the incursions of the political state and much more, such a family can be virtually defenseless (1982:15).

Commenting on the outcome of the World Council of Churches' sponsored research conference in 1980, on Family Power and Social Change, Wynn also says:

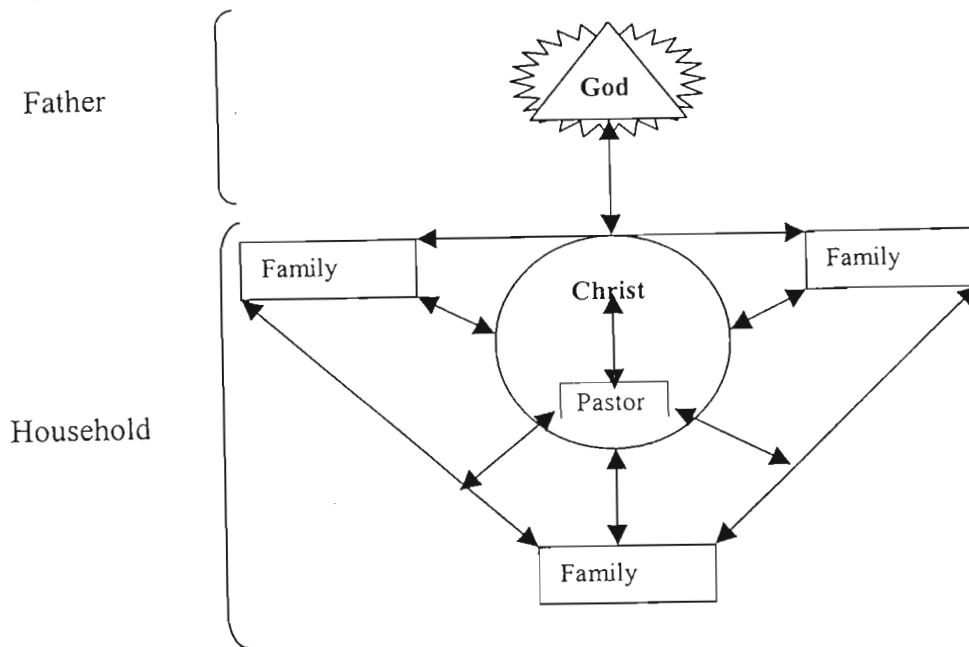
Families can be ignored by the principalities and municipalities, brutalized by corporations and governments, scattered by decrees as well as by natural disasters... Unless Christian families unite together under the aegis of the Churches, unless they form alliances with other groups that can exercise real power, they will not be empowered but will be tossed about by the forces that divide and weaken (1982:15f).

From the above idea, it is apparent that there are irresistible forces that make families become defenseless. These forces include political, economic and social forces which make these families dysfunctional and finally run into crisis. The families need empowerment and liberation and they need to learn how to replace weakness with strength and fear with courage (Wynn,1982:16). This spiritual force which will produce healing to the families must come from the Church. When the Church becomes less caring, most of its members become powerless and consequently run into crises. Pastoral care of the Church should be able to empower as well as liberate the families. Churches of today are weak because the families are weak. The pastors in the Church have a central role to play, not only in uniting the families towards their empowerment, but also in keeping them in constant union with God, who is the overall Father and the Head of the household. The researcher has drawn sketch XI, below to show the nature of relationship which will exist between different families, as a Church, God as the Father of the household, Christ as the central uniting force and the pastor as the facilitator of the unity and oneness of different families that make up the Church.



**SKETCH XI: SHOWING THE FACILITATING ROLE EXPECTED OF THE PASTOR IN THE UNITY OF DIFFERENT FAMILIES THAT MAKE UP THE CHURCH, AS ONE BODY OF CHRIST AND WITH GOD AS THE FATHER.**

(Original sketch of the researcher).



From the above sketch, Christ is in a central position, drawing the families together within the Church, through the facilitating role of the pastor. Not only that his/her strategies as a pastor keeps the families together as one Church and empowers them, he/she is an example of Christ to them and also links them with God whom they see as their Father and whom they call upon when the going becomes highly impossible for them. The next subheading looks at a pastor and pastoral care within the Church.

### **6.3 The Pastor**

A pastor is seen by Hulme, as an ordained minister of the Church, vested with leadership in the community of faith. He goes further to say that though lay as well as clergy may perform pastoral acts, the symbolic role centers in the ordination by the Church, of specific pastors charged with the responsibility for the nurture of a worshipping and witnessing body of believers (1981:13). This definition sees a pastor as a shepherd by virtue of the role she/he is expected to play. The researcher used the word “expected” because not all who claim the title are aware of this role. The principal functions here are “leadership” and “nurture”. A pastor therefore should be a living example of what she/he preaches and in addition to that, be a person that will strengthen, promote and encourage the growth of other people. From the point of view of Edwina Ward, this act of nurture must go beyond ‘a worshipping and witnessing body of believers’ (Lecture notes, 1999). This falls in line with

Fairchild's idea that pastoral care is 'shepherding' or a care giving role which involves mutual care of members for one another and an extension of care to those outside the fellowship who are in need (1980:46). A pastor should nurture not just his/her congregation but every one who requires his/her help. This is contrary to what is seen in many places today where pastors think more of the members of their immediate congregation and those related to them. Fairchild, says this:

Any pastor well acquainted with his/her congregation is often puzzled and anxious about the depressed persons within the Church (1980:1)

Butler, quarrels with the use of the word "pastor". He points out that the word "pastor", presents the congregation as "sheep", while "pastor" is the "shepherd". Shepherd here is a "human being" while a sheep is helpless and senseless animal, thereby placing a great difference between the pastor and the congregation. That a person has a special calling does not make him/her superior to those being served. He therefore prefers the use of the word "minister" (Lecture notes, 1999). As a reaction to this kind of notion about the word 'shepherd', Fairchild says:

Purge of its rural connotations and any implication that we are dealing with a stupid flock of dependents with a herd-like mentality, shepherd is a powerful organizing image (1980:47).

Wynn, sees the word minister as meaning "one who serves" since it is translated from the Latin word "ministrare"(1983:vi). With this in mind, a person who sees him/herself as a pastor should know that it is a position that calls for service and not a position of power and exploitation. Whether a pastor or a minister, what is necessary is to be fully involved in the caring ministry. A person who takes to full time Christian ministry should know that he/she has accepted to serve others.

Kay and Weaver, point out that the job of the Christian minister is to help members of the congregation balance their lives between the competing demands of family, work and Church (1997:12). In other words, a pastor has the duty both to the rich and the poor, young and old, male and female, sick and healthy, single and married, widows and widowers, irrespective of tribe or race or country of origin. Many pastors today only want the wealthy as members of their Church. This is where they hope to get their pockets filled with donations. ]

Wise, points out that many pastors have a too limited and frightened view of their significance as pastors and this seriously limits their effectiveness (1966:12). A pastor needs to be fully aware of what he/she is called to do. They carry this responsibility on their shoulders alone in order not to miss the material gains they expect from the members of their parish. Hunter therefore says:

Mission and ministry belongs to the people. The pastor is there to be the trainer, the equipper of the people. The pastor is like a playing coach... His/her primary responsibility is to train Christians to do this ministry (1983:65).

On this same matter Fairchild says:

It is the pastor's responsibility, as overseer of the congregation, to discern with the laity where they can best serve and educate them in moral and religious context of the religious community, without which they cannot represent the values embodied in the tradition of shepherding (1980:48).

A pastor, from the above statements is not expected to carry out the duty of caring alone. He/she should be a facilitator of other helpers within the parish. He/she should multiply his/her skills to willing members of the parish for the caring of their members.

## **6.4 Pastoral Care**

Pastoral care is seen as a supportive ministry to people and those close to them who are experiencing the familiar trials that characterize life in this world, such as illness, surgery, incapacitation, death and bereavement (Hulme 1981:9). The visit of Job's friend (Job 2:11 [RSV]) in order to console him and comfort him is seen as pastoral care. It therefore means concern shown to a person in distress or any form of social, physical and psychological deformity.

Pastoral care as Professor Lee Butler sees it, is crisis oriented. A pastor needs to shape her/his crisis ideas in things she/he feels people will face crisis with, since people are faced with different kinds of crises every day. Pastoral care according to him, will help a person in crisis feel strong, safe, secure, comfortable and have a sense of self defense. Such caring includes hospital visits, prison visits and visits to troubled individuals and homes. These visits are oriented towards the healing process of people suffering and in pain (Lecture notes, 1999).

Downey, also sees pastoral care as "the broad range of activities carried out by ordained and non-ordained ministers in response to people's needs"(1993:722). These activities include both sacramental and social ministries and they can come up as informal conversational encounters and also as highly structured ritual events. Some of the basic activities in pastoral care include healing, guiding, sustaining and reconciling (Fairchild 1980:49). These activities can occur through preaching, educating, sacramental ministrations, counseling and visitation of the sick.

In line with Downey's idea, Fairchild, says that recovery of hope by despairing persons is a primary goal of pastoral care. He goes further to say that it is the 'shepherding' or care-giving role of the whole congregation, led in most cases by the professional clergy. This involves mutual care of members for one another and an extension of care to those outside the fellowship who are in need. In relation to the depressed, shepherding is the judicious use of all the resources of the congregation to activate hope (1980:46). It is not just the work of the pastor alone but every member of the congregation who can assist in reactivating the hope of despairing members. Fairchild also says:

Healing or restoration of wholeness after some disabling impairment such as depression, is an important task of pastoral care. It is not the whole task, however... other functions include sustaining, guiding and reconciling (1980:49).

He goes on to say that pastoral care includes more than pastoral counselling. It involves all phases of Church life which are preaching and worship, educating and small group work, confession and calling and community action. All have a part to play in bringing hope to the despairing (1980:49).

In a case of bereavement, a special religious service organized in honour of the dead, can serve as a means of spiritual healing to the bereaved family. Sacraments ministered to the sick whether in the hospital or at home can give the person a sense of being cared for. Spending some time with the lonely, can go a long way in relieving tension. An opportunity to preach a well designed sermon can give reassurance to a person who is already losing hope. Through some of these informal encounters, counselling sessions can be arranged for more serious cases. In this process, members of the Church are assisted to attain full well-being.

Pastoral care can also be defined as the practical outworking of the Church's concern for the everyday and ultimate needs of its members and the wider community. That concern has its main-spring in the love that God has for His people and for His world (Atkinson 1995:78). Fairchild on this says:

The pastoral task as it comes to every minister and every Christian, is to respond to the wonder of God's care for the soul and share with others such knowledge as he has of God's healing power (1980:47).

The Church can only demonstrate God's love for humanity through pastoral care. Preaching, pastoral administration and sacrament are all important in the Church's ministry but according to Edwina Ward pastoral care is the means through which all these important functions of the Church can be put into practice (Lecture notes, 1999). It is the practical aspect of theology. If excellent sermons are

preached, the best liturgy is used in sacraments and pastoral administration of the Church is perfect, but there is no personal care for the members of the congregation, all that is said and done ends within the Church premises. God's love can be real to a person in trouble when this love is demonstrated during that troublesome moments by the pastoral care-giver.

You cannot tell a person that you love him/her but when there is trouble, you desert that person. On this St. James said:

If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food and one of you says to them: "Go in peace, be warmed and filled", without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? (James 2:15-16 [RSV]).

What a Church member or even a non-Christian needs to see from a pastor is practical demonstration of the love of God which the pastor preaches and represents.

During a wedding of a couple, at the period of the actual marriage they say:

... for better for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health to love and to cherish and to honour .(CPSA. 1989:464).

This is contrary to what many pastors do. A pastor is to be to the congregation what a husband should be to his wife or vice versa. This does not however mean that the pastor should start sleeping with members of his/her congregation. The relationship of a pastor to the members of his/her congregation should be "for better, for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and cherish and to honour. For the same reasons Jesus Christ also died for the sinful humanity. This is why Fairchild says:

The image of shepherding expands pastoral care far beyond the usual definition of pastoral counseling... sheep were precious in biblical days, and a shepherd sought diligently after even one which was lost (Lk.15:4). One might even lay down his life to protect the sheep from predators (Jn.10:15) (1980:47f).

Some pastors can only care for the members of their congregation when the going is good. Whenever the going becomes bad, they will start to have tight schedules. They wouldn't have time to visit such members again. A pastor cannot preach a good sermon on God's love without demonstrating this love in the process of pastoral care. This is the overall calling of God through His people. God did not command us to preach about love without showing it in our lives. Most Churches today preach so much about love and Christian caring but in the real sense what they practice in every aspect of their lives is an uncaring attitude. There must be practical application of what the Church teaches and preaches.

Through pastoral care the Church communicates the inner meaning of the Gospel to persons at the point of their need (Wise 1966:8). Wise, also points out that pastoral care is not a theoretical discipline, although it may be undergirded by such disciplines as theology or Biblical interpretation (1966:8). If there is no practical functioning of the pastor, what ever he/she is doing becomes theoretical and as such no longer pastoral care. There should be more functions and activities and more loving relationships with the members of the community who are looking up to the pastor.

A family looks up to the pastor to communicate the love of God to it when trouble sets in. Without care and nurture the family may not continue to grow in love. As Butler, observes, pastors by virtue of their position stand a better chance of intervening in any situation among their parishioners even when they have not been invited (Lecture notes,1999). This can occur through casual communications or even during the normal pastoral visits.

Hunter, notes that pastoral presence in the family brings about active listening. Rituals during such visits as he notes are also important (1990:1287). Presence means that the pastor, as a representative of God and Church, may be a stabilizing and a sustaining figure simply by being present in the family during periods of their pains, fear, and “psychic numbing”. Edwina Ward in a Clinical Pastoral Education (C.P.E.) lecture, affirms that even if the minister cannot communicate very well with a person in pain, his/her presence alone has a healing power (Lecture notes,1999). The pastor therefore will be a symbol of hope, help and comfort to a family in crisis. Active listening of the pastor to the family enables them to break out of overwhelming isolation of intense emotions (Hunter 1990:1287). They can then open up and socialize their experiences and share their burdens in the presence of the pastor. They can now begin to gain new perspectives on their problems. Butler, says that crisis enables couples to have insight towards their problems. There will be increased possibilities. The presence of a pastor will therefore help them to discover that they have gifts which can be developed (Lecture notes,1999). In support of this idea, Fairchild says that depression is a painful spiritual condition out of which much growth can come (1980:viii).

There are also rituals which can reach the couple at deep levels (Hunter 1990 : 1287). Butler is also very optimistic at what rituals can do in a crisis situation. He emphasizes that you must first recognize the rituals that are part of the people’s life. Experiencing rituals in certain circumstances affects people’s life so deeply. Rituals are therefore part of human life. There are rituals that make us feel that we live. A pastor should therefore understand a ritual that previously existed, before creating a new one. Ritual in a crisis may take the form of worship. This may include prayer, brief scripture phrases or passage and sacraments which are appropriate to the situation (Lecture

notes,1999).

It is the idea of Hunter, that “guilt is ubiquitous in times of depression” (1990:1287). In the case of spouse subsystem, both couples feel guilty at the same time. The one who caused the problem and the one who is the victim may feel guilty at the same time. The one who caused the problem and the one who is the victim may be feeling guilt and have some level of self blame and self pity. The pastor therefore helps them sort out realistic from unrealistic guilt. Active listening of the pastor will be of great importance here. The pastor can identify salient and silent points in their discussion and guide them along that line so that they don’t side-track what may seem to be the main source of guilt in their relationship. He/she will then seek forgiveness for any valid guilt feelings. The pastor may also avail him/herself as a consultant and guide during the long period of grief and adjustment after the incident had been settled (1990:1287f).

In addition to general pastoral care, a pastor whether trained or not is compelled to be involved in a lot of pastoral counselling as part of his/her pastoral care (Fairchild 1980:103f). This will be discussed further in chapter seven.

## **6.5 The Present Outlook of Pastoral Care in the Anglican Church in Igboland.**

In view of what pastoral care should be as discussed above, it can be said that the Anglican Church in Igboland is yet to embrace it. The last of the European missionaries who evangelized Igboland left in 1967, at the outbreak of Nigerian civil war. Up till that time, the Anglican Bishops of the Igbo dioceses and many clergy were Europeans, with Archbishop C. J. Patterson, as the Archbishop of West Africa and the Bishop of the core diocese of the Igboland (personal experience).

On the exit of the European missionaries, the leadership of the Anglican Church in Igboland, fell into the hands of the Igbos. It is expected that with their pure knowledge of their own people, and with language and cultural advantage, they would show better care for their suffering and depressed people. Also most of these Igbo Church leaders lived in Igboland during the civil war and experienced the crises therein. Fairchild says:

Those who have been healed of depression are, potentially, the wounded healers who may best express pastoral care. Their experience in suffering

may be more crucial than any skills they may possess (1980:48).

He confirms the above statement by saying, “My own occasional depressions helped me to know firsthand the way such misery can immobilize one and lower the flame of life” (1980:viii). This was not the case with the Igbo pastors. Their own experience turned to be a means of exploitation of their people. They started lording it over their own people as soon as the white missionaries left. The white missionaries were seen as being more compassionate and caring than the local pastors. The Igbo pastors wanted to be seen and addressed as lords. Most of the Church leaders became rulers and dictators more than pastors to their congregation (personal experience).

Pastoral care virtually disappeared from the Church. Preaching from the pulpit became a means of getting money from the Church members. Welfare of the people is hardly mentioned. Ilogu, on this says:

The organization of Churches’ life in Iboland must eschew too much emphasis on money contribution as hallmark of membership. Rather teaching, praying and sharing in fellowship of joys and sorrows together, should be emphasized, for these are the more basic foundations of the Church membership (1974:214).

Rev. Canon Ilogu, is an Anglican priest in Igboland and a Professor of Religious Studies, in one of the Universities in the area. He is writing out of his direct participation in the present Igbo Anglican Church. He notes that the compassionate care for people in sorrow, praying, teaching and sharing of fellowship together which marks a Christian group are quickly disappearing in the Church. What the Church wants from its members now is money. If you are poor, no one cares for you. One parishioner (name withheld for confidentiality), in a burial ceremony in one of the Igbo cities said:

I wonder why more than ten bishops and almost all their clergy, most of whom were not invited, should attend the burial of this man simply because he is very wealthy. In many occasions we have called on some of these priests to conduct the burial services of some highly committed but poor members of the Church, but they will leave it to their Church teachers with the excuse that they are very busy (February, 1999).

This expression from a highly concerned Church member is the typical outlook of the situation in Igbo Churches now. The researcher, as one of the priests who attended the same burial ceremony knew that he was speaking the truth. If a priest should accept to attend such burial service of a poor parishioner, the people concerned must do their best to find a means of filling the ‘purse’ of the priest with money at the end of the ceremony, even if it involves borrowing from anywhere (personal experience). The same experience as above occurs in any other ceremony in Igboland, either for a



wealthy or a poor person. A Church leader, has refused attending to the wedding and burial of his priests on different occasions and even the baptism of his priest's child (names withheld for confidentiality), simply because they don't have enough money for his hospitality. The same Church leader, at the shortest notice given by a wealthy person, will leave another engagement, because a lot of money is expected to accrue from there.

Some of the priests in the Igbo parishes go by the title "Superintendents". Their parishes and areas around them are called "Districts". This makes them see themselves as rulers and administrators, rather than pastors. Ilogu on this says:

Ordained ministers must be told in clear terms that we are the ministers of the Word and Sacrament and not superintendents of "groups" and "districts". To realize this is to make us ever humble searchers for the hours, the place and resources from where we can find "sustenance" so as to be able to sustain our people in the prayers, the preaching of the Word and in the breaking of the bread (1974:214).

Ilogu, uses the inclusive pronoun here because he is part of the system where these things happen. He therefore has first hand experience.

The Church uses ex-communication from the Eucharist to punish whoever they want. The researcher was in a Church service one day when a priest by-passed someone already kneeling on the altar rail for Eucharist. He thought it was a mistake and reminded him, but he replied that he did it deliberately as a punishment to the person. On another occasion, the Church warden stopped some people who were already in the line for the Eucharist and turned them back to their seats disgracefully before the congregation. The reason is either failure to pay one Church levy or another or failure to attend a Church function. They have not made any efforts to find out the reasons for those failures. Ilogu, thus says:

The use of ex-communication from Holy communion as a sanction against breach of laws of the Church, must be reviewed so as to leave the sacrament to continue being a means of grace rather than a punishment weapon (1974:214).

These acts of denial are still very much in practice today. Other areas of denial include: refusal of the Church to conduct burial, wedding, baptism or even staying with a member in joy or sorrow when necessary, simply because one problem or the other cropped up.

During the Nigerian civil war, when the Igbos were severely dealt with, their pastors could not offer

them anything better, like food, clothing and shelter. Some of the world humanitarian organizations like the Red Cross, Caritas, World Council of Churches etc, brought some relief materials which included food, clothing, milk, drugs etc, to the war torn and devastated Igbo people. These materials were given to the people via the Churches. These Churches showed the highest level of inhumane behaviour during this period, as it is known that the Church leaders and their pastors wickedly kept these materials for themselves and their families, instead of sharing them out to the suffering and dying masses.

The clergy themselves have large families and extended families to maintain. They lived in luxury during this period at the expense of families under their care, for whose sake the relief materials were brought. The writer still remembers as a child, people dying in Church compounds, while waiting for a day they will receive relief from their pastor. The pastors never cared for such bereaved families (Personal experience).

There is a fellow priest (still in active service today) who up till today is called in Igbo language, *A patara ka a pii gi* (Were these relief materials brought personally for you). This is what he says to every member who came to his parish to request for those materials during the civil war. He ended up chasing the people away from the Church compound without giving anything to them, even if they were there when the materials were being off loaded from the trucks. After the civil war he still had many stores containing these relief materials, which he and his family later started selling in the open market.

Some Igbo pastors of today have lost sight of the healing of the body, mind and spirit of their members as part of Church's caring ministry. They are more concerned with material gifts of money and other things coming from their parishioners. When these fail to come their morale is very low. All their plans within their parishes center on how to raise fund from their members.

They only pay pastoral visits to their highest donors after the fund raising occasions, because this is where they will have their pockets filled up with gifts. Ilogu says:

Spiritual healing should be explored and institutionalized in the more orthodox Churches so that they become not the preserve of the *Aladura* Churches and questionable "Healing-Home-Churches" (1974:213f).

The above statement became necessary because most Igbo priests no longer put this into consideration. One of the researcher's friends among the clergy was telling him how he disbanded a prayer group in a school building near the vicarage where he lives. This group, in the researcher's

assessment, doesn't receive enough spiritual food from their pastor. They were in this school building at night singing and praying, because the pastor would not allow them stay inside the Church building. When the pastor realized that they were there singing and praying, he went for his gun and fired two shots into the air behind the school building. All the people there took to their heels, running for their safety. The pastor was satisfied because he succeeded in disbanding them. They never knew that it was the pastor who fired the gun shots. (September 1998-'name and place withheld for confidentiality').

Some of the pastors have no training for pastoral care and counselling. This is not because they are not willing to have the training nor because there is no money for it. Their Church leaders don't want them to rise beyond a Diploma in Theology. They suppress every effort by these pastors under them to study further and acquire more skills. Any contrary action to their decision leads to the excommunication of such pastor from the Church. They want to maintain an academic distance from their pastors in order to avoid challenges from them. They only train their favorite priests to a very high level to take over top positions in the Church (Personal experience). However, in spite of all these shortfalls, there are still some Igbo pastors who are very good in care giving ministry. Through them, some Churches are still very much alive.

## 6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has so far tried to look at the Church and the caring ministry. What the Church is all about and what a care-giving ministry should be, are its principal foci. Some of the outlooks of the care-giving ministry in Igboland were also highlighted. From the image portrayed of pastoral care in this chapter, the best term to describe it is shepherding. On this Fairchild says:

Shepherding is a prime metaphor for the understanding of care in the Church. Theologically, God is conceived supremely as the Great Shepherd (Psalm 23), whose power is manifested in leading, protecting, feeding and disciplining his people (1980:47).

The above statement is what every pastoral care-giver should have in mind. They should also note that they are not dealing with a stupid, senseless flock, but with intelligent human beings. As good shepherds, they might go to the extent of laying down their lives to protect the sheep from the predators (John 10:15[RSV]). The Church should be devoid of such pastors whose interest is only seeking for their personal gains at the expense of the members of their congregation.

The next chapter is the final chapter and it will look into ways and means of applying pastoral caring skills in the context of Igbo traditional setting. This chapter shows that there is hope for the depressed Igbo family.

**... AND ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN: *As A Metaphor*****7.1 Introduction**

The above title looks into the possibilities of offering reassuring hope to an emotionally depressed family. Chapter six has shown that no condition in this life can be regarded as being totally hopeless, if proper care is given. This chapter tries to bring the ideas of chapter six into practical terms in reassuring hope to a depressed Igbo family. Fairchild says:

The tragedy of life is not death but what dies inside while we are living... We must recognize that we get our basic energy not from turbines but from hope. In a biblical metaphor, depression can be conceived as a wilderness journey, symbolizing the experience of being in a desert place, lonely, without water flowing and in great danger from thorns and beasts. But it is also a place where angels minister, where persons have found transformation, a new identity and direction. Depression is a painful spiritual condition out of which much growth can come (1980:viii).

Fairchild, in the above statement is very optimistic about a positive end result of depression. The last sentence of the quotation shows that it is not mandatory that “much growth” will be achieved. It is only a possibility. The expected growth will therefore be possible due to the quality of care given to the person. This idea supports Butler’s stand that crisis brings about increased possibilities. The person facing the crisis discovers that he/she has a gift which can be developed. What can be done during crisis situations will then start emerging (Lecture notes, 1999).

This chapter also tends to agree with Fairchild, that preaching, worship and liturgy contribute to a comprehensive care of the soul. On this he says:

A specific counselling function is often crucial, but a comprehensive care of the souls can be expressed in preaching, worship and liturgy; in small group and educational work; in friendship networks; in a “system” approach to administration and family visitation and in action and advocacy groups. One-to-one conversations with concerned clergy may be simply a beginning of process, a consultation in which the usefulness of many resources is assessed. The advantages of the total congregation are often overlooked (1980:47).

In addition to what Fairchild notes above, Butler says that people shape their crisis idea in accordance to their own context (Lecture notes, 1999). Edwina Ward, also says that an approach towards caring

for people in crisis will depend on how the people understand and react to their crisis (CPE lecture class, 1999). This chapter will therefore focus on the methods of restoring hope to the emotionally depressed, through the whole caring system of the Church, based on the cultural context of the people concerned.

### **7.1.1 The Idea of Resurrection**

Resurrection here refers to coming back to life from death. This phenomenon has eluded human imagination, so much so that even in the first century the disciples of Jesus Christ at first denied His resurrection even when they had seen their risen Lord. Luke thus says:

But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit. And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do questions rise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:37-39[RSV]).

Jesus had to convince His disciples about His resurrection before they believed. Elwell, says that Christianity is the only religion that preaches about the resurrection of its adherents (1996:678).

Writing to the Corinthian Christians, St. Paul said:

Lo, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed (1Cor.15:51-52[RSV]).

The hope of Christians therefore is that since Christ was raised from the dead, they too will be raised from the dead. This hope is the foundation on which the Church is built. In this regard, Hunter says that the Church is based on the foundation of the resurrection of Christ. This makes it to be a dynamic active organism (1983:53). Some early Church fathers expressed the beliefs of the Church about resurrection. Origen, in C248 said:

His resurrection is more miraculous than that of the others in this one respect. The others had been raised by prophets Elijah and Elisha. However, He was raised by none of the prophets, but by His own Father in heaven (Bercot, 1998:559).

Cyprian in C250 said:

On the third day He freely rose from the dead...However, He tarried for forty days, so that they might be instructed by Him in the precepts of life and so that they might learn what they were to teach... For Christ loved man, He became man and He shielded man from death (Bercot, 1998:559).

Tertullian, in C210 also said:

The flesh that has been committed to the ground is able, in like manner, to rise again by the will of the same God. For although this is not allowed to the sparrows, yet “we are of more value than sparrows”. This is said because, when fallen, we rise again (Bercot, 1998:562f).

These statements by Origen, Cyprian and Tertullian reveal the early Christian belief about resurrection. The summary of their statements reveal the following:

- Jesus actually died and was committed to the grave.
  - Resurrection is an unbelievable phenomenon, but it happened with Jesus Christ.
  - Christians therefore believe that a dead person can rise again as in the case of Jesus.
  - It took a short period of three days for Jesus to be resurrected from the dead.
  - Resurrection involves a change, which can take place within moments.
  - Jesus was raised by His Father, so a dead person can only be raised through the assistance of God.
  - The hope of Christians is that they will also rise again even when they die.
- (Bercot, 1998:559ff).

The writer has drawn these points from the statements of the Church fathers above to show areas of hope for Christians in which a pastoral care giver can base his/her teaching upon. If there can be such hope for a dead person in accordance with Christian belief, there should then be a greater hope for a person who is still living, though depressed.

## **7.2 In the Name of Jesus Christ, Walk (Acts 3:6[RSV]).**

The above subheading is a statement made to a lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple of Jerusalem. Peter and John were entering the temple to pray and were confronted by the lame man, begging for alms from them. The process of his healing took this form:

- \* Peter said to him, “look at us” verse 4
- \* The man fixed his attention upon them expecting to receive something from them.
- \* Peter said to him, “I have no silver and gold, but I give what I have”
- \* In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.
- \* And he took him by the right hand and raised him up: and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.
- \* And leaping up he stood and walked and entered the temple with them, walking and

leaping and praising God (Acts. 3:1-8[RSV], (emphasis, mine).

It is the wish of the writer to adapt the above quotation as a pastoral care formula in this dissertation. Peter and John, while observing their religious rituals, did not ignore the helpless lame man seeking for help from them. They did not look down on him, but directed their gaze at him when he called their attention for help (vs. 4). They confessed what they didn't have, but gave what they had (vs. 6). It should be noted that Peter did not just pronounce healing for him but also gave him physical support, 'They took him by the right hand and raised him up' (vs. 7). This is the practical aspect of their support and on this, the man was made strong and he walked (emphases are mine).

Pastors should not ignore the helpless people in their congregation. Fairchild, says, 'Any pastor well acquainted with his congregation is often puzzled and anxious about the depressed persons within the Church' (1980:1). Pastors should therefore fix their gaze on any one who directs attention to them for help. They should not claim to know those aspects which they are not competent to handle but should rather direct the family to experts on those areas. The aim of each pastoral care giver should be to raise the person/family and make them strong.

### **7.2.1 Some Practical Ways of Care Giving Especially to An Igbo Family in Crisis in Order to Facilitate Healing and Resurrection.**

According to Stone, a crisis is not a sign of mental illness, but a normal human reaction to an emotionally hazardous or risky situation (1976:22). Even the pastoral care giver him/herself often faces the crisis of emotional depression. He/she should realize that depression, though a painful spiritual condition, can still bring about much growth to a person/family (Fairchild 1980:viii). He/she should first reflect on his/her own crisis moments before evolving a strategy of assistance to the despondent. Fairchild thus says:

My own occasional depression helped me to know first-hand the way such misery can immobilize one and lower the flame of life... I learned that depression can actually be a friend which can lead to deeper life and new values of meaning (1980:viii f).

According to Matooane, crisis can be a temporary state of upset (1992:22). The pastor can therefore be very optimistic of good result while attending to a person facing crisis. His/her optimism will help to rekindle hope in the despondent.

In offering the westernized and more scientific form of care, the pastoral care giver must not forget



the part which culture and traditional beliefs play in the life of any African community. Good aspects of the traditional form of caring should be integrated into the westernized one in order to achieve the best results. While engaged in counselling, this aspect should also not be ignored.

#### **7.2.1.1 Traditional Forms of Care-giving.**

Before the advent of Christianity, the Igbos had their own traditional ways of care-giving. Emotional depression was written off in a traditional setting. “For pastoral care to be successful in an African setting, the care-giver must place Africa at the centre”. By this Butler means that the African heritage which includes their mode of worship, relationships, thought and spirituality must be considered. Issues of identity and cultural influences must also be the central foci (Butler, lecture note, 1999).

In Igbo traditional setting, this kind of care-giving comes from local herbalists, diviners, soothsayers, fortunetellers and witchdoctors. Ilogu, states that domestic shrines had helped the Ibos to ‘domesticate’ religion (1974:213). This does not suggest going back to domestic shrines, but adopting the refined principles of their worship which gave them healing prior to the Christian era. Makine, in Masamba ma Mpolo has the view that though pastoral care, counselling and psychiatry in the western sense are relatively new in Africa, the Africans were using these skills before these, helping others to be healed and to grow (1995:1). He says:

The extended family system re-invites itself by using inherent capacity to be centre par excellence of support for and confrontation among its members, thus enabling the individual as well as the entire family, through dialogue and rituals or reconciliation, to deal constructively with conflicting and inhibiting personal drives, cultural and religious values. This family arrangement creates psychological atmosphere conducive to personal growth and family cohesion.... (1995:3).

The principal care-givers within the African setting are heads of clans, extended family, nuclear family, elders and traditional religious personnel. In Igbo culture, these religious personnel are the *dibias* (diviners etc as mentioned earlier). They work out the healing of the body, mind and spirit in a traditional method which the people confide in and believe in.

### **7.3 Care-giving Methods to an Igbo Family.**

Bearing in mind the religious inclination of the Igbos and the communal nature of their life, the care-giver should work out a strategy similar to the one that existed in their midst before. The Igbos

believe so much in rituals, symbolic objects, symbolic languages and symbolic movements, sacred songs, communal approach to crisis and probably to counselling.

### **7.3.1 Special Religious Worships/liturgy.**

Special religious liturgy aimed at ministering, healing and emotional balance will be mapped out, outside the normal worship days of the week. A special liturgy, reflecting the cultural patterns will be introduced. Within this liturgy, the hymns, choruses, periods of meditation and scriptural reflection will be based on healing and restoration of hope. In Igbo cultural setting, the traditional healers direct the focus of all their rituals towards the main objective for the healing. As David Power notes, historical, anthropological and sociological investigations point to ritual as formalized play. He goes on to say that sometimes what is called 'primitive' ritual is associated with magic, since observers think that the intention of such ritual is to influence the powers that control life. According to Power, this is not exact, for it is more an expression of harmony with, perception into and conformity with the patterns of bios and cosmos (1984:85). What may seem primitive in traditional liturgy may not all that be primitive since it is able to solve problems for the people. The Igbos want something similar or close to their already existing cultural patterns.

Many Igbos lost their religious acts of divination, fortune telling, exorcism and mystical displays when they embraced Christianity. In spite of their new religious inclination, they still believe and trust in the power of the use of these rituals to heal and restore. They also look forward to having them in their worship. According to Ilogu, this gave rise to the spread of locally founded Churches, which sprang up almost immediately Christianity came in. He says:

Another feature of the Church life in Iboland within this period of twenty-five years (1939-1964), was the growth of many Ibo inspired Churches (1974:60).

As Ilogu, observes, Igbo inspired healing homes and prophetic types of Churches increased tremendously in Iboland. They displayed signs and wonders in their healing rituals replacing the traditional forms of divination, forecasting and fortune telling (1974:60). Even in the modern 'Pentecostal' Churches, speaking in tongues replaced the traditional incantations while 'deliverance' ministries replaced the traditional exorcisms. Many Igbos are as such very comfortable with these groups. The Church needs a kind of liturgy which will challenge the activities of local sorcerers and herbalists. Use of symbolic languages, objects and gestures must be incorporated as part of the liturgy for the special healing services.

Since the Igbos believe so much in their ancestors, deities and spirits, the part they play in their religious life should be noted. Exemplary lives of Bible heroes, saints and apostles should always be drawn upon. The works of the Holy Spirit and the angels should also be referred to. This will help them think less about the attacks of their wicked gods, demons and evil spirits. Ilogu, notes this kind of change in Igboland when he says:

Iboland felt for the first time the influence of a separatist Church... In 1916, the Garrick Braide secession had taken place in Delta area... Braide, had been an influential member of the Anglican Church when at Saint Andrew's Bakana he was the Pastor's warden around 1914-1915. He later developed efficacy in divine prayer what he called prophetic movement... A large number of members of various Anglican Churches joined him in forming the first 'Prophetic' Church as well as the first breakaway Church which eventually grew in Iboland (1974:59).

It is worthy of note here that Garrick Braide knew exactly what the Igbos needed and gave it to them, not minding that he was not a trained pastor. The chief characteristics of his Church which won the heart of the people were fervent prayers, faith healing and prophecy. Ilogu also notes another Igbo group:

The first Ibo founded 'Prayer-Healing' Church was by Madam Nwokolo of Ufuma who in the early 40's started healing through prayer, fasting and use of holy oil (1974:61).

This latter group is now strongly rooted in Igboland and in Nigeria. It has branches in Europe, America and different parts of Africa. The main characteristic features of their liturgy include: singing heart lifting religious songs, clapping of hands so loudly while singing, use of candle sticks during different sessions of prayer, use of holy oil, holy water and holding the crucifix in the hand pointing it to a depressed person, while praying for him/her. They have a lot of symbolic displays during their prayers and a lot of people have testified being healed through them (Personal observation). There is therefore nothing preventing the Church in Igboland from adopting this kind of method in its liturgy for special religious worship. To do this, some members of the congregation who have special gifts can be incorporated during these special worship sessions, after due training and guidance by the pastor. Families who are facing crisis can be given special attention during this worship, if they so wish.

### **7.3.2 Use of Sacred Music**

Despite the use of heart lifting music during special healing worships, the pastoral care-giver can use sacred music at any other time he/she deems necessary. When the agony of Jesus Christ was

approaching, after celebrating the last super with His disciples, He sang a hymn with His disciples before they proceeded to Mount Olives (Mk.14:26[RSV]). His statement after this was:

You will all fall away; for it is written 'I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered'. But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee (Mk.14:27-28[RSV]).

He started recalling what would happen to Him, after their hymn singing and thereafter, they went to Gethsemane to pray (Mk.14:32). The hymn must have given Him some strength and confidence to face the approaching agony, before He proceeded to a place for prayers. Edwina Ward, agreeing with this idea says that a pastor can find out the hymn/song which a sick person likes most, during hospital visits if he/she is a Christian (CPE lecture note, 1999). This can lead the person into deeper consolation during the period of crisis. If Churches can sing hymns and choruses during funeral ceremonies, it can also be applied during crisis moments. The Igbo traditional healers who claim to handle mental cases make use of songs so much. At times their patients are lined up, beating local musical instruments, singing and dancing in a procession along the main roads. In recent times, the fastest growing Churches in Igboland are those ones that make extensive use of musical instruments.

The pastor can ask the family for the music or chorus which they love most. They can sing it together while the pastor tries to assist them in their crisis. Each member of the family can also be asked to introduce the one he/she likes most. Through the discussion on the content of the hymn/chorus, they can proceed to other family matters.

### **7.3.3 Family Altar**

Christian families can be encouraged to create a space in their homes for a family altar. This will replace the domestic shrines found in the traditional Igbo families. Ilogu, being concerned about an indigenous Church, which is native and traditional to the Igbos, says that the Christians should be taught to replace the domestic shrines with family altars (1974:213). On this family altar, religious objects like the crucifix, candle sticks of different colours, pictures of saints and important religious places will be displayed. Also images and artistic representation of the various historical facts of the life of our Lord and other good artistic representation of the life of faith can be displayed. This will be very close to Igbo traditional religious environment and can stimulate meditation even when no word is uttered. The pastor can call the family members together during the time of crisis in this venue for a sacramental and symbolic worship. After this, they can sit down together and discuss the crisis. If the traditional *dibias* can do so successfully in their traditional way, a trained pastor may

be able to do better.

#### **7.3.4 Pastoral Visits**

The visit of the pastor as has been discussed in chapter six, has a profound healing effect on a family experiencing crisis. This visit is always expected by the family especially during a crisis period. The pastor has access to the home of every body who is related to the family. The visits should not end when the problem ends, but should continue as the pastor plans another way of helping them. During these visits, the pastor can make extensive use of the family altar, either for sacramental or symbolic worship and for special meditation when the family is depressed. He/she can also use the opportunity to invite the family for prayers during the special liturgical worship in the Church or for pastoral counselling. Other issues concerning pastoral visits have been discussed.

#### **7.4 The Facilitating Role of the Pastor**

For effective ministry the pastor needs to play the role of a facilitator. There is never a time he/she can give effective care alone in his/her area of ministry. Jesus was quite aware of this and as such trained His disciples who would assist Him reach out to others. Luke, says:

And He called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases and He sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal (Lk.9:1-2 [RSV]).

Matthew also says, 'Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest"' (Matt.9:37-38 [RSV]). These statements show that Christian ministry is not for one person alone but a joint ministry for all the believers. Hunter says that mission and ministry belong to the people. The pastor is there to be the trainer and the equipper of the people (1983:65). A pastor acts as a facilitator of his/her parishioners, in giving care to the people. Gerald West, commenting on the functions of a facilitator says that the facilitator should use a method that encourages the whole group to participate; he/she should manage conflict and make the group a safe place for member participation; train others to become facilitators; clarify what is not clear; make the group become aware of and involved in the needs of the community. A facilitator therefore helps the progress and empowerment of others, makes it easier for others to act, contribute and to acquire skills (1993:24). Within the Igbo setting, the pastor can through the many groups give care to the depressed, through these principles of

facilitation. These groups would include Church elders, family heads, local ministers, group of professionals and discussion groups. He/she can also organize workshops, seminars, exploration missions, precaution campaign, co-operative society, mass literacy campaigns and group counselling.

**7.4.1 Church Elders, Title Holders and Family Heads:** Since the Igbos recognise the wisdom of elders, title holders and family heads in their traditional method of caring for people in crisis (Ottenberg 1997:3), the pastor through the process of facilitation as seen above, can empower these groups of people to play the same role they would have played traditionally, in a Church setting. These groups of people can also go on training other facilitators to continue in the renewal and empowerment process.

**7.4.2 Empowerment of the Family:** The pastor groups the families according to the crisis they are facing. Through the principles of facilitation, he/she can assist them to discuss the deepest level of their crisis. Each family can contribute ideas of possible outlets from their crisis. When many families are discussing a particular crisis, each will be encouraged to know that they are not alone in their problems. Exchange of ideas can also open up new possibilities. The trained facilitators as seen above can also assist, especially where the pastor may not be available.

**7.4.3 Co-operative Bodies:** Where the problems faced by the families are more of the financial nature, or of unemployment and retrenchment, the Church can bring in experts who can help these families form co-operative bodies. Such bodies can be for large scale farming, trading or any other jobs through which the families can be sustained. The Church can also assist in securing loans or raising funds from wealthy members of the society or other organizations.

**7.4.4 Enlightenment Campaign:** The Church can lead in an enlightenment campaign towards destroying ethnic discrimination, marginalization, crime, domination and oppression. The Church as a religious body stands better chances of speaking against inhuman practices.

**7.4.5 Referrals:** As the pastor cannot claim to know everything, he/she should refer the family to a more professional person who can render professional assistance to them, when he/she feels that the problem has gone beyond what he/she can handle. Such professionals may be a psychotherapist, a professional family counsellor, a medical doctor etc. He/she can still follow up and find out from them how helpful the professional has been to them, and continue to offer pastoral care.

**7.4.6 Discussion Groups:** The pastor can organize the families of particular crisis experiences in

his/her congregation into discussion groups, and invite experts on family life to share with them. These crises could range from divorce to bereavement and to abuse. The discussion groups can go on discussing other relevant matters even when the expert is not there and find other ways and means of preventing and combating crisis in the family.

**7.4.7 Seminars and Workshops:** The pastor can organize seminars and workshops for families during family weeks. These will be geared towards promoting healthy family life. Each participant will have an opportunity of contributing and asking questions. There are some members of the parish who are more talented and trained than the pastor in some areas. He/she can use such people to organize seminars and workshops on family life.

Other roles which the pastor can play as a facilitator include exploration mission, precaution campaign, HIV/AIDS enlightenment campaign, use of local ministers and group counselling. Bearing in mind that family systems are always a very problematic area, the pastor can invite members of his/her parish who will be willing to explore possible ways of tackling the crises which families face especially those ones peculiar to that community. This will help the members of that community to have an authentic source of reference when crises arise.

With the members of the parish, the pastor can mount a campaign, letting people know the implications of allowing problems last within the family system. Some of these implications may lead to the possibilities of waywardness which may lead to STDs, HIV/AIDS, drunkenness, drug addiction etc. Bearing in mind the rate of increase of people living with HIV/AIDS within the society and the stigma that follows it, the pastor should also organize an enlightenment campaign on it. Experts on this field should be occasionally invited, to teach the people preventive measures and how to care for the people living with the ailment.

A major trust could also be on home-based pastoral caring of people living with HIV/AIDS. In this case, the pastor can devise a means of visiting such people in their homes, on regular bases. This may prove very fruitful because most of them are discharged from the hospital and they return to their homes. Visiting them in their homes will provide the opportunity of counselling them and the members of their family.

## **7.5 Other Ways Forward**

Some adapted counselling models suitable for a dysfunctional family can be devised. A family support group for those who are emotionally depressed can be formed.

### **7.5.1 Family Support Group for the Emotionally Depressed**

Having identified some possible methods for pastoral caring, as seen above, the writer wishes to go further by devising a model which he feels can be of great help. This is the family support group for emotional depression. The causes of their crisis can be dealt with in this model.

#### **Method of Approach–**

Four different groups/cells will be formed whose purpose will be to deal with the said cause of depression associated with war, poverty, oppression and religious violence. Then each group/cell will be made up of six members who experience the same kind of problem, with a facilitator to assist them. One to one counselling sessions can be held by the pastor for families that need help, to determine the source of their emotional depression. Each group with the assistance of their facilitator can afterwards discuss their problems and share their experiences together.

#### **Therapy–**

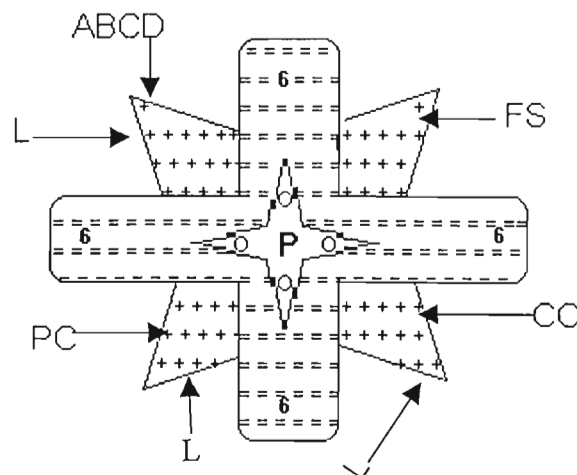
This will start from the listening skills of the pastor during the first contact and during the one-to-one session with the family experiencing the crisis. Then following this will be their talking together within the group and speaking out their problems. They can then share their experiences together as members of one group. While doing this, they may be supporting one another as they think of ways forward and also being sustained as they recognize that someone cares and that they are not alone in their crisis. They learn from the group and from one another, a variety of ways of approaching the same problem and similar problems. Members can be healed as they gain new insight into their crisis.

The writer has drawn sketch XII below to demonstrate how this family support group will work.



## **SKETCH XII: SHOWING THE FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP/CELL FOR EMOTIONAL DEPRESSION.**

(Original sketch of the researcher)



- : Family support group/cell, made up of six members each
- + + + : Skills to be applied by the pastor and facilitators
- O : Facilitators to be trained in caring and counselling skills by the pastor
- L : Listening
- P : Pastor
- P C : Pastoral Care;
- CC : Crisis Counselling;
- FS : Follow up Sessions

The pastor can also arrange for a special session with all these groups which may conclude with a special healing worship, conducted in a special liturgy as explained beforehand.

### **7.6 Pastoral Counselling and Skills**

To carry out the above model effectively, the facilitator needs some counselling skills which include listening, attention, timing, neutrality, empathy etc (Burnham 1986:164ff). Fairchild, is of the idea that whether a pastor is secondary or primary in counselling, he/she always has a key role to play at crisis moments (1980:103f). It is also the belief of Wynn that pastors have no choice in any form of therapy within the context of their Church. Whether they are trained or not, whether they do it well or badly, they must be involved with family crisis (1982:18f). Hunter therefore points out that pastoral care and counselling should embody “contextual creativity” (1995:233). Pastors, whether trained or not must be creative in any situation they find themselves. Fairchild, gives out the following points as what the care giver can do.

- ☐ Through the attention of the care-giver, the family could know that someone cares;
- ☐ Help the family to give suggestions on how to deal with the problem they are facing;

- ❑ Describe to the family the precautions in painful periods;
- ❑ Help to convince resistant relatives or those contributing to the family crisis, to help them to live peacefully;
- ❑ The pastor can help a family understand the unpredictable behaviour, confusion, vacillating emotions, that often occur in family life and how to deal with them(1980:105).

Dealing with crisis in family systems may not be only one event. It may require a series of appointments between the pastor and the members of the family. This may lead to pastoral counselling by the trained pastor or psycho-therapy by a professional. In summary the pastor should help the family increase the awareness of their potential for power and effectiveness, give assistance to the family when they are together and not separately, and help them to get a clear knowledge and understanding of their problem. The pastor should not solve the problems for them but help them towards improving their communication. He/she should not interpret their point for them but give them the chance to speak out their mind. The pastor should also help them to build up their trust in God, believing that faith and trust in God can help them in difficult times. The success of the pastoral care in this situation lies in the ability to help the family reach their full affirmation (Switzer 1978:102ff, Wynn 1982:161ff, Minuchin 1974:89f, Clinebell 1966:27ff).

### **7.6.1 Counselling Skills**

A pastor should always bear in mind that counselling means enabling others to help themselves (Campbell 1981:22). The family should be able to articulate their pains and be willing to seek pastoral help in order to deal with it (Hunter 1990:849). The pastor, in line with the idea of Stone, should be able to enable the family experience the love of God in times of crisis (1976:91). It should therefore be specifically made clear to the family that all healing comes from God. Jesus Christ Himself is the ultimate, whom Christian counsellors imitate and He works hand in hand with His Father-God (Draper, 2000, Lecture handout).

One of the basic skills the pastor should exhibit is to let the client know that he/she is genuine, does care, does listen and does also understand. He/she should be able to convey this understanding to the client. Rogers, points out that, “it is necessary that the counsellor be visible in spite of the selective distortions of the client and crippling effects of misplaced self-regard (1961:284). Hunter, gives a cluster of methodologies which are now known as *Crisis Intervention Theory*. This involves five steps as follows:

**A.** Understanding crisis as homoeostatic upset: This means when the balance in a person's life is in crisis. Each person develops a certain homeostasis in life. Crisis arises when the homeostasis is disturbed. This is evidenced in the intensification of emotional distress or disorientation such as anxiety, depression, guilt or anger.

**B.** Recognizing the kind of imbalance: According to Hunter, various kinds of emotional distress or disorientation have their sources in one of these four dimensions:

- (i) Intrapersonal dimension—inability of the individual to cope with his/her own cognitive, emotional or behaviour impulses.
- (ii) Interpersonal dimension—the individual's relationship with others and inability to enter into constructive problem solving with others.
- (iii) Physical dimension—the individual's health and inability to cope with life threatening, chronic illness or physical malfunction.
- (iv) Spiritual dimension—the individual's response to God or the religious community and inability to respond to redemptive message.

**C.** Recognizing the cause of the crisis: For immediate therapy, it is necessary to identify the immediate or precipitating cause of the homoeostatic imbalance, which comes from any of these sources.

- (i) A loss of support—losing someone or something which a person has established very close emotional ties, like family member, job, identity etc.
- (ii) A loss of control—experiencing a sense of helplessness and powerlessness in the face of what is perceived as an overwhelming threat or a set of impossible demands.
- (iii) A new or unique situation—being confronted with a situation that calls for adaptive behaviour in which a person has no opportunity for such new adaptation, such as occupational change, moving into a new place or environment (1990:78).

**D.** Achieving short-term stability: After identifying the kind of cause of the crisis, short term stabilization has begun. Hunter says, "This is accomplished through the development of a model to help the person understand the cause and cure of the current crisis. The model of understanding develops as the crisis counsellor coaches or facilitates the person's understanding of his/her current situation. Through understanding and support, the person begins to develop a sense of regained control over his/her life. The model of understanding is then used as a beginning to help the person generate program for long-term stabilization, that will seek to remedy the problems identified as the source or cause (1990:246).

### 7.6.1.1 Basic Stages Which the Pastor Will Bear in Mind While Caring for the Family in Crisis

The pastoral care giver must always bear in mind what he/she must do in order to provide a successful care giving to a family in crisis. These include:

**Listening and forming rapport:** The first consideration he/she must have in mind, is family matrix in which the family in crisis is embedded (Switzer 1974:182). Minuchin, points out that family structure is not an entity immediately available to the observer. The therapist data and his/her diagnoses are achievable experientially in the process of joining the family. He/she not only hears the family members' story of their experience of reality, but also observes the way that family members relate to him/her and to each other. This is the analysis of the transnational field and it helps the therapist make a structural diagnosis (1974:89). This implies that the therapist diagnosis out of what he/she has observed going on in the family.

**Initial signal:** He/she starts from the initial signal to diagnose the family matrix. This includes the nonverbal gesture and body language of the family. This helps him/her to understand much about their regards for each other. From participant observer, he/she gradually goes into active interventions (Minuchin 1974:89).

**Pastoral caring:** The pastoral care giver will define his/her goal and move towards this, aiming at the family transformation. This however, may not be achieved in a single therapeutic intervention but requires a continuous involvement in the direction of the therapeutic goal. The experience of the family, personal experiences, techniques and methods of approach of the care giver, will contribute so much to the success of the intervention.

**Crisis Counselling:** The pastoral care-giver will employ all the relevant techniques of crisis counselling as seen earlier to approach the situation of the family. A lot of creativity is required at this stage. If the channel of communication is re-established between the conflicting spouse subsystem, sibling subsystem or the entire family system, then the therapeutic goals must have been achieved (Minuchin 1974:89).

**Follow up sessions:** The pastor arranges for follow up sessions for the family, in order to enable them to grow, by encouraging them to join any of the family support groups/cells.

This process is represented in sketch XII (p.97), with the following abbreviations:

L----Listening skills; PC– Pastoral care; CC– Crisis counselling; FS– Follow up session.

### 7.6.1.2 The ABCD Method of Counselling

This is a crisis intervention skill proposed by Clinebell (1966:35ff), Switzer (1974:32ff). These abbreviations stands for:

**A**—Achieving contact point;   **B**—Boiling down the problem;  
**C**—Coping actively with the problem;   **D**—Develop the future plan.

- (A) This aspects marks the beginning of the relationship. What is important here is the client experiencing a hearty welcome, being listened to with love, caring and trust. The client is also motivated to relax. Creative ways of easing the tension of the disturbed person to relax are important. Through empathy, the counsellor can show understanding of the client's feeling, thoughts and actions (Clinebell 1966:35-37).
- (B) What is important here on the part of the counsellor is responding and focusing. He/she has to be conscious of non-verbal behaviour, feelings and meaning (Clinebell 1966:38). For example, a person may deny being hurt, but at the same time he/she may be crying. The behaviour clarifies the situation. The counsellor should not however be judgmental. It is better to think more of different resources for supportive measures. This will strengthen the growth of that family (Clinebell 1966:41).
- (C) This aspect evaluates A and B. Suffering can make people to isolate themselves from the society. The family should be encouraged to set goals in order of priorities. The counsellor may help them look at various alternatives. The family will also be reminded that whenever they are blocked, the pastor is always available for help (Switzer 1974:42-47).
- (D) The need for the process of follow-up is important. The counsellor can motivate the client to establish an action plan and encourage him/her to follow them seriously. The family will be helped to make plans and steps towards changes, however small (Clinebell 1966:207).

The pastoral care giver may not be expected to be perfect in counselling, but since he/she is always faced with situations involving counselling, these basic methods and skills must be born in mind. Also since the pastor has the challenge of training lay facilitators to assist in the effective caring ministry within the parish, it is an essential step to get them acquainted with these basic skills. It is true that perfection is not achieved overnight, but with consistent practice and application of these skills the parishioners will be less worried, due to their effective caring system.

## **7.7 A Suggested Traditional Model Therapy**

The researcher has also tried to devise this model which he calls traditional model therapy. In this therapy, the pastor can start his/her encounter through one-to-one counselling with members of the family. He/she will apply the relevant counselling skills during this encounter. By the end of this session, he/she would have had an idea of the nature of crisis which the family is facing. Fairchild says, "one-to-one conversation with the concerned clergy may be simply a beginning of the process, a consultation in which the usefulness of many resources is assessed" (1980:47).

After one-to-one, the next few meetings may take place in counselling sessions with the whole family present. The final step will be to gather the members of that family at their family altar as suggested earlier. Some of the experienced Church elders will also be invited to that family altar, if the family so wish. Their presence will replace the role of elders in the traditional caring system. These elders must have been trained by the pastor in the duties of a facilitator and have basic counselling skills. The Igbos attach some spiritual importance to the presence of elders.

The pastor will then open up the session with the celebration of Eucharist, exhortation from the Bible relating to the nature of their depression, hymns selected jointly by the pastor and members of the family. Prayers led by the pastor and the elders will then follow. The Igbos also see prayers from elders as invocation of blessings.

The final session will be followed by confession and reconciliation. Since the Igbos believe in symbols, the candle sticks, possibly of different colours may be arranged and lighted in an artistic manner, by the pastor. The pastor will also be in clerical outfit with a red stole, to show that they are in a serious ritual. The reconciliation here will be first, with God and then among themselves, after a session of confession. This will help to clear the anxiety, self blame and guilt before the discussions ensue. Switzer, says, "crisis is often caused by anxiety, self-blame and frequently a sense of personal failure and guilt, which may lead to a constricted perspective on accumulated problems" (1974:42f). By the end of this session, each member of the family may feel free and elevated. They can then dialogue with refreshed and free minds.

Other aspects of the counselling and dialogue can now ensue, with the pastor and the elders coming in at intervals, either to clarify or direct the line of the discussion so that they don't over emphasize irrelevant aspects. They will also help the family to come out with suggestions and ways of overcoming their crisis. The awareness that this category of people are assisting them to overcome

their crisis may be enough healing for the family. The whole process may end up with the family being invited to the Church for prayers during the special liturgical worship. This time, it will no longer be at their family altar but with other members of the congregation. After this prayers, the family can then join any of the family support groups where they fit in, for follow up sessions.

### **7.8 INTEGRATING WESTERNIZED FORM OF PASTORAL COUNSELLING SKILLS WITH THE SUGGESTED TRADITIONAL MODEL THERAPY.**

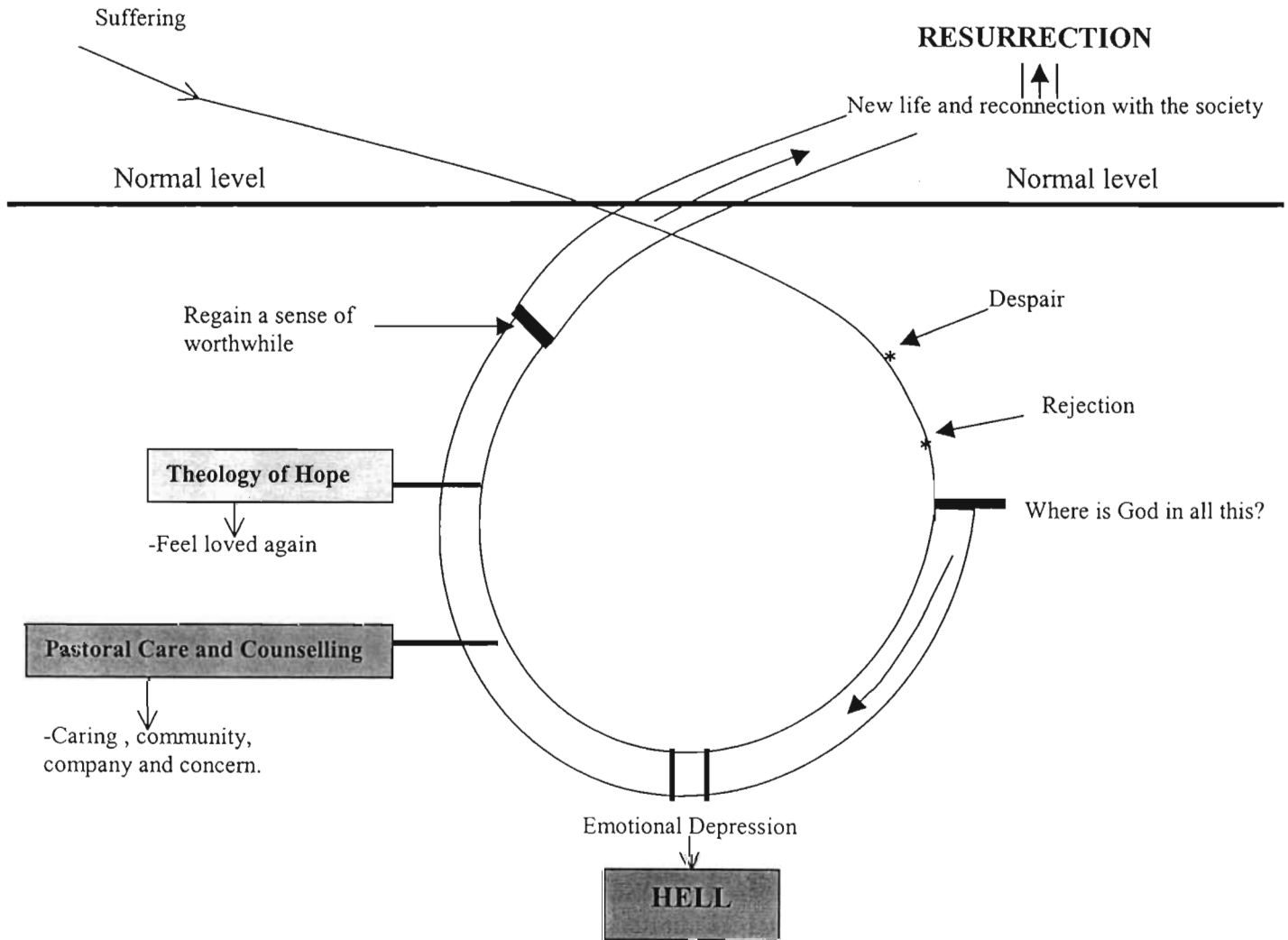
The researcher has highlighted some of the westernized form of pastoral counselling skills which are already in use. Some of these skills include Crisis Intervention Theory by Hunter (1990:78, 246) and ABCD method of counselling (Clinebell 1966:35ff; Switzer 1974:32ff). These skills have been discussed above. It is necessary for a pastor to have these skills at his/her finger tips while approaching any counselling situation. A further step will be to integrate the skills into the suggested therapy for crisis intervention. These therapy as seen above are the family support group and the traditional model therapy.

The pastor can help the Church elders and other people he/she intends to use as facilitators in acquiring the skills. These skills can be applied whenever a situation calls for them. By doing so the counselling intervention will go beyond the traditional idea of giving advice. While it is traditionally based, it still combines the westernized skills of pastoral counselling. These therapy and skills have been discussed above, what now matters is their proper integration.

The researcher has made sketch XIII below to show the hopeful outcome of effective caring for an emotionally depressed dysfunctional family.

**SKETCH XIII: SHOWING THE PROCESS OF RESURRECTION FOR AN EMOTIONALLY DEPRESSED DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY.**

(Original work of the researcher).



After this whole process of pastoral caring, which also involves counselling, there is hope that the depressed family will be resurrected and be re-integrated into the society for a happier social life. It is the hope of the researcher that after combining the westernized form of counselling skills, the traditional skills already existing within the society and the suggested traditionally based model therapy, the result shown in the above sketch will be possible.



## 7.9 CONCLUSION

This dissertation has looked into the deepest crisis moments of the dysfunctional Igbo family system. This is seen as their period of emotional depression which is labeled here as “descending into hell”. It is discovered that the circumstances that lead to this condition are associated with their historical, cultural, political, economic, social and religious factors. These factors create unbearable dysfunctional patterns which later result in emotional depression within the family system.

This research has shown that the first step towards solving a problem, is gaining proper insight towards it. Also the proper understanding of a people, their culture, their history, their social institutions, the likely causes of crisis in their life and how they respond to crises are very useful steps towards giving care to those people. A pastor who understands the geographical, historical, social, political and cultural background of the Igbos can intervene properly in their crisis moments, within their family system. It is also noted that religion is at the center of every Igbo healthy family system. Religion can also tear a healthy Igbo family system apart. In effect, successful pastoral care to any Igbo family in crisis, must have God in the central position.

### 7.9.1 Summary of the Research Findings

It has been seen from the research that the Igbos have very high regard for religion and religious personnel. The pastor should therefore be aware of this leadership position he/she occupies in the mind of the Igbos, and try to maintain his/her integrity. He/she should also be aware of the power of religion in tearing families apart or holding them together. The pastor should always be aware of his/her position as shepherd of souls and as one who nurtures members of his/her congregation. The family looks upon the pastor both in times of sadness and in times of joy.

There is need for a pastoral-carer to be a typical example in his/her own family life to the members of his/her congregation. He/she should not preach one thing and practice the reverse. He/she should also see the emotional depression/crisis of the families in his/her congregation as his/her own as well, so that he/she can be committed enough to assist them. In this regard, the pastor should understand that he/she is not superior to the families being assisted. He/she is only called upon in virtue of the position he/she occupies, which is a position of service. The service of a pastor should be made available to every member of his/her congregation/community, not just to a particular class in the community, like the wealthy class only. Visits should always be aimed at healing, guiding,

sustaining, reconciling, admonishing, counselling, educating and at times administration of sacrament. Visits must also be made to the family members in hospital, during separation and divorce, when the home is broken and in each case, healing and renewal of hope should be administered to them. Regular visits to the distressed family are a source of great empowerment.

The pastor has to shape his/her crisis ideas to conform to what is obtainable within the community where he/she is serving. He/she is expected to make him/herself a source of safety, security, self defense and strength to the family in crisis. It is also important to trace and identify the very source of emotional depression and crisis in the family life of parishioners.

The place of God as the central focus in family life can never be ignored. The family members should always be reminded of this and what God's love means in their public and private lives and in times of crisis. Igbo families are to be reminded not to resort to the traditional way of resolving disputes which may often take them back to idol worshiping. The Christian God is the same God whom they approach in traditional worship and will help without reference to any idol. The pastor can help them to make the good news and joy of the gospel replace the old fears of the idols and wicked ancestors and the harms they can bring.

The family is to be reminded of the very love that held them together from the beginning of their family life. Spouses may be reminded of the elaborate rituals they passed through before they lived together as husband and wife and also all the vows they made during their wedding in the Church. They should guide their children in family oneness and love of God and then exclude them from family crisis. It is a blessing from God to have children in the marriage in the understanding of the Igbos, so these children should be well cared for.

The family can be assisted to identify new perspectives in their problems and by themselves suggest new possibilities. The pastor can help the family discover the gifts which they don't know they already have which they can develop. Where the pastor can not give them all the help they need, he/she can refer them to better qualified experts.

Since the Igbos naturally believe in symbols and symbolisms, a depressed family can be invited to the Church privately, kneeling in front of the altar, each one of them will be told to pray for their problems. The pastor concludes the prayer by picking points out of what they prayed for, and affirm the same by giving them his/her blessing. This can also be done at family altars and special Church liturgies. Brief scriptural passages and some relevant psalms can be additional readings before or

after the prayers. The pastor can also help any family member who admits guilt to ask for forgiveness and ensure that their line of communication is reopened.

The family should be helped to understand the unpredictable behaviour, confusion, vacillating emotions, that often occur in family systems and how to deal with them. The pastor should be conscious of his/her ability in assisting a family reach their full affirmation in their family life. He/she can in a very careful manner, re-echo those natural Igbo factors that bind families together and at the same time remind them of the traditional Igbo inclination and trust in God.

Having discussed all these, any pastoral care-giver must also bear in mind that whatever technique adopted for the family therapy, the most important thing is to re-integrate the family into the wider society and in full communication with God. Resurrection here, to them means re-establishment of good communication links within the spouse subsystem, within the sibling subsystem, between the parental and sibling subsystems, between the family and the society and between the family and God.

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## APPENDIX I

### THE GREAT PHYSICIAN NOW IS NEAR

(The first hymn sung at Onitsha by the Christian missionaries, which won the heart of the people)

- (1) The Great Physician now is near  
The sympathizing Jesus  
He speaks, the drooping heart to cheer,  
Oh! Hear the voice of Jesus  
  
Sweetest note in seraph song  
Sweetest name on mortal tongue  
Sweetest carol ever sung, Jesus blessed Jesus
- (2) Your many sins are all forgiven  
Oh! Hear the voice of Jesus  
Go on your way in peace to heaven  
And wear a crown with Jesus
- (3) All glory to the dying lamb  
I now believe in Jesus  
I love the blessed Saviour's name  
I love the name of Jesus
- (4) And when to that bright world above  
We rise to be with Jesus  
We'll sing around the throne of love  
His name, the name of Jesus.

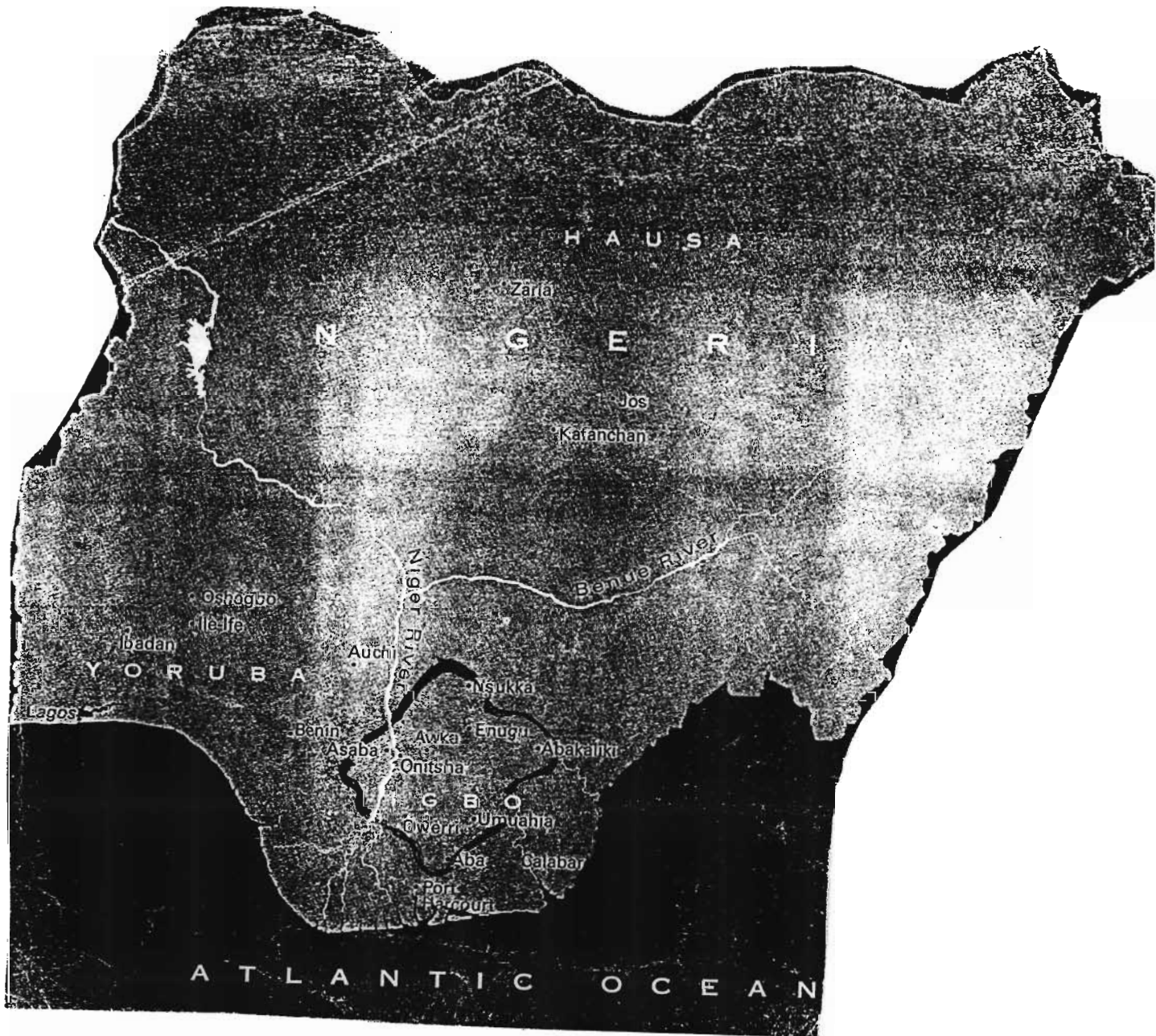
**MAP I: Area Occupied by Nigeria in Africa.**

(Adapted from Ottenberg 1997:xviii)



MAP II: Where the Igbo People Live within Nigeria.

(Adapted from Ottenberg 1997:xviii)



— The boundary of the Igbos within Nigeria