The Primitive Methodists declared 1931 a Jubilee Year with a book aptly entitled, Akuko Oke Onu (A Story of Great Joy). The indomitable missionary, Fred William Dodds, painted a picture of a missionary enterprise in Igboland which had proved to be a huge success. He illustrated it with the story of Uzuakoli. Apparently, the first contact with Uzuakoli in 1910 was fraught with danger as unfriendly villagers surrounded the white missionary and his young African companion from the Niger Delta area, wielding matchets and spears. A prominent chief, Iheukumere, presided over the episode. This, in fact, was the point which Dodds wished to make: twenty-one years later, the Primitive Methodists held a huge rally attended by converts from all over Igboland, comprising of about ninety-six circuits, at Uzuakoli:

Again there was a great crowd standing in a ring around the open space. Again a solitary man sat on the same log on which I had sat. This time, the crowd consisted of hundreds of Christian men and women, from Uzuakoli and from all the Ibo circuits. The solitary man sitting on the log was the same Iheukumere, who twenty one years before, had sought to stir up his people to set about me and make it impossible for me to bring in any more of the white man’s ways. It was a complete turning of the tables.

Dodds always wrote with an intriguing imagination. Actually, Chief Iheukumere kept the covenant with the gods of his fathers and never converted to Christianity. This raises the question whether the tables were so completely turned. Did Dodds exaggerate the success of the enterprise after years of resistance? In the following year, 1932, the Primitive Methodist missionary enterprise ended as they reunited with the Wesleyans.

The time span covered by Akuko Oke Onu provides a convenient time frame for this paper, which intends to analyse the missionary enterprise of the Primitive Methodists in Igboland until they lost their “primitive” stripe.
I. Literature and Methodology

The secondary literature is scanty. E. A. Udo's doctoral dissertation concentrates on his native Ibibioland. S. N. Nwabara and Elizabeth Isichei's monographs give the Primitive Methodists cursory attention, while a number of undergraduate dissertations mention the activities of this church only in relation to the narrow confines of the communities studied. Indeed, the Methodists in Igboland are becoming acutely aware of the lack of their own history. The recent crisis in the church could, in fact, lead to much distortion because conflicts are often fuelled with distorted and validating reconstructions of the past.

The other historiographical danger posed is that as the generation of these early years die off, the "missionary" accounts of prolific protagonists such as Fred William Dodds will monopolize the "facts". It is a truism in historiography that sources have a way of dominating perceptions of a problem. Moreover, Dodds was an energetic propagandist par excellence: he wrote several accounts of the enterprise, compiled dictionaries, and contributed regularly to various missionary magazines which were designed to raise money, boost morale and aid recruitment. As the Secretary to the Home Mission wrote in complimenting him on a series entitled "Piccin's Page" in the Herald,

Your Piccins article is evidently read as your reference to my prickly heat experience has led to a number of questions

and later wondered:

how you get through all your typing and the matters that you send on. I hope that it is correct of you as one of my friends says that he can type three times as fast as he can write—that would explain some things.

As late as 1929 when Dodds was contemplating retirement, a new Secretary, Eyre, still gushed:

How you get through all your tasks I do not know and where you find time to write an Ibo-English Dictionary puzzles me but I have heard from members of the staff that you can do with half the sleep of an ordinary man.

The history of this early period of the enterprise has in fact been dominated by Dodds's writings. His "Ibo Opening" is a standard text—though still in archival manuscript form. He also wrote "Notes on Early Days in Uzuakoli", which A. J. Fox included in his collection on the history of Uzuakoli. Fox performed an enter-