

**CHRISTIAN MISSIONS' INITIATIVES IN
THE PARTURITION AND
PROGRESSION OF FORMAL
EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE PRE-
COLONIAL, COLONIAL AND POST
COLONIAL EPOCHS.**

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I START WITH SOME QUOTATIONS – ENTREATING REFUTATION OR CONFIRMATION

- LORD BROUGHMAN :” Education makes a people easy to lead but difficult to drive, easy to govern but impossible to enslave”
- **DRYDEN** “By Education most have been misled, so they believe because they were so bred.”
- **AWOLOWO** : To educate the children and enlighten the illiterate adults is to lay a solid foundation not only for future social and economic progress but also for political stability because a truly educated citizenry is, one of the most powerful deterrents to dictatorship and feudal autocracy.
- PETER FALK “Perhaps the greatest service of the missionaries in virtually all colonial territories in Sub-Saharan Africa, was the promotion of western education and the development of vernacular literature”

Christian mission and Education

- This lecture attempts to portray that so far as **Christian Missions**(I mean "The mainline Churches' or "Missionary established churches?) are concerned ,**Christianity and education are inseparable entities.**
- The contributions of Christianity to the development of Nigeria, and indeed many countries in West Africa in the area of education are discernable.
- This paper underlines the great impact of Education and its snowball effects on other social institutions, such as the political, healthcare, language and human development, moral and spiritual development, etc.

The importance of Education

To be sure, whenever we talk of education, we assume something that is positive, elevating and worth pursuing; it is in such sense that we speak of having education or being an educated person.

- For educational system to be valuable it should contribute to the national development because education is not just an end in itself but a vital means to an end.
- **It is basic to nation-building because It is the best weapon in the battle against societal ills such as malnutrition, disease, ignorance, unemployment, superstitious beliefs and practices and so on.**

What did the Christian Missions contribute to education in Nigeria?

.The missionaries started, pruned and promoted Western education that was offered free or at highly subsidized fees in most cases.

Most Nigerian leaders benefitted from the virtually free education offered by the missionaries, which became the bedrock for Nigerian nationalism and independence.

Their Christian model served as the bedrock of later post colonial developments in education

MAJOR TYPES OF EDUCATION

- Traditional indigenous education,
 - Formal/ Western education
 - Of course, there is Islamic education
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- Our contention is that it is the introduction of Western education that changed the education landscape in Nigeria, significantly.

Why the epochs are important

“To appreciate the efforts of the Missions in Education, it would be more expedient to look at the major components of development at three major epochs, namely:

- The Pre-Colonial.
- The Colonial.
- The Post -Colonial Stages (From the late 1950s).

The Pre-Colonial (from about the 15th century to the 1840s)

- Some argue, with some good reasons, that Africa had her indigenous education and her best time in the economic, political, social and cultural context of pre-colonial Black Africa.
- Evidence abounds in the veracity of these claims in the establishment and thriving of empires and ancient kingdoms in Mali, Ghana, Oyo, Sokoto and Benin and so on. These are among the pre-Colonial African Centres of learning and civilisation .

- In the 16th century, the Catholic missionaries who accompanied the Portuguese navigators on their expeditions only attended to the spiritual needs of the Portuguese community.
- They had absolutely nothing to offer to educational development of the Africans

THE COLONIAL Period (from 1884 or slightly earlier)

Starting from the time of the Portuguese, the Atlantic slave trade started and halted the progress of indigenous knowledge and expertise. Most able men and women that represented the potentials of Africa were forcefully transported to the Americas, Europe and the Caribbean (Rodney, 1972)

- Soon after the slave trade was officially abolished in the 1860s, Africa was not only opened up for European commerce, the land became a scrambling field for European nations. After the Berlin Conference (1884-85), colonial administrative structures stepped, in sometimes peacefully but most times, forcefully.
- So, the end of slave trade ushered in colonialism and its major fruit - western education.

The goal of colonial administration

- The colonial administration basically sought economic advantages but these were hard to disentangle from political and strategic motives
- The essential aim of colonial education was the supply of **subordinate personnel** necessary for the effective functioning of the colonial administration: In Korea, for example, Japan imposed several measures designed to assimilate the Korean population, including outlawing **Korean language and even Korean family names.** -
- **Ngugi wa Thiongo** believes that colonial education instills a sense of **inferiority and disempowerment with the collective psyche of a colonised person**

The goal of colonial administration (Cont.)

- As Moumouni asserts :

The curricula and texts of the Colonial period ensured that everything was directed at convincing the young African of the inferiority of the blacks, and generosity of the colonising nation" (Moumouni, 1967:43). ‘

Quality was deliberately lower than those obtainable in the home countries, given only to a small minority,

Against this background one cannot but appreciate the efforts of the missionaries.

- **After** the Protestant Evangelical Revivals (ER) of the 18th century, West Africa benefitted considerably from the efforts of the missionaries in a variety of ways, particularly in Education because their motives vision and values were different from that of the colonialists.

The Missionaries and Colonial Governments' motives were at variance. For example, examine the case of the Basel Mission in the Gold Coast

- **Lets us compare the Basel Code with the Colonial Government's Principle**
- The Basel Mission (BM) agreed to open a mission on the Gold Coast under the protection of the Danes. The missionaries to be sent out on this mission were given a 5-point mandate in the Gold Coast:

Basel Mission set of instructions

- Love the people with the Love of the Lord;
- Preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ;
- Perceive mission in some measure as a work of compensation for the evils of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade;
- Locate a right and proper site where Mission Station may be cited;
- Study and become proficient at speaking the language of the people, corresponding, preaching and teaching in the language”.

The Colonial Government Principle on the other hand specified that education must ensure :

- supply of subordinate personnel necessary for the effective functioning of the colonial administration
- provision of interpreters, who will carry out oral translation from their language to another language
- short training of clerks, employees in commerce, nurses and veterinary assistants who will be under strict supervision,
- training of teachers, assistants to doctors and workers in various fields to support the vision of the government.

“The Post-colonial Stages”. (From The Late 1950s)

- For Nigeria, the decade of the 1960s marked a crucial transition from colonial to independent status. There was a wind of change that blew in virtually all sectors of the country's national life

“The Post-colonial Stages” Cont.

- Political independence was heralded from late 1950s through the 60s after concerted struggles of the Africans led by the emergent elites.
- At independence, there were high hopes and aspirations. Africa witnessed massive expansion in education, infrastructure and patriotic fervour.

“The Post-colonial Stages” Cont.

- In Nigeria ,It marked the launching of the 2nd National Development Plan with its New National Policy on Education,
- In Tanzania, Arusha Declaration and Education for Self - Reliance came into force began
- Liberation fervour and general development surfaced **under President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana**
- other healthy competitions in matters of development among various post - colonial leaders were some examples of emergent Africa.

Regrettably,

- AT THIS TIME the over ambitious attempts to increase the number of schools and pupils soon after gaining political independence without adequate preparation and provision, there was much led to degeneration of initial gains. These were compounded with **neo-colonialism, neo-imperialism, corruption and dictatorship** .
- Today, many would agree with Rodney that many African leaders systematically weakened and destroyed their continent through these counter compass (Achebe, 1983; Agbo. 2010).

THE CHRISTIAN MISSION'S LEADERSHIP in the expansion of EDUCATION is evident in the statistics

- By 1899, in Nigeria, for example
 - only **33 out of the 8,154** primary schools,
 - **9 out of the 136 secondary schools**, and
 - **only 13 of the 97 other schools**, were government-run.
- A similar story may be told about the Gold Coast.
- In Kenya and in Uganda all schools were conducted by missions.

some benefits of MISSIONARIES' INITIATIVES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION

- **In what ways did the Christian Mission help in the development of education especially in Nigeria?**

THE BEGINNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF FORMAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

- Started with the initiatives of the African slaves from Nova Scotia who initiated the Church life in Sierra Leone. Their successes included:
 - **starting the first schools before the British Methodists and the CMS missionaries arrived in Sierra Leone**

1. Breeding ground for learners and evangelists in West Africa.

- **Education served as one of their primary methods of the Nova Scotians evangelization:**
- With more assistance and more competent hands offered by the CMS who placed a high priority on the education of the settlers, S-L soon became the hotbed for indigenous beginners and experts in education in West Africa.

- The influence of the products of the Fourah Bay College in the religious and educational spheres in West Africa was remarkable.
- Most of those who became educationists contributed immensely to the education of their people in Sierra Leone and other West AFRICAN COUNTRIES.

- From the 1830s several Creoles travelled from S-L to other countries along the West African coast for trading purposes and serving as advance-party evangelists reaching out to other indigenous people.
- they invited the missionaries to assist in the work.
- With time more settlers and liberated slaves travelled to Lagos and Badagry and over 500 found their way to Abeokuta and surrounding towns.
- From these towns, some of the prominent Creoles remitted correspondences abroad to request for missionaries.

2 Health education and MEDICAL SERVICES

- After education, medical services occupied a second place in the missionary pursuit of Christian Missions in West Africa. Before the arrival of the European missionaries in Africa, the mortality rate among the people was very high.
- There was not much knowledge concerning many of these diseases. In many cases, as much as 6 out of 10 children died before they were two years old
- The missionaries produced greater impact on the Nigerian society through the establishment of dispensaries, maternity centres, hospitals and leper clinics. All the major missions built their own.
- Because they also used these as means of evangelism the missionaries gave their patients best treatments and adequate care.

3. Study and mastery of indigenous languages as well as the facilitation of the translation of sacred texts and school text books

- **There is a MISCONSTRUCTION OF IDEAS ABOUT THE MISSIONARIES INITIATIVES IN TEACHING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES**
- Missions were not only the first to open schools, they were also the first to develop the painstaking study of African languages, even if that was to facilitate the translation of sacred texts or to deepen the conduct of religious instruction in the native tongues.
- **While in S-L the missionaries with the help of the creoles embarked on the Study of their indigenous languages, they assisted in the translation of the Bible into many languages which included Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, and they helped also in the Preservation of the history of Local Culture:**

Missionaries should ever be remembered for preserving the vernacular in Nigeria. This was done against the craving of the colonial government which wanted to make the English Language , *the lingua franca*

- They missionaries sponsored and financed the writing of the indigenous languages, textbooks and Dictionaries. They also financed the translation of the Bible and other Christian and educational books into the Vernacular.

- As an example, a vernacular printing press was established at Abeokuta by the CMS in 1859 and a newspaper called the Iwe-Irohin was printed.
- Another press, less known, was in fact opened by the Presbyterians at Calabar in 1849 and a newspaper published in Efik language. These steps were taken in order to encourage the development and study of the vernacular.

Importance of promoting Indigenous languages in Schools

You may recall that : 2019 was recognized as the year of indigenous languages on purpose

- The UN website claims that there are not less than 7000 languages world-wide. About 2680 are in danger of extinction. **Yet we know that Language defines our identity.**
- It is through it that we express our history, our being and our culture, customs and traditions.
- Listen to Mandela, if you talk to persons in a language (foreign) which they learnt that goes to their head. BUT If you talk to them in the one they know (indigenous language), that goes to their heart.
- The proclamation and demonstration of the gospel by those who are committed to the salvation of people can best be done through the vernacular.

4.Provision of indigenous foundational Professionals

- The products of Fourah Bay College served as teachers, clergymen, doctors, lawyers and Civil Servants in Nigeria, Ghana and the Gambia. For example in 1925, forty-four out of the forty-six lawyers that served in Nigeria came from S-L.
- Some vocationalists freed slaves also worked in various artistic sectors- as carpenters, bricklayers and so on.

5. Agricultural education.

- The missionaries did not neglect agricultural education. They taught the Nigerians to be interested in agriculture as a substitute for the slave trade.
- In order to be successful, model farms were set up by the missionaries in different parts of the country. A coconut plantation was set up in Badagry by the Catholic mission; Cocoa and rubber plantations were established in Agbowa, in Ijebu Division; rubber plantation was set up in Benin while cotton growing was started in Abeokuta.
- The proceeds from the farms were used for the expansion of the missions and their activities.

6. Industrial education

- **This** was also given due attention. In 1903, an Industrial Institute was established in Abeokuta. In the Institute, cotton industry was taught to the converts.
- In 1897, an Industrial Institute was established in Eastern Nigeria. In these centres, boys were admitted and taught various trades such as carpentry, masonry, brick-making and pottery.
- After the training, the students were given money to establish on their own. In the Hope Waddell Institute, courses were given in naval engineering. In some of the Institutes, girls were taught domestic science and dress-making.

7. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

- Moreover, for a long while, religious establishments were alone in offering vocational education, frequently in the face of the fears or opposition of the colonial authorities.

SCHOOLS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION:

- The mission did a lot to advance the quality of life of marginalised groups which included persons with disabilities, particularly those with visual impairment and hearing defect.
- In Ghana, the school for the blind was established in the compound of PTC, Akropong in 1934.

8. Fighting obnoxious Practices

- In Nigeria, as in many other African countries, there were certain evil practices widespread among the people. These included human sacrifice, trial by ordeal, female circumcision, and ritual killings of various kinds.
- Even In some West African societies, whenever a paramount king died some of his slaves must either be killed or buried alive with him so they could continue to serve him in the hereafter.
- In certain African communities, twins were considered evil children who had to be eliminated so as not to put the well-being of the community in jeopardy ([Buchan, 1980](#)). Today, all these practices have been outlawed by government legislation, but it was the missionaries who first inveighed against these evils, often at great cost to themselves. Through this, the missionaries contributed in no small measure to peace, progress, and stability across African communities.

Political Awareness Leading to Self-Rule :

- The Creoles inspired political development in S-L. In 1850, they asked for more African representation in the Legislative and Executive Councils of S-L. In 1863, a new constitution was introduced which gave the Africans more representation on these councils.
- By the beginning of the 20th Century, the liberated Africans had formed an educated elite that dominated the political and social life of S-L.
- This political consciousness led to the fight for self rule. Sir, Milton Margai, the first Prime Minister of S-L was a product of missionary education.

9. Political Reforms

- Quietly, consistently, and modestly leading by precept and example, many missionaries inculcated Christian values, including the sanctity of human life, the worth of the individual, the dignity of labor and the importance of social justice, personal integrity, and freedom of expression, all of which have been incorporated into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights drawn up by the United Nations.
- These Christian ideals sparked sociopolitical reforms in Africa, as many African countries fashioned their constitutions to include many of them.
- These helped to accelerate the efforts to gain political independence of many African countries. [Kane \(1982\)](#) explains that without this groundwork laid by the missionaries, it is possible that not many countries in Black Africa would be independent of European control today

11. Their Methodology Served as bedrock for later Educational developments

- With time, the missionaries enlarged the curriculum and taught reading, writing, arithmetic, hygiene, nature study and religion. It should be noted that greatest emphasis was placed on religions and moral instruction.
- They were particular about character training and spiritual development. Any pupil, who behaved immorally and irreligiously was properly disciplined.

Modest interest and efforts in the development of higher education

- The main reason for the initial apathy of Missions was that, most of the mission workers with higher education usually looked for flimsy excuses for leaving the mission as soon as they got better paid jobs in the civil service or commerce. Unfortunately for the missions, the civil service and commerce offered higher salaries and better conditions of service to better educated Nigerians.
- The second reason was that the secondary schools were not appropriate centres for the spread of the gospel. This is because most of the students should have been converted in the primary schools.

- Another discovery by the missionaries was that the clever students used to concentrate more on the study of non-religious subjects. Therefore, the missionaries were convinced that the higher institutions would not serve the main purpose of spreading the gospel.
- Eventually, virtually, all missions in Nigeria produced Grammar Schools. By 1948, they were over 100.
- The missions continued to open more schools even though they received government assistance in respect of only 10 percent of the schools.

In spite of the criticisms

- If one looks at the lists of the early Higher schools owned by Mission, Private and the Government, Out of the first 31 School (1859- 1937) The Government and Private Schools owned only 7. The list starts with these:
 1. CMS Grammar School, Bariga, Lagos 6th. June 1859
 2. Methodist Boys High School 1878 (Its female arm, the Methodist High School Lagos started in 1879)
 3. Baptist Academy Lagos 1885
 4. Hope Waddell Training Institute, Calabar 1895
 5. St. Annes School Molete (for girls only)

- We are proud of the Baptist Mission Schools which are under the Directorate Baptist Mission Schools : Most of the schools (Boys and Girls) which include Reagan Memorial Baptist Girls' School (Day and Boarding) Baptist Girls High School, Idi Aba, Baptist Girls High School, Agbor, Olivet High School and so on, have
- CORE VALUES which include Spiritual and Academic Excellence, Moral uprightness, competence and professionalism and VISION which is to provide quality education, and to produce Christlike leaders

Theological Education

- The C.M.S. established St. Andrews' College Oyo, the Methodist Wesley College, Ibadan and the Baptist College, Iwo, as Teacher Training Colleges. Here, they produced trained teachers who would also help the Church in their stations after their course in the Colleges.
- Apart from these, most of the Missions followed up with Catechist Institutes which metamorphosed into Seminaries In West Africa after Fourah Bay College which was opened in Sierra Leone by the Anglican Church Missionary Society in 1827 , the next was The Presbyterian Training College (Seminary) in Akropong July 3, 1848 and the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary , Ogbomoso in 1898.

THE DOWNSIDE

- **1. The stigmatization and demonization of the African culture**
- Some missionaries went to the other extreme by labeling virtually everything which touches on rituals and ceremonies in Africa as fetishistic or idolatrous.
- This stigmatized many of the laudable African cultural practices that could have been used in the domestication of Christianity on the continent. It is in this context that Barett (1968) stated that the Christianity of the time was over-Europeanized.

- Even though contextualization makes the faith more relevant to the environment where it is being practiced, most missionaries did not see much need for the indigenization or contextualization of the faith until after the second decade in the 20th century.

2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF FREE EDUCATION IN WESTERN NIGERIA, 1951-1966 manifest more weaknesses

- **The strengths of this Scheme and the REASONS FOR GOVERNMENT'S CONTROL OF EDUCATION manifest more failures of the Missions Educational efforts .**

A. Lack of integrated universal management

- Government participation in education actively at this stage warranted a unified standard of control.
- In other words, government's participation henceforth, guaranteed uniform curricular, textbooks, timetable, staffing, supervision and inspection of school.

B. Lack of central examination structure

Before the government took over, there was **no central examination system and awards of certificates** . Many mission/private schools had their own standard at all levels.

C. Lack of Systematic and harmonious form of service for teachers

- -There were no standard qualifications for teachers engaged and there was no uniformity in the conditions of service of teachers.
- Teachers could be employed and dismissed at will whilst sometimes salary depended on the wish of the head of the mission or owner of the school."
- . The teacher also had a better direction for his professional work as this was provided for in the National Policy on Education.

Lack of Central Management Bodies

- The initial gains and privileges of the take-over was the birth of the National Primary Education Commission, the various States Management Boards, the National Commission for Colleges of Education and the National Universities Commission.
- All these bodies were intended to ensure both quantity and quality control in education.

CONCLUSION

- The missionary activities in Nigeria has brought about a number of positive achievements, especially their educational programs helped to whip-up the consciousness of a shared identity and helped to train many people that championed the course of nationalism and constituted a virile leadership for the young nation at independence.
- **What are the Implications of all these on the future of Christianity and Theological Education**

- The fulfilments of the prediction that the epicentre of Christianity is moving from Northern Hemisphere to the South, are now more real than ever before.
- Walls (1998), Jenkins (2002), and Bediako (1998), among others, predicted that there would be significant historical and social developments concerning African Christianity in the 21st century.
- **What are the implications of these for the future?**

- First, there will be a phenomenal numerical surge of the faith in Africa. The statistics of over 600 million Christians in Africa now seem to confirm this assertion.
- Second, Christianity will evolve permanently into a primarily non-Western religion. It is evident now that Christianity, whatever it used to be, can no longer be considered the religion of White Europeans and North Americans.

Christianity has not only ceased to be an exclusively Western religion in our generation, but it is also no longer holding its own in Europe and other parts of the West.

- Third, Africans will be the main actors and catalysts shaping Christian cultures in the 21st century. In other words, the contemporary generation of African churches will determine the shape of the history and theology of the Christian Church for centuries to come. All these developments are happening now, apparently even faster than was originally anticipated.

- YES, Africa will harbour the majority of young people in the world, if they are genuine Christians, these are inestimable resource for the 21st Century
- Now, how will Africa face other challenges of maintaining the Apostolic faith and lead in becoming the seed bed, and shape the Christian mind in the 21st century and beyond. Authentic Mission, genuine Spirituality and veritable Theological Education would play primary roles.

- Although the number of schools has grown from the elementary to tertiary levels with Faith based universities increasing by the day, it seems these are yet to translate to real development, a situation that has generated the term - **growth without development.**
- There is much to do in the preparedness for Africa to be the epicentre of the paradigm shift.

THANK YOU