

**IMPACTS OF CHRISTIAN MISSION IN LOKOJA
FROM 1860 TO 2000**

**A THESIS
PRESENTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE
NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OGBOMOSO,
NIGERIA.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARTS IN THEOLOGICAL STUDIES**

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JUNE 2001

ABSTRACT

Christian Mission has made commendable impacts to the development of Lokoja. The missionaries responsible for opening of schools and evangelisation of Lokoja and its environments.

The study has six chapters. Chapter one introduces the essay and key terms will be adequately defined. Chapter two deals with the historical background and setting of the Lokoja. Chapter three focuses on the beginning of Christian mission in Lokoja. Chapter four critically looks at expansion of Christian mission and churches in Lokoja. Chapter five treats extensively impacts of Christianity in Lokoja. Chapter Six has the evaluation, recommendation and conclusion.

II. Recommendation

It is pertinent to state here that since the advent of Christianity in Lokoja, it has been able to pursue her objectives vigorously, especially in the area of mission, evangelism and education. Notwithstanding, there is need for improvement on Christian activities in Lokoja. Against this background these recommendations are made. First, the churches in Lokoja should not relent in their efforts to evangelise non-Christians. Although, there are many churches in Lokoja, when one looks into each of them, scarcely can one find a native who is a member in a congregation. Churches are filled with people from other land. It is evident that without indigenes joining churches, Christianity in Lokoja could not be regarded as deep rooted among the natives. Therefore churches should intensify their efforts in reaching villages and settlements in an around Lokoja. Thus the evangelistic activities will focus on the native and non-Christians.

Second, educational institutions are of paramount importance in national development. They are training grounds to provide inevitable manpower needed in all spheres of development. Base on the evidence that those who were trained by missionaries are influential personalities in Lokoja, it is the candid opinion of the researcher that there is need for the opening of more secondary school in Lokoja by churches. There are many primary school leavers who could not be fixed in any school in Lokoja, they have to seek admission in Neighbouring towns. Churches like Baptist, ECWA, Cherubim and Seraphim movement; Redeemed Christian Church of God should rise up and establish their own secondary schools.

Third, proliferation of churches and ministries should be checked. Churches are springing up in Lokoja not wholly as a result of spiritual growth or evangelistic explosion but in some cases because there is lack of discipline among Christians. Some church members who are under discipline, instead for them to take corrective actions proposed by

the leader would reject and resolve to organise their church. This is affecting the relationship of churches. Some have gone as far as rejecting their names registered with CAN. Therefore, this project is recommending that steps should be taken by CAN officers to check anybody under disciplinary from organising a church. For instance, many classrooms in the public and private schools in Lokoja are filled with churches without particular attaching them to any known denomination. It will be appropriate for Christians to check themselves before they are checked.

Fourth, the Christian Association of Nigeria Lokoja branch needs land for an office as it was gathered during the writing of this project that CAN has no office. This will enable the Association to keep all her records in one place safely. The Association should apply to the State Ministry of Lands for allocation of a convenient place for the erection of an office.

Similarly, CAN needs to have an up-date record of its activities. In addition, CAN should have a video recorder that can record some of the activities for future references.

On the whole, it has been observed that of all major Christian denominations in Lokoja, it is only the Baptist Church that has not been developing as expected. For example, Baptist Church started in Lokoja in 1913 and since then it has not been well-established in the town. Other denominations that came after Baptist have spread all-over the town. They do not seem to be evangelistic enough. Thereby this research is recommending that the ORA department of the Nigerian Baptist Convention should focus on the town and mobilise Baptist members in the town to organise evangelistic rallies to win souls for Christ. Thereby Baptist Churches shall be increased in the town.

If all these recommendations are adhere to, the Christian mission in Lokoja will grow from strength to strength and future research on it will be easier and deeper than this.

III. Conclusion.

This research work has basically examined the impact of Christian mission in Lokoja between 1860 and 2000 with particular reference to the activities of the early missionaries and growth and development of Christianity after the European missionaries had left. From the researcher's personal observation, it is strongly believed that Christian mission has made a lot of impact in the growth and development of Lokoja.

The story reveals particularly how Christianity started in the town with handful people which has grown to become in the modern day a force to reckon with. The impact of Christian mission has brought civilization and development to the people of Lokoja. It is discovered that the introduction of Christianity to Niger area brought along with it the transmission of European cultural practices to the people of Lokoja. This had its positive influence in the church and the people, the standard of the people greatly improved as a result of access to western education and better economic system.

Christians in the Northern Nigeria, in particular Lokoja Christians, owe a great deal to Bishop Crowther who through three expeditions on the Niger in which he served, opened Lokoja to Christianity which resulted to great civilization of the town. The rapid progress in the propagation of the Gospel in Lokoja and its environments was significantly influenced by Bishop Ajayi Crowther. The Anglican church which started in a humble way in 1864 has now today developed into many churches in Lokoja. The bond of brotherhood introduced by the saintly Crowther still exists among church-members that made up of Christian Association of Nigeria Lokoja Branch.

On the whole, judging by the immense contribution made by Christianity to the development of Lokoja it can be affirmed that no Christianity no Lokoja because Christian missions have been responsible for the accelerated development in the town.