

THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

EFFECT OF COLONIALISM ON CHRISTIANITY IN NIGERIA. 1900-1960:

A CRITICAL EVALUATION

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BY

JAMES OLUWASEGUN ADIGUN

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ABSTRACT

Emergence of colonial administration in Nigeria (in 1900) and its policies obstructed mission progress, which has been flourishing for over fifty years before the advent of imperial government. For sixty years British colonial administrations governed Nigeria, used its political power with the support of home government (British colonial foreign office in London) to suppress Christian missionaries' endeavour. Both foreign Christian missionaries and converted natives suffered embarrassment and humiliation in the hand of colonizers.

This work is an attempt to examine the effect of colonialism on Christianity in Nigeria. The emphasis of this research is on the effect of conflicts between colonialists and missionaries. It was discovered that Lugard's promise of religious non-interference, methods of implementation of indirect rule and other policies were the sources of strained relationship between them. Investigation revealed that North-south dichotomy and religious riots in Nigeria today are the consequences of conflicts between the missionaries and colonialists.

In order to deal with the inherited political and religious conflicts government functionaries and its agencies should shun religious and political

segregation. On the other hand, government should uphold our constitution which declares Nigeria as a secular state. And finally, Nigerians should be educated on the necessity of living together peacefully.

Conclusion

This research work has briefly discussed the history of Christianization and colonization of Nigeria. Christianization and colonization was an episode which cannot be erased from Nigeria's history as a country. The principal characters of the events were Europeans most importantly Britons. Their activities and strained relationship that developed in pursuance of their goals

and objectives affects the growth of Christian mission. Consequently missionaries and converted natives suffered. The religious and political legacy left behind by missionaries and colonialists has been a dividing factor that divide Nigerians religiously and politically up till today.

Recommendations

Based on the assessment of conflict between Christian missionaries and colonial administrators between 1900-1960 in Nigeria some recommendation are made below. First, government should not give preferential treatment to any religious body. Each religion adherents should be treated equally. Religious affiliation should not be a barriers to secure government appointment, winning contracts, political appointment and marriage.

Second, Nigeria is constitutionally a secular state, therefore government should not promote the interest of one religion at the expense of other religion. Adherents of each religion should enjoy principle of human right which allows freedom of worship, association, assembly etc. Any person or group of person causing religious riots in the country should be dealt with severely by the government.

Third, there is need for Christian denominations to maintain unity among themselves. Christian councils of Nigeria and Christian Association of Nigeria should be strengthened and speak with one voice. The two Christian organizations should let its presence be felt not by causing religious riots, but by promoting cordial relationship with government. Also awakening Christians

in government appointment to stand for Jesus and defend the cause of the gospel by shining as light either as civil servants or political appointees, government contractors, sportsmen and women, etc. anywhere and position of authority Christians found themselves, they must be good ambassadors of Christ. Their faith must not be thrown into the wind because of money or position of authority they hold.

Government should educate Nigerian populace the necessity of peaceful co-existence of religious bodies. Each religious adherent must learn how to tolerate one another. Destruction of life and property by religious fanatics must be discouraged. Religious leaders must preach peace and ensure their followers abide with their message of peace.