



THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANITY IN NIGERIAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Before the advent of Christianity in Nigeria, the economic and socio-religious life of the people was indigenous. The economy was based on local products where the people practiced trade by barter. There was no formal education, there were no quality health institutions and the people were mostly African traditional religionists. The overall aim of this study therefore, is to historically bring into focus the important and far-reaching contributions of Christianity to Nigeria's development in the areas of our economic, social life and religious development. The method adopted for this study is historical research. The major finding of this study is that there had been changes in the physical development, scientific inventions, and education and socio structures of the country since the advent of Christianity in Nigeria. Although some historians do not totally agree that the Christian religion has played significant role in Nigeria's economic and socio-religious development, the fact still remains; the progress made by the churches in the last century is quite remarkable. This paper is therefore recommending that the government at all levels should consolidate on the existing structures already laid in Nigeria by the Christian religion.

Keywords: Role, Christian Religion, Nigerian Economy, Socio-Religious, Development

Introduction

Two amazing and significant facts of history are the sweeping of Christianity over North Africa during the early centuries of the Christian era, and after a millennium of difficulties and setbacks, it is flowering throughout Africa South of the Sahara in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is more than 200 years since the first Christian missionaries left Europe for many



African countries, Nigeria inclusive. During this period, an ever increasing number of Westerners from Europe and North America, men and women, established themselves in several Nigeria polities, in the cause of the foundation of the church and the propagation of the Christian religion.

Before the advent of Christianity in Nigeria, the people of the Southern part were mostly African Traditional Religionists (Falk, 2011). Islam had penetrated the northern regions of Nigeria via the trade routes from the Southern shores of the Mediterranean and the Nile valley. The consideration of the role of Christian religion in Nigerian economic and socio-religious development historically brings into focus the important and far-reaching contributions of Christianity to Nigeria's development in the areas of her economy, social life and religious development.

Max Weber (1992) has argued that issues of religion cannot safely be ignored in human discourse as it provides legitimacy and justifications for man's actions. Based on this thesis, the activities of the Christian Religion (missions) in Nigeria had very important impact on the economic and socio-religious evolution of the Nigerian State. Our attempt in this paper is not to concentrate on the spiritual dispensations of the Christian missionaries in their theological and doctrinal underpinnings. Rather, the motive is to bring to the fore, the role played by the Christian religion towards growing the economic, social and religious life of Nigerians since the advent of Christianity in Nigeria over 200 years.

The Geography of Nigeria

Nigeria lies between latitudes 4⁰N and 14⁰N. It is bounded in the North by the Sahara Desert and in the south by the Gulf of Guinea, an arm of the Atlantic Ocean. The history of the country has featured many waves of human movements from across the Sahara, which has never been a complete barrier between the lands lying to the north and south of that great desert. In the course of these colonization type migrations, there have been displacement and intermingling of peoples, some groups have been pushed into new and often more difficult environments and the people, given the technology at their disposal, have had to adapt their ways of life to make the best use of their new environment.

It is hardly necessary to say that the economy of groups such as the Ijaw of the Niger Delta has been closely related to and very much limited in scope by the conditions of their physical environment. In this vast low-lying region of swamps and innumerable waterways and



creeks, the traditional economy has been largely limited to fishing and salt-making from sea water (Udo, 2004). Today, the Niger Delta which McGregor Laird described as having a soil too poor to produce a ton of palm oil, is Nigeria's mineral oil-rich region (Udo, 2004)

Outside the Niger Delta and the coastal swamps and creeks, the Nigerian landmass consists essentially of a low plateau of about 600 meters (2,000 feet) above sea level. Except in the rugged range of hills along the Nigerian – Cameroon borders, there is no major physical barrier to the easy movement of people. Pre-colonial movements of population across the Cameroon-Adamawa ranges were very restricted, and both the people of Oron and the Ekoi groups of the Cross River Basin, who claim to have come from Cameroon appear to have entered Nigeria from the sea and from the Cross River gap respectively. By contrast, the Western and northern borderlands of Nigeria which consist of open plains have presented no obstacles to large scale movements of people and armies. Like the open spaces of Central Asia, these plains have permitted easy passage on foot and horseback. The ready movement of troops in such environments certainly assisted the prosecution of inter-group wars between the Abomeys of Dahomey and the Egba Yoruba of Nigeria as well as the numerous inter-group conflicts in the region of Lake Chad and the Niger-Niger borderlands. It is largely as a result of the absence of major physiographic barriers and the consequent ready spread of people that the political boundaries of Nigeria (as indeed of most African countries) have come to be regarded as “artificial”.

Extensive plains dotted with numerous hills characterize the plateau surfaces of Nigeria. In most areas of the Western and northern states where old hard rocks of the Basement Complex outcrop, the hills usually occur singly, but may also occur in groups as at Idanre and Oke-Iho in Ondo and Oyo states respectively. The historical significance of these hills lies in the fact that in many areas like Idanre, Oke-Iho, Aku, Abuja, Igarra, Kabba, Okenne and Mubi, they provided defensive outposts for refugees fleeing from more powerful invaders. The ability of many of the so called pagan groups to resist the Fulani mounted Warriors owed much to the protection offered by these natural defence outposts.

In view of the open nature of the Nigerian landscape, particularly in the grassland areas of the north, it is not difficult to explain the absence of notable natural routes of human migrations in the country. Mountain passes and river valleys constitute natural routes, as distinct from roads which have been created by man. Movement between the peoples of the northern and



western borderlands of Nigeria has been relatively easy and regular, largely because of the absence of physical barriers, but also mainly because the people inhabiting both sides of the colonial boundaries were often from the same ethnic groups.

The Advent of Christianity in Nigeria

Christianity was introduced into Nigeria following the return of Christian slaves, beginning in 1853 (Falk, 2011). The spread of Christianity was largely determined by the physical geography and the receptivity of the people. In 1842, the first batch of Christian missionaries landed at Badagry, on their way to Abeokuta. They came in the wake of the liberated slaves returning home to Nigeria. Unlike the “overseas” Muslims, some of whom were practicing Islam before their captivity, the Christians had all been converted during their period of captivity in Brazil or Cuba or after they were granted freedom there or in Sierra-Leone. Their sponsors were anxious to see the liberated Africans engaged in some useful pursuits, and indeed, some became gainfully employed in farming, trade or missionary work. For the greater number, however, success did not come so easily because opportunities were limited: farming land was scarce, and markets few. It was, therefore, necessary to consider other ways of utilizing their newly acquired experience.

Thomas Fowell Boxton and others advocated that the Africans be returned to their country where they might all be engaged in agricultural development and evangelization. The combined introduction of the Bible and the plough would usher in light and civilization into the heart of the African continent. Many liberated Africans were impressed by the idea of returning home to join their kith and kin. The missionaries and Sierra Leonean authorities, after an initial period of skepticism and indifference, became reconciled to these ideas. Thus began the mass movement of the liberated slaves back to their homes.

The first missionaries landed first at Badagry which they tried to make their base. They found the place unsatisfactory, for the loss of its former bustling slave trade had impoverished the town. The people were in no mood to receive Christianity and they offered the missionaries little cooperation. Missionaries therefore looked further afield and entered into negotiations with the authorities at Abeokuta, a new town under a dynamic leadership, struggling for survival, and seeking access to the sea. The return of the emigrants also resulted in the introduction of Christianity into various other Yoruba towns such as Lagos, Ibadan, Ijaiye, and Ede. From these



centers, Christianity filtered to other towns in Yoruba land in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In the south-eastern area, it was the Scottish missionaries who pioneered Christian evangelization. The group of Christian converts swelled when the emigrants began to arrive in Calabar, settling mainly on the mission land at Duke town. Some of these were Presbyterians, but most of the others were Methodists or Anglicans who had to attend the only available Presbyterian Church.

As regards the states of northern Nigeria, the Christian mission at first entertained very high hopes of evangelization, and their enthusiastic interest in this area was for a long time unabated. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the recurrent theme of the thought and plans of virtually all the Christian missions was how to evangelize this vast Muslim area of Nigeria.

The main pioneer of this enterprise was the Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther. His interest in missionary work among Hausa Muslims could be traced back to his contacts with the Hausas during the Niger Expeditions of 1841 and 1854. His evangelistic visions were shared by William Balfour Baikie who led the 1857 expedition which employed a large number of intelligent young men from there to serve as interpreters and guides to the expedition in its relationship with the rulers and peoples in the northern areas.

Conditions that Promoted Christianity in Nigeria

The spread of Christianity was largely determined by the physical geography and the receptivity of the people. The peoples south of the Niger and Benue rivers came into contact with Christianity, Western education and commercial developments along the Guinea coast (Falk, 2011). This influenced the formation of a professional elite middle class, who demanded and enjoyed the comforts of urban living.

Preparation for the introduction of Christianity into Nigeria took place from 1841, with the first Niger expedition, to 1885, when British proclaimed the protectorate. This period opened the way for the larger expansion that came with the establishment of the churches in the Southern regions, the extension of Christianity to regions in which the gospel was not proclaimed, and the expansion of the Christian ministry to the Northern regions.

In some ways, conditions were favourable to missions in Nigeria. The slave trade was suppressed and the ritual human sacrifices were prohibited. The tribal wars were stopped. The



colonial rule permitted missions to enter some regions where the people had not been friendly. The coming of the British Colonial rule has been called the “turning of the tide” in Christian missions in Nigeria” (Ajayi, 1969).

With the progress of the missionary programs after 1918 and especially the advancement in Western education, the new political perception of many Nigerians also grew. The schools and the churches, guided the people to self-understanding and self expression. Church activities were guided by councils composed of Nigerian Christians and Missionaries. The legislative council in Nigeria was introduced in 1923. Advanced education naturally provided greater knowledge of the political systems functioning in Nigeria and also promoted Christianity in Nigeria.

The Role of Christian Religion in Nigerian Economic and Socio-Religious Development

The Christian missionaries who brought Christianity to Nigeria, founded mission homes, churches, schools, hospitals, dispensaries and plantations (Barkrido, 2012). The focus of this section is to examine the role of Christian religion in Nigerian Economic and Socio-religious development. To this end, the educational development which took place and how this led to the emergence of an educated elite will be discussed. Furthermore, the role of the educated elite in the political, social and economic developments of the region will also be highlighted. Finally, this aspect or area of the work would cover the effect of Christian missionary work on social service delivery, especially through the hospitals and dispensaries.

i. The Role of Christian Religion in Nigerian Economic Development

Nigeria has passed through incredible changes at an unprecedented speed within the last hundred years. Changes have occurred in the physical development, scientific inventions, education, and social structures of the country. Big vessels sail Nigeria’s waterways, dock in its harbors, and are unloaded with huge, modern machinery. In one century, Nigeria witnessed the termination of the slave trade, the coming of Christianity, the period of colonialism, and the declaration of independence. During the last century, Christianity has spread remarkably and its spread had also impacted on the Nigerian economy. Some Europeans had a sincere desire to help the African people attain a better livelihood. The Niger expeditions were a product of this concern. Robert Moffat and many other missionaries desired to bring the bible and the plow to Africa. Henry Venn, secretary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), advocated lawful trade to replace slave trade. He maintained that profitable, legitimate commerce would cause chiefs to



desist from the slave trade. He requested that missionaries send samples of products of the country to him. He presented these samples to brokers to stimulate trade with the country. Missionary societies and governments introduced new crops, such as coffee, cocoa, cotton, and citrus fruits. The companies traded their wares for local produce, and in this way they encouraged increased production.

The scientific, economic, and political conditions in Europe favoured the economic development of Nigeria. European brokers were looking for raw materials. The demand for minerals encouraged mining developments. The opportunities attracted men from the villages to work in the mines, interfering with the customary village life (Falk, 2011).

As trade increased, the desire for imported merchandise also increased. Factory woven clothes soon replaced the hand-woven cloth made in the villages. Shoes, utensils, bicycles, radios, and many hitherto unknown items appeared on the market in remote areas. To a greater measure, commerce also influenced a good number of parents to send their children to school. They realized that formal education placed an individual in a higher income bracket and that this would increase one's buying power (Barkindo, 2012). As the demand for merchandise increased, factories were built to produce products in the country. This attracted many people to jobs in the cities. Thus, Westernization encroached upon the Nigerian society, bringing with it some economic changes.

The concern to develop legitimate trade brought many companies with a concern for the people to various parts of Africa. The West Africa Trading Company had close relations with the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Bishop Samuel Crowther's son, Josiah, was appointed agent general of the company in 1873. In 1879, the four British companies on the Niger amalgamated to form the United African Company (Ajayi, 1969). In the same vein, Gbadamosi and Ajayi (2004), have posited that certain aspects of missionary work deserve better recognition. One of such aspects on which current research is throwing some light is their contribution to the economic development of the country. The sponsors of Christian enterprise in the country had generally always emphasized the need for both missionaries and converts to engage in and promote some type of economic activity. Buxton was the advocate of the philosophy of the twin use of "the Bible and the Plough in the regeneration of the country (Buxton, 1840 and Gallagher, 1950). Henry Venn formulated in the 1850's a policy of development which produced the skilled artisans upon which a middle class would depend. In pursuit of this, Venn encouraged cotton



production in Abeokuta, attaining for some years, a success which elicited the demands of other towns for a similar establishment in their areas. Also, an industrial institution was founded, teaching brick making, carpentry and other skills, and many were sent abroad for various vocations (Ajayi, 1969).

At Agbowo in Ijebu-Remo, vast acres of cocoa and Liberian coffee were grown by Agbowo Industrial Mission under Dr. Mojola Agbebi, and managed by J.E. Rickets in concert with the Colwyn Bay institute (Webster, 1963). The cultivation of cocoa was encouraged on a large scale among Christians at Agege, Ondo and Ibadan, and the success of the vast cocoa plantations at Agege was in no small measure due to the imagination and sustained efforts of the African Church movement (Webster, 1963).

Christian economic activity went beyond encouragement of cash crops. Some industrial education was provided (Ayandele, 1966). Under the patronage of the Anglican Mission in 1897, brick making flourished in Okorofiong in Calabar, meeting the large orders of the Government. In 1897 – 8, industrial institutions were opened by the C.M.S at Brass and Onitsha, where masonry, carpentry and brick making were taught. In 1903, R.R. Blaize, perhaps the most industrially minded educated convert, established his industrial institute at Abeokuta, committing almost all his fortune to it. Probably, the most elaborate of such institutes was The Hope Waddell Institute which was established by the Presbyterians in 1895. Besides providing facilities for teacher training and secondary education, it offered courses in blacksmithing, coopering, carpentry, masonry, and naval engineering; for girls, it had domestic science and dress making.

ii. **The Role of Christian Religion in Nigerian Social Development**

Christian missionaries exercised considerable impact on the society through the medical services they provided. Unlike the Muslims Organizations' that recently built health centres, the Christian medical effort has been more institutionalized (Gbadamosi, 2004). To cite a few examples, the C.M.S maintained a hospital at Onitsha, the Baptist at Ogbomoso, Saki, Okuta, Oyo, Enugu, Ejigbo, Okeho, Ilero and Okehi in Rivers State, the Wesleyan at Ilesha and the SMA (Society of Africa Mission) at Abeokuta.

Also deserving of attention is the contribution of Christian religion to the intellectual development of the country. Apart from building schools and teacher training colleges, scholars of Christian religion wrote many works on the history and cultures of many Nigerian societies. Many Christian literary men produced series of local histories. Some of the more valuable one's



include J.A. Otuba's Payne's *Lagos and West African Almanac* (1874), *Table of Principal Events in Yoruba History*, (1894), J.O George's *Historical Notes on the Yoruba Country and its Tribes* (1884 and 5), and the incomparable work, *History of the Yoruba's* by Reverend Samuel Johnson.

The linguistic studies undertaken by the Christian missions yielded abundant fruit. Among the most notable works were, for example, T.Bowen, *Grammar and Dictionary of the Yoruba Language*; MacIntyre's *Nupe Reader or Grammar*; Reverend S.W. Koelle's *Grammar of the Bornu or Kanuri Language* (1854), Schon's *Primer* (1857); Dr. Miller's *Vocabulary of Hausa Grammar*; Hugh Goldie's *Principles of Efik Grammar and Specimens of the Language* (1862), *Efik Dictionary* (1874) and *Efik Grammar in Efik* (1874) and *Efik Grammar in English* (1874).

With the mastery of the grammar and vocabulary of several Nigerian Language, the Christian literary men were able to translate many religious works into them. It was these pioneering works on Nigerian Languages that made possible the beginning of a literary education. Religious works such as the Bible and the Catechism were therefore done into Yoruba, Hausa or Efik. Other works such as the *Pilgrim's Progress* also began to be translated (Gbadamosi, 2004).

Perhaps, the most laudable of the whole religious enterprise was the provision of a different and formal education. It is possible that no more than an elementary education was initially planned for the new converts who needed initiation to some basic teachings of the new faith. But as the educational appetites became whetted, it was the converts themselves who clamored for more. The Christians brought Western Education and on their pioneering effort the educational system in the country has been built. They introduced not only elementary, but also secondary, teacher training and technical schools.

The Christians also introduced a variety of journals and magazines published by the church. Magazines such as *African Church Cleaner*, *Nigerian Baptist* and the *African Church Chronicles* served as the media through which budding nationalists aired even their political views. Newspapers such as the *Lagos weekly Record* acquired a wider circulation. And it can hardly be forgotten that it was among the Christian Churches that were to be found the first crop of Nigerian Nationalists. These early nationalists who included people like James Johnson and Dr. Mojola Agbebi advocated for a Nigerian nation, that is independent and playing its proper role in the comity of nations.



Last, but by no means the least, there is the undoubted moral and spiritual influence of the Christian religion on the society. Though congregations have dwindled or even split on the issue of morality, such aberrations should not obscure the spiritual and moral force for which Christian religion stands and which have more often been upheld than denied or abused. With the decline of the old gods who gave sanction to the traditional morality, Christianity has had to provide the basis of a new morality in Nigerian society. The Christian religion, have been able to develop institutions (Mission Schools and Theological Seminaries) to encourage members to cultivate higher ideals and higher standards of morality. Among Christians, there are Bible Societies, Scripture Unions, Student Christian Movement, as well as various associations in the different churches. We can, therefore, probably say that the pulpit and the church have endeavoured to develop a new morality and maintain the moral tone of the Nigerian society.

iii. The Role of Christian Religion in Nigeria Religious Development

Before the advent of Christianity in Nigeria, the people of the Southern part were mostly animist (Falk, 2011). Islam had penetrated the northern regions of Nigeria via the trade routes from the southern shores of the Mediterranean and the Nile Valley. The Muslims won the allegiance of a portion of the population, especially the ruling classes. Preparation for the introduction of Christianity into Nigeria took place from 1841, with the first Niger expedition, to 1885, when British proclaimed the protectorate. This period opened the way for the larger expansion that came with the establishment of churches in the southern regions, the extension of Christianity to regions in which the gospel was not proclaimed, and the expansion of the Christian ministry to the northern regions.

Before the advent of Christianity in Nigeria, the belief regarding the future life, required attendants to be put to death and buried with the deceased Chief or king to serve him in his future life. Witchcraft was prominent and caused a heavy death toll among the people (Dabrunner, 1965). The destruction of new born twins and the killing of the aged were customs routinely practiced. The Christian mission had a significant influence in instilling a respect for life, which eventually brought an end to the ritual extermination of human life (Dayton, 1973).

The Christian religion, helped to put an end to human sacrifice in some Nigerian communities' e.g Shodeke, the Chief of Abeokuta, in 1842, stopped human sacrifices after being converted to Christianity. Meanwhile, in Calabar, Mary Slessor was instrumental to the stopping of killings of twins. Obviously, religion is an integral part of every human society, which its



importance cannot be glossed over. It is noteworthy to state equivocally here that; “experience has shown that religion exists, persists and continues to influence and determine the pace of humanity. There is hardly any part of the world that has successfully ignored religion “(Isiramen, 2010).

In the work of Confucius, as cited by Prothero (2010), education is pivotal to character building. Since education is not learning trade, but learning to be “human”, that is, learning to become more of ourselves and transform society through others, religion therefore is also known as an agent of socialization of an individual. Through Sunday schools, Mission schools and Theological education, morality, ethics and good characters are formed in the life of an individual. The different forms of Christian religious education in the Nigerian societies are geared towards forming a life that is morally correct.

Another major point that must be considered is the place of Christian religious values in enhancing national transformation. This by implication assesses the theological basis of Christian religious teachings and their impacts on the formulation and implementation of key development concepts and practices, within the context in which Christian religious teachings are offered.

There is a symmetrical relationship between Christian religious values, character building, national transformation and development in the Nigerian society; therefore, it behooves on all Christian religious institutions and the leaders to put the proper mechanism in place to impart necessary religious values that can aid growth and development. In turn, this process will bring the nation out of its doldrums of arrested growth and development.

The work of Williams is apposite at this juncture. In her work titled; “Religious Groups and the Politics of National Development” (Williams, 1992), She argued that religion and development can; and do go together, and in Nigeria’s development as it is today, cannot be divorced from the support of religion. Though her focus is on the efforts of religious institutions, rather than an individual, but the point is that, individuals’ character cannot be built along the line of religious values without the instrumentality of religious institutions. In essence, the position here is that, the Christian religious bodies in the contemporary Nigerian society have now developed into a community of faith and dynamism, which have the potential to change people’s values, and perceptions about life through their teachings. Through strict adherence to Christian religious values in Nigeria, transformation of individuals have been achieved and it has given rise to character reformation, leading to national transformation.



The Precarious Human Situation in Nigeria since the Introduction of Christian Faith to the Country

Whereas religion ought to be an instrument for social development, contemporary African religious expressions are full of deceit, hypocrisy and contradiction. For instance, while many African societies have benefited from the establishment of educational and health institutions by the introduction of the Christian faith, many of such societies are also full of bribery and corruption, armed robbery, ritual killing and kidnapping. Religion, therefore, is spurious and fake if it has no transformative impact on the morality of people (Nihinlola, 2018). The economic performance of many African countries has clearly not done enough to promote economic diversification, job growth and social development in order to lift millions of Africans out of poverty (UNECA, 2013). And while poverty persists on the continent, corruption is also rife (Kolade, 2001).

The perceived notoriety of Nigerians in terms of corruption, both at home and abroad, is irreconcilable with the significant presence of religious centres and activities in our societies (Okafor, 2009). Referring to the example of Nigerian Christians, Ben Kwashi (2008), for example has remarked: “This nation of Nigeria is blessed with every conceivable missionary church and Para-church, and the number of prayer ministries is uncountable, but what have we achieved? In similar vein, John Onaiyekan (2010) has also commented on the palpable religiosity of Nigerians as evinced by the number of churches and mosques and by the religious noise experienced in Nigerian towns. For him, this feature of intense religiosity should be contrasted with the enormity of corruption in Nigerian society.

This section of the work is not contradicting what had earlier been said concerning the positive role of Christian Religion in Nigerian economic and socio-religious development. The emphasis here is that the enormity of corruption in Nigerian society in the midst of intense religiosity inevitably raises serious questions about the kind of Christian religious morality that exists in this predominantly religious nation.

Moreover, one may ask: What are the consequences of this form of religiosity? How does the moral experience and performance of Nigerians conform to the requirements of biblical religious morality? If Christianity is a norm, how, then, should the remarkable rise in instances of corruption, the looting of public treasuries, electoral malpractices, cultism, bribery, armed robbery, kidnappings and other forms of criminal activity in so many Nigerian societies be



explained? What constitutes the actual moral authority of contemporary Nigerian Christians? Why have Nigerians both in moments of crisis and when in political or elevated positions, failed to live up to their religious vocation, especially in terms of enacting sound moral values? In as much as these are extremely difficult and disturbing questions they clearly call for deep reflection on the part of Christian religious scholars and practitioners.

Conclusion

Although some historians do not totally agree that the Christian religion has played significant role in Nigerian economic and socio-religious development, the fact still remains; the progress made by the churches in the last century is quite remarkable. The church had impacted positively on the economic, social and religious life of Nigerians everywhere. It has taken place despite the superficial understanding of the Christian teaching by some church members, the proliferation of independent Christian groups, racial and political tensions, and the growing influence of secular materialism and Islam. The twentieth century, having witnessed a Christian advance through the storm, may be considered the Christian century. Christianity made rapid advances in re-orienting Nigerians especially people in the south, economically, socially and religiously after the original difficulties of ignorance concerning disease, climate, geographic, and ethnographic conditions had been bridged and rapport had been established with the people.

The Christian community multiplied more than fivefold during the first half of the twentieth century. It has continued to grow since 1950 and has greatly influenced many people who are not baptized Christians. In southern Nigeria as it is today, majority of the people are unwilling to be called anything but Christian. This presents a great potential for church growth and a most sobering responsibility to the churches. Religious teachings that are aimed at moral formation, have contributed substantially to developing optimism amidst the deplorable socio-political and economic conditions in Nigeria. Christian religion, therefore, has been able to create hope and optimism in spite of failed governments and economic institutions in Nigeria. Nigerian Christianity, through African Pentecostalism, offers a typical example of the enormous hope that extends from religion to the society. Hope and optimism are mediated through emphasis on the power of the word of God in spiritual formation and in resisting all evil forces.

Religious communities in Nigeria have been able to create an effective interface between religion and socio-economic and political development. Christ Embassy and Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria are prominent examples. These churches have become platforms for



business interests which include, the banking, publishing, broadcasting, entertainment and hospitality industries. With regard to the political involvement of religion, the involvement of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Nigeria has been felt in various sectors including politics. In the midst of the turmoil accompanying transitions to democracy in Nigeria through the 1990s, the Pentecostals have always rallied in prayer for the nation and interceded in order to save their country from bloodshed. These religious interventions portray Christian religion as a unifying factor in society.



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