A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON CALABAR, A NIGERIAN CITY

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INTRODUCTION

Christianity is essentially a profound, inward, personal and spiritual experience. From a sociological view point, however, it is a world religion which, like every other world religion, is concerned with shared beliefs and practices. From this perspective, it is pre-eminently a social phenomenon which pervasively influences and is influenced by the various strata of society. Viewed as a social phenomenon, Christianity constitutes one of the most important and viable institutional structures that make up the total social system of most organized societies. The historical validation and vindication of the claim to its being one of the most viable institutions of the society is indubitable. This is aptly expressed in N.S.S. Iwe's words:

> Christianity in its various institutional and social forms and manifestations is a human and moral, spiritual and cultural, national and international force to be reckoned with … Christianity has in the course of human history and in the various nations, demonstrated itself as the custodian and promoter of human values.[1]

The continued importance and influence of Christianity on the various systems of the modern societies of the world cannot be overemphasized. This is because, in its institutional forms, Christianity does not exist in a vacuum, but within a social context in which it affects and is affected by its social environment. Sociologists of religion like Yinger have acknowledged that the religious system (Christianity in this case) can be powerfully shaped and affected by the surrounding secular structures like the political, economic, social and cultural systems.[2] In keeping with this position, Christopher I. Ejizu affirms the influence of the ecosystem on the religious system. According to him, "both religious experience and expression occur within identifiable localities and socio-historical circumstances."[3] The traces of the various ecological and sociological influences on the religious system can easily be discerned and identified by a careful student. This clearly implies, in his own words,

that the religion of such a riverine group as the Kalabari people will reflect the dominant geographical features of the area, while that of the traditional Yoruba is expected to manifest clear imprints of the characteristic indigenous pyramidal social organization.[4]

Yinger equally acknowledges that the social structures within which a religious system operates are at the same time "modified by the religions they enclose."[5] This mutual effect of religion and social structure on each other is illustrated by the social foundations and functions of Christianity in, and its impact on Calabar.

SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY IN CALABAR

Religiously, Calabar has been a fertile ground for the proliferation of churches right from the missionary era. Though spatially a very small city, Calabar may compete favorably as one of the most denominationally pluralistic towns in Nigeria. It hosts such an unimaginable number of churches and para-church groups that may be compared to only very few other Nigerian cities of equal size. It is in this respect that the city has been described as a "city of church industry."[6] That is, a city where the churches have become the main industry. Following from more than a century and a half of intensive and extensive Christianizing activities by Christian missions and churches, both foreign-and home-based, Calabar ostensibly stands out as a 'Christian city' in terms of its alarming and overwhelming multiplicity and diversity of denominations and Christian groups. It is a truism that:

> … as one wends one's way around the streets of both "old" and "new" Calabar, an array of religious buildings and signboards meets the eye, ranging from cathedrals to neighborhood churches, to compound churches and prayer houses and healing homes. On Sundays especially this visual diversity comes alive with music and with people as they move around town in family groups or with friends to attend their respective places of worship … This heterogeneity is an important consideration in terms of religious diversity.[7]

In his unpublished paper, entitled "A Socio-Historical Survey of the Presence of Christianity in Calabar a Nigerian City," Christian O. Uchegbue evidently demonstrates that in addition to its religious or spiritual foundations and motivations, the quest for an eventual coming and establishment of Christianity in Calabar was predominantly socially or secularly motivated.[8] This argument is predicated on some self-evident premises. Firstly, the earliest contact of the indigenous people of Calabar, the Efik, in particular, with the Christian religion was not religiously motivated. It was their commercial and mercantile transaction with the Europeans rather than a deliberate organized missionary expedition that brought this initial contact. The result of that transaction was their realization of the superiority of the white man's culture which ignited in them a strong passion and aspiration for the acquisition of the superior European civilization and

technology. The association of the requisite knowledge for the appropriation of this higher culture with Christianity and the Bible led to their passionate and urgent plea for missionaries. Secondly, the demand for missionaries was economically motivated. It was the quest for the mental and material development of the subjects (educational progress for economic prosperity) rather than their desire for religious development and spiritual regeneration that motivated the Efik chiefs and kings to request for missionaries. That these requests were made at the wake of the abolition of slave trade which was the main source of income decodes the motive behind the call for missionaries and the inclination towards Christianity. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first project on which the Scottish missionaries contemplated on embarking on their arrival was the establishment of a school in Obutong or Old Town.[9] It is also noteworthy that their acceptance was based on this gesture and not actually because of the religious instructions and gospel preaching they came to offer. This establishes that the coming of Christianity to Calabar had strong social and secular foundations and motivations. The implication of this truth is the tendency of its recipients to pick and choose what they want out of it and reject what is not relevant to them. This is the instrumental or opportunistic approach to Christianity which explains, to some extent, how it functions in the society. It is being adopted and adapted to the changing needs and circumstances of the society.

IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON CALABAR

In its impact on the various systems of the society, one unmistakably notices the functional ambiguity and complexity of Christianity in Calabar. This can be explained, partially by the inherently paradoxical and complex nature of religion. This functional ambiguity can also be associated with, and interpreted with reference to the opportunistic concept of Christianity which has continued to characterize the religious responses of many of its adherents in Calabar right from the inception of the Christian religion in this area.

Educational Impact

The educational impact of the Church can be summarized in the assertion that it brought to Calabar "the secret of European power-Western education."[10] In another expression, it "has brought the light of education where there was before the darkness of idolatry, ignorance and superstition."[11]

The development of the total man is the primary and central objective of all forms of education, be it informal or formal. Education aims at influencing the value dimension of life thereby building up man to build up society. It is "a socializing process which develops the all-round man and his total frame of life - the head, the heart and the hand."[12] From this holistic perspective, the early missionaries saw a close and inseparable relationship between formal education and the salvation of souls. Both have the transformation and development of human life as a common goal. They saw the schools as the seed bed or "nursery of the infant church."[13] Therefore, they emphasized the essence of mass education in achieving both mass active participation in church services and personal salvation.[14] Perceiving this intimate relationship,

the Presbyterian Mission immediately embarked on formal education along with gospel proclamation, as soon as it arrived in Calabar. Hence, Duke Town School was founded in 1846 and soon developed into a full-fledged primary school. By 1911 it had become the largest single primary school in West Africa with about 1,400 pupils on roll.[15] Later on, Henshaw Town Primary School and others were established by the Presbyterian Mission while the Hope Waddell Training Institute was established in 1895. Schools were established also by other Missions which later came to Calabar. The Roman Catholic Mission, for example, paid special attention to education, using their schools as their proselytizing strategy.

Being one of the earliest centers of Christian missionary activities in Nigeria, Calabar simultaneously became one of the earliest "centers of educational enlightenment and social development."[16] In this respect, the educational system appears to be the sphere of the Missions' earliest and greatest contribution to, and impact on, the society. This was partly due to the evangelistic and competitive use of education which motivated various missions to multiply schools.[17] In addition, it was equally due to the foremost demand for western education by the local populace.

The importance of mission schools is clear from the fact that long before any recognizable educational policy and plans were evolved by the colonial government, mission schools remained the only available hope and means of obtaining western education and civilization for the yearning local people. They are equally important because they played significant roles in bringing about modernization, industrialization and cultural renaissance. Western education exposed the local people to civilization through the new culture of science and technology as well as modern systems of economic transaction and organization.[18] Part of the achievements of the educational work of Christian Missions in Calabar is the ability of many citizens to communicate in a cross-ethnic language (a lingua franca), that is the English language. Without this, it would not have been possible for many to work effectively as civil servants, teachers, pastors, factory workers, medical doctors, engineers, politicians, accountants, lawyers, and so forth. To properly evaluate the educational impact of Christianity, it should be acknowledged that several well-meaning citizens and statesmen in Calabar had their formal education in missionary schools. From these products of Mission Schools, the various staff needed for the proper functioning of both government and mission's machineries were supplied. In this way, mission schools produced developed Christian men and women who, being trained up in Christian values, demonstrated a great deal of commitment to selfless service and outstanding personal integrity.[19] It is the realization of the great capacity and utility of mission schools for nation-building, national unification and national progress that motivated the nationalists to fight so vehemently to gain the control of them.

The educational roles of the churches did not end with government's take-over of schools. Presently, many churches in Calabar are still embarking on the establishment of schools and other forms of educational programs. The increasing success of many of these schools is greatly enhanced by the increasingly falling standards in government schools presently and the increasing importance and popularity of private schools in the city. Moral and mental training is offered to children and youth through formal education in the church-owned nursery, primary and secondary schools. Besides, some of these church-owned institutions offer literacy classes and continuing education for adults as well as vocational training for handicapped, less-

privileged and unprivileged members of the society. Such projects help those who have been frustrated, edged out or totally neglected by the limited and imbalanced opportunities in government's educational set up. They help to combat and reduce the high level of illiteracy in the society and enhance the rehabilitation of freed prisoners, pensioners, and the like. Very recently, the mission churches in Calabar have taken back the schools that were taken from them by the government.

However, the educational policies of the various missions and denominations engendered not only civilization and positive development, but also unhealthy competition, conflict and division. This is because in their effort to outsmart others in the mad chase for membership, the various denominations fronted their schools as a means of recruitment of members.

Political Impact

Christianity has considerably demonstrated its influence on the political structure of Calabar through many of its political orientations and actions since the early periods of the missionary era. During the colonial era, it proved to wield a great political force and influence by which it could compete favorably with those of the secular administration. Both institutions constituted "the two most important bastions of British colonial rule" in Calabar.[20] [Due] to the great power and influence which it wielded, missionaries often functioned as social critics and moral watch-dogs of the society. They were defenders and spokesmen of the defenseless classes against the oppressions and exploitations of the secular authorities, whether traditional or colonial. Sometimes, certain missionaries vehemently opposed "the high-handedness and brutal approaches" by which the secular colonial authorities treated the local subjects.[21] They exposed and denounced the inhumanity of the colonial regime towards the local populace. Through such humanitarian roles, they

> won the people over to their side by the opposite policy of kindness, patience, sympathy and friendliness, there soon grew up a strong bond of mutual trust between them and the people.[22]

In view of this tremendous influence wielded over the local polity by Christian missions and missionaries, it has been acknowledged by E.A. Udo, as quoted by Afigbo, that were it not for the secular administrations' use of the army to enforce their wishes, the missionaries would have outshined the government both in power and in influence.[23]

Consequently, the colonial government often sought to exploit the noticeably great and pervasive influence of the Church for the advancement of her political goals and programs. As such, missionaries were often employed as administrators and sometimes nominated into the membership of the legislative assemblies.[24] For instance, in order to exploit Ms. Mary Mitchell Slessor's great influence among the people, the government appointed her vice-consul of the Oil Rivers Protectorate in 1892.[25]

Thus, although the political goals of the government differed considerably from the evangelistic and soteriological goals of the missions, the government often acknowledged and

appreciated the socio-political utility of the Church. This, however, placed on the missionaries a dual commitment. The first was a commitment to support the political programs of the colonial government, which stemmed from their sense of common racial heritage and identity. In this commitment, Christian missionaries could be, and have been described as, agents of imperialism. The second was a commitment to defend the powerless local people, which stemmed from their biblical concept of the dignity of man.[26] The result of this dual political commitment and responsibility was a paradox of political functions by which the missionaries were surrounded. Paradoxically, therefore:

> the missionaries colluded with the colonial government when it suited
> their interests, and yet would also at times unleash virulent attacks
> on certain styles and purposes of government.[27]

Furthermore, in its transformative influence on the political structures of Calabar in the colonial era, Christian missions contributed immensely to "the subversion of the traditional political systems."[28] The political authority of Efik traditional rulers was constantly and increasingly eroded by the combined influence of the Christian Mission and colonial administration. The missionaries often sought and harnessed the support of favorable Efik rulers and *Ekpe* laws in carrying out their reformation proposals. However, they constantly appealed to the British Government to suppress repressive *Ekpe* laws and traditional customs. It was through such superimposing political influence of the Christian Mission that the signing of the Hopkins Treaty of 1878 came to destroy the power and authority of the *Ekpe* and outlaw repressive traditional customs. This also led to the Christianization of Efik kingship in 1874. Moreover, the Mission's teachings on the equality and dignity of all men and against the inhumation of slaves did not only appeal to the servile population, but could have considerably contributed to and influenced the tensions and revolts among them. This was climaxed in the formation of a revolutionary movement, the Association of Blood Men (*Nka lyip*) in 1851. The political threat and disruptive influence of such teachings were the constant fears of many Efik rulers.[29] In these and other ways, Christianity effected considerable political modifications and changes.

The Church still exerts and retains considerable impact on the present political system of the city. Corporate institutional involvement of churches in partisan politics has not been apparent. However, regardless of what appears to be a general cold attitude of most Christians towards partisan politics, a considerable number of churchmen and women participate actively in politics. Political leaders also have often demonstrated their commitment to one Christian group or the other by celebrating either their political appointments or election victories in their respective churches. Besides, the influence of denominational differences on political affiliation, participation and administration is noticeable. Denominational identity sometimes serves as one of the major basis of political affiliation and voting behavior. For instance, rumors of the association of certain political contestants with the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star have often been used by their political opponents as an effective propaganda to cause a sudden mass repudiation of these candidates by voters at election periods. This has often caused their consequent defeat. This is because of the general negative impression about, and attitude towards this religious movement in Calabar.

Closely related to this, F.M. Mbon has pointed out the clear and definite pro-NPN

orientation and sympathy of certain publications of the *Inside Out,* a journal of the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star, during the Second Republic. This further illustrates a possibility of a denominational basis of political party affiliation, at times, in spite of the common claim to political neutrality by most Christian groups.[30] This is in line with Geoffrey C. Layman's conclusions from his study of the political behavior of American Christians. His study demonstrates that religious affiliations, commitment and doctrinal cleavages influence political behaviour.[31]

Above all, Christianity has often provided a critique of the political system through the denunciation and correction of wrong policies and programs of the State government. Both through pulpit preaching and press or other mass media publications and broadcasts, positive changes and revocation of some unpopular and unchristian government decisions have been achieved through such Christian voices from church leaders and ministers. It is certain that, "if these apparently lonely voices keep speaking up, their words are likely to have some measure of observable impact..." on the political life of both their members and the general polity.[32]

Economic Impact

In many ways, Christianity has contributed immensely to the economic development of Calabar. The socio-economic foundations of modern developments in the city were laid by the missions through the educational training of artisans and professionals who formed the foundation for its economic development, progress and prosperity. In addition, Christianity inculcated certain moral values and ideological orientations which promoted the economic life of Calabar. Being Calvinistic in its theological outlook and orientation, Presbyterian Christianity, very early in the history of Calabar, promoted the Protestant ethic which sanctions individual salvation. The Calvinist theology emphasizes material progress through hard work, self denial and frugality as a proof of being elected of God for salvation. The elect must work out his salvation and do whatsoever he does with all his might. By this, the way was indirectly paved for "the individualization of economic activity and success striving."[33] Furthermore, Christianity has often been successful in inculcating a positive work ethic of modesty and frugality in style of living, fidelity and stability in commitment as well as savings habits.[34]

In keeping with this, the prevalence of evangelical and Pentecostal orientations in the present religious landscape of Calabar has some significant and positive economic implications for the society. Certain psychological traits and behavior patterns characteristic of Pentecostalism and evangelicalism can be associated with ideological elements which are conducive to modernization and success in a capitalist economy. Such elements include self-denial, self-discipline, individualism, initiative, optimism, courage, determination and devotion.[35]

Apart from these, many churches engage in various economic establishments like bookshops, printing and publishing houses, hotels or guest houses, factories, shopping complexes, schools and health centers. These and many of their building projects have provided employment and business for a large spectrum of the society. Equally, the repudiation of certain unethical habits like smoking, consumption of alcoholic drinks, visiting of

prostitutes and other forms of indulgent and luxurious living, which some churches enforce, tend to enhance savings among church members and boost the economy of the city.[36] At the same time, certain religious restrictions by some churches in food, drinks and clothing, especially among the Independent or *Aladura* Churches, evidently tend to keep the relevant producing sectors out of business. Their prescription of other lifestyles also creates the scarcity and rise in the price of other commodities.

Social Impact

One of the earliest concerns of Christian Missions in Calabar was to provide civilization through cultural revolution. In pursuit of this, they endeavored to bring about a structural transformation of the ambivalent and obnoxious aspects of the traditional culture. They provided the ideological basis for the vehement campaign launched against 'superstitions' and 'barbarism', such as the inhumation of slaves, killing of twins, the use of the deadly *esere* beans ordeal to identify witches, and other inhuman and dehumanizing practices. Without the ideological role of Christian missions, the considerable degree of success made in this respect would not have been achieved through the stringency of government decrees and the militancy of their enforcement agencies alone. For instance, the far-reaching social revolution which the missionary activities of Mary Slessor brought about outweighed all the military expeditions of the colonial government to exterminate these obnoxious practices. Beyond the destruction of tyrannical customs, Christianity also paved the way for the evolution of a new culture in Calabar in the areas of material, social, economic, scientific, technological and medical systems. These changes generated new aspirations, good and stable health, longevity, social mobility, spatial transformations and infrastructural developments.

Another relevant area of the social impact of Christianity in Calabar is in the area of health care and social welfare services which Christian missions and churches have rendered. Health care services include the establishment of hospitals, dispensaries, clinics and maternity homes which were pioneered by them. Actually, none of these mission hospitals was located in Calabar, but in the outstations. Examples include Mary Slessor Hospital at Itu and the Itu Leprosy Colony by the Presbyterian Mission, as well as St. Joseph's Hospital at Ikot Ene by the Roman Catholic Mission. However, medical and health care services have been offered right from the arrival of the pioneer missionary team. This was started by Rev. Samuel Edgerly and Rev. Zerub Baillie who, because of their medical training, received "Missionary permit" to open clinics and dispensaries at Creek Town, Duke Town and Ikot Offiong. Besides, the St.Margaret's Hospital, Calabar, although a government hospital, was being run for some time by the Scottish missionary doctor, Dr. Peter Rattray and the Scottish missionary nurse. Miss Margaret Graham.[37]

Presently, many churches in Calabar provide different forms of medical and health services for both their members and the general public. The Nelson Mandela Street's branch of the Assemblies of God Mission, for example, has established the Evangel Model Maternity along Atu Street, which has become a full-fledged clinic with qualified doctors and consultants in attendance. The Roman Catholic Mission in Calabar has equally acquired a lot of medical supplies from the United States for a medical establishment that has been delayed by the current political instability and uncertainty in Nigeria. The First Baptist Church in Calabar runs a Free Medical

Services program for her members, especially to the outstations where the poverty level is very high and acute. Similarly, the Lutheran Church of Nigeria, Calabar, runs a Rural Health Care Program all over Cross River State.[38]

In addition to health care services, social welfare services have been rendered by various churches. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, has established the Pope John II Good Samaritan Home for the Poor, Aged and Needy.[39] Besides, various teams and associations in the various churches undertake the ministry of visiting hospitals, orphanages, prisons and other welfare centers. The Band of Hope/Charity, a social welfare arm of the Holy Trinity Anglican Church as well as the Hospital and Prison Evangelism Teams of the Deeper Life Bible Church are outstanding examples in this ministry.[40] Similarly, various forms of individual and corporate aids are often provided to support church members in times of failures, frustrations, disasters, bereavements and unemployment. Members can be trained also in certain skills and techniques to facilitate effective adjustment to, and survival of, the prevalent harsh economic condition in the society. The monthly seminar/ workshop of the Deeper Life Women Fellowship (DLWF) have been popular in this aspect. In this respect, Christianity has often functioned as an adjustment and adaptive mechanism which provides:

> a sort of anchor and refuge for those whom the problems of city
> life bite hardest - the unemployed, the lonely, the alienated,
> the dehumanized, the socially displaced, drug and sex addicts and
> the like.[41]

Along with these adjustment and adaptive functions, Christianity offers liberation from the prevalent fear of witchcraft and other inexplicable stresses and distressing conditions and experiences in the society. Generally, it often helps to explain and contain the common calamities, mishaps, insecurities and uncertainties of life as well as the resultant fears and anxieties by which men under these circumstances are often overtaken.[42] A good number of Calabar residents live under such circumstances that recurrently create these fears and anxieties. For instance, the perpetuity of Calabar's poverty, unprogressive condition and socio-economic backwardness, has often been attributed to the extra-prevalence of witches on the Calabar coast. In such a situation, one of the greatest needs of the inhabitants has been the quest to gain the requisite power, knowledge and techniques for resisting and overcoming these existential problems. Indisputably, the Christian ministries of prayer, fasting, teaching, counseling, deliverance and exorcism have often provided effective and lasting solutions to these problems. Through their workshops, seminars, crusades, retreats, night vigils and other programs, some churches, especially, those of Pentecostal background, have provided a lot of the residents with the spiritual and mental capacity for contending with, containing, and conquering the fears and anxieties engendered by the awesome and gruesome realities of witchcraft. They have equipped them, not only with a theodicy, but also with the right frame of mind which makes them confident and optimistic in grappling and battling with these negative forces.

Another important aspect of the social impact of Christianity is its effects on social relations. As an organized religion, Christianity functions as a basis for social identification, classification and differentiation In view of this, its impact on the society has

been both integrative and disintegrative.

On a positive note, right from its inception in Calabar, Christianity

> has been an integrating influence bringing men and women
> together and providing power for unifying society by giving
> that inner core of unity to life which makes men and women
> proof against the stresses and changes in human society.[43]

Certainly, a sense of community, common identity and solidarity is often being maximized as people, who are socio-culturally, politically and economically divided and torn apart, come to worship and fellowship together in one church. Besides, in a concern for the problem of denominationalism, a lot of effort has been made by certain church leaders to keep up the spirit of unity, harmony, tolerance and co-operation among the various Christian groups. To foster this spirit of unity, joint, inter-denominational programs have often been organized, such as singing competitions, football matches, prayer conferences and state services. Similarly, non-denominational and inter-denominational Christian groups such as the Scripture Union, Bible Society of Nigeria, Gideon International, Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship, Campus Fellowships and Chaplaincies, tend to foster inter-denominational co-operations to some extent- Furthermore, outdoor church programs such as Crusades, Retreats, Conferences as well as Christian Councils, like the Christian Community of Nigeria (CCON), the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), have often facilitated co-operations among various Christian groups. What seem to be the most effective and far-reaching facilitators of unity and ecumenism among the various churches in Calabar in recent times are the Reinhard Bonnke and Pastor W. F. Kumuyi Crusades which often elicit a common vision, action and orientation. These efforts have created a confluence of religious orientations and a paradoxical situation of denominational homogenization amidst an increasing denominational pluralization and fragmentation in Calabar. This tends towards a situation of unity in diversity because:

> As people move between groups or are associated with a
> number of religious institutions concurrently, there is an
> interaction and diffusion of ideas and practices, as well as a
> breaking down of institutional barriers.[44]

Such a religious atmosphere can facilitate the process of tolerance and co-operation in the general society.

From a negative perspective, however, Christian organizations have sometimes exerted a differentiating influence which has often generated disaffection, apathy and separation among people in the society. The unification of people under various common denominational identities has often tended to evoke different levels of social division and tension. Firstly, it has often caused the disruption and disintegration of domestic unity as homes become fragmented into Protestant and Catholic; Pentecostal and Mainline; Anglican and

Methodist; Assemblies of God and Brotherhood of the Cross and Star, and so forth. Secondly, social discrimination in Calabar sometimes follows denominational differentiation. Thirdly, the legacy of denominationalism in Calabar has often led to serious interdenominational competition, hostility and discrimination. Critically appraised, many of the educational, economic, medical and social welfare services rendered by various Christian groups in Calabar may have primarily served divisive and competitive purposes. As E. A. Udo has critically observed:

> The establishment of churches, schools, hospitals, maternity homes, and health centers under different denominations .whose policies, standards of instruction and administrative systems varied, was a divisive rather than a unifying influence.[45]

Fourthly, denominational differences have often led to inter-denominational crisis and conflicts. There are two most popular ones. One of them was a conflict between the members of The Apostolic Church and the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star in 1977. The other one was a relatively more recent bloody clash between members of the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star and the Liberty Foundation Gospel Church on February 20, 1997, in which some people were reported dead.[46]

In addition to inter-denominational conflicts, there are abounding and recurrent cases of intra-denominational crisis and conflicts which often lead to either complete schisms or the establishment of separate branches of the same denomination. It is situations such as these that have led Max Assimeng to conclude that Christianity is the most divided of all world historical religions.[47]

The magnitude of the negative effects of denominationalism is evident from the truth that it has been wasteful in, and sapped the church's material, human, spiritual and evangelistic resources. This underscores the weakening and neutralizing effects of the continuing process of denominational pluralization and fragmentation on the role of the Church as a unifying, transforming and liberating social force in Calabar. Indisputably, "little chance exists for creative change within the present denominational structure."[48] Moreover, denominational disunity, hostility, competition and conflicts have invariably accentuated similar conditions that exist in the wider society. At times, however, it is the latter that has either brought about or facilitated the former.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is apparent that Christian institutions have made a tremendously positive impact on the developmental and integrative processes of Calabar. In view of the fundamental roles of the Churches in the educational, economic, political and medical systems of Calabar as well as in social integration and welfare services, they have proved to be a positive force in Calabar. Equally apparent, however, are their divisive, disintegrative and disruptive effects on the city. In these aspects, they have sometimes proved to be the worst obstacle to social integration and national mobilization and an effective preserver of divisiveness.

This functional ambiguity and paradox surrounding Christianity in Calabar is to be partially explained by the fundamentally instrumental, pragmatic and materialistic concept and approach which the people have of, and towards it. These appear to be inherent in the history of its inception, adoption, expansion, and diversification. They have often led to a kind of religious opportunism and manipulation in which Christianity has often been adopted to serve various present and practical purposes and needs.

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Endnotes

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[4]*Ibid.,* 242.

[5]Yinger, *op. cit*., 203.

[6]R.I.J. Hackett, *Religion in Calabar: The Religious Life and History of a Nigerian Town* (New York: Mouton De Gruyter, 1988), p.1. See also F.M. Mbon, "The Social Impact of Nigeria's New Religious Movements," in J. A Beckford, ed., *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*,.London: Sage Publications, 1986, 177.

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[14]*Ibid.*, 2.

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[19]Anya, *op. cit.*, iii.

[20]Afigbo, *op cit.,* 187.

[21]*Ibid.,* 187

[22]*Ibid.,* 188.

[23]*Ibid.,* 188.

[24]Akpenpuun Dzurgba, "A History of Christian Missions in Nigeria: A Developmental Approach," *Asia Journal of Theology,* Vol. 5., No. 1, April 1991,189.

[25]Udo, *op. cit.,*162.

[26]Kalu, "Christianity and Colonial Society…," *op. cit.*, 189.

[27]*Ibid.,* 189.

[28]Hackett, *op. cit.,* 185.

[29]*Ibid.*, 65, 68.

[30]Mbon, *op. cit.,* 183.

[31]Geoffrey C. Layman, "Religion and Political Behaviour in the United States: The Impact of Beliefs, Affiliations, and Commitment from 1980 to 1994," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 61, July 1997, 288 – 291, 306 – 307.

[32]Mbon, *op.cit.,* 183.

[33]Assimeng, *op. cit*., 94.

[34]*Ibid.,* 94.

[35]W. Wedenoja, "Modernization and the Pentecostal Movement in Jamaica," in S.D. Glazier, ed., *Perspectives on Pentecostalism: Case Studies .from the Caribbean and Latin American.* Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1980, 40-41, cited in Hackett, *op. cit.,* 14.

[36]Mbon, *op. cit.,*184.

[37]E.E. Ecoma, "Binding the Wound: Presbyterians and the Health of the Nation," in Ogbu U Kalu, ed., *A Century and Half of Presbyterian Witness in Nigeria, 1846-1996.* Lagos: Ida-Ivory Press, 1996, 176-178.

[38]Information was from interviews with Rev. A.E, Mfon, Rev. Fr. Bernard Okokon, Rev. H.J. Edoghotu, and Rev. Michael Adoga.

[39]Sacred Heart Cathedral, op. cit., 22.

[40]Interview with Rev. Christian Akawor.

[41]Mbon, *op. cit.,* 191.

[42]Assimeng, *op. cit.,* 5.

[43]L. J. Lewis, "The Church in Africa," *Colonial Review,* Vol. 5, No. 3 (1947), p. 77, cited in Assimeng, *op. cit*., 96.

[44]Hackett, *op. cit*., 345.

[45]Udoh, *op. cit.,* 179.

[46]For details on these episodes, see Essien A, Offiong, "Schism and Religious Independence in Nigeria: A Case Study of Calabar," (B. A. Long Essay, Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, University of Calabar, Calabar 1983), pp. 40ff; and Anonymous, "Religious Sects in Bloody Class." *Weekend Chronicles.* February 23, 1997, 2.

[47]Assimeng, *op. cit*., 98.

[48]Ogbu U. Kalu, "Church, Mission and Moratorium," in Ogbu U. Kalu, ed., *The

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