

CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE IN EASTERN AND NORTHERN NIGERIA (1841-1914): A HISTORICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract

Christianity as a religion was brought into limelight as a result of the spiritual revival amongst various Christian denominations in Europe. Thus, these denominations began to form missionary bodies made up of spirited and willing Christians who decided to take the gospel to places where Christianity has not dominated. One of such places was Nigeria. Thus, many Christian missionary bodies trooped to Nigeria. As a result of this the nineteenth century Christian missionary enterprise in Nigeria was successful unlike the Christian missionary enterprise in Lagos, Benin and Warri that took place between 14-16th century. The problem of this study is that many literatures have demonstrated the advent and impact of Christianity in Nigeria, without an in-depth analysis on reasons Christian missionary enterprise blossomed in the east than that of the north of Nigeria. Hence, this research will carry out a comparative analysis of Christian missionary activity between the east and north of Nigeria by pin pointing factors that made the missionary work more successful in the eastern area than northern Nigeria. The research finds out that there were different approaches and strategies applied by the Christian missionaries in spreading the gospel message in eastern and northern Nigeria. However, eastern Nigeria recorded better results than the northern territory. The research recommends that present Christian missionaries should learn to adopt different strategies in the course of their evangelism in various places so as to achieve positive results.

Keywords: Comparative, Analysis, Christian, Missionary Enterprise, Nigeria, Historical

Introduction

Christianity as a world religion was based on the Great Commission. This because the blood of the Christian martyrs watered the seed of the church and led to its spontaneous growth. The emergence of Emperor Constantine made Christianity became a legal religion in the Roman Empire. Emperor Constantine sponsored the missionary activities and programmes of the church. This further led to the astronomic growth of the church within Europe and beyond. After many years, there was a sort of spiritual revival among the various Christian denominations in Europe. Nwadiolor (2010) enunciates that in the 18th century, Christianity witnessed a wave of spiritual upheaval and the bubbling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men by generating a kind of evangelism that demanded a renewed zeal, revival and commitment on the part of the individual Christian for a personal act of conversion. This spiritual revival has been described as the Great Awakening. These Christians felt that, they have failed to obey the Great Commission. Thus, they

began to form missionary bodies. These missionary bodies were made of spirited and willing Christians who decided to take the gospel to places that the gospel message has not been heard of, or places where Christianity has not dominated. One of such places was eastern and northern Nigeria. Thus, many Christian missionary bodies trooped to Nigeria already in control by the British colonial government after the 1888 Berlin Conference.

Although before the nineteenth century, Christian missionary enterprise had taken place in Benni and Warri kingdom by missionaries from Portugal. However, this was not successful probably due to unfavourable climate condition, language barrier, lopsidedness that is, failure to include women among the missionaries. Okoro (2018) writes that, the early Catholic effort at missionary work in Nigeria suffered a devastating failure due to the ravages of the slave trade. It was the nineteenth century Christian missionary enterprise in Nigeria that was successful. Despite the significant influence of Christian missionaries in shaping social, educational, and religious aspects of Eastern and Northern Nigeria, there remains a gap in literature that needs to integrate the varied experiences and responses of the people population to missionary endeavors. This study aims to provide a detailed historical discourse on the activities of Christian missionaries in Eastern and Northern Nigeria from 1841 to 1914, thereby examining their methods, challenges, and impacts on Eastern and Northern Nigeria. By doing so, this research seeks to offer a nuanced understanding of how missionary work intersected with indigenous cultures and colonial dynamics. This study is relevant as it contributes to the broader historiography of Nigeria by highlighting the regional differences in missionary activities and their lasting legacies. However, this research is focused on carrying out a comparative discourse on Christian missionary enterprise in the east and north of Nigeria, with a view to ascertain reasons Christian missionary enterprise blossomed and flourished in the east than in the north.

The Early Church and Missionary Activities

Terry, Ebbie and Justice (1998) observes that the expansion and growth of the small group that met in the upper room during the Apostolic era in Jerusalem resulted in the activities of the missions that moved like wildfire at the beginning of the era of the early church. The early church members especially the Apostles who were so engulfed with the zeal that they converted many Gentiles, established many Christian communities, and trained some of the Gentile converts as

leaders to head the Christian communities. For instance, Alawode (2020) reports that Peter ministered in Bithynia and Cappadocia, Paul in Spain, Thomas in India and Mark founded the church in Alexandria. However, the early church met strong opposition and was persecuted but these did not stop the spontaneous growth of the body of Christ. This was because the early church members were zealous and courageous to fulfill the Great Commission.

Post Early Church Missionary Activities

With the emergence of Emperor Constantine according to Terry, Ebbie and Justice (1998), in 325, Emperor Constantine and Bishop Hosius welcomed 318 bishops to the Council of Nicaea to discuss and seek ways to expand the mandate of the Christian missions to the lost world. Thus Emperor Constantine sponsored the church in her missionary activities in order to spread the gospel message to the lost world. During this period, missionary activities extended to other parts of the world. This is according to Alawode (2020) was as a result of the outcome of the discussion reached at the Council of Nicaea by the bishops to take the mission as a corporate mandate of the church to reach the world for Christ. Terry, Ebbie and Justice (1998) enunciates that given this, Emperor Constantine and his son Constantius encouraged the expansion of Christian missions and the growth of Christianity by instituting Christianity as a way of maintaining peace within the empire and pacify warlike tribe outside its borders.

The Medieval Church and Missionary Activities

The medieval era was an era which exposes low redundancy in missionary activities. This could be as result of elements of decay in the medieval church. According to Nwaozuru (2020):

During the medieval period the church had much control of the world and the priests were considered to be more enlightened than others thus, some priests use this as an avenue to involve in actions that fall below Christian standards. These immoral acts could be referred to as elements of decay in the medieval church which include; concubinage, sale of relics, sales of indulgence. Other wicked acts include inquisition and index, the crusades, investiture struggle and so on (pp. 6-7).

More reasons were explained by Hiebert (1995) who stated that; during the medieval and renaissance periods, the destiny of Christian missions changed because of the negation of many gains in the first century and confrontation with Islam. From the above viewpoints, it could be said

that Christian's missionary work was not properly carried out in the medieval period hence it did not bear much fruit.

Christian Missionary Activities During and After Reformation

Untung and Khoirunisa (2019) explains that reformation could be considered as a movement which focused on thorough examination of institutions, practices of Western Christianity dominated by Catholic Church. Furthermore, Alister (2016) observes that it was a movement that fiercely opposed the dogmas of the Church. Although some scholars point to Erasmus as the pioneer of reformation through his writings, it is well known that it was championed by Martin Luther who took pragmatic approach to openly confront and counter certain practices of the Catholic Church which could be said to be antithetical to Christianity. Hallihan (2017) narrates that Luther was a monk from the Society of Augustine, who was dissatisfied with some practices of the Catholic Church. In his quest to counter such practices, he wrote and hung 95 theses at the door of Wittenberg Church and sent to the Archbishop of Mainz in October 1517. The action of Martin Luther gave birth to Reformation. It was during and after the Reformation period that missionary activities took another dimension. According to Alawode (2020), fortunately for Christianity, the rise of protestant reformation brought about spiritual and biblical revival and reawakening to both Roman Catholics and Protestants with regards to inner vitality for Christian mission which led to the emergence of courageous missionaries who dared to penetrate hostile areas (Hiebert, 1995). As a result, the monastic and missionary order became proactive and the universal nature of the reformed faith became a factor in this turnaround. This era prepared the way for the modern mission movement.

After the Reformation, it could be said that, there was a sort of spiritual revival among the various Christian denominations in Europe and America. This sort of spiritual revival has been called the Great Awakening by scholars. During the Great Awakening and evangelical revival that swept across Europe and America, those who were spurred by Holy Spirit felt the need, to take the gospel to areas which the gospel has not reached. Nigeria particularly east and north was part of non-evangelized areas. Nwadiolor (2010) observes that:

Christianity witnessed a wave of spiritual upheaval and the bubbling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men like John Wesley. Wesley for example challenged the established Anglican Church into action by generating a kind of

evangelism that demanded a renewed zeal, revival and commitment on the part of the individual Christian for a personal act of conversion (pp. 88-89).

Hence, it gave a boost to evangelism and missionary outside the European continent. Consequently, Nwadiolor (2010) states that enthusiastic and committed Christian groups constituted themselves into various missionary societies one of which was formed by the evangelical Anglicans in 1799 and called the Church Missionary Society. Others are Church of Scotland Mission (CSM), Roman Catholic Mission (RCM), Primitive Methodist Mission, Sudan United Mission, Sudan Interior Mission and so forth.

Pauline (2005) opines that these Christian missionary societies were formed to enhance the speedy spread of the gospel message. The numerous missionary bodies formed throughout Europe and America in the later part of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries went to other countries beyond theirs to spread the Gospel. These missionary bodies chose Nigeria especially eastern and northern Nigeria as their field for mission and evangelism work. It is interesting to note that these missionary bodies were motivated by the Holy Spirit and love of Christ, to bring the gospel to the area under study.

Historical Perspective of Christian Mission in Eastern and Northern Nigeria

The history of Christian missionary enterprise in Nigeria has been documented by both local and foreign scholars. Christian missionary enterprise in Nigeria started as far back as 14th -16th centuries. Okoro (2018) asserts that it was the Catholic missionaries from Portugal that evangelised Lagos, Benin and Warri. However, the early Catholic effort at missionary work in Nigeria suffered a devastating failure due to the ravages of the slave trade. Another missionary enterprise took place in the nineteenth century. This Christian missionary enterprise was championed by Christian missionary bodies from Great Britain and other European countries later joined by American missionaries. It could be said that the nineteenth century missionary bodies did not want to make the same mistake as their earlier counterparts did. Thus, they orchestrated and formulated a well-planned strategic missionary policy called the Bible and the Plough. In this regard Okoye and Pongou (2017) report that Thomas Buxton rightly said that let missionaries and school masters, plough and spade, go together and agriculture will flourish, the avenues to legitimate commerce will be opened, confidence between man and man will be inspired, whilst civilization will advance

as the natural effect, and Christianity operate as the proximate cause, of this happy change. The missionaries earnestly implemented this policy during their apostolic work in the areas under study. Hence, one could say that the missionary bodies contributed their quarter to the Christianisation of Nigeria according to their abilities, with the east receiving greater impact than the north. Before the division of Nigeria into six geo-political zones, Igwe (1977) states that the ethnic groups in Eleastern Nigeria are broadly divided into four main groups; the Ibos (sic) (also spelt Igbo), the Ibibio - Efiks, the Delta-Ijaws and the small groups.

Church Missionary Society (CMS) was the first mission to visit eastern Nigeria in 1841. Nwadiolor (2010) asserts that Aboh was the first town to encounter Christianity in the nineteenth century during the Niger expeditions of 1841. It is on record that Aboh was the transit camp of the C.M.S. missionaries who accompanied the expedition. However, this expedition met various challenges. Dike (1965) reports that at the first sight, the 1841 expedition appears to have been a complete failure for, within two months of its departure from England, two of the three ships were lost at sea and 54 of its 162 white crew had died of malaria. Egwuonwu (2021) observes that the missionaries faced opposition from powerful local kings with their guards. Nwadiolor (2010) states that Obi Aje of Aboh rejected the missionaries and the missionaries left. According to Amucheazi (1986), on April, 1846, another group of missionaries of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, headed by Hope Waddell arrived at Duke Town, Old Calabar. They were warmly received by Chief Eyamba of Duke Town, who offered them a beautiful piece of land on a hill where they founded a mission station and from there began to spread. Despite the challenges CMS met at the initial, they came back in 1857, this time they moved to Onitsha, they were accommodated by Onitsha people who allocated a land to them. Thus, CMS established a permanent mission station there. CMS and Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) evangelized for decades within eastern territory, before other Christian missionary bodies like Roman Catholic Mission (RCM), Primitive Methodist Missionary amongst others joined them.

Ayandele (1966) narrates that, a Roman Catholic Bishop was appointed for a Borno Mission in the first decade of the eighteenth century. According to Ajayi (1965), there were various attempts to establish mission stations in northern Nigeria between 1855 and 1900, which were met with varying degrees of success. Ayandele (1966) writes that a Kanuri recaptive Wesleyan agent, W.

Allakurah Sharpe, had also desperately pleaded with the Wesleyan mission to send missionaries to Kanuris in the Northeast of Nigeria in 1879. Pauline (2005) states that in 1890s the Southern Baptist Mission again proposed to forsake the Southern area completely in order to devote her strength and resources in the Northern area. It is worthy to note that the attempt to establish Christianity in northern Nigeria met opposition from the Emirs. Ayandele (1966) opines that, the Church Missionary Society organized the Sudan Party under Bishop Tugwell to conquer the north for Christ in six months. This dream did not materialize as the party met its ordeal at Kano as the Emir Mallam Aliyu, humiliated them. Both Miller and Tugwell later described their journey as a colossal blunder. Pauline (2005) records that, in 1893 three British Canadians which Rolland Bingham, Thomas Kent, and Walter Gowans made frantic efforts to reach the northern part of Nigeria called the Soudan but failed. Despite these challenges, Christianity was meant to have its firm stand by the apostolic work of Sudan Interior Mission. Pauline (2005) explains that the founding of this missionary society began in 1893. This was when some few individuals had a vision for the missionary works in the Sudan. It all began when some three British Canadians indicated their interest at some time to evangelize the central Sudan. These were: Rolland Bingham, Thomas Kent and Walter Gowans. Burning with the zeal to fulfill the Great Commission, they sought to storm the northern Nigerian territory for Christ. Although the mission body had made two previous unsuccessful attempts, the third attempt in 1901 was successful. Bingham (1943) asserts that Sudan Interior Mission and first missionary station was established at Petagi. Pategi in Nupe land was opened in 1902, from there, the missionaries evangelized other areas and founded other stations like Bida in 1903, Wushishi in 1904, Kpada in 1906. It was also from here that the influences of the missionaries were felt in Yaba land, Abguyi land and other areas.

Apart from the above mentioned Christian missionary bodies that attempted to spread the gospel to northern Nigeria, another Christian missionary body that joined in this campaign of northern Nigeria for Christ was Sudan United Mission. The founder and initiator of the Sudan United Mission was Dr. Harman Karl Kumm. Pauline (2006) reports that on July 23rd 1904, the members of Sudan United Mission sailed with Karl Kumm as the leader in the sailing ship “Akabo” and stopped at Niger at Burutu on August 10th 1904. From Niger they moved to Lokoja and finally settled at Wase thereby establishing a mission station there. The station was burnt down in 1909.

They later moved to Damparin Langtang North of Plateau State. Matthew (2017) records that, the Cambridge University Mission Party of England which was established in 1858 for mission started some work in north-central Nigeria in several places including Nupe Land in Bida Town in 1903, where the work expanded to Katcha in 1909. In 1907, they also began work on the Bauchi Plateau among the Angass at Kabwir, where they established a mission station in 1910. It was from these missionary bodies that Christianity spread to various parts of northern Nigeria.

Comparism of Christian Missionary Enterprise in Eastern and Northern Nigeria

Having established how Christianity came to stay in these two geographical areas. This research will further compare Christian Missionary Enterprise in Eastern and Northern Nigeria by analyzing some reasons that made Christian missionary activities in Eastern Nigeria to thrive more than Northern Nigeria.

Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

The first reason that motivated Christian missionary enterprise in the areas under study is the abolishment of Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Prior to the nineteenth century Christian missionary enterprise in the east and north of Nigeria, slave trade was a booming business. Many European and American merchants came to buy Africans who will work in their plantations and carry out domestic chores for them. This was fully documented by Anene (1999):

The establishment in the New World of European plantations for the large-scale production of sugar, cotton and tobacco necessitated the search for cheap and abundant labour. The local Indians were being wiped out through subjection to arduous plantation labour and it was out of solicitude for these Indians that Bishop Las Casas petitioned the Holy Roman Emperor to allow the importation of Negro slaves (p. 100).

Okpalike and Nwadiolor (2015) observe that the British who had acquired many islands in the Caribbean realized that the islands were suitable for the production of sugar. The demand for labour for the care of the cane and its harvesting for processing into sugar and rum could be met by importing Negroes. Hence, African continent became the suitable market to buy Negroes. Christian missionaries felt pity for Africans and decided to come to their rescue. Okpalike and Nwadiolor (2015) enunciate that the missionaries chose Africa for the Apostolic work (to plant Christianity), and to commiserate for wrongs which the slave trade had wrought upon them

(introduction of legitimate trade). However, it could be observed that the east of the Niger took lion share of the activities of Trans-Atlantic slave trade than their northern counterparts. Dike (1956) observed that from the 1780s, it was reckoned that 80 percent of the slaves exported from Bonny to Europe and America were Igbo people. This is owing to the fact that eastern Nigeria is a coastal region and is closer to the Atlantic Coast which favoured slave trade business as it thrived on water transportation. Abolition of slave trade took effect in 1807 through the efforts of CMS and other spirited Christians in Britain.

Attempts to Checkmate Islam

Another reason was to check the rapid spread of Islam. It could be said that, this was particularly for northern Nigeria where Islam dominated and had already established Emirate System of Government whereas such was not found in eastern Nigeria. Eastern region had an egalitarian system of government especially among the Igbo ethnic group. It could be observed that both the local chiefs in eastern Nigeria and the Emirs in northern Nigeria resisted the missionaries. Njoku (2007) documents that, the agents of Church of Scotland Mission landed at Ohaike Ekpa Omaka beach in Ikwo clan and they were mistaken for ghosts and in an attack two missionaries lost their lives. Ayandele (1966) reports about CMS ordeal at Kano as the Emir, Mallam Aliyu, humiliated them saying; we do not want you, you can go. I give you three days to prepare: a hundred donkeys to carry your loads back to Zaria, and we never wish to see you here again. However, the British colonial government approved the deployment of British Naval Squadron to eastern Nigeria and was utilized to neutralize the power and influence of the local chiefs as they were conquered and deposed. Whereas the case of northern Emirs were different. It could be said that Lord Lugard was being more of political than missionary oriented when it comes to anything concerning northern territory. In the opinion of Pauline (2005), Lord Lugard the British High Commissioner pursued a closed-door policy against the Christian missionaries. The pursuance of Lord Lugard's policy of non-interference with Islamic religion was the main reason Christian missionaries were refused the propagation of the gospel in the north or to engage in any Christian activities. This was also considered as a phenomenon meant to create some setbacks by government to the Christian missionaries. Okoye and Pongou (2017) states that the wish of the colonial masters to govern through traditional rulers actively discouraged missionary activities in the northern parts of the country. The absence of missionary activity in northern Nigeria was as a result of the colonial

government's policy of Indirect Rule established around 1900. Indirect Rule meant that the protectorate of northern Nigeria would be administered by the Emirs of the Islamic Sokoto Caliphate in the northwest, and the Islamic Borno Emirate in the northeast. The policy strengthened the opposition of the Islamic northern rulers to Christianity. From the aforementioned, it could be observed that while the colonial government supported the Christian missionaries in spreading the gospel to every nook and cranny of eastern Nigeria with British expeditionary force clamping down on hostile zones like the Aro expedition of 1902 and so on. The missionaries received little or no such support in evangelising the northern part. This contributed to the limited success achieved by the Christian missionaries in northern whereas, they achieved huge success in the east.

Lack of Colonial Government Support/Western Education

This lack of colonial government's support to the missionary enterprise in northern Nigeria could further be seen in the educational development of the two areas. Despite the fact that there was an Arabic education already established in the north yet, it could be said that Western education brought by the Christian missionaries made impact than Arabic education. In affirmation to this, Diara and Nche (2013) confirms that the establishment of Western education in Nigeria could be described as the base of the country's development. The policy of Indirect Rule instituted by the British colonial government according to Okoye and Pongou (2017) strengthened the opposition of the Islamic rulers to Christianity. It is well known that the nineteenth century Christian missionary enterprise in Nigeria was synonymous to Western education so opposing Christianity is sequel to opposing Western education. To this end, there was higher rate of educational development in eastern than northern Nigeria. At the initial, education was solely sponsored by the missionaries and foreign philanthropists with little help from the indigenous people. This was mainly seen in eastern Nigeria. Okoro (2018) affirms that this was largely the case until government intervened in the education of its citizen in 1920. Csapo (1981) reports that as early as 1914 when the north and south were merged into one country, there were 37,500 primary schools in the South of which eastern Nigeria is part of, but just 1,100 primary schools in the north where the colonial government had taken primary responsibility for schooling. According to Sundkler and Steed (2000), few missionary schools that were established in northern Nigeria

operated under the condition that religious education would not to be permitted. When the Emirs protested against these schools, the administration had some of them closed.

From the above viewpoints, it is glaring that, the eastern region had higher number of schools because the missionaries who were given free access to operate while the northern region had lower number of schools because the colonial government took sole responsibility of establishing schools and gave limited access to the missionaries. One may be poised to ask why was the colonial government responsible for schooling in the north while the Christian missionaries piloted greater affairs of schooling in the east? In answer to this question, Okoye and Pongou (2017) responds that, the Emirate administration opted for government provided schools in order to preserve the power of the Emirs. And Lord Lugard yielded to this request as a measure to curb and limit missionary activities in northern Nigeria. Hence, there was poor educational infrastructure in northern Nigeria while the eastern blossomed in this aspect. This is simply because the eastern region was more exposed to missionary activities than the north where they were resisted. Hence, the east had more number of schools compared to the Muslim dominated areas which the colonial government refused the missionaries to access. It is worthy to note that Western education was very beneficial as those who acquired it either gained employment or started their own business. This alleviated poverty among the indigenous people

Increase in Number of Ex-slave as Missionaries

Another reason Christian missionary enterprise gained momentum in the east than the north was that, there was higher number of eastern ex-slaves in Sierra Leone who volunteered to work as missionaries. Among the ex-slaves who received the gospel, greater number of them was easterners who decided to bring the gospel to their countrymen. Such as Simon Jonas, John Christopher Taylor amongst others. At their arrival to the host community, the indigenous people saw and heard their kinsmen preaching or interpreting the gospel in their own language, they paid more attention to it. A good example was reported by Ekechi (1972), who said that as CMS came to Aboh in 1841, Simon Jonas acted as an interpreter. When the king heard the gospel interpreted in the indigenous language, he was overwhelmed with joy and wholeheartedly received the gospel. He king further urged Simon Jonas to continue teaching his people more about the gospel. Okpalike and Nwadiolor (2015) observe that during Simon Jonas short stay at Aboh, he made more

remarkable progress in forming a Christian group among the people. Also, when CMS arrived Onitsha in 1857, Taylor preached in Igbo without an interpreter, and this gave the indigenous people a sense of belonging and served as an eye opener that they could also benefit from the economy of salvation. Hence, they did not hesitate to accept the gospel wholeheartedly. These good impressions convinced the missionaries that partnering with ex-slaves in the missionary enterprise will yield positive results. Thus, they added more ex-slaves as missionary agents in their subsequent missionary endeavour of which easterners were greater in number. Odidi (2019) observes that CMS promoted the use of African missionaries to reach out to the local people. They sent out some of these African missionaries and teachers, who were freed slaves from Sierra Leone, to Nigeria. The presence of the ex-slaves among the white missionaries was advantageous to the successful spread of the gospel in the eastern than in northern Nigeria. This does not mean that there were no ex-slaves from northern Nigeria. Ayandele (1966) recalls that a Kanuri recaptive Wesleyan agent, W. Allakurah Sharpe had also desperately pleaded with the Wesleyan mission to send missionaries to Kanuris in the northeast of Nigeria in 1879. However, they were fewer in number compared to ex-slaves from eastern Nigeria.

Okpalike and Nwadior (2015) is of the opinion that the crucial reason for appointing indigenous people as missionaries in their native country and to lead their Churches is to enable them to adapt the Christian religion to the culture of their people. Anyabuike (1996) notes that the purpose of the CMS in supporting the earnest appeal of the Freetown Igbo Christians for a mission in Igboland was to help in the development of committed Christians who will be mature and proud of their own cultural heritage. It was through the contributions of indigenous Christian missionaries such as Simon Jonas, J.C. Taylor, G. N. Anyaegbunam, A. C. Onyeabo, N. O. Nzekwu among others that the translation of Igbo Bible was made possible not devoid of assistance from the white missionaries.

Establishment of Mission Stations

It could be observed that there were greater number of mission stations in the east than in the north and this made Christian missionary enterprise flourish in the east than the north. Okoye and Pongou (2017) observes that, the Christian missionaries arrived in northern Nigeria in great numbers, but they never set up significant numbers of mission stations and this could probably be due to the

hostile acts of the Emirs. The eastern territory played great host to communities and welcomed the missionaries and even allocated lands to them, however, the reverse was the case in many places in northern Nigeria. Thus, the missionaries never hesitated to establish mission stations among other infrastructural projects such as schools, hospitals, and so forth in eastern areas than northern areas. An examination of the foregoing might make one ask why Christian missionaries failed to penetrate the Hausa, Fulani, and Kanuri areas of the north, that were already under British control by 1903? The answer according to Okoye and Pongou (2017) is that the colonial government never gave them much support and approval as they did concerning missionary activities in eastern Nigeria. In affirmation to this answer, Ayandele (1966) indicated that there was the establishment of mission stations in parts of the Emirate at Bida, Kontagora, and Zaria which was led by the evangelist Dr. Walter Miller, amongst several European missionaries who also preached in the large cities of the Emirates without the government's approval. Furthermore, missionary activity in northern Nigeria was significantly restricted by the Indirect Rule policy prohibiting missionary activity from most parts of northern Nigeria under the control of the Emirs. The colonial government's attitude towards missionary activity in the north is further seen in the expression of Sir, Percy Girouard, Governor of Northern Nigeria (1907-1909). Ayandele (1966) further documents that Lord Salisbury words in an address to the Wesleyan Missionary Society in 1900 which states "you will not convert them...and the danger of creating great perils and producing great convulsions, and it may be bloodshed..., is a danger you must bear in mind" (p. 59). In view of the above, Okoye and Pongou (2017) reveals that, the missions could not rely on the support of British force in the face of opposition as they had enjoyed in Southern Nigeria.

Many scholars are of the view that, the reason colonial government restricted missionary activities in northern Nigeria was to prevent the Emirs from revolting which would lead to crisis which could be injure or kill many people. However, Okoye and Pongou (2017) opposed this viewpoint, stating that if missionaries had the support of the administration, the opposition of the northern Emirs, like that of other rulers in the South, would have come to naught in the face of a superior British military force. This is not to say that missions would have gained converts in these areas mostly governed by Islamic rulers. Evidence from other parts of Nigeria indicates that, even with the establishment of mission stations, missions found it difficult to attract converts without military intervention (Okwu, 2010). Hence, the inability of the colonial administration to fully support the

Christian missionaries in evangelising the north reduced the pace of the Apostolic work and resulted to the stunted growth of Christianity in the north.

From another perspective, Okoye and Pongou (2017) explain that the reason for the lack of missionary activity in the North is geographic; the South is closer to the Atlantic Coast, so it was easier and less risky for missionaries to set up stations in those areas. However, Ayandele (1966) reports that, around 1900 that the British colonial administration already had a significant presence in northern Nigeria and the area was accessible to European traders and missionaries. In 1911, there was a rail line going from Lagos to Kano in the heart of the north, and in 1926 another line went from Port Harcourt in the southeast to another major northern city which is Kaduna. Despite the late arrival of the Christian missionaries in the northern, the lack of support from the colonial government that made them to achieve limited success in the area.

Conclusion

Christian missionary enterprise took place in the east and north of Nigeria within the nineteenth century. However, the enterprise was more successful in eastern territory than its northern counterpart. The present study made efforts to point out reasons this was so. Christian missionaries in the East were able to establish schools, hospitals, and other social services more freely than in the North. These institutions not only provided essential services but also served as effective tools for evangelization. The educational opportunities offered by mission schools were particularly appealing, leading to greater acceptance and spread of Christianity. In the North, the missionaries were competing with the already established Islamic institutions such as Quranic schools, mosques which competed and resisted the establishment of missionary schools. In the East, missionaries adapted their approaches to align with local customs and practices, often incorporating elements of indigenous culture into their teachings. This cultural sensitivity helped in gaining the trust and acceptance of the local populations. In the North, however, the stark differences between Islamic and Christian doctrines and practices made such adaptations more challenging.

In summary, Christianity flourished in Eastern Nigeria more than in Northern Nigeria between 1841 and 1914 due to a combination of favorable cultural and religious contexts, political fragmentation, supportive colonial policies, effective use of educational and social services,

community receptiveness, and adaptable missionary strategies. These factors created a conducive environment for the spread of Christianity in the East, while in the North, the entrenched Islamic structures and unified resistance posed significant challenges. Thus, all these culminated to the limited success of Christian missionary enterprise in the north while the tremendous result was recorded in eastern Nigeria.

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