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CHRISTIANITY IN NIGERIA

Part I

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and

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Nigeria is one of the leading nations in the Continent of Africa, politically but also in Christian witness. Christianity is making remarkable strides, not only in numerical growth but in deepening theological maturity of many outstanding leaders. This two-part article on "Christianity in Nigeria" traces the historical development of the church, focusing on the relationship of the Church with Islam and politics. Dr. Bulus Galadima and Dr. Yusufu Turaki presented the following paper at the African Theological Fellowship Continental Conference at the Akrafi Christaller Memorial Centre in Akropong, Ghana. In this first part of the paper on "Christianity in Nigeria", the authors describe the historical and social background of Nigeria and then the ways in which the church was planted among the various peoples. Part Two will appear in the next issue of AJET.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the Nigerian State (Islam, Christianity and Politics) and the experience of the Nigerian Church since 1841 to the present. The year 1841 was the beginning of modern mission work in Nigeria led by Bishop Ajayi Crowther. Bishop Ajayi Crowther was a slave taken from Nigeria. He was later freed by the British abolitionists on the high seas and was taken to Sierra Leone. It was there that he became a Christian and was trained as a clergy in Sierra Leone and Great Britain. He became the first African to be consecrated Bishop on the West Coast of Africa. Thus, it is important to state the significance of the relationship between slavery and the beginning of modern Christian missionary activities on the West Coast of Africa.

First, this paper states very briefly the historical and social background of Nigerian society within which Christian missions carried out their activities in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The theory and practice of Christian missions, i.e., missionary activities, which formed the foundations of the Nigerian Church are then presented. This provides a background to our understanding of the nature, structure, theology, practice and the relationship of the Nigerian Church to both society and the State.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

This section describes very briefly the historical and social background of the Nigerian society and State. The socio-political setting of the Nigerian society and State can be divided geographically and culturally into two broad major areas: (1) the North; and (2) the South. This classification forms the basis for understanding Nigeria's historical ethno-regional politics, cultural and religious conflict, and socio-political, moral and ethical problems. The early work of Christian missions and the emerging Church confronted the challenges posed by some very powerful social factors, namely the traditional and Islamic factors, and the Colonial Administration. Thus, it is important that we understand some historical, geographical, political, cultural and religious

factors which have contributed in shaping and defining the nature of the Nigerian Church.

Southern Nigeria: Southern Nigeria can be divided into two broad societies, namely, Western and Eastern societies.

In the West, the Yoruba and the Edo, just like the Hausa-Fulani in the North, had centralised political, administrative and judicial systems, which were controlled by traditions. Where Islam existed in the West, it too came under the powerful influence of traditional values.

The Western coast of Nigeria came under European influence in the 15th century, especially through the early contacts of the Portuguese with the kingdoms of Benin and Warri.

This part of West Africa was named the Slave Coast because of the slave trade introduced by Europeans in the 17th century. This obnoxious trade caused inter-ethnic wars, depopulation and instability in the region until the British colonial rule in the 19th century when Lagos became a Crown Colony in 1860. Modern Christian missions entered Yorubaland by 1840s.

The Fulani warriors and Jihadists had their base at Ilorin, the northern edge of Yorubaland and raided the Yorubaland in places as far south as Oyo, Ibadan and Abeokuta. That was how Islam was first introduced into Yorubaland. In western societies, Islam, Christianity and traditional religions have co-existed harmoniously, unlike in the North.

In the East, the Igbo, Efik and others, just like the peoples of the Middle Belt of Nigeria, did not have centralised political, administrative or judicial systems as did the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Edo. This area, like the West, also came under European influence, especially during the period of slave trade. Important city-states such as Opobo, Bonny and Brass in the Delta Region grew and became powerful, as did Calabar in the Cross River Region. Arochukwu and Onitsha became powerful trade centres in Igboland. As it was in parts of the Western region, the slave trade introduced by Europeans caused inter-ethnic wars, depopulation and instability until the colonial rule in the late 19th century.

Christianity entered the region in the 1840s and grew more rapidly than in any other region. This region was followed by the

Middle Belt in the rapid growth of Christianity. The traditional values, however, had a very powerful influence on Christianity. Islam did not enter the region until after the civil war in the 1970s.

Northern Nigeria: Northern Nigeria can be divided into two large regions consisting of two broad ethnic groups: The Northern part, known as Hausaland and Bornu, which was composed predominantly of Muslim groups; and the Southern part, known as the Middle Belt, which was predominantly traditional and made up of largely of the non-Muslim groups. The major ethnic groups in the Northern part are the Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri of the old Kanem-Bornu Empire, while the southern part consists of well over 250 ethnic groups concentrated in Plateau, Bauchi, Southern Kaduna, Adamawa, Sardauna (former Northern Cameroons) and Benue areas. The relationship between the Muslim groups, in the Hausaland and Bornu, on the one hand, and the traditional groups, in the Middle Belt, on the other, was characterised by slave-raiding, slave-trading and wars of territorial expansion before the British occupation of Northern Nigeria in 1900.

Arab influence was very strong in this region especially in slave trade. The irony of the era was that while the Europeans were plundering the West Coast with slave trade, the Arabs were doing the same in the Hinterland (Sudan). The Middle Belt region was plundered for both European and Arab slave traders. Christianity entered the West Coast of Africa where slave trading and slave raiding abounded.

The Middle Belt: In mission and colonial records, the inhabitants of this area were usually referred to as "Pagans". The bulk of the work of Christian Missions in Northern Nigeria was in this area until the early 1930's, when the Colonial Administration lifted the ban barring Christian Missions from entering the Muslim Emirates of the Hausaland and Borno, with the exception of the Zaria and Bida areas, where the Church Missionary Society (CMS) was stationed before the consolidation of colonial rule over Northern Nigeria.

Linguistically, the traditional peoples of the Middle Belt were classified as Benue-Congo or Semin-Bantu. They exhibit similar characteristics in culture, language, religion, customs, physical

features, social values and organisation. This probably indicates that in the distant past they might have had the same origin. Comparative linguistic analysis in this region would shed more light on the past history of these peoples. Their socio-political organisation lacked centralized authority, administrative machinery and constituted judicial institutions but was based upon democratic and consensus principles.

The contacts of these societies with the Hausa-Fulani, the Colonial Administration and Christian and Muslim missions, especially in the colonial era, brought about rapid social changes and transformation. Indeed, the impact of Christianity, Western civilisation and Islam upon the traditional societies of this region has been quite substantial and profound.

The Far North: The Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri in the Far North have been in contact with the outside world for many centuries. This is because, for centuries, Hausaland and Borno were under the profound influence of Islamic and Arab civilizations. In the Western Sudan, ancient empires, such as Mali and Songhai, introduced Islam, education, commerce and political institutions which contributed a lot in stimulating socio-political development in Hausaland and Borno. Links with North Africa, Egypt and especially the Maghreb, strengthened economic, religious, social and cultural ties with the Hausaland. The rise of economic, political and cultural power of the Hausa States and Borno brought them fame in the Arab, Mediterranean and Western worlds. Travellers, scholars, Muslim missionaries and merchants from these lands visited the Hausaland and Borno.

At the end of the 18th century, the Fulani or Fulbe moved into Hausaland in large numbers and later became the religious and political rulers of the land after the Jihad of Usman dan Fodio in 1804, and which successfully overthrew the Hausa Kings. Islam and Fulani rulers were in consequence imposed upon Hausaland.

Given its recognisable civilisation, the Hausa, as a distinct ethnic group in Northern Nigeria, attracted the interest of scholars, statesmen and religious men throughout the Middle Ages. Fascination about the Hausaland lured Europeans in the form of the colonial adventures and Christian missions.

There were some major socio-political differences between the Muslim and the Traditional groups in the North which had important implications for both mission and colonial policies. The Muslim groups were united together not only by Islam and Usman dan Fodio's Jihad of the early 1840's, but also by the assimilating power of Hausa language and culture, as well as the Sokoto Caliphate structure which covered a vast land across the northern parts of the Central Sudan of West Africa. Conversely, the traditional religions of the peoples of the Middle Belt were mainly particularistic and local and far-removed from the universalism of Islam. The numerous languages and dialects of the peoples of the Middle Belt did not have any assimilating power or wide influence like the Hausa language which was increasingly becoming a trade language in the Central Sudan. Briefly then, these peoples did not have any unifying ideology like Islam or the assimilating power of Hausa language and culture.

The Middle Belt did not have any centralised authority, administrative machinery, or judicial and fiscal institutions covering vast areas and cutting across ethnic or geographical boundaries. These segmentary societies were just like "mini republics" which did not have a common ethnic identity, authority or legitimacy. Each "republic" (tribe) was a confederacy of communities and villages based upon lineage and kinship systems. Each lived on its own and was independent of others because the sense of "tribal" affinity and unity excluded all those who did not belong.

The rise of Islamic power in Northern Nigeria drastically changed the socio-political conditions and the nature of inter-ethnic relationship, especially between the Muslim and the Traditional groups. Islamic ideology represented "universalism" while the traditional African religions and culture in general represented "particularism."

The Jihad, which generated Islamisation, colonisation and slave trade and slave-raiding, also introduced the religious and social stratification between the Muslim and the Traditional groups. Thus, the pre-colonial inter-ethnic relations between the Muslim

and the Traditional groups were, to a large extent, determined by religion.

It was upon these two broad-based distinct societies of Northern Nigeria that the Colonial Administration imposed a colonial structure. In 1900, the same administration had imposed a colonial superstructure over the two Protectorates of Nigeria, namely, Southern and Northern Protectorates.

Christian missions also carried out their mission work within these two broad societies in the North. The Church in Northern Nigeria was born within three powerful contexts: (1) the traditional context, mainly in the Middle Belt areas; (2) the Islamic context, mainly in the Far North; and (3) the colonial context of British rule over the whole of Nigeria.

This northern context had been transformed by the Colonial Administration and Christian missions. The consequences of this transformation in post-colonial Nigeria have influenced greatly the nature of politics and religious conflict in Nigeria.

From the previous sections, we have identified four very important social factors in the history and making of Nigeria worth mentioning, namely, traditional, Islamic, colonial and missionary. These have had profound influence on the nature, growth and development of Nigeria as a nation and as well as the Church. These geographical, cultural and religious factors have greatly affected the nature of politics, the State and the Church.

THE FOUNDING OF THE NIGERIAN CHURCH

This section examines briefly two aspects of the founding of the Nigerian Church: (1) the arrival of Christian missions; and (2) the theory and practice of Christian missions (activities).

Arrival of Christian Missions

This section does not intend to give a detailed history of missionary evangelisation of Nigeria. This has been adequately treated by many Church historians. Early missionary activities began between 1472 and 1621 when the kings of Portugal launched pioneering missionary enterprise in the Kingdoms Benin and

Warri. This primary attempt did not yield any lasting fruit. Similar attempts were also made at entering Borno and Hausa lands by Catholics and Protestants alike, but this too failed.

The story of modern missions in Nigeria began with the freed slaves in the Americas and Great Britain. They became the pioneers and the instruments of spreading and building Christian missions on the West Coast of Africa, especially in Yourubaland, the Niger, and Cross River. One of such freed slaves was Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther.

It suffices to present a list of the most important pioneering Christian missions in Nigeria (Foxall, p. 257):

Wesleyan Methodist, 1842
Scottish Presbyterian, 1842
Church Missionary Society, 1844
Southern Baptist Foreign Mission, 1850
Roman Catholic Mission, 1961
Sudan Interior Mission, 1893
Sudan United Mission, 1904
United Missionary Society, 1905
Seventh Day Adventist, 1914
Qua Iboe Mission, 1932
Assembly of God, 1939
African Church Movements, 1888-1925.

By the 1970's, there were more than 50 Mission Agencies which operated in Nigeria. As a result of the work of many Christian missions, Christianity has grown and become one of the dominant religions in Nigeria. Over 45% of the population of Nigeria embraces Christianity.

The Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Methodist and the Baptists pioneered mission work in the West, while the Presbyterian, the Catholics, and the Qua Iboe Mission pioneered the work in the East. Christian missions in Southern Nigeria began in 1842 with both the Scottish Presbyterian in Cross River and the Wesleyan Methodist in Abeokuta and Badagry.

The early development of Christian missions in the Niger Territories in the hinterland began, in earnest, with the Church

Missionary Society based at Lokoja. The work of this mission dates back to the great influences of Sir William Wilberforce in his successful campaign for the abolition of slave trade in the British Empire which came into effect in 1807, and also that of Sir Thomas F. Buxton who continued in the footsteps of Sir William Wilberforce, the great abolitionist leader. A society was formed in Great Britain, *The Society for the Extinction of Slave Trade and the Civilisation of Africa*, under the leadership of Sir Thomas F. Buxton. This society was very concerned about the effective abolition of slavery on the West Coast of Africa, particularly the Slave Coast (Coast of Nigeria) and was successful in persuading the British Government to send out an expedition on the Niger River to establish alternatives to slave trade, the legitimate trade.

In 1841, the British Government commissioned three ships, the *Albert*, the *Wilberforce*, and the *Soudan* to explore the Niger with the view of establishing trade relations with the states of the Niger Territories in the hinterland so that legitimate trade could supplant slave trade. This was to be accomplished through the "Industrial Mission" concept which emphasised the establishment of industrial farms for agriculture and the general social welfare of the communities. This mission was headed by Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a freed slave from Sierra Leone and was also accompanied by Rev. Schoen.

Later, a schism crippled the Mission. Conflict arose between those missionaries who were sympathetic with African culture in their missionary approach and those who believed in applying whole sale European culture in their approach to Africans. The pro-European culture broke away and founded the Sudan Party which was exclusively European. But this group did not advance into Hausaland beyond Lokoja and was disbanded in 1893. The pioneering missionary work was done mainly around Lokoja and the Nupeland in Central Nigeria.

Generally speaking, Christian missions and the colonialists advanced into Central Nigeria almost simultaneously during the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. During the same period, the Royal Niger Company was given a Charter by Great Britain in 1886 to trade on the Niger and make treaties with the

states of the Niger Territories. In December of 1898, this charter was withdrawn and Great Britain declared a Colonial rule over the Niger Territories on First January 1900, and at the same time a Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was brought under the command of a young "colonial cadet", Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick D. Lugard, and who became the First British High Commissioner.

By the end of the Victorian Age, (1832-1900), missionary work had started already in other parts of the world, such as, China, Japan, Korea, India, South Africa and other parts of the world, except the Sudan (Central Nigeria). Both in England and North America, the theme, "The Sudan, the worst manned mission field in the whole world" was beginning to ring louder and louder in many missionary conferences, especially the Keswick conventions in England and later Canada. During the same period, the Student Missionary Movement was beginning to have a strong influence on the need of global evangelisation in North America and Europe.

Furthermore, during this same period, the anti-Islamic sentiment was quite high in Europe and North America within Christian circles. Islam was viewed as the greatest social evil which threatened the survival of Africa, in particular. The challenge for Christian missions was of two kinds: (1) to stop the spread and influence of Islam in Africa; and (2) to win Africa for Christ before it was too late. However, the Sudan, the coveted mission field was not an easy mission territory for Christian missions from Europe and North America. It was located in the hinterlands which made it difficult for European missionaries to reach. It involved high risks – "Africa the white man's grave." But the part of the Sudan that was particularly attractive was the Hausaland in Central Sudan. Hausaland (Northern Nigeria) was well known in England and Europe at this time. The accounts of Mungo Park, Richard Lander, the travels of Clapperton, Henry Barth, and other travellers from North Africa were quite well known to the European and North American general public, especially the merchants, explorers, colonialists and missionary societies. Hausaland for centuries had aroused curiosity in Europe, and the Middle East, and much later, the colonial, missionary and the explorers and merchant circles.

In 1892 the Hausa Association was formed in Great Britain. It sent Canon C. H. Robinson to study Hausa at Tripoli in 1892 and later in 1894 he travelled to Kano. In 1897 a small party of CMS missionaries left England and travelled to Tripoli to study Hausa. In 1899 this small party arrived in Nigeria under the leadership of Bishop Tugwell. At this time, the British Government was about to proclaim a Protectorate over Northern Nigeria as mentioned earlier. This party went to Kano against the wishes of Lt. Col. Frederick Lugard. Dr. W.R.S. Miller, a medical doctor, became the director of the Hausa Mission. The Mission at first settled at Girku (South of Zaria) and then moved to Zaria.

The Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) and the Sudan United Mission (SUM) were also born out of this "Burden of the Sudan." This time not from an ecclesiastical organisation as the CMS of the Church of England or like other Church Mission Boards, such as, the Baptists, the Presbyterians, the Methodists and the Catholics in the South, but from Faith Missions and certain individuals who felt the burden of the Sudan. In 1893, three individuals, Thomas Kent, Walter Gowans and Rowland V. Bingham raised funds privately in Canada and England and journeyed to the Sudan. Two of them died in the Sudan leaving Bingham who continued the work. In 1900, Bingham arrived in the West Coast with Albert Taylor and A.J. Moline but had to return home. In 1901, the Sudan Party came out with E. Antony, Charles Robinson, Albert Taylor and Alex W. Banfield and late in 1902 Dr. Andrew P. Stirrett joined them at Pategi in Nupeland.

The challenge of the lack of missionary work in the Sudan had consumed Dr. Karl Kumm, a German and the pioneering founder of SUM. He went to England in 1902 after his earlier failures to enter the Sudan through Egypt. He helped the founding of the Sudan Pioneer Mission, later known as the Sudan United Mission (SUM). In 1904 this mission entered the Sudan with Kumm and his wife Lucy, Dr. Bateman, Burt and Maxwell.

Thus, by the end of the Victorian Age, the evangelical mission societies had succeeded in sending Christian missionaries to the Sudan under "The Burden of the Sudan" and the mission "interior" concept.

The beginning of Christian missions in Northern Nigeria was given much prominence because of its significance in shaping and highlighting colonial and State policies towards Christian missions and the Church, on the one hand, and the approaches of Christian missions and the Church to the Colonial Administration and the State. Furthermore, it defines the socio-political implications of the work of Christian missions within the (1) traditional; (2) Islamic; and (3) colonial contexts and the role of the Church in modern Nigeria.

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

Christian missions have played a significant role in the transformation of African societies in modern history. The transforming of African societies through various missionary activities has become a major contribution of Christian missions to modern social history of Africa. The work of Christian missions has become an integral part of Africa's social history. The theory and practice of Christian missions which effected social formations and transformations can be summed up in its humanitarian ministries and services, such as, (1) educational programmes and institutions; (2) medical work, services and institutions; (3) literature work, programmes and institutions; (4) planting of mission stations and churches; and (5) other forms of spiritual, moral and social development of peoples and societies. Christian missions held a dominant position as leading pioneers in education, the fight against illiteracy and ignorance; medical work, the fight against various physical human ailments, diseases and epidemics. The theory and practice of Christian missions can be studied from the following missionary activities. These activities did have a profound influence on the nature of church structures, theology and philosophy and patterns of relationships and approaches to (1) African tradition, culture and religion; (2) Islam; (3) colonial policies and other socio-political issues. Thus the nature and the role of the Church within the State are defined and shaped by these experiences.

Planting of Mission Stations, Churches and Institutions

Christian missions used the strategy of founding mission stations, out-stations, churches and institutions as means of occupying and entrenching their presence in a vast African territory. The mission station played significant role as being the centre and focus of missionary activities in the Mission Field. Mission stations and out-stations grew to become centres of mission and church activities. The emergent Church structures in the Mission Field took root from the pattern of mission stations and out-stations. The Mission administered churches, institutions and general missionary activities from the mission station. Patterns of church administration and structures, policies and practices which were developed by Christian missions were passed on to nationals by the missionaries.

The politics of creating dioceses, or districts and their headquarters, church offices and officers and titles of clergy draw a lot from the missionary legacy. The Church today spends so much time, energy and resources on these matters. Schisms, crises, conflicts and tensions caused by these issues have in one way or the other affected most churches in Nigeria. This phenomenon alone can occupy most of our time.

Education Ministry

Christian missions pioneered western education in Nigeria. Their educational programmes were such as: Literacy Programmes; Classes for Religious Instruction; Sunday School and Catechism Programmes; Elementary and Primary Education; Teacher Training and Secondary Education Programmes; and Theological Education and Training Programmes. The bulk of educated civil servants and professionals had their humble beginnings from mission education programmes and institutions. Christian missions pioneered education where the Colonial Government and Native Authorities could not provide such for their subjects.

The major contributions of Christian missions in the area of education has been literacy, social, moral, and spiritual up-bringing and general development of the peoples and societies. Education was the most potent tool for the transformation of African societies

and also the most effective tool of evangelism. More people became Christians through the mission ministry of education than any other means.

Even though Christian missions pioneered western education, most mission societies did so very reluctantly. Theological or Christian education was more favoured than general (secular) education. Most missionaries during the pioneering periods were anti-intellectual and modernity and this affected the quality and mission education policies. Education for some mission societies was narrowed down to the popular three R's (Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetic) and Bible Knowledge and anything beyond these was "worldly". The fear of too much education, modernity and worldliness dominated much of mission education policies. This fact has adversely affected the concept of education and its administration by the Church.

The State take-over of mission and church schools in the late 1960's and the early 1970's was motivated by the assumption that the mission or the Church cannot provide "neutral education" as its education is nothing more than Christian "propaganda."

This dualistic conception of education as "secular" and "spiritual" has affected both State and Church policies towards education. After the State take-over of schools many churches turned their focus on Theological Education.

A wholistic Christian approach to all aspects and disciplines of education and not only theological or spiritual is a great task that awaits the Church in the 21st Century. "All Truth is God's Truth."

Medical Ministry and Services

Christian missions pioneered medical ministry where both the Colonial Government and Native Authorities had no adequate medical services and institutions for their subjects, especially in the remote rural areas. They built health clinics, dispensaries, maternity homes and hospitals. They also pioneered Leprosy ministry and services and as well as built eye clinics and hospitals. Just as in the field of education, the Colonial Government and Native Authorities needed the help of Christian missions in this

area. Christian missions contributed immensely to the state of health, demography and social well being of the people in general.

Both medical and education activities were conceived by Christian missions as auxiliary or the hand-maid of the Gospel of Christ. They were simply tools and means for evangelisation and church planting. They were never viewed as an integral part of the Gospel. This led to the dichotomy between the "word" and the "deed", or the "spiritual" and the "social". This "dualism" affected the wholistic gospel approach to the total man and woman.

Just as in the area of education, the State took over the medical work and services from the missions and churches. This reflects the belief that the Church should limit its activities to only what is "spiritual", but what touches on politics, economics, social, etc., should be the prerogative of the State. Both medical and education policies of Christian missions reflect this dualistic worldview.

The medical sector of the State is also falling apart, as it is in the education sector. If the Church is to serve and meet man's total needs in the 21st Century, it must go beyond this dualistic worldview and the missionary legacy.

Literature Ministry

Christian missions pioneered Christian literature ministry and translation in Nigeria. They reduced African languages into writing and grammar, printed, sold and distributed Christian and general literature through their translation work and bookshops. They also pioneered Christian journalism and developed social critics and greatly influenced nationalist's movements.

The preoccupation of Christian missions with what is "sacred" as opposed to what is "secular" led to their ambivalent approach to social, cultural, political and economic causes. These were conceived to be out of bounds. Missionary products who wanted to get involved in these issues, must have to do so outside of the Church. The contributions of missions to these areas were mainly indirect in nature or consequential to mission policies towards these areas.

The bulk of Christian literature pertained mainly to spiritual needs, but hardly on how the Church, Christianity, the Christian

and the Bible addressed such issues. Serious biblical and theological reflections on these were inadequate. A Christian worldview of culture, religion, politics, economics, ethnicity or race, etc. needs to be fully developed by the Church.

General Social Formations and Transformations

Christian missions have done more in bringing about social, religious and human development and change than any other human agent. Missionary activities in general were indeed powerful tools for religious and social change, human development and social formations and transformations. Social and human services to the missionaries were first and foremost auxiliary to the Gospel of Christ. They were a means to the gospel. They were not ends in themselves. In spite of any limitations or weaknesses on the part of Christian missions in their theory and practice of missions, as pioneers, they made substantial contributions to nation-state building in modernising African societies which can be summarised in the following missionary activities:

Educational Programmes and Institutions
Medical Work, Services and Institutions
Literature Work, Translation and Publications
Social, Spiritual, Religious and Human Development.

In the Muslim Emirates of the Far North, Christian missions were kept out until the early 1930's when the British lifted the embargo but even with this, mission work was highly regulated and controlled by the Colonial Administration. This fact has great significance to State-Church relations in modern Nigeria.

The theory and practice of Christian missions informed and influenced their missionary activities and projects. Christian missions had clear goals and objectives which made them pioneers and social reformers. This missionary legacy, the pioneering and reforming spirit of the missionary, is what is lacking in the agenda of the Church today. What pioneering and reforming agenda does the Church have for society and the times? If the Church will become relevant in the 21st Century, these two principles must be addressed prophetically.

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