

THE BIBLE AND THE PLOUGH STRATEGY: AN IDEAL WHOLISTIC EVANGELISM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The quest to fulfill the great commission, made the Church Missionary Society of England to choose West Africa of which Nigeria is inclusive as a focal centre for apostolic work. When they came to Nigeria, they discovered that slave trade has dealt a big blow on the indigenous people. The missionaries were aware that the indigenous people may not welcome them nor be interested in their missionary activities as a result of what the earliest European traders and the British colonial administration have done to them. Thus, there was the need to orchestrate a plan which when carried out would lead to the successful evangelization of Nigeria. The Bible and the Plough policy was formulated and considered as the best strategy for evangelization of Nigeria. This was formulated to commiserate for wrongs which the slave trade had wrought upon the indigenous people. The Bible and the plough policy, in no doubt prompted the indigenous people to accept the gospel as well receive other benefits that came along with it. Many works written about Christian missionary enterprise in Nigeria appears to focus on missionary activities and civilization of Nigeria, neglecting the strategy implored during the era of Christian missionary enterprise in Nigeria. This is the gap the study intends to fill. Thus, this study will point out how the Bible and the Plough policy became a missionary evangelistic strategy in evangelization of Nigeria. Secondary sources of data collection like mainline books, journals, book of readings and unpublished project works relevant to the topics were used in this study. The study finds out that, the Bible and the plough ideology was truly an ideal for wholistic evangelism in Nigeria.

Introduction

The Bible and the plough was a veritable ideology capitalized by the early Christian missionaries in evangelization of Nigeria. The Bible and the plough idea yielded fruitful results that led to the establishment of Christianity in Nigeria. This ideology was initiated by the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S). Okpalike and Nwadiakor (2015) state that Thomas Fowell Buxton believed that the Bible and the plough hypothesis would serve civilization and Christianity. Civilization was to come through the introduction of Western education, modern commerce, mechanized agriculture among others while Christianity was to be established through missionary activities of which was evangelistic oriented. The Bible and the plough aim was summarized in the words of Okoro (2018) evangelism was thus to mix with business and commerce. Fafunwa cited by Okoro (2018) state that these ideas, which were contained in Buxton's book were subsequently adopted by the British government, and they formed the basis for the Christianization and development of Nigeria.

It could be said that the Bible and the plough strategy was used by Apostle Paul during his missionary journeys in Greco-Roman world. While carrying out his evangelism (the Bible), he was involved in tent making (the plough). Paul in a bid to fulfill the Great Commission, did not neglect to work as Jews upheld the dignity of labour. Hence, in various passages in the New Testament, Apostle Paul encouraged Christians to be active in spiritual matters, engage in meaningful endeavours and not being slothful in business. This was the same strategy adopted by the early Christian missionaries in evangelism works in Nigeria and this was a veritable means of transforming Nigerian society.

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Great commission

The Great Commission is a mandate which the church has no option but to fulfill. The final instruction Jesus gave to His disciples was to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28: 19). As Christ was sent into the world by the Father, so He sent His disciples (John 20: 21). Their primary task, as well as

that of the church, has always been the sharing of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the world. Ekpendu (2016) opines that the members of the church have been called out of the world to be sent back into the world with a mission and a message. The call to evangelism springs from an unequivocal command of the Lord of the church. To share messages that transforms and directs lives to live in harmony with the character of Christ. Ogunewu (2013) states that Acts of the Apostles reveals the zeal of the apostles in this direction and the early church is also not left out in the venture as through it the gospel spread to the nook and crannies of the Roman Empire. In the same vein, the church of the nineteenth and the twentieth century witnessed a tremendous quest for and emphasis on the need to carry out the Great Commission.

This is apparent by the myriad of independent missionary bodies which came into being during the time. Many Church denominations have over the years developed their own Mission Boards and Evangelistic groups which aimed at spreading the Gospel to Africa. The missionaries made the Bible available in the indigenous language of the people so as to expose them to the word of God. With the use of the Recaptives, the missionaries every province and village was penetrated with the gospel in one way or the other. It was the quest to obey the Great Commission that made the European Christian missionaries to carry out evangelism in Nigeria.

Concept of Evangelisation

Evangelisation is a key factor in Christianity, the early believers understood this hence, they evangelised at the expense of their lives. No wonder it is said that the blood of the Christian martyrs were used to water the growth of the Church. Evangelisation is acknowledged as the major reproductive mechanism for the church, without which it cannot grow. According to Ogunewu (2013), evangelisation as a direct consequence of the obedience to the Great Commission has been a principal preoccupation of the Church since inception. It has been commanded as an abiding obligation of the church to the end of the age and successive generations of the Church have taken this mandate seriously over the centuries. The idea of Ogunewu is correct because early believers despite oppositions evangelised the Gospel till many cities under Roman Empire became Christians and also it was this same evangelisation that motivated the European missionaries to leave the comfort of their homes to Africa which was initially described as a White man's grave to establish Christianity.

Evangelisation is a veritable tool in spreading Christianity. Christ desires that His church will continually expand. He expects it to grow both quantitatively and qualitatively, from age to age, through the efforts of his disciples. The greatest tool that he has provided for this is evangelisation. Hunter (1983) expresses this view when he defines evangelisation as the reproductive process by which Christianity expands and fills the earth. In the words of Stott (1975), if the church is to expand, it must embrace as its foremost responsibility, the chief task of taking the Gospel into the entire world and making disciples of all nations. The consensus within Christendom is that evangelisation is the urgent and supreme task of the church. It could be said that evangelisation is the responsibility of the entire church, and every believer is mandated to be personally involved in it. It is not to be left for religious leaders alone, but a mandate to be fulfilled by all believers. It is the primary and permanent task of the church on earth.

The Christian community is here because of the Gospel. It exists to proclaim and enact the Good News of Jesus and to see the fulfillment of that Gospel in the Kingdom of God. Evangelisation is therefore the work and heritage of the church. One clarification of what evangelisation is all about is contained in what Stott (1975) writes and it reads thus:

To evangelise is to spread the Good News that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe in him. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelisation, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelisation itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would

follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelisation include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church and responsible service in the world (p. 4).

According to Sowale (2001), evangelisation is proclaiming the good news of the love of God as discovered in his Son Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is sharing the Lord Jesus Christ with the world. He explained further that evangelisation is far more than preaching to others, rather, it is benefiting others out of the rich grace of God to which we (Christians) are endowed. Kumuyi (1990) refers to it as the heartbeat of God and the commission, which God gave to the church. To neglect, ignore or reject this commission will amount to utter disobedience to the word of God. It is the urgent task for the church and every Christian. The assertion of all these scholars is that evangelisation is crucial to the survival of the church and bringing the lost souls to the redemptive work of Christ for the salvation of their souls.

There are various methods of evangelisation which include; personal evangelisation, parish/ local church evangelisation, rural evangelisation, urban evangelisation, industrial evangelisation, visitation evangelisation, hospital evangelisation, prison evangelisation, women and men evangelisation, personal evangelisation, pastoral evangelisation, tract/literature evangelisation, follow-up evangelization, media evangelization among others. One principal method of evangelisation has been missionary activities which have been carried out all over the world by many Christian missionaries. Ogunewu (2013) observes that a line of distinction is sometimes drawn between missions and evangelisation, missions being conceived of as the bringing of the gospel to the unsaved at a distance, and evangelisation being thought of as bringing of the gospel to the unsaved that are near at hand. However, according to Kuiper (2002), restriction on the usage of evangelisation is difficult to justify, as missionary activities have over the centuries occupied a pivotal position in the conversion of non-believers to Christianity.

It was through the missionary method that Christianity was brought to Nigeria as Nwadiolor (2016) confirms that the Portuguese missionaries brought Christianity to Benin and Warri kingdom between 14-15th century, they recorded initial success in the kingdom of Warri but this did not endure for a long as the missionaries failed due to many reasons like lack of personnel, finance, lopsidedness, attack on African culture and beliefs, language barrier, unfavourable climate and so on. The enduring and successful missionary enterprise began in the nineteenth century as many scholars pointed out that the 19th Century was an intensive missionary activities by various missionary sects in Nigeria. Today, many Nigerians are Christians.

Concept of Plough

A plough is a large farming tool with sharp blades which is pulled across the soil it turn it over. In this context, the plough should not be seen as one of the modern farming tools. Here it means a strategic planned and well formulated policy by Church Missionary Society of England to be implemented on Nigeria which has been chosen as its sphere of apostolic work. As the missionaries came to Nigeria, they found out that the socio-economic life of the indigenous people were at a low state. This necessitated the formulation of the plough policy. It was formulated to civilize the indigenous people in order to bring development to the indigenous lands. The plough strategy helped to raise the standard of living of the indigenous people to better. The plough policy, accompanied the Christian faith to Nigeria. The plough policy motivated the indigenous people to accept Christianity as a result of the better things Christianity offered to them.

Theoretical Framework

The advent of Christianity in Nigeria, brought social changes to Nigerian society. Thus, there is need to explore theory of social change.

Theory of Social Change

Change they is constant and also inevitable aspect of human life. Change is an integral part of life and human existence. According to Anele (1999), social change is the alterations in the pattern of social organization of specific groups within a society or even of the society itself. Ekpenyong (1993) posits

that alterations in the social organization of a group and or society refer to the development of new norms, the modification of role expectations, a shift to new types of sanctions, the development of different criteria for ranking and the introduction and use of new production techniques. Anele (1999) further asserts that, a change in any part of the society or social organization affects other parts and the society generally at large. Akujobi and Jack (2017) cites an example that the recent advent of information and communication technology in Nigeria has changed virtually the nature of social interaction and pattern of social organization from personal relationship with loved ones far and near over the telephone and internet dating to macro-economic activities such as electronic banking, online registrations among others. Likewise, Moore cited by Anele (1999) described social change as the significant alteration of social structures (that is of patterns of social action and interaction), including consequences and manifestations of such structures embodied in norms (rules of conduct), values and cultural products and symbols. The above viewpoint is correct, the coming of both the British colonial government and Christianity in Nigeria altered many social, political, religious structures. For instance, in Igboland, before the advent of Christianity Igbo indigenes were adherents of Igbo traditional religion but now, many are Christians.

Empirical Studies

Okpalike and Nwadiolor examined *the contributions of the Christian missionaries in building the Nigerian nation, 1840-1960* in 2015. The study found out that, when the Christian missionaries came to Nigeria, they worked with the British government to unite the various ethnic groups in the geographical into one formidable nation. The missionaries played vital role in establishment of Western education through which many Nigerians acquired knowledge and was able to fight for independence. The mission schools made English compulsory for all students and staffs. With the help of the colonial government, English language became a lingua-franca for all Nigerian citizens. It was this foreign language that also helped to serve as a means of unity and for proper understanding of each other's thoughts and views. The study concluded that, the Christian missionaries contributed immensely in building modern Nigeria.

In 2016, Nwadiolor conducted a research on *Christian missionary enterprise in Nigeria in historical perspective*. The research pointed out that the advent of Christianity in Nigerian soil, especially in the 19th century, brought many social changes. For instance from indigenous education to Western type of education, subsistence farming to mechanized agriculture, abolition of slave trade to legitimate trade, from local mode of dressing to European mode of dressing, establishment of industries among others.

Furthermore, Okpalike and Nwadiolor carried out another a research in 2015 on *The missionary twist in the development of the Igbo identity: The dialectics of change and continuity*. The research looked at the extent to which missionary enterprise brought changes in the identity of Igbo people and how the Igbo responded to its new challenges vis-à-vis problems and opportunities. The research findings indicated that the advent of the missionaries and the Christian religion was loaded with potentials of social change in Igbo societies, but in the long run, the Igbo people were able to resist a change of identity to a great extent. According to the research, although Igbo people embraced Christianity and westernization with enthusiasm; one must not mistake this as meaning that they did so at the expense of their own identity by deserting their ancestral culture in all its forms.

The Bible and the Plough Strategy: An Ideal Wholistic Evangelism in Nigeria

For the Bible and the plough ideology to be fruitful and fulfill the aims of the European Christian missionaries in Nigeria, certain strategies were adopted by the missionaries to make sure that the Bible and the plough policy will be an ideal of wholistic evangelism in Nigeria. These strategies include:

Western Education

As the European Christian missionaries came to Nigeria to convert indigenes to Christianity, they however found out that this could not be possible without the rudiments of Western education, even though few have acquired Arabic education yet the European Christian missionaries could not speak nor write Arabic. It was realized that the British school system would be in essence, the most important mechanism to achieve their purpose, assist the native people to accept the Gospel (the Bible) and

advance in human development (this was to be achieved through the plough). Thus, they introduced British standard of education. The missionaries moreover found out that education will also be a veritable tool to convert the indigenous people hence, they opened schools. This they did without hesitation. It could be observed that one of the crucial method of evangelism by the missionaries was through the establishment of Western education. In agreement to the above viewpoint, Egwuonwu and Mgbemena (2019) enunciate that:

Education became necessary for the missionaries for obvious reasons. First the missionaries considered it easier and rightly too, to achieve their aim of conversion using the school when the children had not become fully involved in traditional beliefs of their various cultures. Secondly, through the schools, they aimed at producing indigenes that would assist in propagating the gospel in the vernacular languages among their people. Besides, the development of colonial government and the expansion of mercantile houses required that the people be educated to occupy certain positions like clerks, messengers, church teachers, cooks among others. Thus, for the first time, education was seen as the gateway to economic opportunity by the Igbo people themselves. They realized, as they never did before that knowledge is power, and that it commands economic security and social prominence. Western education offered an escape from the petty tyranny of court clerks and warrant chiefs during the colonial era as the products of the local mission schools began to compete with them, the commercial advantages of education became universally evident. The emphasis on competitive achievement applied not only to individuals, but to towns. Onitsha appeared the paradigm of a town which had prospered through education and association with the missionaries (p.3).

According to Okoro (2018), William de Graft of the Methodist missionary body began work in earnest, De Graft and his wife established the first known school called Nursery of the Infant Church in Badagry. The C.M.S. after arriving in Badagry in 1842 established schools in various parts on Nigeria. Some of the schools eventually evolved into training institute for teachers and catechists. .Egwuonwu and Mgbemena (2019) point that the C.M.S. was the first body to provide any form of post primary education. In the late 19th century it established a training school for catechists. This was held first at Lokoja and then spread to other areas. Okoro (2018) opines that the first secondary school, C.M.S Grammar School had also been founded in Lagos in 1859 and after establishment of secondary schools by the missionaries, vocational education was not left out; the earliest vocational education took place under the auspices of the Scottish Presbyterian Mission at Calabar founded in 1846.

In order to convert the unbelievers to Christianity and encourage Christian living among the converts, the missionaries used to organize their converts into congregations for effective teaching. Every congregation was given a school and each unit was taught how to lead Christian lives. Hence, education was sequel to conversation. The missionaries gave free education and and compensated parents in order to allow them to send their children to school. Wealthy European Christians and humanitarian bodies abroad sent gifts, text books, financial grants, to the missionaries to assist the mission schools, care for the needs of the students who have been converted. These gestures made many parents to send their children to the mission schools as they considered education as a great economic value while for the missionaries it was an avenue for easy conversation of the native people. However, Ayele (2017) observes that missionary education was used not as an end itself; it was rather largely employed as a means to an end. That is, to win converts and subsequently increase the number of adherents. In most cases, a considerable number of students who attended their education at mission schools ended up becoming evangelists themselves.

In many mission schools, the Bible was taught as one of the subjects given at the elementary and junior secondary levels. Students were encouraged to recite verses from the Bible. Some of the schools had farmlands where exotic cash crops were planted by students. The Holy Bible and the cash crops were given as a reward for outstanding students at the end of each academic year. The missionary education in general and the Bible classes and songs in particular were so attractive to students. In addition, mission schools were known for inculcating strict discipline and good virtues in the minds of children. As a result, a good number of families preferred to send their children to those schools. All these show to what extent missionary education was employed as a vehicle towards religious goals which was

mainly for conversion purpose. According to Owino (2017), it is worth noting that Western education was not naturally Christian; rather, It was made an integral part of Christianity to facilitate winning of African converts. The missionaries achieved this objective through establishment of schools. Thus, Western education in Nigeria was a means the Christian missionaries converted many native people to Christianity.

Partnership with Recaptives and Translating the Bible into Native Languages

After the various encounters between the missionaries inclusive of the Recaptives (freed slaves) and some notable indigenous kings like Obi Ossai of Aboh among others, the missionaries found out that if the Bible could be translated in native languages of the people, it will create more avenue for the acceptance of the gospel. This made the missionaries with the Recaptives to make efforts to study the principal Nigerian languages, reducing them to writing. According to Ajayi (1965), the driving force behind the work on the Nigerian languages was the anxiety to teach the converts and would-be converts to read the Bible in them (p. 13). It was especially for this that so much emphasis was placed on translating the Bible into the vernaculars; the ability to commit some Nigerian languages to writing led to the translation of the Bible into the vernacular of many native societies. This had considerable positive effects on the warm reception of the Gospel by Nigerians.

Humanitarian Services

Prior to the coming of the European missionaries, the socio-economic conditions of the native people during the advent of the Christian missionaries was in a poor state. According to Diara and Nche (2013), before the arrival of the European missionaries in Nigeria, the mortality rate among the people was so high, these deadly diseases, which went wild rapidly and caused a heavy death toll among the people include; malaria, fever, dysentery, diarrhea, and sleeping sickness. When the missionaries came to Nigeria and found the magnitude of mortality they felt compassion for the people and therefore missionaries saw the socio-economic assistance to the less-privileged and poor natives as a missionary imperative. If the native people were not healthy how can they plough as planned by the missionaries? Thus, they involved in offering humanitarian services to the people. Hence the establishment of medical facilities like hospitals, health centres, maternity homes and many more to treat sick people. The special glory of the Presbyterian lay in its medical work. The outstanding sum of the Presbyterian mission proved to be a medical missionary.

Among the missionary bodies in Nigeria, the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) was exceptional in provision of humanitarian services. Igwe (1977) emphasizes that the Catholics, at first, adopted the strategy of reaching the people through the charitable approach of erecting hospitals and dispensaries, where the sick and the suffering were treated free or at nominal charge. They also established Christian villages where run-away slaves or those redeemed by mission money were protected and educated in the Christian way of life. The Catholics also provided its members with food and clothing. Humanitarian services offered by the various missionary bodies attracted more native people to Christianity. Many native people joined Christianity as a result of these humanitarian services. Health care was worthwhile as it led to a healthy living among Nigerians, as many diseases were treated, hence the people were fit to engage in various economic activities (the plough policy) introduced by missionaries.

Abolition of Slave Trade

Slave trade was an impediment to the Bible and the plough ideology, as many native people at first were running away from the missionaries as well rejecting and opposing their activities. This was because, the native people thought that they were like the slave traders since both the missionaries and the slave master were white men. So for this ideology to be actualized, slave trade must be abolished. Hence, the missionary bodies made efforts to abolish slave trade. Diara and Nche (2013) elucidate that the abolition of slave trade which was achieved through the efforts of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) of the Church of England. This was beneficial to the missionaries as many freed slaves (Recaptives) were used as the missionaries' agents to spread the gospel to interior places in Nigeria.

The Recaptives were very vital and played significant role in spreading the Gospel to the native people especially into the interior areas. The combined efforts of the European Christian missionaries and the Recaptives did not only lead to the conversion of many native people but played vital role in development of Nigeria. The Recaptives, encouraged the missionaries to establish schools for the native people to be able to read the bible and for easy communication between them as well as other facilities to better the society.

Introduction of Mechanized Agriculture

For the Bible and the plough policy of the missionaries to be fully implemented, the missionaries saw that need to improve subsistence farming already practiced by the native people. Hence, the introduction of mechanised agriculture. The missionaries brought cash crops like palm tree, cashew among others to Nigeria. Modern agricultural equipments were brought into Nigeria and many native converts were trained on how to use them. This led to establishment of mills, industries and so on. The introduction of mechanised agriculture was targeted at achieving the plough policy of the missionaries.

Introduction of Modern Commerce

The missionaries studied the lifestyle of the native people and understood that some among them especially the Igbo extraction were enterprising in nature. Hence, with the abolition of slavery, they assisted in re-establishing legitimate trade on which European nations hitherto traded with Nigerians. In this way, they introduced European system of commerce in place of the illegal trade of slaves. Industrial institutions were established and through vocational education teaching on carpentry, bricklaying, dyeing among others were taught to indigenous converts. It was through the influence of the missionaries that many companies were built in Nigeria, some were built by the missionaries and some by the British colonial government like the cotton industry in Lokoja, Royal Niger Company, UAC, Unilever and many more. The criteria to be employed or learn the skills in these establishment was ability to read and write hence, many Nigerians were admitted to various missionary schools and before graduating they have already been converted to Christianity. The introduction of modern commerce, assisted in developing Nigeria.

Conclusion

At the arrival of C.M.S. in Nigeria, the missionaries found out that slave trade has dealt a big blow on the indigenous people. There was the need to devise a strategy which would help in converting the indigenous people to the Christian faith. This was the main aim of choosing Nigeria as its sphere for her apostolic work. This was found in the formulation of the Bible and the Plough policy. The Bible and plough policy was initiated by the 19th century Christian missionary body of the C.M.S. It was for the gospel to spread all over the indigenous lands as well civilizing and advancing the host communities to greater heights. The Bible and the Plough ideology was to commiserate for the wrongs slave trade has wrought on the indigenous people. Other missionary bodies also adopted this ideology as they arrived Nigeria. For this ideology to be fruitful, the missionaries adopted various strategies to make sure that the Bible and the Plough idea becomes an ideal for wholistic evangelism in Nigeria.

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