



Christianity, Western Education and Development in Akwa Ibom State, 1846 – 2007

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ABSTRACT

The history of Christianity is the story of development. One of the most effective tools of evangelization used by the Christian missionaries is Western education. Therefore, the complex problem of development which faces Nigeria in general and Akwa Ibom State in particular since her creation out of Cross River State on September 23, 1987 demands a deeper understanding of Nigeria's colonial relationship with Europe. The beginnings of that relationship go back to the 15th century, when the Portuguese Catholic Missionaries got to Benin and Warri, but it was rather sporadic until the 19th century with the arrival of the Presbyterian Church at Calabar on April 10, 1846 led by the Rev. Hope Masterton Waddell. Other missionaries were to follow, notably: the Rev. (later Bishop) Samuel Ajayi Crowther who led a team of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) into the Niger in July, 1857 and Ikot Abasi, 1902. Pastor Samuel Alexander Bill in Ibene in 1887; the Methodists, in Oron in 1893 and the Lutherans in Ibesikpo in 1935¹. The relationship became much complex when Christian evangelism joined hands with European commercial and colonial enterprise. These three co-ordinated aspects of the Europeans – the missionaries, traders and colonial masters - largely shaped the making of modern Akwa Ibom State in particular and Nigeria in general². They are vital threads of Akwa Ibom historical experience.

INTRODUCTION

This paper, therefore, seeks to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between Christianity, Western education and development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, for better understanding of the issues involved. In the African context, Western Christianity which began its courtship with West Africa in the 15th century, did not begin to make any real progress until the late 19th century when colonialism was steadily advancing into Africa³. Consequently, the establishment of Christianity went hand in hand with the process of acculturation or indigenization to the colonial order. As Benjamin C. Ray aptly noted, Christian missionaries may have believed they were

converting Africans to the gospel of Jesus Christ, but, in fact they were converting them (Africans) to the whole range of Western values (literacy, medicine, clerical and industrial education, town life, wage earning and social mobility) as well as instilling in them a distaste for traditional African values⁴.

Christian missionary enterprise in the Akwa Ibom region (hereafter region) was started and nurtured in the era of colonialism. Largely because of this colonial factor, many of the converts to Christianity adopted a new identity based upon the colonial-Christian order. Western Christianity was transplanted, root and branch in terms of doctrine, worship and polity without the necessary adaptations and modifications which the Nigerian cultural context demanded⁵. Many Independent African Churches in Akwa Ibom State were started by indigenes partly because they did not wish to remain indefinitely under the domination of foreign missionaries, partly because they did not wish to remain indefinitely under the domination of foreign missionaries, partly because of personal desires for power or for wanting Christianity to reflect African culture and problems or the wind of God in human history and for various other reasons.

It was certainly not without good reason that Christianity caught on in the African continent and Akwa Ibom State in recent times. Meditative scholars have pinned the success of Christianity on the colonial factor. The political, economic and social changes brought about by the colonial rule had serious and immense intellectual and material repercussions in Africa in general and Akwa Ibom State in particular. For most, non Islamised Africans, the colonial experience broadened their Spatio-historical horizons and made them begin to view their world in macrocosmic terms. As Robin Horton has noted, Africans readily responded, for example, to the new Western religious concept of “Supreme Deity”, the overall arbiter of all mankind-beyond ethnic boundaries-and all that transpire in the universe.⁶ Islam and Christianity exerted the catalytic influence that enabled Africans overcome the challenge posed by the weakening of their microcosmic boundaries. It is instructive to note that Akwa Ibomites were and are, in practice, highly selective in their acceptance of Christianity. Without the cataclysm of colonial conquests and reconstructions, Christian march through Akwa Ibom State could not have been as smooth as it was.

Thus, Christian Missionary enterprise in the Akwa Ibom region exerted considerable impact on the society through schools, provision of medical services, linguistic studies, moral and spiritual influence, promotion of political and economic activities, among others.⁷ Thus, with the arrival of Christianity in the Region in 1863 at Ikot Offiong and 1902 at Itu until 2003, there were established one thousand one hundred and two (1,102) primary schools and four hundred and twenty-eight (428) secondary schools⁸; one polytechnic at Ikot Osurua, one College of Education at Afaha Nsit, one College of Agriculture at Obio Akpa, one State University of Science and Technology and a Teacher Training College which eventually transmogrified into a Federal conventional University of Uyo, the State Capital in 1991.

In closer perspective, therefore, this work seeks to among other things, throw light on the relationship between Christianity, Western Education and Development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria; appraise the impact of Western Education in the State and make recommendations for improvement. Before this is done, it is however necessary to give a working definition of the key words in our chosen theme, like Christianity, Western education, development, communication, language, arts and Akwa Ibom State.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

A 'Christian' is a follower of Christ; one who relates to Christ or his religion⁹; a new community of God founded and cemented by the covenant blood and resurrection of Jesus Christ. 'Christianity' means the religion of Christ¹⁰. At the centre of Christianity is Jesus Christ. Christians believe that Christ was born human and divine. They accept his teaching and try to follow it. They believe that by his death he reconciled mankind to God. They believe that by his resurrection he overcame death and evil and that he gives new life to those who trust and believe in him.¹¹

"Education" comes from the Latin verb "*e-ducare*", meaning to "lead out of" or "bring out of". If we brainwash people, or hypnotize them, or drug them or cut their brains about, it does not mean that we are leading something out of them or educating them. The operative word is "leading" as opposed to "forcing". To educate people is to deal with them in certain specific and restricted ends. Very roughly, the word 'educate' is tied to the notion of improving people by increasing their knowledge, understanding and rationality. "Education" is concerned with learning, being taught, developing awareness and understanding¹². In the region, we have two types of education-traditional or informal education and Western or formal curriculum. "Western Education" or "Western Curriculum" in the widest sense is the programme of worthwhile learning experience which is planned and implemented within the school. This activity is both conscious and deliberate and is designed to bring about certain learning outcomes in the child within the school. It is planned, conscious, and deliberate and is an agent of cultural transmission. In other words, formal or Western Education begins with identifying four fundamental questions, viz:

What educational purposes should the school seek to attain? (Objective);

What educational experiences can be provided that is likely to attain these purposes? (Content);

How can these educational experiences be effectively organized? (Methodology);

How can we determine whether or not these purposes are being attained? (Evaluation).¹³

Informal or traditional education is received from "schools of life" like parents, peers, neighbourhood, elders, mass media, markets, and so on, informally. This is less planned, less conscious and less deliberate.

“Develop” is to cause to grow larger, further or more mature, or organized. ‘Development’ means developing or being developed in all sense, a new stage which is the result of developing.¹⁴ ‘Development’ also means advancement, evolution, expansion, growth, improvement, increase, maturity, progress, progression, spread, unfolding, unraveling, turn of events and upshot.

‘Communication’ is like life’s most inevitable fixture: death. For humanity, ‘communication’ surrounds life like water surrounds fish. It is a process or means of access to the mind or thought of another. It is an exchange of meaning. Each participant comes into the ‘communication’ situation with his or her own experience which he or she hopes to exchange with the other participants. It is a reduction of uncertainty. Without communication through reading, listening (the perceptive skills), speaking and writing (the productive skills), mankind would find it hard to unravel some of the mysteries of life. Those things that we do not know or have knowledge of or that we have doubts about can be explained to us or we can apprehend them better through communication.¹⁵

‘Aesthete’ is a person who claims to have great love of and understanding of what is beautiful especially in the Arts. ‘Aesthetic’ (adjective), is the appreciation of the beautiful, especially in the arts; of persons having such appreciation. It could also be a branch of philosophy which tries to make clear the laws and principles of beauty (contrasted with morality, and utility). Aesthete or esthete, (Greek *aesthetes*) means one who perceives; a person highly sensitive to art and beauty, a person who exaggerates the values of artistic sensitivity or makes a cult of art and beauty; believer in art for art’s sake.¹⁶

‘Language’ is the human and non-instinctive methods of communicating ideas, feelings and desires by means of a system of sound symbols. It means the expression or communication of thoughts and feelings by means of vocal sounds and combinations of such sounds, to which meaning is attributed; human speech; the ability to express or communicate by this means; the vocal sounds so used, or the written symbols for them; any means of expressing or communicating, as gestures, signs, animal sounds, and so on; all the vocal sounds; words, and the ways of combining them common to a particular nation, ethnic group, or other group.¹⁷

‘Arts’ is the creation and expression of what is beautiful, especially in visual forms; fine skill or aptitude in such expression or something in which imagination and personal taste are more important than exact measurement and calculation. History, literature, music and religious studies are among the arts to the disposition or modification of things by human skills to answer the purpose intended; creative works generally, or its principles; the making or doing of things that have form and beauty; ‘art’ includes painting, sculpture, architecture, music, literature, drama, the dance, etc.¹⁸

“Akwa Ibom State” is one of the thirty-six States of Nigeria. It occupies a total land mass of 8,412 sq. kilometers of Nigeria’s wealth basin in the South-South Zone of the Delta Region. Lying between latitudes 4^o 33 and 5^o

Onah Augustine Odey

33° North and longitudes 7° 35' and 8° 25' East, Akwa Ibom falls within the tropical zone with a dominant vegetation of green foliage of trees, shrubs and oil-palm tree belt which holds the highest density of the cash crops in the world including rubber, cocoa and rice. Other dominant crops are coconut, citrus, cassava, yam, maize, cowpeas, plantain, banana, pineapple and kola nut. The State is also endowed with rich deposits of limestone, gravel, salt, silver nitrate, silica and kaolin that can be commercially exploited. The people are culturally homogenous with a common identity and linguistic heritage. The three major intra-ethnic groups are Ibibio, Anaang and Oron, and the main language, Ibibio, is widely understood throughout the State, despite some slight dialectical variations.¹⁹

A Brief History of Christianity in Akwa Ibom State

With the invention of improved traveling techniques and materials; abolition of slave trade; the need to evangelize the unchristened; quest for knowledge; love of adventure; and the urgent need to form alliance with African chiefs not yet Islamized, Christianity came to Nigeria. As was noted above, in April, 1846, a group of missionaries of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, headed by the Rev. H. M. Waddell arrived at Duke Town, Old Calabar and were warmly received by Chief Eyamba V of Duke Town, who offered them a beautiful piece of land on a hill overlooking the town and the river. Before October that year the mission compound had been completed with a school building and a printing press. This was the formal planting of Christianity in Eastern Nigeria.²⁰ From this location the mission spread to other parts of the country. A recent survey by the present writer shows that there are presently five Dioceses, 116 parishes and 338 Churches in Nigeria staked out by the Presbyterian Church.

In 1875, another mission, sponsored by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) of the Anglican Church, but led by Nigeria ex-slave, the Rev. and later Rt. Rev. Samuel Ajayi Crowther, arrived Onitsha on the banks of the River Niger and held the first Sunday service on August 2, 1875 at King Akenzua's compound with his captains, chiefs and 500-600 souls present. A recent survey by the present author shows that the entire Anglican Church in Akwa Ibom State falls under one Diocese called Anglican Diocese of Uyo with forty parishes (stations) with Bishop E. E. Nglass as pioneer Bishop and Rt. Rev. Isaac Orama as current and second Bishop.

Towards the end of the century two other protestant missionary bodies were also established in the Akwa Ibom region. Qua Iboe Mission (1887) which derived its name from a local river and village of the same name and the primitive Methodists (1893), based first in Oron, moved in 1920 to Uzuakoli and Umuahia, the later town thenceforth becoming its headquarters. The Qua Iboe Church was established in the region by a Northern Irish Missionary, Samuel Alexander Bill, who wanted a protestant non-denominational mission. It made Ibeno its headquarters²².

The first Christian Missionaries whose home roots were not in Britain were the Catholics. Catholic presence in Eastern Nigeria was first established in December 1885 when a group of members of the French-based congregation of Holy Ghost fathers, led by father Joseph Lutz, sailed up the Niger to Onitsha. Having established headquarters at Onitsha they began to spread their influence in an area which had previously been “monopolized” by Anglicans. It was not until February 07, 1903 that mass was first celebrated at No. 3 Bocco Street, Calabar and 1905 at Ekeya (Akwa Ibom) by the Holy Ghost Fathers. In 1930 a group of Irish Priests, led by the Rev. Fr., (later Bishop) James Moynagh came to Calabar to assist the Holy Ghost Fathers and it was the Irish who presided over the establishment of Independent Catholic jurisdiction in Calabar (1934), Ogoja (1938) and later Ikot Ekpene in March, 1963²³. Ikot Ekpene Diocese was created out of Calabar and has the singular honour of having a double “first” in Catholic history in Nigeria. Its Bishop, Dominic Cardinal Ekandem, was the first indigenous Catholic Bishop of West Africa, ordained Bishop on February 07, 1954. He was also the first Nigerian Cardinal. The Diocese of Ikot Ekpene houses the Inter-diocesan Senior Seminary for Philosophy and Theology at Ikot Osurua.²⁴ The Catholic Diocese of Uyo was created out of Calabar in 1989 with Bishop Joseph Effiong Ekuwem as its pioneer Bishop. A recent survey of the Catholic Church in Uyo Diocese shows that there are eighty-four stations and thirty-six parishes; while the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene has forty-one parishes.

The first contact of the Apostolic Church with Cross River State of which Akwa Ibom was a part was in 1931, when Evangelist J. A. Babalola came from Ilesa (Osun State) to visit Creek Town. A church was set up in Creek Town and subsequently in Calabar. In 1932, two British Missionaries arrived Calabar to help consolidate the establishment of the Apostolic Church²⁵. Presently, the Akwa Ibom field of the Apostolic Church comprises the following districts: Oron (1933), Eket (1933), Ikot Ekpene (1934), Ikot Abasi (1934), Etinan (1934), Ndot Abak (1935), Ikot Ekpe (1935), Itu (1936), Ikot Akpa Idem (1956), Uyo (1955).

Up to 1928, Qua Iboe Church was the main Christian denomination in Eket/Etinan/Ibesikpo areas of Akwa Ibom State, but in May, 1928, Jonathan Udo Ekong traveled to the United States of America and established contact with the Synod of the Lutheran Church. In 1935, the first group of American Lutherans arrived in Ibesikpo, and on April 24, 1936, Dr. and Mrs. Nau arrived to take up residence. They were later joined in 1938 by Jonathan Udo Ekong who had been trained in a Lutheran Seminary in the United States of America. The Lutheran Church is now firmly established in Akwa Ibom State with 231 stations and with Obot Idim as its national headquarters.

In 1934, the Rev. Udom Akpan of Ikot Ekpene and Minister of British Apostolic wrote the Assemblies of God, *Evangel* for affiliation because what they believed in agreed with what they read in the magazine. Unknown to them that another group in Port Harcourt which broke away from Faith Tabernacle because of their belief in faith healing without drugs, also wrote

Onah Augustine Odey

for Assemblies of God Missionaries. The letter was signed by Nwogu, a railway worker. In response the AGC sent foreign missionaries from the Gold Coast (Ghana) who arrived Port Harcourt in June, 1939.

The foreign missionary equally met the Ikot Ekpene group. He then went back to Ghana (Gold Coast) and sent his report to the United State of America (USA), later returned to Nigeria in September 1939 to meet the two groups in a joint meeting. The result of the meeting was the formation of two separate groups of the Assemblies of God Church (AGC) with the Rev. W. L. Shirer as Superintendent of Anaang/Ibibio axis with the Rev. Udom Akpan as his assistant, and the Rev. George M. Alioha as assistant for Igboland. The two groups-Anaang/Ibibio and Ibo continued until the Rev. Rex Jackson united them and became the first overall Superintendent. With time, however, the work of AGC in Anaang/Ibibio area collapsed while that in Igboland continued. The seed of the Assemblies of God Church in Nigeria was sown in Port Harcourt, but the first reception or outpouring of the Holy Spirit (the Pentecost event, Acts 2:1-10) was experienced in Old Umuahia. With time, the late Rev. O. M. U. Okpo, a teacher, at Lagos, Dr. E. A. E. Umo an Akwa Ibomite in Ewu and J. O. Mkpa, an Akwa Ibomite in Igede (Benue State) came back to Akwa Ibom and resuscitated the AGC²⁶. This emphasizes the role of indigenes in the evangelization of their people. A recent survey by the Rev. John Obot shows that the Assemblies of God Church in Akwa Ibom State comprises seven hundred and sixty stations, four districts and one hundred and thirty-six sections.

Besides the mainstream Churches, there are numerous Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches in Akwa Ibom State. Several of these groups are founded by Akwa Ibom indigenes. A survey of Christian worship centres in Uyo Capital City by Mmenyeneabasi Bassey in August 2008, showed no fewer than six hundred and ninety Christian worship centres²⁷ in the area alone. Some of such groups have only one branch with mouth-watering, biblical names. Such names include: Power Chapel, African Methodist Evangelical Zion, Mount Zion Light House, Mount Zion Full Gospel, Sanctified Mount Zion, Disciple Church of Christ, among others. Several groups have contributed immensely to the educational, economic, socio-cultural and political development of the State in particular and the nation in general as will later be shown.

Christianity, Western Education and Development in Akwa Ibom State, 1846 – 2007

Pre-colonial African society, including the Akwa Ibom region fully appreciated the crucial role of education in the people's cultural and economic development. Accordingly, it accorded education its highest consideration.²⁸ For various reasons, however, Western education made slow progress initially in the region (as in most parts of tropical Africa). Up to the late 1870's it was devoted primarily to the "Four RS" (Religion, Reading, Writing and Arithmetic). One principal reason for this was that Christianity

Christianity, Western Education and Development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

itself initially attracted mostly the underprivileged of the society: the slaves, twin mothers and outcasts, and not the elites or the well-to-do. The initial phase of expansion occurred from about 1891 to 1915 due to the British subjugation of the region thereby imposing a Pax Britannica and a colonial administration, and enhancing communication and transportation infrastructure which facilitated mobility and communication.²⁹

The necessity to administer and develop the Region (primarily along Western lines) implied the training of African staff to assist or supplement European staff. More important, perhaps, the British Government viewed the Christian missions as partners in promoting a new economic and social order in Southern Nigeria and accordingly supported Christian Missionary and educational work. By also enforcing freedom of worship, the government effectively blunted opposition to Christianity posed by practitioners of African Religion (AFREL). Thus, given unlimited freedom to develop and expand, the missions gradually increased in number (as noted above). Their advent increased both the area of mission operations and the number of missionary and educational establishments.

Table 1: List of Methodist Church Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom between 1905 and 2003

S/N	Names of School	Year Founded	Founding Diocese	LGA
1	Methodist Comprehensive Secondary School, Ikot Essien Etok	1995	Ikot Ekefre	Abak
2	Methodist Secondary School, Ete	1962	Ikot Abasi	Ikot Abasi
3	Methodist Girls' Secondary School, Utu Ikpe	1972	Ikot Ekpene	Ikot Ekpene
4	Methodist College, Edem Idim Ibakesi	1983	Ikono	Ini
5	Methodist Secondary School, Nto Ndang	1949	Mbiaso	Obot Akara
6	Methodist Secondary School, Ibiaku Issiet	1972	Uyo	Uruan
7	Methodist Boys' High School, Oron	1905	Oron	Oron
8	Methodist Secondary School, Odot	1972	Uyo	Nsit Atai
9	Mary Hanny Memorial School, Oron	1927	Oron	Oron
10	Union Girls' Secondary School, Ibiaku	1943	Uyo	Uyo

Source: Onah A. Odey's 2008 Fieldwork on this topic.

The Christian Missions and much less, the colonial government were the proprietors of Western education in the Region by 1915. Each tailored the scope, content and methodology of its education programmes to meet its specific needs and goals. Mission education aimed primarily to supply evangelistic personnel like deacons, pastors, catechists, interpreters, preachers and teachers trained in basic literacy, numeracy, and particularly the Bible, and committed to expansion of the missionary enterprise³⁰. More generally, it aimed to spread literacy necessary for converts to read and understand the Bible and other religious literature. To these ends, the

Onah Augustine Odey

missions used Sunday Schools, Bible Classes, formal (initially mostly elementary) schools, adult night classes, apprenticeship (of the youths to the missionaries), and funds contributed mostly by the local congregations. Understandably, the missions and missionary policies generally emphasized the personal piety and conduct of the pupils and mission workers above their educational qualifications or academic excellence *per se*³¹. By 1916, however, as the Africans became more enlightened and ambitious academically, the missions found it increasingly difficult to maintain their conservative educational policies and attitude.

The colonial government's involvement in education should be viewed in the wider context of Britain's overall colonial policy in tropical Africa. The policy aimed not primarily to develop the colony or the colonial subjects but to achieve the maximum administrative and financial responsibility to the British Government or British tax-payers, since colonies existed basically for exploitation by the mother country.³²

Following the imposition of British rule on the Region, the colonial government established elementary schools at Eket (1905) Ikot Obong Edong (1908), Ikot Ada Idem (1909) and Uyo (1911). The government schools were better funded, staffed, equipped and managed than most mission schools and were subjected to regular government inspection and regulations about staffing, equipment and academic standards.³³ Besides establishing its own schools, colonial government provided grants-in-aid of school buildings and teachers' salaries to mission schools based on the education codes of 1882 and 1903³⁴.

Through education, literacy became more widespread and prized in the Region for its economic and social significance. The earliest educated elites were also produced, some of whom had outstanding careers. Among them were Essien Essien Ukpabio (Presbyterian), David Ekong (Qua Iboe), and John Enang Gill (Methodist). Each of these was the first convert, first trained teacher, and first indigenous priest of his mission.³⁵

As from 1916 when Lord Lugard's Education Ordinance Code was promulgated to 1958, the eve of Universal Free Primary Education (UPE), Western education expanded spatially throughout the Akwa Ibom region because of the people's seemingly insatiable thirst for Western education. Again, as the colonial government consolidated its rule and created more communication and transportation infrastructure, economic, career and employment opportunities increased in commerce, the government and the missions mostly for the literate. Through their association with the Europeans as agents or employees, literate persons could also share somewhat in the white man's power and prestige. More importantly, Christianity eventually spread throughout the Region, while Western education came to epitomize progress and the foundation of the future social and economic order which youths and parents could only ignore at their peril. Tables 2 and 3 below summarize the increase in educational institutions in Akwa Ibom between 1846 and 2003.

Christianity, Western Education and Development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Table 2: Summary of Primary Schools in Akwa Ibom State, as at 2003

S/N	Name of Local Government Area	No. of Schools	Percentage
1	Abak	46	4.17
2	Eastern Obolo	10	0.91
3	Eket	29	2.63
4	Esit Eket	15	1.36
5	Essien Udim	54	4.90
6	Etim Ekpo	39	3.54
7	Etinan	41	3.72
8	Ibeno	12	1.09
9	Ibesikpo Asutan	50	4.54
10	Ibiono Ibom	58	5.26
11	Ika	18	1.63
12	Ikono	59	5.35
13	Ikot Abasi	34	3.09
14	Ikot Ekpene	34	3.09
15	Ini	44	3.99
16	Itu	37	3.36
17	Mbo	27	2.45
18	Mkpat Enin	48	4.36
19	Nsit Atai	23	2.09
20	Nsit Ibom	31	2.81
21	Nsit Ubium	38	3.45
22	Obot Akara	33	2.99
23	Okobo	29	2.63
S/N	Name of Local Government Area	No. of Schools	Percentage
24	Onna	26	2.36
25	Oron	13	1.18
26	Oruk Anam	69	6.26
27	Udung Uko	10	0.91
28	Ukanafun	62	5.63
29	Uruan	45	4.08
30	Urue Offiong/Oruko	21	1.91
31	Uyo	47	4.26
	Total	1102	100%

Source: Census of Primary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Federal Ministry of Education, 2003.

Onah Augustine Odey

Table 3: Summary of Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State, as at 2003

S/N	Name of Local Government Area	No. of Schools	Percentage
1	Abak	16	3.74
2	Eastern Obolo	03	0.70
3	Eket	19	4.44
4	Esit Eket	06	1.40
5	Essien Udim	18	4.21
6	Etim Ekpo	16	3.74
7	Etinan	19	4.44
8	Ibeno	01	0.23
9	Ibesikpo Asutan	09	2.10
10	Ibiono Ibom	26	6.07
11	Ika	04	0.93
12	Ikono	20	4.67
13	Ikot Abasi	10	2.34
14	Ikot Ekpene	13	3.04
15	Ini	11	2.57
16	Itu	20	2.57
17	Mbo	06	1.40
18	Mkpat Enin	24	5.61
19	Nsit Atai	07	1.64
20	Nsit Ibom	23	5.37
21	Nsit Ubium	10	2.34
22	Obot Akara	10	2.34
23	Okobo	13	3.04
24	Onna	11	2.57
S/N	Name of Local Government Area	No. of Schools	Percentage
25	Oron	09	2.10
26	Oruk Anam	19	4.44
27	Udung Uko	02	0.47
28	Ukanafun	15	3.50
29	Uruan	15	3.50
30	Urue Offiong/Oruko	07	1.64
31	Uyo	46	10.75
	Total	428	100%

Source: Federal Ministry of Education, 2003 Census of Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State.

The colonial officials and the missions continued to value education as hand-maid of Christianity and agent for social and economic change. The people's goals and philosophy of education were ambitious and fundamental because they took the Europeans as their model in intellectual, technological, economic and social spheres of life and the influence of the rising tide of Nigerian nationalism. Like other Nigerians the educated Akwa Ibomites sought the full development of the individual for leadership and service at the highest levels in Church and State, viewing education as the key to all individual or group development and nation-building. Thus, one of the inscriptions on the badge of the Ibibio State Union (I.S.U.) was "a burning candle."³⁶

Besides the government schools, there were the Native Authority Schools. As from the 1930s, the Clan councils replaced the Native Courts as local government bodies or Native Authorities or Administration. Each Native Authority possessed executive and legislative functions over the clan, while the Native Courts were restricted to purely judicial functions. With funds derived from taxes, court fines and other levies, the Native Authorities built primary schools, roads and other public works. In Akwa Ibom State, such schools were few and unevenly distributed and sited at Abak Division (Ika,

Ukanafun, Ikot Okoro, Utu Etim Ekpo, Otoro and Ekparakwa), Eket Division (Okobo, Ubium), Ikot Ekpene Division (Afaha, Ediene, Ukana and Nto Edino), Itu Division (Ibibio), Opobo-Division (Andoni, Enwang, Yeghe-Ogoni, Ghara), Anaang and Uyo Divisions (Odot, Iman, Ibesikpo-Asutan, Ikono, Mbiaso and Uyo).³⁸ Since such schools were funded by the colonial government and the Native Authorities, they generally maintained high academic standards comparable to the government schools.

With Government take over of schools in 1974, Western education expanded and there was the emergence of closer partnership between government, voluntary and private educational agencies. Furthermore, several fundamental political and economic developments occurred such as the attainment of greater internal self-government and control of education, increased Government revenues from primary exports and Marketing Board financial reserves and later on from petroleum exports. Political independence, the Civil War of July 1967 – January 1970 and the post-war Reconciliation and Reconstruction all significantly influenced development of the State materially and in human resources for nation-building. Presently, Western education has come a long way from the people's initial opposition or apathy to enthusiasm and fanatical zeal since the 1930s. Increased literacy and acquisition of technical and professional skills have opened up economic and employment opportunities to thousands of Akwa Ibom people.

The Impact of Christianity in Akwa Ibom State

Of all the factors responsible for the Christian success in Akwa Ibom, the colonial impact was probably the greatest. The material and psychological influences of the colonial conquest and rule in the propagation of Christianity in the Akwa Ibom region are comparable to those of the Jihad in the spread of Islam. Though Akwa Ibomites are not forced at gun-point to accept the Christian religion, the colonial conquest and rule brought about a critical disillusionment on the people. They tended to lose faith both in themselves and in their traditional order of things-particularly their religion and philosophy (wisdom). Their faith in the traditional deities was badly shaken. They readily conceded superiority not only to European military superiority but also to the culture and religion of the colonizers.

Because they were eager to share the new blessings, they tended to under-rate their own indigenous culture and religion. Many Akwa Ibomites adopted the European frame of reference and yielded with alacrity to the missionaries' demand in their quest for new and enhanced social status. On the decisive impact of colonialism on the mission work in Nigeria, Ade Ajayi has observed:

For the history of the Christian missions in Nigeria, the first phase (1841 – 1891) was only the seedling time in preparation for the great expansion that came later with British rule...it was in the earlier period that the work of the missionaries had its greatest significance. After 1891, their expansion was largely incidental to the establishment of the colonial administration.³⁸

Onah Augustine Odey

F. K. Ekechi has argued that the colonial conquest was responsible for the missionary revolution of the first half of the 20th century in South-Eastern Nigeria.³⁹ E. A. Ayandele, though stressing the ethnological and sociological factors, was in general agreement with Ekechi's position⁴⁰.

Other factors for missionary success include: ethnological factor (the Ibibio, Anaang, and Oron are compact and densely populated with their segmentary and rural villages with autonomous communities) and the absence of earlier proselytic Religions like Islam and so had no tradition of disillusionment or animosity against Christianity. The influence of poverty and underdevelopment of the people is another condition that undermines the dignity of human beings and distorts the human family. True religion must seek to overcome or change that situation. Again the success of Christian missions in the area lies deep in Christian beliefs and convictions that Jesus Christ commanded his Apostle to preach his gospel to every human being on earth (Mk. 16:15) and to reach all nations (Matt. 28:19).

The Social Impact

The impact on the social scene is indeed of epochal significance. The missionaries were the "pathfinders of the British influence"⁴¹ and certainly assisted the British to consolidate the conquest, especially through the mission schools and missionary influence on the people. The carpenters, masons and brick-layers, trained in the Christian workshops, helped to diffuse the art of their trade in the Region. New forms of house furniture were popularized. The frock replaced the semi-nudity of the women. The lion-cloth was exchanged for pairs of shorts, sometimes complete with stockings and shoes. New culinary habits of food and beverages as well as new mannerisms and etiquette became symbols of social prestige. It was easy to pick out a convert in the crowd by his personal attire or social manners. Eating with fork and knife, seated at the dining table replaced the earlier squatting on the floor and the licking of the fingers. The blessings of literacy, new standards of sanitation and modern scientific medicine were objects of wonder and curiosity. The Christian contribution to the creation of the new social order was, indeed, significant. Some of the earliest mission schools in Akwa Ibom include: Boys' Institute, Etinan by Qua Iboe (1916), Methodist Boys' High School, Oron (1935), Union Secondary School, Ibiaku (1948), Methodist Secondary School, Nto Ndang (1948), Holy Family College, Abak (1942), Cornelia Conelly College, Uyo (1944), St. Columbanus Secondary School, Ikwen (1954), Lutheran High School, Obot Idem (1950) and Ibibio State College, Ikot Ekpene (1946).

The Religious Impact

Christianity, Western Education and Development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

It is the religious sphere that the Christian missions in Akwa Ibom left their most telling imprint on the indigenes. In 1846, there were hardly any Christian in the region. By 2008, the objective of founding Christianity in Akwa Ibom State remains, a hope for the future because the foundation has been substantially laid. The religious impact is greatest in three areas of church life: doctrine, ritual and administration. The rich heritage of religious symbols familiar to the converts was rejected. The Bible is translated to the people's language for proper and better understanding, while the training in Christian morality became casuistic and legalistic. Many denominations have seminary institutions for the training of Church workers.

Political Impact

On the creation of Akwa Ibom State out of Cross River State on 23rd September, 1987, all the eleven Commissioners except three were of Akwa Ibom stock. Today, the State has thirty-one Local Government Areas with indigenous chairmen and Councilors of the Councils. For the first time in the history of Nigerian politics, an Akwa Ibom indigene, Arch. Obong Victor Attah, eight - years governor of the State was one of the Peoples Democratic Party's greatest contenders for the Nigerian Presidency. Another - Akwa Ibomite, Sunday Mbang served the Methodist Church as its prelate and National Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). Many elites of Akwa Ibom State are products of mission schools. Educated elites have excelled in local, national and international spheres of their endeavours. Thanks to Western education. The government and control of all Christian Churches in the State are in the hands of Nigerians. The earliest Akwa Ibom nationalists were products of missionary institutions and exposure. The influence of local, missionaries and resources (catechist-teacher, members of the village Church committees, the generality of the converts and school children) are vital to the success of Christianity in the State.

CONCLUSION

This work is an attempt to evaluate the impact of Christian mission on Akwa Ibom State from 1846 to 2008. It is not deliberately structured to attack or criticize the missions in the State, but rather seeks to be as objective and scientifically critical as possible in its analysis and evaluation of the work of Christianity, Western education and development in the area. The study seeks in the interest of missionary enterprise in Nigeria to redress the distortions and serious omissions and gaps in the existing presentations of materials on this subject.

From the forgoing discussion, it can be said that there is a very strong link between Christianity, Western education and the development of Akwa Ibom Region. The effects of the dialogue between these areas on the traditional milieu are both positive and negative.

Onah Augustine Odey

It is suggested that in the process of cultural cross-fertilization and borrowing, the agents of our culture must be circumspective, discreet, selective and adaptive, so that our people do not lose their cultural identity. As acculturation goes on, the key words and guiding principles must be identity and authenticity, indigenization and Nigerianization of the Christian religion. This is because if Christians are sufficiently interested in indigenous culture, the skills which went into the production of the works of art in the shrines could be tapped for the benefit of Christian art, while the works of art already existing in the shrines could be presented and imbued with historical significance. This is timely because Akwa Ibom and African culture have their very positive aspects too. The present author believes very strongly that inculturation involves the exposure of the Christian message and the Akwa Ibom culture to each other towards mutual interpenetration and integration. It is also timely to advise that inculturation is NOT adaptation.

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Christianity, Western Education and Development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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