

## **CHRISTIANITY AND RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: AN X-RAY**

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### **Abstract**

*Our efforts in this research have been geared towards describing historically Christianity and human development in Nigeria. The study revealed that most of the contemporary churches do not have the will withal strategies in respect of human development. As a result, Nigerian society is characterized by mass unemployment, kidnapping, armed robbery, drug abuse, and corruption especially among the politicians and youths. The objective of this research therefore is to present a way forward in ameliorating the sorry nature of many Nigerians more especially in this modern era. The method of approach includes historical and phenomenological methods.*

### **Introduction**

To Iwe (n.d.), Christianity in its various institutional and social forms and manifestations is a human and moral, spiritual and cultural, national and international force to be reckoned with. As a religion its claims are both human and divine. Its incarnate nature and foundations give it an inescapable and essential human dimension. In view of its human character, Christianity has, in the course of human history and in various nations demonstrated itself as the custodian and promoter of human values. It is to be remembered that Christianity had a purifying and humanizing impact on the pagan and imperialistic vices and violence of the Ancient Roman Empire.

When we think of 'humanity' certain attributes or traits immediately come to mind and they include: the human race, the quality of being humane, patience, emotional, compassion, hardwork, caring and so on. It is the concept of 'humanity' that gave rise to the branch of learning known as the humanities. The

humanities are about people. Genesis 1:1 reports the beginning of creation, humanity, marriage, sin, judgment, arts and crafts, the concept of covenant and the covenant people themselves. God created 'humanity' in his own image (Gen. 1:26-27).

It must be stated from the outset that when the missionaries came to Africa, their primary aim was to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Africans. To Nigerian people, their understanding and hermeneutic of salvation preached in the churches went beyond the ordinary salvation from sin. To them, the concept of salvation implies more than liberation from sin. It includes redemption from physical misfortune such as sickness, road accident, sudden death, poverty, court case, oppression of the enemy, socio-cultural, political, illiteracy, economic among others (Onunwa, 1991).

Liberation in this context applies to these suffering, the poor, captive the oppressed, and the naked bound in ignorance, political, economic, religious and social structure. For the church in Nigeria to make a real impact on the life of the people it must concern itself with their economic well-being. It should associate itself with the economic development ideologies of the Nigerian society. Most communities in Nigeria have achievement orientation especially in the areas of commerce and industry. The pattern of preaching should not condemn the people's quest for genuine economic well-being, but rather be concerned with interpretations of the Christian meaning and usage of wealth. The methodological approach includes historical and phenomenological approaches.

### **Definition of terms**

To Ukpong (1990), the concept of development has been discussed under various terms such as evolution, change, progress, modernization among others, but summed under the generic term, 'idea of progress' (p.107). It is the growth in knowledge, essentially a legacy of the Enlightenment to structural transformation at societal level. In the most liberal way, development means social, economic, political, religious, cultural and economic changes in society leading to improvement in the quality of life for all. Although this concept is not ideological, it nonetheless depicts development as a normative enterprise. According to Meler (1976), from this view, development is considered to be qualitative 'growth plus positive change' applied to a particular human end (p.6). The central element of development is cumulative change which is high

complex and can only be best achieved through different phases vis-à-vis cultural, economic, political, social, and religious and so on operating in concert.

Development in the sense in which we conceive it in this paper is the gradual growth of a people and a society, so that they become better, more advanced, leading to an unfolding of the potentialities of the individuals in that society. The point is that Christianity is indispensable in human development, for a people properly educated, civilized, and socialized derive development as a matter of course. Christianity, according to Willis (2007), one billion, seven hundred eighty-three million, six hundred and sixty thousand-about one out of every one's in the world today-claims Christianity as their religion. But those people have such vastly different opinions as to its theological content that a single definition of Christianity is just about impossible.

The etymological derivatives of the word "human" or "humanity" in the plural form the Latin word '*humanitas*' while 'human' is derived from the word '*humanus*'. When we think of 'humanity' certain attributes or traits immediately come to mind and they include: the human race, the quality of being humane, patience, emotional, compassion, hardwork, caring and so on. It is the concept of 'humanity' that gave rise to the branch of learning known as the humanities. The humanities are about people: how people create the world they live in; how the world they live in makes them the people they are. Genesis 1:1 reports the beginning of creation, humanity, marriage, sin, judgment, arts and crafts, the concept of covenant and the covenant people themselves. God created 'humanity' in his image (Gen. 1:26-27). All humanity retains God's image such as knowledge, righteousness and holiness, which Christ restored in humanity (Matt.17:1-2, 10:25; John 17:22). Humanity has the responsibility to rule the world for God (Gen.1:28).

According to Iwe (1991), the word "humanity", derives from the Latin word, "humanitas." Both the word and idea it enshrines are of a creation of the culture of imperial Rome. Originally the concept of humanity among the Romans stood for the total development of man's personality and his sentiments and attitudes to his fellow human beings. It is a concept based on the natural dignity and splendor peculiar to man's personality, when compared to the other beings on his planet. Iwe citing Schulz averred,

Thus the concept *humanitas* comprises moral and intellectual education, but also kindness, goodness,

and sympathy, the restraint of one's will, consideration for others; it means that one's own rights

and one's own advantage are not ruthlessly pursued that one is willing to forgo something

out of consideration for the other person concerned (p. 93).

According to Ezeigbo (2013), in the West, the study of the humanities was first introduced in ancient Greece, as a basis of a broad education for citizens. Then, during the period of Roman Civilization, the idea of the seven liberal arts evolved and was expressed in the teaching of grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. These were the main subjects studied in the medieval period. During the Renaissance, the humanities evolved and became subjects to be studied rather than practiced and emphasis shifted from its traditional conception into new areas such as literature and history. With time, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, more and more areas have been incorporated into the discipline of the humanities.

Now, the fields include archaeology, anthropology, religion, ethics, history, language and linguistic, literature, fine and applied arts, media arts, music, jurisprudence, philosophy, political science, psychology, etc. The humanities are stories, the ideas and the words that help us make sense of our lives and our world. As fields of study, the humanities privilege analysis and exchange of ideas in contrast to the quantitative explanation that preoccupy the sciences. Each field of the humanities focuses on a specific area of knowledge. For examples, history, anthropology, archaeology and political science study human social, political, and cultural development. Literature, language and linguistics explore how we communicate, including how our ideas and thoughts on the human experience are expressed and interpreted. Philosophy, ethics and comparative religion consider ideas about the meaning of life (existence) and the reasons for our thoughts and actions. Jurisprudence examines the values and principles which inform our laws while historical, critical and theoretical approaches to the arts reflect upon, and analyze the creative process. All these are geared towards humanity and national development.

Language constitutes an integral and crucial component of man's life and it permeates and pervades virtually every aspect of man's life. The role of a piece of language is the place it has in the manifold patterns of human activities and

institutions. Language is used for communication in various circumstances and for different purposes. Language in specific contexts and situations form functional variation of language which is referred to as register variation. Registers then, like dialects, are often seen as different “Englishes” because they are often distinguished by special features of semantics, vocabulary, grammar and sometimes phonology. According to Yule (2007),

A register is a conventional way of using language that is appropriate in a specific context, which may be identified as situational (eg in church), occupational (e.g. among lawyers) or topical (eg talking about language). We can recognize specific features that occur in the religious register..., the legal register...and even the linguistic register....He also goes on to state that one of the defining features of a register is the use of jargon. Jargon itself is a concept which is of major interest to stylistic and ESP scholars (210).

Man as a *social* being, has great need of interaction with others. He uses language to communicate his ideas, desires, fears and accomplishments to others. Davy and Crystal (1969) assert that there are different varieties of language in Christianity and identify the language of sermons as stylistically akin to the variety of language used in public speaking; the theological discourse stylistically akin to “learned descriptive or discursive narratives (such as History or Philosophy)...” Also, they identify the language varieties of liturgy and Biblical translation. Babatunde (1998) identifies the rhetoric strategies used in persuasive Christian religious speeches. The language used in Christian religious teaching is usually dogmatic and predictable in its approach.

### **Nigeria: its brief history**

Nigeria is a socio-political entity situated on the Southern coast of West Africa, sharing borders with Benin Republic to the west, Cameroun and Chad to the east and Niger to the North. It is bordered to the south by the Atlantic Ocean. It covers a sprawling area of 923, 733 square kilometers, and has the largest population in Africa, estimated to be between 160 and 170 million people. Although, there is a widespread notion that Nigeria is equally divided between two major religions- Christianity and Islam; their population ratio is a highly

contentious issue. Apart from the internal population estimate which includes adherents of Traditional Religion, Stefanos (2009) observes that “Nigeria’s population includes both more Christians in any other African State and more Muslims than in any other African State too. It is estimated that one out every six Africans, is a Nigerian.

Obviously, Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, as well as multi-religious nation, being made up of an estimated two hundred and fifty (250) ethnic groups. The major ethnic groups are the Hausa/Fulani, the Igbo and the Yoruba which together is said to make up almost more than half of the entire Nigerian population. The Hausa/Fulani who are predominantly Muslims mostly inhabit the North-western part of the country. Igbo are predominantly Christians, and mostly inhabit the South-eastern part of the country. The Yoruba are, in a religious sense, a “mixed grill” having almost equal adherents of both the Christian, Islamic and Traditional Religions.

The story of the creation of the Nigerian federation is rooted, in part, in the country’s history of colonization by the British which began officially in 1861 with the establishment of the colony of Lagos, a process that eventually culminated in the Lord Lugard’s amalgamative fiat of 1914. This led to the emergence of the entity known as known as Nigeria. Achieving her independence in 1960, Nigeria was composed of three district administrative regions: the Western region, the Eastern region and the Northern region. One prominent theme of Nigeria’s history as a federation has been the quest to subdivide. Nwabueze (1982) noted that,

Agitations for subdivision of the three Regions into smaller States began even before independence. One cause was the sheer size of the Northern Region which was larger than the other two put together, encompassing about seventy-five percent (75%) of the land area and about sixty percent (60%) of the population of the country. This imbalance is perhaps the most astonishing peculiarity of the Nigerian federation and it naturally gave rise to fears in the other two regions, of domination by the mostly Muslim North” (p. 153).

Today, there are thirty-six states and a Federal Capital Territory in Abuja. Nevertheless, agitations for further state creation, engendered by religio-ethnic factors are continuing feature of political discourse in Nigeria. Though the preamble to the Nigerian Constitution (1999) expresses the “firm and solemn resolve of Nigerians to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation” (section 2:1), the vexing issue of religious and ethnic intolerance, which has often degenerated into conflict, remains a major threat to the ultimate unity of the Nigerian nation.

It would be recalled that in the light of Nigerian heterogeneity, the Constitution (1999) sets out “actively to encourage national integration, and to end, prohibit discrimination on the basis of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic and linguistic association or ties (Sec. 15:2). Accordingly, the Constitution obliges the Nigerian state to foster a feeling of belonging and of involvement among the various peoples of the federation, to the end that loyalty to the nation shall override sectional interest (Sec. 15:4). In the same manner, the Constitution obliges the government of a state or a local government to conduct its affairs “in such a manner as to recognize the diversity of the people within its area of authority and the need to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among all the peoples of the federation” (Sec. 14:3)

The significance of these constitutional phrases is better appreciated against the background of the incessant religious and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. Being a multi-religious and ethnic nation, Nigeria is facing several incidences of conflicts that have led to flagrant attacks, destruction of lives and properties of innocent people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds leading to an unprecedented upsurge of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP). Unfortunately, there are always trumped up political, ethnic or religious reasons given for every conflict and attack, especially against Christians and their Churches.

Incidentally, there is an avowed drive by the Muslim fundamentalists in Nigeria ‘to ensure that Nigeria is Islamized, that and all facets of life must be governed by Islamic law: the Shari’a Law. The flagrant display of this religious and ethnic intolerance is demonstrated in the statement credited to the former Governor of Kano State, Malam Ibrahim Shekarau who declared his determination to expend the whole treasury of his state’s revenue for the cause of Shari’a when he said,

We cannot mind spending whatever we have in the state coffers to ensure the success of the Shari’a and whoever has any grumble on that should not only go to the radio stations, but also make it known on the internet.

Based on this, we shall now examine further some of the remote and immediate causal factors of inter and intra religious and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria.

### **Christianity and human development**

It must be stated from the outset that when the missionaries came to Africa, their primary aim was to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Africans. To Nigerian people, their understanding and hermeneutic of salvation preached in the churches went beyond the ordinary salvation from sin. For them, the concept of salvation implies more than liberation from sin. It includes redemption from physical misfortune such as sickness, road accident, sudden death, poverty, court case, oppression of the enemy, socio-cultural, political, illiteracy, economic among others ('Onunwa, 1991). Evangelization situates liberation in Christ to include a transformation of concrete historical and political conditions. The human beings to whom the gospel is proclaimed are not abstract apolitical beings, but members of a society characterized by injustice and human exploitation.

### **Mission schools and human development**

On education, Fafunwa (1974) stated that in African educational set up, there were seven purposes before the advent of the west. These were to develop the child's latent physical skills; to develop character; to inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority; to develop intellectual skills; to acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour; to develop a healthy sense of belonging and to participate actively in a family and community affairs and to understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large. Therefore the missionaries did not only bring the gospel of Jesus Christ; they taught also the people. They opened schools wherever they established churches where young ones were, and those interested were taught how to read, write, sing hymns, psalms, choruses, recite catechism, pray, and even learnt how to read the scriptures. Some of the notable schools by the mission bodies include Uzuakoli Methodist College built in 1923, Ihie High School built in 1945, Dennis memorial Grammar School Onitsha built in 1925, the St Paul College Awka, Bishop Lasbrey College Irete, and St. Augustine and Trinity Theological College, Umuahia.

From the mission schools, the missionaries helped in the unification of Igbo language by translating the Bible into Igbo version called Union Ibo by 1910.

Christian missions helped also to preserve the vernacular languages of the people as against the wishes of the colonial administrators who preferred the English language to the vernacular languages. This became one of the Christian legacies to the people of Igbo, Yoruba, Efik, Nupe and Hausa (Ayandele, 1966). The translation of the Bible is a reflective interpretation of what the biblical God is doing to enhance Nigerian survival through the agency of the people who are informed by scripture and traditional concepts of the God who is revealed to us through the faith and life of Jesus Christ. Our future is found in the application of a peculiarly Nigerian hermeneutic to Bible principles. For the people who could now read in their language, liberation is Christ mission to the world of those struggling for survival. Liberation in this context applies to these suffering, the poor, captive, the oppressed, and the naked bound in ignorance, political, economic, religious and social structure.

The objective of the mission school is to educate members on the need for co-operation and to enhance self-awareness and promote the spirit of confidence, determination, focus and hard work. Missionary enterprise in this case is for satisfaction of basic needs such as food, shelter (housing) , potable water, light, good health, basic education, clean environment as well as access to satisfactory cultural, spiritual, social and political life. The philosophy behind this objective is to increase in per capital income, improvement in standard of living and for self-reliance. The human development also consists of child care services which includes probation, orphanages, fostering coupled with family services such as marriage counselling, economic empowerment through establishing cottage industries where unemployed parents and youths are engaged. There is also skill acquisition for parishioners, and settling of conflicts in the family among others.

### **Domestically**

According to Iwe (n. d.), there is the glaring fact of irresponsible procreation or rather irresponsible conception which stubbornly perpetuates the reckless practice of launching new babes into the community “with or without” the visibility of the means of livelihood. This typically Afro-Irish domestic malpractice had generally adamantly refused to yield to the principles and acceptable techniques of responsible and planned parenthood. In consequence, definitely, recognizable human values are being jeopardized. It is human dignity and decency and security in the standards of living that are here being assailed, if not sacrificed. Often irresponsible reproduction gives rise to domestic classrooms

of ape-looking children suffering from acute malnutrition and want of care. Christianity can certainly demolish the religious fear and phobia and ignorance at the basis of this practice of ill-planned and irresponsible parenthood. The church has a mission of enlightenment on reproduction and child-spacing.

### **Ethically**

Ethical speaking, the virtues of honesty and integrity highly indispensable aspects of the principle of justice, are critically in danger of total eclipse especial in our official, ecclesiastical, commercial and public relations and transactions. Here in our developing country or continent of Africa, bribery and official corruption characterized by embezzlement and diversion of public funds for private use in high and low quarters are shamelessly practiced if not institutionalized. The present regime of Muhammadu Buhari claim of fighting corruption will be realistic if he has the will-power and political-will coupled with those who are working with him showing high sense of honesty, integrity and prudence in the use of public funds. In this area also the Christian churches will have to put up fight against dishonesty in dealing with official corruption. Christianity must practically and publicly advertise itself as diametrically and irreconcilably opposed to such vices, while ceaselessly exerting itself to inculcate the habits of righteousness, honesty and public integrity into people.

### **Christianity and humanization of social life**

This humanization of social life is a value which modern citizenship can ill afford to discard. A responsible citizenship endowed with a dedicated sense of humanity will incline the citizens:

- (a). to show scrupulous respect for the dignity and sacredness of human life,
- (b). to eschew any in human action or treatment which degrades human personality,
- (c). to exhibit sincere and active concern for the welfare of others, especially the weak and handicapped, the helpless and the poor, the honestly unemployed and the sick, and those under their care and authority.
- (d). to ensure that the ruthless pursuit of absolute justice and rights does not lead to absolute injustice and injury (*ne summum ius ducat ad summam injuriam*).

A truly mature citizenship would indeed ensure at all times that all the significant social institutions of the society are animated by the spirit of humanity and effective compassion for the weak. A sincere sense of humanity is

an unmistakable mark of a truly cultured man. Similarly a dynamic spirit of concern for the weak and handicapped is a clear sign of a healthy and mature society and citizenship. Nothing exhibits more the true dignity and nobility of man and his society than humanity and magnanimity.

Christianity and human development should also involve the spirit of liberty and democracy, the principle of solidarity, the sense of justice, the sense of religion, the essential fluidity and functionality of Nigerian socio-political institutions, sense of self-reliance, self-propagating, and self-dependence, the spirit of industry coupled with the spirit of magnanimity and hospitality. For instance, in the issue of essential fluidity and functionality of Nigerian socio-political institutions, each institution has to establish its legitimacy and acceptability on the basis of its rationality, functionality and relevance; otherwise it runs the risk of rejection and disestablishment. Again, after the attainment of adult maturity such as in Igbo community, one is expected to be enterprising, resourceful, and full of initiatives, creative, daring and adventuring.

In our communities, we have got nepotism, statism, denominationalism, multi-faith, extremism, terrorism, ethno-centricism or tribalism, and various forms of ritualized or caste-system of social discriminations (such as *osu* caste, *diala*, *ohu* etc Igboland Nigeria). This sort of social atmosphere, deeply poisoned and violently charged as it is, poses a serious obstacle to justice and its administration and to the recognition and observance of human rights. Christianity in keeping with its traditional role, posited Iwe (n. d.), must step in here to proclaim the dignity of human person. It must preach the gospel of the fundamental dignity and equality of all human beings in rights and duties. It must be unequivocally spelt out that the abolition of all forms of unjustifiable social discriminations and the effective recognition and practical observance of human rights are the indispensable pre-conditions for liberty, justice, peace and progress in the society. Here Christianity has got to exercise its diligent mission.

### **Christianity and human development from economic perspective**

According to Idowu (1968), Africa had known the Europeans, missionaries inclusive, as people with immense power, wisdom, and wealth. Europeans had demonstrated their power either as tormentors of Africans before whom the latter were entirely powerless; or as their deliverers whose benefactions appeared to be inexhaustible. In commercial wares brought by Europeans, in their bearing and comportment, there was every sign of wealth, and of this

wealth, Africans were already having a taste in the gifts brought to them by explorers. In relation to this, the missionaries conferred a status upon their converts; they were in a class by themselves. Even today in Abeokuta Christians are called 'the bookish ones' or 'the people with books' (Idowu, 1968, p. 424).

Christianity is a religion with a prestige value. Christians were in the forefront of a new enlightenment throughout the continent and they and their children set the fashion which the impressionable Nigerians followed. Christianity enabled people to earn their livelihood in 'clean' jobs, a situation which was greatly exploited by the church. Chiefs became friends of missionaries and either professed Christianity themselves or surrendered their children for education and baptism, undoubtedly because of expected political or material benefits, but the church found this acceptable and rejoiced at it.

In his book titled, 'The African slave trade and its remedy', Sir Thomas F. Buxton, the greatest leader of the slave trade abolitionists after the death of William Wilberforce, insisted that the full ransom of Africa was to be found in her fertile soil. He suggested the establishment of a settlement at the confluence of the rivers Niger and Benue to act as an agricultural training center for Africans. Christianity was to be introduced as a necessary aspect of this programme to bring about the moral and spiritual regeneration of Africans. Hence Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton advocated the principle of the "Bible and plough" slogan which caught the imagination of the next generation. Venn became an energetic exponent of the Buxton's doctrine. According to Nwosu (1998), the formation in 1840 of "The Society for the extinction of slave trade and the civilization of Africa" gave more force to Buxton's ideas.

One of the aims of the Christian village strategy popular among the Roman Catholic missions in Africa was to raise the economic well being of the converts. St. Joseph's Topo established in Badagry in 1876 on a piece of land nine miles long between the Lagos lagoon and the ocean was intended to be "the foundation of an agricultural establishment for raising the standard of agriculture so necessary in a colony and so little developed in this part of Africa. In this Christian village each inhabitant was given a plot of land to cultivate under close supervision by missionaries for his own profit, except for a little rent paid in kind. The Church from the beginning of the Christianization of Nigeria was an active participant in proposals about viable commercial ventures, and

encouraged individual Christians to engage in enterprises for the improvement of their economic well-being.

When the first Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries were dispatched to Yoruba land in Nigeria in late 1844, Venn outlined the means to be used in social development. First and most important was the Christian gospel. This was the foundation for everything else. The second means was agriculture because it contributed to the necessities of life and provided a constructive occupation. In the third place, he advocated commerce to stimulate local production and create demand for imports. Hence, Venn planned to bring young Africans to England for training in commerce and the professions. Through this effort young men developed skills in producing and marketing cotton, brick and tile-making, building, medicine, printing, agriculture, and navigation (Shenk, 1983).

Training in practical arts was also introduced in 1848. Venn encouraged also local congregations to be self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-reliance instead of depending on funds from England. Venn and friends believed that production of a major cash crop for export was required too. They selected cotton. To introduce cotton production in West Africa, they brought Africans to England for training in the manufacturing and marketing of cotton and brought machinery for processing the raw materials in Sierra Leone and Yoruba land. Warehouse was built for the grown cotton at the ports to expedite shipment from Lagos and Freetown. Regular shipping started between West Africa and Manchester. CMS involvement in various education programmes no doubt proved also more important for future development.

By 1852, the CMS appointed W.C. Hensman as medical adviser and industrial agent to Abeokuta Industrial and Training institution. The industrial concept suited Venn's idea of development. Men's capital includes his wisdom, physical strength, health, skill and his ability. The missionaries recognized skill and honour the dignity of the individuality of the men who possess those skills.

### **Christianity and humanity development from political perspective**

To Iwe (1985), the objective of the church in politics should be essentially humanitarian in order to restore human dignity, rights and human values. The church during the missionary era interfered, intervened, interfaced, influenced, arbitrated, re-ordered or even changed the relationship or attitude of the

government to the people. But today the church is a society ruled by governments of corrupt men whose actions determine our comfort and misery (Nmah, 2008). In Jeremiah 7:16-17, we hear our God in anger say, "Do not pray for these people, nor make intercession to me, for I will not hear you. Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?" (cf. Jer. 11:4). We can substitute Judah with Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Judah, Libya, Iraq, Samaria, Egypt and South Africa. The anger the Lord is much, for there is so much corruption and social injustice in these lands. Some of the priests, bishops, archbishops and the like, that are overtly or covertly politicians from their ex-Cathedral is an indication of the level of corruption in a society that has affected even some clergy. Our kind of politics will be reformed for better if there will be honesty on the side of the rulers and the led, the clergy and their parishioners.

From Pentecostal angle, in explaining the story of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, the progressive expansion of poverty, urbanization, ignorance, hunger, disease, poor quality education, unemployment, exploitation, alienation, oppression, witchcrafting, mal-administration, ecclesiastical poor leadership and dispossession in Nigeria since independent has continued to influence the resort of Nigerians to search for the spiritual essence of their being. The socio-economic and political adversities in the country provide a fertile ground for the planting, germination, growth and balkanization of all forms of religion. The emergence of global cultural system which is the consequence of a variety of social and cultural developments, came to a large extent explain the growth of Pentecostalism in Nigeria (Nmah and Udezo, 2013).

In the 1999 elections, Pentecostals supported Olusegun Obasanjo of People's Democratic Party. For many Protestants' leaders, he symbolizes the restoration of Christian hope and control over government. A Baptist, Obasanjo had served as military ruler from 1976-1979. In 1995, while in prison, Obasanjo claimed that he is a 'born again'. As he was elected, he called for national prayer and fasting to assure a successful transition. In 1999, Pentecostal leaders conducted an all-night prayer meeting for the new president (Freston, 2001; Ojo, 2004). Anyim Pius Anyim of People's Democratic Party and a member of Assemblies of God were elected as senator and later became senate President and Secretary to the Federation of Nigeria. Sam Egwu, a member of Assemblies of God was also elected as Governor of Ebonyi State (1999-2007). This is as result of the support of the Pentecostals.

## **Contemporary Christianity and human development**

For the church in Nigeria to make a real impact on the lives of the people, it must concern itself with their economic well-being. First, it should associate itself with the economic development ideologies of the Nigerian society. Most communities in Nigeria have achievement orientation especially in the area of commerce and industry. The pattern of preaching should not condemn the people's quest for genuine economic well-being, but rather be concerned with interpretations of the Christian meaning and usage of wealth. The current hardship, mass unemployment, corruption, poverty stricken situation of Nigerian societies, mal-administration characterized by faulty government policies, falling standard of education coupled with economic mismanagement call not only for the voices of God's people to redress the ills-the cause of the economic quagmire-but also for a direct contribution from every quarter to improve the economic conditions of the poverty stricken Nigerian society and technically the Third world countries generally.

To put it differently, according to Nwosu (1998), while it is legitimate to decry the factors that have produced the economic disasters in which many Africans find themselves, it is equally appropriate to identify with the various programmes to alleviate the economic hardship including participation in economic ventures. The Church's participation in economic ventures would fulfill an important deuteronomist legislation which formed the basis of the communal life organization of the early Church: none among you should be poor. The modern church could achieve it by engaging in economic ventures that would produce the required wealth and eliminate poverty. If narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria can ever be achieved, the Nigerian society needs much more pressing today than yesterday the gospel of salvation that must radically take a spiritual and material turn, a turn towards the evolution of the theology of economic liberation.

The church's engagement in business ventures would achieve two great objectives. Firstly, it would, if managed by Christians in true spirit of Christianity, mean more money accruing to the church for the purpose of maintaining itself in spirituality, commerce and civilization and carrying out also the mandate to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. It would also lead to less financial burden on the average poor church goers. Secondly, the mission to

make disciples of all nations (Matt.28:18-20) or the church to evangelize the world-would be possible in a spiritually and economically dynamic and viable society. The foundation of American and European civilization is centered in their faith in Christ.

American and European missionaries could not have come to Nigeria or Africa at the time they did if the church and the states of Europe and America were then as poor as African states are today. Ultimately the production of wealth must be seen within the plan of the creator who never decreed poverty, but promised unending prosperity (Dt. 5:33, 28:63, 29:9; 1kings 2:3; Prov. 28:25, etc).

Presently Nigeria's economy is experiencing a serious recession, and strains and stresses here and there, especially in the foreign exchange reserves. The oil export boom of the 1970s brought fantastic sums of money into the coffers of the nation and created the illusion of a healthy and balanced economy. Now, in the 2016s our oil-export reverses in the world oil market due to the drop in oil prices. Its foreign exchange earning capacity has been drastically reduced, and as a direct consequence, the structural deficiencies and other harsh realities of the economy are staring the Nigerians squarely in the face, and some economic have truths are being learnt. We have to understand that the economic boom of 1970s was not, after all, judiciously utilized to lay solid and lasting economic foundations for a healthy and stable economy due to persistent corruption in Nigeria.

Now we have come to realize, posited Iwe (1991) that we have for long imprudently allowed the nation to perch perilously on a single-commodity economy, to the near total neglect of other sources of foreign-exchange earning. The failure to develop our agricultural sector on a significant scale is now yielding its disastrous effects. Hunger, poverty, unemployment, and malnutrition in the midst of natural abundance, are social problems to be reckoned with by the generality of the people. The humble suggestion here is that there must be synergy, an ethical and economic re-orientation of the nation and the maintenance of a democratic social order, through a sound educational system. According to Gillespie (1966),

Only an economic break-through on considerable scale will save the continent

(Nigeria inclusive) from serious human frustration. Furthermore it has been aintained that such a break-through will only be possible if an educational and training programme conceived, in a very wide sense, can be devised and carried out with sufficient effectiveness to meet a very difficult situation (p.62).

If Nigeria is to be salvaged from its present economic crisis and malaise, there must be a radical redefinition of economic priorities. If the nation is to be able to feed its uncounted and teaming millions, there must be a massive injection of capital into the agricultural sector. Intensified efforts must be made to produce more cash crops and develop new ones for foreign exchange purposes. The development of local raw materials must be pursued with vigour, as a stable basis for rapid industrialization.

### **The indispensable role of Religious Language in human development**

People all over the world use language to communicate which is an integral part of being human. Language could be defined as a system of sounds or vocal symbols by which human beings communicate experience. It is a veritable means of communication and it is a special attribute which differentiates man from other animals. It is a human phenomenon that has form which can be described in terms of the units of sounds (phonemes), words, morphemes, phrases, sentences and paragraph or discourse. According to Gatherer (1977), we think in language and effective thinking is not possible unless we possess linguistic competence adequate enough to realize and express our ideas.

Language is one of the wonderful gifts given by God to humanity which helps man to communicate and solve a number of his problems and has been able to make a lot of achievements in life. If there has been no language, it would have been difficult for man to communicate his views to fellow human beings. Crystal and Derek, view the language of religion as a kind of language which a speech community uses for the expression of its religious beliefs. It is usually, one of the most distinctive varieties. The importance of religious language especially in contemporary Nigerian society cannot be underestimated. It is the language used for communication, expression and enlightenment and human development. Language is a tool for actualizing human ingenuity, creativity, human skills and knowledge. Through it man as a gregarious animal can comfortably live among his people and adapt to various socio-cultural groups and situations. Ogundare

(2004) describes language as a facilitator and an index of a people's capacity to conquer nature and civilize their environment. It is capable of carrying the burden of a society's value, experiences and ideologies. The scripture is expressed in different kinds of language. He went further to state that religious language has a reference point beyond this world, for it transcends physical reality. In many instances, the language of biblical texts, the language of Christian religion, are used with particular intensity. Christian religion plays an integral role in the Nigerian community as it helps to inculcate moral values in the lives of the people and brings the people nearer to their maker. Christian Churches use language (English) to carry out their roles.

In Nigeria, the word 'development' is frequently used, either tagged on to, or preceded by, such other expressions as "human" "national," "economic," "cultural," "political," even "democratic." From all such perspectives, development suggests some form of "advancements" or changes in the life of the society. To quote Akpakpan: "Most economists and social scientists in general now see development as having economic, social, political, and other dimensions. Human development is a form of improvement which manifests in the various aspects of the life of the society. If development is to be achieved in whatever colour, size, or shape, it must begin from the mind. Such mind development can be gained when we imbibe positive values. Development will necessarily begin from the individual, in other words, such values must first occupy his mind if he is to develop at all. This is where religion and religious language come to play. The role of religious language is pivotal to human growth, national development, global integration and sustainable democracy.

Summarily, religious language is the language for Peace education. We must stress that peace education can re-orientate the humanity towards meeting the challenges of a globalized world. Christian religion is a genre with identifiable stages in a particular order that allow people to achieve certain purposes within the context of use. There are stages like: entrance, sermon stage, communion, offertory, praise and worship, special songs delivery etc. Some of the strategies used by religious writers and speakers are: reminiscing, worshipping, committing, solemnizing, invoking, praying, blessing, exhorting and inspiring. Such strategies help immensely in shaping humanity and these ultimately lead to human development.

## **Conclusion**

My main concern has been the believers' orientation towards practical socio-economic affairs of everyday living. One can view the church doctrine on spirituality and economic as providing a whole series of possible causes of legitimate action which carry church approval. Wise investment is encouraged. As Isaiah taught that the world would be rebuilt by God's chosen people, so by Christians acquiring skills and improving their own standards of living, both materially and spiritually, they are preparing themselves for the new life and the tasks ahead. There should be emphasis on individualism and industriousness, and church organization and discipline work to uphold the values of the group. There is also the need to introduce peasant farming scheme by Christian own universities in order to have a little move away from traditional methods. Under the scheme individuals can acquire cattle, birds, crops, farm implements on a government loan and can receive instruction in crop rotation, animal husbandry, and ploughing (Long, 1968) . It is also true that majority of Nigerian population as in Africa rely on traditional methods, there is now an increasing tendency for those who possess ploughs and oxen or who have traditional implements to cultivate crops or rear animals rather than by scientific method. That notwithstanding most of the peasant farmers produce also a small surplus of maize, beans, groundnuts, and vegetables which are transported to overseas' markets for sale.

The net result of all this, together with the regular influx of cash from town in the form of remittances and investments made by retired labour migrants, has been an over-all increase in prosperity, manifest in the growing number of brick settlements and stores, the existence of some diesel-engine grinding mills for cassava, palm fruits, groundnuts, millet etc and several cars, tri-cycles (keke), trailers, and lorries. And this in turn has led to greater-economic differentiation within the community. Connected with these changes has been a change in settlement patterns. Prior to about 1950 the basic residential unit was the village which had a core of patrilineally-or to an extent matrilineal-related men and women. But with the growth of new forms of production and of wealth, the villages in Nigeria have metamorphose into urban areas such as Onitsha, Lagos, Badagry, Lokoja, Kaduna, Jos, Calabar, Oron, Port Harcourt, Benin, Agbo, Abeokuta, Aba, Ikot Ekpene, Umuahia, Owerri among others. Another major feature was a change in administrative policy and the rise of independent churches. When we look at the crop of humanities developed during the

missionary era and their enviable achievements in their chosen fields, we are not in doubt that they received the best education possible anywhere. Some of them became top literary artists and scholars, historians, philosophers, politicians, lawyers, medical doctors, civil servants, theologians, etc. These men were the products of excellent secondary schools headed by committed Christian missionaries and humanists, and taught by teachers trained in the best tradition of humanist education. These men we are referring to include Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, J.P. Clark, Akanu Ibiam, Michael Okpara, James Johnson, Herbert Macaulay, Mr. E.O. Eyo, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, Anthony Enahoro, Kenneth O. Dike, Margaret Ekpo to mention just a few. To this day the great majority of Nigerian leaders in politics, medicine, law, civil service, and education owe their beginnings and their positions in Nigerian society to their education in mission schools. Missionary effort is an onion for the regeneration and development of this country. Browne (1977) averred that education brought with it a demand for a share in government. Nigerian nationalism, according to him, traditionally had a wealth of associations reaching across tribal boundaries such as the long-standing Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) founded in 1931. Their members were trained in mission schools.

The special contention here is that there is still a strong need for Christianity to continue its traditional role the agent of human values here in our developing Nigeria especially African region. Our developing Nigeria scene exhibits multifarious forces-domestic, ethical, cultural, religious, social, political, national and international-which militate against the realization of unquestionable human values. Against this backdrop, the resources of Christianity require immediate mobilization and effective deployment.

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