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The triangular relationship between Christianity, Islam and the colonial administration

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Abstract
Religion plays a very vital role in shaping human nature and human society. In the Millennia of human existence, religion has contributed variously to develop society, and also to mar its progress and mutual co-existence. Apart from Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc., there are also Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion, especially within the African context. In this paper particularly, there is an attempt to examine the contact between Islam and Christianity, especially as they encountered Colonial Administration in the period before political independence. The inter-play between these religions and politics led to mutual suspicions and sometimes to decisions that eventually sowed the seed of mutual hatred, which still lingers so many years after the end of colonialism. The paper advocates a radical change of mind to embrace mutual co-existence.

Keywords: Christianity, Islam, colonial administration

1. Introduction

The Sudan United Mission and the Sudan Interior Mission: purpose

The SUM was later known as Church of Christ in Nigeria (*COCIN/SUM*) while the SIM was called the Evangelical Church of West Africa, ECWA). Both did not represent established churches as such but were composed of volunteers from many different Protestant denominations. Their origin and their purpose were similar – the establishment of a strong autonomous Protestant Church in the Sudan region and to evangelise Muslims. The use of the word 'Sudan' by these mission societies has nothing to do with the modern country of northeast Africa called The Republic of Sudan. It is an Arabic word, which means 'black people' and was used by the Arabs of North Africa to describe the country south of the Sahara Desert, which is inhabited by the black race. In this way it came to be used as a geographical term to refer to the Savanna parkland south of the Sahara Desert and stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the valley of the Nile. The region rather supported quite a large population, which was under the influence of the more advanced Arabs to the North. Thus, the purpose of the Sudan Mission Societies, the SIM and the SUM, was to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of this region and so prevent the southward advance of Islam from the desert. With such a goal in mind, the SIM and the SUM established stations not only in Northern Nigeria but also in Chad, the (Anglo-Egypt Sean) Sudan and Ethiopia (*Hickey, 1981*:*33-34*). However, these zealous steps led to complaints of intrusion and favouritism by Muslims, as well as conflicts with the colonial administration.

Despite the complaints about favouritism against the Colonial administrators and the actual practice of it by the accused colonial administration in Northern Nigeria, it was clear that missionaries saw the Christian mission, especially the Protestant mission, in its early period in Northern Nigeria as a race against Islam (*Rasmussen, 1993:36-37*). The primary aim was not to convert the Muslims but to 'fight them', to prevent them from gaining a foothold in 'pagan' communities. To 'stem the tide of Islam' was another mission slogan. Ironically, it was not only the Muslims who had to be fought, but also the Catholic mission and supposed colonial administrative antagonism. The Catholics had to be fought because they constituted some kind of menace to the Protestant missions, and as a result there was fierce competition between both missions. The latter knew that the Igbo parts of eastern Nigeria were already taken over by Catholicism. In fact, there was something of a mass conversion, expressed as a kind of public commitment, which posed a source of concern for the Protestants. Rival denominational loyalties grew very strong. As a result of the development of rivalry, it was better to take the Muslims seriously as objects of 'proselytisation' than to risk the inconvenience of Catholic presence. Furthermore, it was the practice of Protestant missionaries to build stations in areas where they knew that the Catholics were trying to infiltrate, and vice versa. In Igboland, the dynamics of such movements and the methods of the missionaries varied considerably - the schools race between Irish Holy Ghost Fathers and British Church Missionary Society presents a clear example of competition for recognition, acceptance, and dominion.

The Protestant missionaries' attitude of ascendancy during this period was not without some strong feeling of patronage and assistance by the British Empire, which was principally protestant. In fact, it was the shadow of Britain, which established everywhere, even beyond the shores of Nigeria, something of a Protestant ethos for colonial Africa. A general example could help to explain this situation more clearly. The effect of the British blockade on slave ships had been to land many slaves at Freetown in Sierra Leone, a Protestant stronghold since its foundation by returned black Nova Scotians. Fourah Bay College was set up by the CMS for their education and soon some among them were returning to evangelise their own peoples along the coast, including Lagos. The impact of this upon the character of West African coastal Christianity was, all in all, immense and it was almost entirely a Protestant one. However, a few returned Catholics from Brazil should not be forgotten for their influence in Dahomey or Lagos. But they did not turn into evangelists, as did many

of their Protestant counterparts from Freetown. Of these, Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a Yoruba whom I have already mentioned above, was the most outstanding. According to Misty L. Bastian (*2002:85*), "the Venerable Bishop Samuel Crowther, another repatriated Yoruba, developed the idea of the Niger Mission in the 1850s as a set of Christian outposts to be run by African missionaries. He was concerned by the late 1800s that Onitsha – so hard won as a beachhead in the mission's development – would slip through the grasp of the CMS". A great source of disappointment of Samuel Crowther in his planned programme of evangelising the Muslim north is summarised in the following words: "Crowther and his African missionaries had hoped and planned that the Onitsha mission station would be central to an extension of Christianity into the Muslim north and east, into the 'unspecified' but extremely populous regions of Igbo land. Instead, it appeared, the Yoruba missionaries had laboured in vain, gaining relatively few committed converts, and having recently come under suspicion in London because of reports about the Church members' sex lives and various episodes of alcohol abuse" (*Bastian, 2002:85*).

On the whole, records show that the Colonial administration was not always very comfortable with the excessive zeal shown by the Christian missions in what the former considered a flagrant disregard of such privileges. In 1912, for instance, K.V. Elphinstone, the *Resident* or Colonial Authority for Kabba Province noted with regard to the African converts, thus: "I have no hesitation in saying that the native converts are a constant source of trouble, owing to the fact that they consider themselves superior to the Chief's orders; time after time troubles arise from this cause; the possession of a book, usually a bible in Yoruba, being literate and being in very intimate relationship with white men are the cause of this trouble" (*NAK SNP 10 97P/1913, 24-25*).

In 1920, D. O. Fitzpatrick (*NAK SNP 17 16413*) who was the District Officer of Kabba Division wrote to the Resident, Ilorin Province, about the almost uncontrollable position reached by the African Converts in the following words: "The Christianised African in Kabba is presently a difficulty and is rapidly becoming a problem. Today his attitude and his actions make it hard for the Native Administration to govern: tomorrow they may make it impossible". Their attitude puts to question the sincerity and the depth of their conversion to Christianity. Moreover, he considered their embracing of Christianity as an easy way of escaping social responsibilities and communal obligations ("Converts are streaming into the various Christian folds. Nor is this to be wondered at, seeing that a Christian becomes at once a privileged person. He escapes all duties, retains all rights, and does, as he likes. Thus he does not obey the orders of his Father, nor of the Head of his house, nor of the Chief, but he lives in all respects as a Pagan, i.e., he keeps as many women as he can persuade to live with him, he enters into relations with women who are not Christians, and are, or are not, divorced from living Pagan or Muslim husbands") (*NAK SNP 17 16413*). In what may be interpreted as an overt support for Muslim leadership against christian missionaries, A.E. Barnes (*1995:420*) writes, "Christian leaders mocked not only the political authority of traditional or 'pagan' rulers, but that of Muslim rulers as well". He cites an example with Bako, a CMS 'teacher' who had his chair taken down to the Native Court, an act that in Kabba township was under the jurisdiction of the local emir. Once seated, he frequently interrupted the *Alkali* (Muslim judge), discussing his judgements with him in open Court. A further show of discomfort and dislike for the Christian missions could be noticed in the report by Sir Frederick Dealtry Lugard (*Kirk-Green, 1968:147*) on the Amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria and Administration, 1912-1919. On the numerous mission schools, he argued that they were "frauds on the public and are conducted for profit by half-educated boys and others who cannot read or write properly themselves. They are lacking in discipline and in loyalty to any constituted authority whatever, and the local chiefs find it very difficult to exercise control over them. In some districts they are reported as 'outposts' by the minor missions and are of no educational value. They are popular as the native considers that a 'school' of any kind adds to the prestige of the village".

Lugard was not hesitant to note his utter disgust with the conduct of the Christian converts in social life: "Occasional disturbances have taken place in the Southern Provinces between bands of persons calling themselves Christians and their Pagan neighbours, in which it would appear that the Christians have been the aggressors by interfering with festivals, or mocking at forms of Pagan worship, and in one case at least, there was some loss of life in the resulting fray. The heads of the missions did not in this case deny the culpability of the Christians, and stated that the movement to embrace nominal Christianity among certain Pagan tribes was so widespread, that they were unable to control or supervise it with the available staff" (*Kirk-Green, 159*). On his own part, Major W. Hamilton Browne - the Resident Kontagora - attributed the situation to what he called the often lack of training on the part of the Christian missionaries sent to Nigeria. He wrote (*AHA, 15246*): "From personal experience I am afraid that in most cases the type of Missionary who comes out is not one sufficiently educated to exercise the necessary tact in the very difficult position in which he would inevitably find himself". But the Christians had some sympathies from some colonial administrators. J.M. Freemantle, The Resident Muri, for instance, noted that "Missionaries in the field...are martyrs to statistics and unless figures are progressive their Society is in danger of being discredited at home and the enthusiasm of subscribers wavers. Unless however they are exceptionally discreet, any definite proselytising step forward is apt to discredit them - and perhaps the Government also - in the eyes of those whom they wish to influence. But the statistical shoe pinched and their zeal for results tends to outrun statesmen-like discretion" (*AHA, 15246*).

1.1 The Augustinian Mission (OSA)

Another turn of events in the relationship between Islam and Christianity, especially in Northern Nigeria, arose with the coming of the Augustinians to the region. The Order of St. Augustine as it is known today, was established formally in the 13th century, when Pope Alexander IV in the year 1256 amalgamated various religious communities who followed the Rule of St. Augustine into a single Order, called the Great Union. The "Great Union" marked the beginning of the Augustinian Order. The close relationship with the church has led to the noble missionary activities undertaken by the Augustinian Order in many parts of the world since its inception. The Portuguese Augustinians were for instance the

first missionaries to West Africa in the 16th century. They also established the first Catholic community in Warri, although they were not very successful in their mission attempt in Benin City. The Augustinian mission in Adamawa and other parts of Nigeria had a medieval background inspired by the life and writings of Saint Augustine of Hippo in North Africa. His life in a community with his priests, as well as his rule of life for them inspired other religious societies in the Church. Prominent among them were the Order of Preachers (Dominicans). After their unsuccessful attempt to establish a mission in Benin City in the 16th century, nothing was heard about them again until 1936 when the Irish Province of the Augustinian Order made a request to Rome for a mission territory in either East or West Africa. It was at a Chapter of the named Province in Dublin in July 1936 that the decision for the Request was taken. With the full support of the Prior-General of the Order, Fr. Clement Fuhl, and of the new Irish Provincial, Fr. R. Thomas Cooney, the Request was made a reality - a decision taken at the peak of the Irish zeal to undertake missionary works all over the world. After a positive consideration of the request by Rome, Fr. Joseph Kirsten was appointed Prefect Apostolic of the Benue in March 1937. Having travelled to Sugu and Toungo already in 1933 and 1934, Fr. Kirsten did not lose sight of the enormous job and challenges awaiting him, especially among the Muslim opponents. It was he also who requested Rome to cut off the whole area from the Donga River to Yola, since it was too large for their effective evangelization (cf. *Spiritan Archives, Box 545*). The Request was approved by the Apostolic Delegate to British colonial territories in Africa, Archbishop Riberi, who visited Jos in April 1937. Due to the refusal of the Swiss missionaries of the newly established Bethlehem Foreign Mission Society (BFMS) to take up an offer to evangelise the Adamawa Province, the Irish Augustinians who had earlier indicated their interest for the work were asked in February 1938 to accept and evangelise Adamawa.

To be equipped for the work, the newly arrived Augustinians had to undergo an apprenticeship under the experienced missionaries of the SMA already established in the Jos Prefecture. The first group of missionaries of the OSA to be approved for Adamawa after the permission from Cardinal Fumassoni Biondi (Prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide in April 1938) was Fathers P.A.Dalton, D.B. Redmond and G.T. Broder. Others were Frs. Luke Maddock and John Bergmans Power who were already acclimatising in Rhodesia (precisely in the Vicariate of Salisbury under Bishop Chichester, S.J.) for missionary work in Africa. They had left London port for Cape Town on 10 October 1937. Under the SMAs, the Augustinians had to learn Hausa – not only for evangelisation, but also to be able to communicate with the Muslims in the area. The next step was to make an application for a mission station in Adamawa Province to secure a strong foundation for the new missionary adventure. To give this search a concrete basis, Bishop Lumley visited Yola in February 1939 in order to discuss with the Resident or Senior Administrative Officer of the Province on the necessity of the proposed Catholic mission.

After seeing and considering various sites, Bishop Lumley settled for only two mission stations – at Sugu and at Bori. The wise decision was informed by the fact that the Augustinians were not yet experienced in the missions in the area. Expansion would be a gradual process, especially when they were installed in the Province and knew the place very well. Although the application for Boi was turned down by the Government, that of Sugu was approved in September 1939 by the same civil authority. A possible reason for the rejection or refusal to approve Boi was its proximity to the Emirate of Yola, which was considered a possible reason for conflict. It took years afterwards, before the formation of a Catholic Community among the Verre people. For most Missionaries, the mission at Sugu however planted a solid foundation for the eventual evangelisation of Adamawa. After the departure of Fr. Redmond for Ireland in May 1939 – due to a possible misunderstanding with Bishop Lumley – his Confrere Fr. Dalton (30 years old and only four years a priest) was elected Augustinian superior in Nigeria and confirmed in office at the Chapter of the Irish Province held in July 1939 in Dublin. According to the Spiritan Archival Source, the first Holy Mass in Maiduguri was celebrated in 1850 at Kukawa, while the first missionary and the first bishop were Rev. Fr. Andrew J. Handy (OSA) and Rt. Rev. T. Cotter (OSA) respectively (*Spiritan Archives, Box 6*).

2. The SMA: Society of African Mission

Before the arrival of the Irish Augustinians to Jos in 1938, in the Jos Prefecture, which was under the jurisdiction of Mgr. William Lumley (Prefect Apostolic of Jos), it was the Missionaries of the Society of Africa (SMA) who were already experienced in the area. Actually, it was under the SMAs that the Irish Augustinians did their apprenticeship, not only to acquaint them with the tools for the missionary work, but also with the correct means of relating with the Muslims and the Colonial administration. The SMA was a Society of French origin that was established by Bishop de Marion Bresillac in 1856, who later resigned his post as bishop and went for mission to West Africa. The SMA was indeed one of the earliest missionary groups that came to West Africa. But it was unfortunate that Marion Bresillac contracted Yellow Fever after some weeks of arrival in Sierra Leone and died there on 25 June 1859. The SMA and the Cssp could therefore be said to be the main springs of Catholic Evangelisation in West Africa. In the present day Nigeria, particularly the French missionaries of both societies carried out the misssionary work along the coasts. The latter missionary works of the German and Irish Confreres of both societies in the 1930s were therefore a continuation of the pioneering roles of the former, from the French provinces. In fact, the German Cssp Missionaries worked in the Benue Prefecture while the Irish SMA Missionaries continued in the Jos Prefecture. Today, statistics show that a lot of dioceses in Nigeria were evangelised by the SMA missionaries, thus (*Spiritan Archives, Box 6*):

2.1 Archdiocese of Lagos (1870)

First Mass in the Diocese - 1863
First missionary - Rev Fr. Francis Xavier Borghero, S.M.A.
First Bishop - Mgr. J.B. Chausse, SMA

2.2 Diocese of Ibadan

First Mass in the Diocese - 1884
First missionaries - Rev. Fr. Theodore Holley, SMA & Rev. Fr. Jean-Baptist Chausse, SMA (later first bishop of Lagos)
First Bishop – Rt. Rev. R. Finn, SMA

2.3 Diosese of Issele-Uku
First Mass in the Diocese - Asaba, 1888
First Missionary - Fr. Zappa, SMA

2.4 Diocese of Benin
First Mass - 1480
First missionary - Rev. Fr. Jules Poirier, SMA
First Bishop - Rt.Rev. Thomas Broderick, SMA

2.5 Oyo
First Mass - 1884
First missionary - Rev. Fr. Holley, SMA

2.6 Ondo
First Mass - 1884 by Frs. Chausse & Holley (SMA).

2.7 Ijebu-Ode
First Mass - 1864
First missionary - Rev. Fr. Borghero, SMA

2.8 Ekiti
First Mass - 1913
First missionary - Very Rev. Fr. Friers, SMA

2.9 Archdiocese of Kaduna
First Mass - 1916
First Missionary - Fr. Cerminanti, SMA
First Bishop - John McCarthy, SMA

2.10 Jos
First Missionary - Msgr. William Lumley, SMA
First Bishop - Rt. Rev. John Redinton, SMA

2.11 Lokoja
First missionaries - Fr. Jules Ambrose Poirier, SMA
Fr. Peter Piolat, SMA
Fr. Philip Fiorentini, SMA.

2.12 Sokoto
First missionary - Rev. Fr. Cerminatti, SMA

2.13 Ilorin
First Bishop - Rt. Rev. Dr. William Mahony, SMA

3. Why Islam should be rejected: the Christian notion

The first Christian missionaries were convinced that Islam was rooted in economic exploitation of the people, expressed in the drive for slave trade. For them, it could not be for extraordinary religious reasons or for the sake of a more personal relationship to one God, that someone became a Muslim. On the contrary, Christianity was presented as being intellectually superior to Islam; such that once Muslims had reached a higher level of awareness they would then be able to understand these facts and would then convert to Christianity. R.A. Ayandele (*1966:117*) argues that this notion was long associated with the early Christian missionary enterprise in the Muslim emirates even before the coming of the British Colonial power in Northern Nigeria. Moreover, they believed that the Hausa, who had reached a higher level of development than other Nigerian groups, would easily appreciate what was considered to be the superiority of Christianity to Islam and become useful instruments for the propagation of the Gospel. There was an unexpected disappointment for the Missionaries who turned around to praise the wisdom of the pagans in rejecting Islam. Thus, they claimed that pagans resented Muslim doctrines while being eager to hear about the Christian "religion". C.N. Ubah (*1976:352*) further explains that this great illusion was later to lead to considerable frustration and bitterness on the part of the missionary bodies when, with the establishment of British power in Northern Nigeria, the Missionaries launched serious and determined offensives to get established in the emirates, especially by engaging themselves in a variety of occupations (sometimes, mean and strange ones) such as exploring rivers, tending gardens, buying and freeing slaves, building schools and hospitals, preaching their doctrines, translating their bibles and prayer-books into native languages, holding services, etc, to ensure the general success of their mission, and in Northern Nigeria in particular, for the conversion of Muslims. Later, the missionaries were forced to realise that bringing Islam's progress to a halt was not that easy, and most missionaries abandoned the effort to convert Muslims and concentrated instead on building a barrier against Islam's penetration into non-Muslim areas. The adverse situation confirmed the uncertainty of the degree of success the missionaries themselves believed they could achieve in the emirates. They must have been really and unduly optimistic, otherwise it would be difficult to understand what the persistent agitation to penetrate the emirates had been all about, notwithstanding for instance, the bitter experience of the Church Missionary Society at Zaria. Fortunately for the Christian missions, they realised that some work of practical value to the people – instead of confrontational approach to Islam and even the traditional religions - was the likely means of penetration into the emirates. It had worked in many parts of Nigeria outside the emirates. Schools had proved to be a very powerful factor in evangelisation, and the missionaries hoped that it would at least be as effective in the Muslim areas that were educationally (western, not Islamic literary tradition) much less developed. The establishment of medical institutions was also means of evangelisation by the missions, and they thought it wise to use the same means in penetrating the emirates. Thus, humanitarian necessities prompted a move towards a pliable relationship with the Muslim emirates of the North.

4. The Christian Missions' complaint: Islam enjoys preferential treatment and protection

Applications by Christian missions to build up centres in the emirates were however not always approved. But, according to Andrew E. Barnes (*414*), "the reactionary nature of the administrators' views helps explain the paralysis in their response to the ever increasing pressure by missionaries to be allowed to preach in Muslim areas". An application by the S.I.M. for a site at Birma (in Borno emirate) and at Darazo (in Bauchi emirate) were rejected because the Resident of Borno had raised objections, and in the latter, because the place was predominantly Muslim in population. The S.I.M.'s application to build up a site at Garko (Kano emirates) was also rejected. From 1906 when the Colonial government was effectively established in the then Northern Protectorate, the Missions did not always passively accept being manipulated by the administrators. As a result of the fact that none of the three earliest missions to the North, the Church Mission Society

(CMS), the Sudan United Mission (SUM) and the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) was credited with a coherent organisation in the region before 1910, led later to serious apprehensions ranging from the question of character to the alleged disrespect of Native Authorities (especially against the S.I.M. in 1930). Showing his rage at the supposed unruly behaviour of some missions, Sir Hesketh Bell, the Lieutenant Governor of the North, wrote about an allegation of the pulling down of places of worship in the following strong words: "Some of the members of a tribe, among whom the Sudan Missionaries are working, appeared to have gained the impression that conversion to Christianity meant complete emancipation from the orders of their Chiefs and, in some cases they behaved in a way that was calculated to cause considerable trouble in the locality. The Chief naturally incensed at the behaviour of his subjects, appears to have ordered the demolition of certain huts which have been built to serve the purpose of worship" (*NAK SNP 7 3754/1911*).

Sometimes the Church missions were also treated on what the Colonial Administrators considered personal merit. Thus, applications by the C.M.S. for a site at Naska (in Zaria emirate), and by the Church of the Brethren's request for a presence in the Biu emirate of Borno province were granted, an indication that the colonial regime had some laid down procedures for such grants and permissions, whose fulfilment the administration also expected from the interested missions. In this case, the interests of the Native Authorities were not seen as jeopardised, manifested in their non-opposition of the application; the local population was not predominantly Muslim; there were no adverse reports on the personnel of the missions; and there were no conflicting interests among the missionaries. The Colonial administration's insistence on spheres of influence was strictly adhered to. With the exception of the Church of the Brethren Mission (CBM), an American missionary society that entered the field in early 1920's, representatives of the missions who participated in the Miango Conference had reached agreement on areas of operation, just as they had earlier done in the case of non-Muslim areas. Their contribution in Garkidda in the Adamawa Province, especially in the area of Medical Services, attracted some positive report from the Colonial Administration in spite of the suspicion attached to the Missions as agents of intimidation in the Muslim emirates. The report of G.W. Webster in 1929 stated, "the work of this Mission is deserving of every support owing to the sane ideas it holds in regard to the teaching of religion to natives and its care not to embarrass the administration in any way. Ideas of loyalty and obedience to existing authority are one of the chief subjects of its educational syllabus. The Mission does not aim at making converts at the outset of its work but in the first instance at teaching to help themselves by learning improved methods of agriculture and industry" (*NAK SNP 17 12447*).

A similar positive report was made by G.W. Webster in 1930, thus: "Proselytising at present takes a secondary place to the enhancement of the material welfare and health of the people and it is probably this which has contributed so greatly to the popularity and success of the mission among the Bura and Margi tribes. They do not make a strong point at the outset rightly maintaining that a healthy and prosperous people are the first desideratum. Their attitude to the administration is one of cordial cooperation and in no case has it been observed that any adherent of the Mission has thereby failed to show proper obedience and loyalty to the District authorities" (*NAK SNP 17-16694*). The report on the SIM, on the contrary, was less favourable in the same year, 1930. For Webster, "this mission's work is in marked contrast with that of the Church of the Brethren Mission in that evangelisation takes the primary place in the programme and medical, social and material progress are subsidiary consideration… In spite of the fact that evangelisation is the main object and that all efforts of the Mission are directed to this end, the number of converts is extraordinarily small" (*NAK SNP 17-16694*). The stringent measure accorded the Christian missions was to avoid what the Colonial administration regarded as evangelizing where it was not wanted. In 1933, the Annual Report for Bauchi Province stated clearly " in Bauchi and Dass… relationships have not been so cordial, evangelisation where it is not wanted being the greatest difficulty, also a disposition on the part of certain Mission adherents to get out of hand, thus upsetting the villagers and local authorities" (*NAK SNP 17 – 21305*).

Earlier in 1930, an Annual Report from Plateau Province mentioned the arrogance of some converted Africans in their preference of marriage under the Marriage Ordinance against the stipulated native custom. The report read: "In April two Kuru converts of the Sudan United Mission wished to be married under the Marriage Ordinance and firmly declined to be married under native custom as well. Had they consented to the native marriage the parents would have had no objection to the Christian ceremony, but as it was feeling ran high and culminated in an outburst against the Mission as a whole, even though the local representative was of the same tribe and had been working without opposition for three years. The District Head and his elders felt their authority was being flouted and ordered the Mission boys to be beaten, exercising as they pointed out a parental rather than an administrative or executive authority. The District Officer visited Kuru and urged forbearance and this anti-mission feeling seems to have subsided" (*NAK SNP 17 – 14716*).

The Roman Catholic Church did not enter into the agreement of area or sphere of operation with the Protestant missions. The former took to this decision probably because delimitation of spheres of influence was not really the policy of the British government in any colonial territory. The agreement by the Protestant missions on the other hand did not imply that only one of them could operate in a single emirate. In his report, E.W. Playfair, the field director of the SIM wrote that it was agreed that cities with a population of 20,000 or more could accommodate more than one missionary society. For the Kano emirate, it was agreed that the CMS could operate west of the railway while the eastern side of the railway belonged to the SIM. With the increase in the number of missionary societies wishing to work in the different emirates, the principle of the sphere of operation was weakened and the government consequently abandoned them (*NAK SNP* 17/8. No.K6917).

In the processing of applications, the colonial administration always had a lot of sympathy for the Muslims. For instance, in reaction to an application by the CMS to set up a dispensary at a site in Chafe in the Sokoto emirate immediately after the enthronement of a new Sultan, the Resident of Sokoto, the lieutenant governor, and the governor agreed among themselves that it would be unfair to expect the cooperation of the newly-appointed "Defender of the Faith" in the establishment of Christian missionary presence as this would possibly be understood as a betrayal of the Islamic religion

(*NAK SOK, Prof*. C.240). A year later, the Sultan approved a subsequent application. In the next few years the CMS was able to establish dispensaries in Maska and Baskori in Katsina emirate. These developments point to the fact that the relations between Christian missionaries and the Muslim emirates were not always hostile. One could also observe the astute diplomacy of the emirs in the positive disposition they granted to the Christian missions when they realised that the latter was not always utilitarian in their approach to evangelisation. Most of the hospital establishments in the emirates remain to this day among the best in the country. A clear example is the eye hospital in Kano, which was established by the SIM in 1943 (*NAK Kano Prof*. 5/1. No.5558). The SUM established a hospital at Maiduguri in 1938 and another one at Nguru in 1949 in the Borno emirate. The colonial administration also showed interests in the request to establish leprosy centres in Bokoto, Kano, Katsina and Bauchi by the SIM, although it was aware of the fact that religious interests were not to be ruled out of these humanitarian works. The emirs were also very apprehensive of the religious implications of the medical missions.

By 1960, it became clear that the relationship between the Christian missions and the Muslim emirates was not always positive, although it was not completely a failure. There was continuous struggle for recognition and conversion of people by the Christian missions while the emirs were not willing to play 'lotto' or gamble with their political and religious control of the emirates. As a result, the emirs and the government instructed the proscription of religious teaching of any type to children of Muslim parents except such teaching on Islamic religion as the Native Authorities might prescribe, house-to-house visiting for any purpose of persuading any Muslim to accept Christianity, distribution of tracts, pamphlets or any other publications designed to attract Muslims to the Christian religion, and the holding of Christian religious services in any public place to which lepers resorted for treatment, recreation or for any other social purposes within the settlement. However, the new rules recognised the right of any Muslims who of their own free will and without previous propaganda wished to receive religious instruction in Christian doctrines. The missions reacted vehemently, pointing it out to the government that such rules were without parallel in British law. Once again, there is a clear indication of sympathy for the Muslims by the colonial regime and resentment for the latter by the Christian missions who felt themselves highly restricted and undermined in their missionary goal in the emirates. In the cloud of the triangular crisis of confidence that prevailed in the relations between the three groups – the Muslims, the colonial regime and the missionary societies – there was also a remarkable sense of goodwill between them because of their common interest to curb certain ailments such as leprosy and other diseases. And according to C.N. Ubah (27), "other concerns of the missionaries such as churches and schools were of no interest to the Muslim rulers. They saw both as agents of unnecessary change, and if the Native Authorities approved of their being set up, it was merely to please the colonial authorities and to make the missions realise that they had imposed an impossible task on themselves". In the circumstances of what Ayandele (122-123) refers to, 'as the irrational colonial policy which led to the failure of the missionaries to penetrate the emirates, whereby the emirs regarded them as political spies and sent their own spies to survey the military strength of the Niger Company at Lokoja', one could appreciate the unfriendly reaction from the Christian missions to the Muslim emirs and to the colonial regime in particular.

5. Exceptions to the atmosphere of distrust

There were however exceptions to the general atmosphere of distrust and conflict in relation to the Muslims. Edward Wilmot Blyden (1887:24), himself a black from the West Indies, who had a genuine respect for Islam and a high regard for the Qur'an, wrote in 1887 in his book, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, that Islam was a 'convenient half-way house from Paganism to Christianity' (Blyden, 1890:102-103). His aim was to build up a relationship of mutual trust between the two religions, although Muslims in general would not accept his description of Islam. The negative reception given to the Sudan Party in Lokoja in 1890 proved the previous speculations of the Muslims as already half-Christians, easy to convert and assimilate into Christianity as an illusion, a myth (Ayandele, 120). Different scholars have interpreted Blyden's attitude of seeming softness to Islam variously. He was thought to be reacting to his alleged expulsion from Liberia for moral misconduct. In Sierra Leone, he found the African clergy very welcoming to him. Another school of thought maintain that he was sent to Freetown by Henry Venn and the CMS, to teach Arabic at Fourah Bay College and in general to prepare the way for a mission to the Muslim interior (Hastings, 1994:355).

The entire Christian population could not share fully his Islamic preferences because, Islam for them, was a rival. For him, it was something to be patronised. The negative reaction to his Islamic leaning was strongly shown when he visited Lagos in 1890 by his Yoruba Christian hosts, living in a city where they were outnumbered by Muslims. The Yoruba society was essentially a mixed one, overwhelmingly traditionalist in religion, but with significant Muslim and Christian minorities, and a creative tension between the coast and the principal towns of the interior. This was simply not a society missionaries could control, but they resented their impotence. It is asserted that they could have controlled the Christians if the latter were effectively excluded from society as a whole, but it was the great strength of Yoruba Christianity that this was not the case. Yoruba Christianity had another special characteristic that makes it historically relevant and theologically significant in the consideration of inter-religious dialogue. There was a seeming syncretism that made it tolerant. For instance, Christians, like Muslims already present among the Yoruba, adopted the name of *Olorun*, a Yoruba title for the creator God, to speak of the God of the Bible. While for them the worship of Olorun was to be sharply contrasted with that of lesser deities like Sango or Orunmila, for the traditionalist Yoruba, it remained quite within their system if some should wish to transfer their worship from one of these deities, the *Orisa*, to the high god, *Olodumare - Olorun*. Therefore, the aggressiveness of the Christian preacher could appear ill mannered and unnecessary. Fanaticism was therefore incompatible with both the religious pluralism of Yoruba tradition and its confident, almost democratic, urban authority. It is therefore asserted that the growth of a large Muslim community in many parts of Yoruba land was one of the most important developments in African religious history of this period.

6. The political implications of religious distrust

Because of the existing colonial policy, the missionaries seemed to interpret every religious step taken by Muslims as aspiration for political power. A manifestation of this was the establishment of the Northern Nigerian non-Muslim League in the Jos area. This was a political organisation aided by Christian missionaries (principally the Sudan Interior Mission and the Sudan United Mission) whose intention was to counter Islamic expansionist moves. The efforts of the Assemblies of God and the Danish Lutherans were also incorporated to ensure Christian success. In the Catholic Church, Southern immigrants helped to make some significant contribution to evangelisation in the far more Islamic north. The degree of Islamisation of these vast areas, of course, varied enormously - almost 100 per cent around Kano. Islamic identity in the north did have political implications. Conversion to Islam strengthened the Hausa and this in turn promoted dissent between the predominantly Muslim north and the predominantly Christian south. Islam constituted a new source of strength, a means of rejecting European control. It took the shape of Muslim revolts; mainly Mahdist revolts against the invaders (the British and, later, the Southern Nigerians), who were identified as Christians. On the whole, there was very little nationalist activity and sentiment among northerners before the late 1940s. There were peasants' revolts but these were local protests against specific abuses committed by colonial administration. Although no direct connection has been proved between Madhism and mission, Madhist resistance had consequences for Christian-Muslim relations in Northern Nigeria. Christians feared that the Mahdi would rise in Nigeria. This fear increased the anti-Fulani sentiment. Muslims were more dedicated to preserving the Islamic politico-religious system established by the Sokoto jihadists. Therefore, according to Madhists, the emirate system had compromised with the 'Christian' colonial government in accepting indirect rule and had betrayed Islam. The consequences of this distrust still disturbs the unity of Nigeria.

7. Conclusion

As we approach the highly awaited and ominous 2015 in the history of Nigeria as a nation and as a country of many colours, there is need to remember our antecedents. It has been full of suspicion and doubts – culturally, religiously, politically, and economically. The country, Nigeria, did not inherit an easy administration from colonialism. In fact, ab initio, it has been a relationship of distrust, which in the course of the years has affected our common will to co-exist and develop into a great and advanced country. But there can be a redress rooted in a determination to accept, tolerate, and understand each other – individually and collectively. The colonial administration is come and gone, though its effect of divisive mentality along religious sentiments lingers and hampers every effort to build a COHESIVE SYSTEM. The onus lies on all and sundry to effect a radical change for a better Nigeria.

8. References

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