CHRISTIAN MISSIONS AND COLONIAL RULE IN AFRICA: OBJECTIVE AND CONTEMPORARY ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to determine the correlation between the nineteenth century missionary enterprise and colonial occupation of Africa. European missionaries entered Africa simultaneously at the very beginning of colonial conquest and domination of Africa. What was the relationship between missionaries, traders and administrators in the colonial era? What can we identify as the predetermined objective of colonialism vis-a-vis missions in Africa? These are some of the questions that the present study will attempt to answer from the perspective of the historiography of European expansion in Africa.

Keywords: Colonial Rule, Africa, Colonial Mentality, European Missionaries, Imperialism

Introduction

Colonialism has become a stigma for Christianity in contemporary Africa. It is an historical fact that Africa was evangelized through colonial machinery. It is not an overstatement to say that colonialism aided missions in nineteenth century Africa. It is also correct to say that missionaries, traders and colonial administrators had a common interest in Africa. Missions and colonialism is topical in African ecclesiastical historiography. Africans throughout the continent are living under the pains and consequences of colonialism. Mission Christianity, which was imposed through colonial military power, has become the dominant religion with various strands and variegated manifestations.

Christianity has become the religion of civilization and development. Even with the pervasive influence of Christianity, educated Africans have refused to put off the memory of colonial dimension of missionary enterprise. John Mbiti writes: "... The image that Africans received, and to a great extent still hold, of Christianity, is much colored by colonial rule and

all that was involved in it. We are still too close to that period to dissociate one from the other" (Mbiti, 1969:231).

African historians hotly debate the correlation between missions and colonial occupation in nineteenth Africa. Scholars are divided on the role and status of missionaries in nationalist historiography. Some of the questions that agitate the mind of scholars are; Is it a good historical judgment to describe missionaries as partners both with the colonial authorities and mercantile powers in the exploitation and marginalisation of Africa? If there was any need, at anytime, in the colonial era for missionaries to receive any form of assistance from traders and colonial officials, is it good historical thinking to use such incidence as evidence to adjudge missionary complicity and collaboration with colonial powers? We shall open the debate with the definition of colonialism.

What is colonialism?

Colonialism is the imposition of foreign rule by an external power, which culminates in the control and exploitation of the conquered people. Foreign rule can be imposed through political deception and propaganda. Apart from political subjugation and infantile domination of the subject people, economic motivations are often the fundamental reasons for colonial occupation. In African historiography, colonialism represents the period when Europe conquered and exploited the human and natural resources of the continent through the use of superior military force. Africa did not negotiate for colonial rule. It is unnatural and illogical for any sane person to willingly surrender his freedom in preference for servitude. Even when host communities purportedly signed treatise, objective historical scholarship has shown that such treatise were products of visible intimidation and manipulation. N.S.S. Iwe has described colonialism as: "... a phase in the evolution of Africa characterized by intensive geographical explorations, the slave trade, the scramble for Africa, the territorial ambitions and pretensions of the Western nations, the imposition of alien rule and institutions, the planting of Western forms of Christianity, acculturation, racialism and exploitation..."(Iwe, 1985).

African resistance to colonial rule

Scholars, who defend colonialism often give the impression that it was a peaceful and diplomatic arrangement carried out in the interest of Africans. But the greatest evidence to refute the view that Africans accepted colonialism willing was the massive and powerful military resistance, which various African communities put up against colonial armies. Irving Markovitz has said that the resistance from the natives was not only bitter but also well organized, ranging from powerful battalions in Dahomey and

Asante to prolonged guerrilla warfare (Markovitz, 1977: 47). Michael Crowder in his *West African Resistance: The Military Response to Colonial Occupation* asserted that a good majority of West African states opposed European rule with military action, which included tactical guerrilla warfare against the invading armies (Crowder, 1971:1-2). Crowder also debunked the view that colonial occupation was through peaceful negotiation:

> *The greater part of this area was occupied by force of arms, and where occupation was peaceful it was usually because African leaders, having seen the success with which European-led forces overcame their neighbors, decided resistance would be futile. There were of course, numerous instances of occupation by peaceful negotiation... but few African leaders desired that political control of their countries should be alienated permanently to the newcomers (Crowder, 1971:3).*

Crowder has estimated that two-thirds of the peoples of West Africa resisted colonial penetration in armed conflict (Crowder, 1968: 3). Resistance was serious in Bornu under Rabeh, Opobo under Jaja, the Itsekiri under Nana and Benin under Ovoramwen. It was not easy for colonial army to penetrate some communities. Even in situations where African resistance failed, Crowder attributed it to overwhelming technological superiority of the colonia (Crowder, 1968: 4). Gann and Duignan in their *The Rulers of British Africa,* exhibited a glaring Euro-centric ambiguity in the presentation of African response to colonial invasion:

> *Some societies accepted colonial rule, others resisted. Some chose to corporate with the new rulers in order to manipulate them to their purposes; others tried to opt out of the imperial system by force... Generalizations regarding the African response are therefore difficult to make (Gann and Duignan, 1978: 361-362).*

Bohannan and Curtin have rightly observed that the so-called peaceful negotiation was only a culmination of tactical manipulation and intimidation.

> *...the European began by sending punitive expeditions through the country as a way of demonstrating their military power... it was a matter of military patrols and gradually increasing pressure for peaceful submission. In the end, it required some measure of consent on the African side, as individuals and then groups within African society began to see the possibility of using the alien presence for whatever advantage it might offer (Bohannan and Curtin, 1971: 322).*

Bohannan and Curtin have also observed that in some cases colonial occupation started when an African government requested military assistance from Europeans against its internal enemies:

> *In 1858 in the almamate of Bundu (now in eastern Senegal), a certain Bekar Saada was one of a number of contestants in a succession crisis. He entered into a military alliance with the French, on terms that left him as an independent monarch. As a result he won control of Bundu until his death in 1885, and the French made him a chevalier de la Legion d' henneur out of gratitude for his cooperative attitude toward their expansion farther to the east (Bohannan and Curtin, 1971: 323).*

Ogbu Kalu has identified the various types of resistance to white conquest, ranging from primary resistance (bow and arrow) through romantic, charismatic (religious), to dane-gun confrontation:

> *... Africans did not fold their arms or meekly surrender their fatherland: At least in Ahiara (Mbiase, South-Eastern Nigeria), the people dug trenches in which they mounted spikes and covered the top with leaves. The conquering troops after the Aro expedition, fell into those trenches... In retaliation some villages were burnt (Kalu, 1985: 129-130).*

Kalu also observed that the fact that British overpowered African resistance and successfully imposed colonial rule should attest to the point that African military resistance was ineffectual. Webster, Boahen and Idowu are of the opinion that the conquest of Africa was very simple and that it was carried out with ease. Frequently African armies of 20, 000 were defeated by European-led armies of 2,000 or less. Few Europeans were involved, often no more than one hundred, occasionally only a dozen or so. Africa was conquered by Africans trained and officered by Europeans and fighting with European arms. The normal pattern was that a European-led army of African soldiers administered a crushing defeat, following which African resistance collapsed (Webster, Boahen and Idowu, 241). Webster, Boahen and Idowu have also observed that the quality of African resistance can best be understood in relation to military and political weakness of African states:

> *... even when African resistance was strong, led by military commanders of superb intelligence and backed by a unified and determined people... it was overcome by the vast military superiority of European weapons. The symbol of this superiority was a late-nineteenth century invention, the maxim-gun, which, a Lagos journalist in the 1890's pointed out, overawed the*

> *Yoruba rulers by inspiring 'the most profound respect'*
> *(Webster, Boahen and Idowu 242).*

Unilateral legitimation of colonialism

Some reputable Western scholars have said that Africans willingly accepted colonial rule in their interest. A strong proponent of this view was Rupert Emerson who listed the positive legacies of colonialism to include new means of transportation, communication health care, education and higher standard of living:

> *a plausible case can... be made for the proposition that the future will look back upon the overseas imperialism of recent centuries, less in terms of its sin of oppression, exploitation, and discrimination, than as the instrument by which the spiritual, scientific, and material revolution which began in western Europe with the Renaissance spread to the rest of the world... (Emerson, 1960: 6-7).*

Robinson and Gallagher in their Africa and the Victorians have argued persuasively that economic motives did not constitute the driving force behind colonial occupation. They also contended that Africa did not have much economic and commercial potentiality to attract the interest of British manufacturers, merchants and investors. Colonialism, according to them, was more of a philanthropic and humanitarian intervention aimed at salvaging an atomistic continent from self-extinction through outlawry and perennial conflict. The justification of colonial rule as a philanthropic and humanitarian gesture was not new.

The theoretical purpose of history is to put the records straight. The assumption of the theoreticians of colonialism that Europe had no commercial interest in Africa is incorrect. In 1896, The Times in an article titled "The Commercial Value of Africa" endorsed the commercial motives of colonialism:

> *The fact is that up to within the past few years Africa has hardly been needed by the rest of the world except as a slave market. But her turn has come, and the need for her cooperation in the general economy of the world will become greater and greater as population increases, as industry expands, as commerce develops, as states grow ambitious as civilization spreads: it is discreditable anomaly that at this advanced stage in the progress of the race nearly a whole continent should still be given over to savagery... (qtd in Uzoigwe, 1978: 27).*

The predetermined objective of European colonial enterprise in Africa was also stated point-blank in the Pall Mall Gazatte of 1899:

> *Nor have we gone to the equatorial regions from religious or humanitarian motives... still less have we sought out the African in order to endow him with the vices (and virtues) of western civilization... the dominating force which has taken us to Equatorial Africa is the desire for trade. We are in these tropical countries for our own advantage and only incidentally for the good of the African (qtd in Uzoigwe, 1978:28).*

Godfrey Uzoigwe in his Britain and the Conquest of Africa, posited that historically, empire building was often dictated by economic motives. He debunked the assumption that Africa was not economically interesting to Europe as invalid: "No entrepreneur worthy of the name invests without security... if Africa was economically worthless, why then did the European powers persevere in partitioning and conquering it?" (Uzoigwe, 1978:23).

The Portuguese historian, Adriano Vasco Rodrigues has opened another debatable dimension of the argument, still to justify the humanitarian and civilizing mission of the European race. According to Rodrigues, it was through colonization that the African was elevated to the status of a human being: "Colonization, principally that practiced by the Portuguese, raised the Negro to the status of human being, to the extent that they considered him to be their equal" (Rodrigues, 1968: 440).

The argument here is value-loaded and ethnocentric with a faulty conclusion that it was colonization, that aided the full development and maturation of the African to the status of a human being. Apart from technological superiority, there was also a concomitant feeling of moral and racial superiority. The white man was theoretically placed at the top of the hierarchy, while the black man who was deemed irredeemably inferior and senseless was placed at the bottom. Thus the conquest of Africa and the subsequent scramble and partition of the entire continent were carried out supposedly in the interest of Africans who required many years of tutelage to become normal human being. Lord Leverhulme at a dinner in honor of the Governor of Nigeria, Sir Hugh Clifford said:

> *I am certain that West African races have to be treated very much as one would treat children when they are immature and under-developed... Now the organizing ability is the particular trait and characteristic of the white man. .. I say this with my little experience, that the African nature will be happier, produce the best, and live under conditions of prosperity when his labour is directed and organized by his white brother who has all*

> *these million years' start ahead of him (qtd. In Crowder, 1968:36).*

Jomo Kenyatta, the first President of independent Kenya in a perceptive analysis of colonialism has faulted the idea that colonialism enhanced the economic fortunes of the Africans:

> *They speak as if it were somehow beneficial to an African to work for them instead of for himself, and to make sure that he will receive this benefit they do their best to take away his land and leave him no alternative. Along with his land they rob him of his government, condemn his religions ideas, and ignore his fundamental conceptions of justice and morals, all under the name of civilization and progress (Kenyatta, 305).*

Missionaries and colonial rule

It cannot be denied that colonialism aided missionary work in Africa. Colonial administrators occasionally, rendered much help and even security to missionaries. Colonial image of the missionary enterprise actually affected the reception of the gospel message by the African. Even though missionaries came with the good intention to evangelize Africa; the timing was bad. Missionaries came into Africa along with colonial administrators and traders with the plan to introduce Christianity, commerce and civilization. African scholars have replaced the word "civilization" with "colonization". Lamin Sanneh writes:

> *At its most self-conscious stage, mission coincided with western colonialism, and with that juncture students of the subject have gone on to make all kinds of judgments about the intrinsic bond between the two forces. Historians who are instinctively critical of received tradition in other spheres are more credulous in perpetuating the notion of mission as 'imperialism at prayer". In the nineteenth century this idea persisted under the slogan of "Christianity and 6percent ", by which it was understood that mundane interests prospered under a religious guise. Thus mission came to acquire the unsavory odor of collusion with the colonial power (Sanneh, 1990: 88).*

Some scholars are of the opinion that the functional relationship and unity, which existed between missionaries, traders and administrators in colonial Africa, was not accidental. Michael Crowder insisted"... early missionaries in West Africa had a dual purpose to promote legitimate trade

between African and Europeans and to convert Africans to their own religion (Crowder, 1962: 111). Emmanuel Ayandele did not have any difficulty in describing Christian missionaries as "spiritual wing of secular imperialism" (qtd. in Uya 6). Ayandele also affirmed that the timing for the entry of missionaries into Africa was wrong:

> *His coming into interior about the same time as the trader and administrator was unfortunate for the missionary. Africans were often inclined to doubt the genuineness of his propaganda. They could not see their way to making any distinction between him and other white men (Ayandele 135).*

Since missionaries, traders and administrators knew they were British residents in Africa with a common interest to protect; they cooperated and united as vital element in the attainment of their set goals. Missionaries in critical times of need, depended on traders for funds, and relied completely on administrators for physical security and protection. That was the logical root for A Gikuyu proverb that says "There is no Roman priest and a European- both are the same!" (qtd. in Mbiti, 1969: 231).

Although there is a glaring absence of scholarly consensus on the role of the missionaries in the colonization of Africa, the argument seems to favor the view that some missionaries cooperated essentially with colonial authorities in the exploitation and cultural subjugation of Africa. Walter Rodney in his *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa,* contended that missionaries were agents of imperialism: "The Christian missionaries were as much part of the colonizing forces as were the explorers, traders and soldiers... missionaries were agents of colonialism in the practical sense, whether or not they saw themselves in that light" (Rodney,1972: 277).

Rodney accused missionaries of preaching humility and submission in the face of gross injustice, inhumanity and dehumanization. While British traders were exploiting their African customers, the missionaries preached peace, forgiveness and good neighborliness, which actually prevented genuine rebellion, self-preservation and determination. Missionaries worked towards the preservation of the status quo and upholding of the master-servant relationship between Africans and Europeans. Rodney writes:

> *The church's role was primarily to preserve the social relations of colonialism... the Christian church stressed humility, docility and acceptance. Ever since the days of slavery in the West Indies, the church had been brought in on condition that it should not excite the African slaves with doctrine of equality before God (Rodney, 1972: 278).*

If it is correct that missionary sermons suppressed genuine rebellion that could have ushered in freedom for the oppressed, then the linkage of the missionaries with all the visible evils of colonialism may be justifiable. Rodney has this to say"... in colonial Africa churches could be relied upon to preach turning the other cheek in the face of exploitation, and they drove home the message that everything would be right in the next world (Rodney,1972: 278).

But, is it correct and even logical to interpret missionary cooperation with British traders and administrators as intentional and premeditated? N. S. S. Iwe, perhaps because of his religious and intellectual pedigree, as a core Catholic and a direct recipient of missionary benevolence does not agree totally with the view that missionaries collaborated with colonial administrators and traders to the detriment of Africa: "Some Africans, today, hold that the missionaries were as much a part of the colonization force as the explorers, traders and soldiers... it may be conceded that such missionary cooperation in cultural colonization was purely incidental, unofficial and unintentional" (Rodney,1972: 230).

It is Iwe's considered opinion that colonization was a forceful imposition that did not require substantial cooperation between imperial powers, adventurers and the missionaries. Godwin Tasie and Richard Gray are of the opinion that the alliance between missionaries and colonial agents though intimate, was never complete to the extent of equating missionary enterprise as a dimension of European colonialism "The message and impact of the missions could in varying degree be distinguished from the apparatus of alien rule" (Edward Fashole- Luke, 1978: 3). Jacob Ade Ajayi posited that missionaries did not always question the colonial theory that Christianity, commerce and civilization would work together for the over all benefit of the African. On the relationship between missionaries and traders, Ajayi wrote:

> *The truth of course was that traders and missionaries were interdependent. The Christian mission made a considerable impact on the trading situation. In turn, the expansion of European trade and political influence greatly facilitated the work of missionaries. Traders and missionaries often quarreled. Many missionaries despised most traders and the compliments were fully reciprocated. Nevertheless, they had to cooperate most of the time (Christian Mission 57).*

Ogbu Kalu in his contribution to the debate admitted, "evidence abounds of collaboration between missions and colonial and mercantile power" (Kalu, 1980: 7). Kalu however criticized Emmanuel Ayandele for stating the case in its most extreme form in his *Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria*, which according to Kalu belongs to a class of nationalist

historiography, which cannot be ignored. It is his personal opinion that the relationship between missionaries, traders and the colonial government was far more complex than Ayandele portrays. Kalu elucidates on the relationship between missions, traders and government in colonial Africa:

> *The missionaries depended on the merchants for transportation, supplies and ... protection but they were constantly embarrassed by the morals of the merchants and their brutal exploitation of African societies... The colonial government needed missionaries as civilizing agents and offered them grants-in-aid and protection. But the two allies differed over attitudes towards 'pagan' cultures, the goals of education and the future of the colonies... The government aimed to use the traditional order as a basis for administrative restructuring while the missions wanted to pull down everything (Kalu, 1980: 7)*

Kalu in a critical analysis of Christianity in colonial society observed that similarity of interest between colonial officials; mercantile powers and missionary cannot be interpreted as identity of purpose. He noted categorically that government did not establish the colonies for missionary goals; rather the purposes of government and that of missions often differed both in content, philosophy and in execution: "Lord Lugard once endeavored to remind the C.M.S of what he believed to be their identical interest, namely that both the government and the missions looked upon the civilization of the black man as their paramount goal" (Kalu, 1980: 182). While some historians have given the impression that missionaries were agents of imperialism, Kalu avers that missionaries commented freely on government policies to the point of criticism:

> *Missionary ideology was full of paradoxes: while sharing the racist theories of the age, and supporting the official programme to transform the political and economic structure of the colonies, it realized higher values in the biblical conception of the dignity of man... the missionaries colluded with the colonial government when it suited their interests and yet would also at times unleash virulent attacks on certain styles and purpose of government. Missionaries condemned the harsh sanctions of government labour proclamations and criticized merchants for their intemperance, irreligiosity and brutality (Kalu, 1980: 183).*

Richard Gray in an objective and unbiased contribution to the debate, stated in plain words that "exploration, steam-power, medical advances and

the maxim-gun all contributed to the astonishing extension of Christian missionary activity in the nineteenth century Africa" (Gray 14). Gray argued convincingly that European missionary work in Africa was intimately dependent on colonial and commercial expansion. He mentioned the Padroado agreement, which bestowed a monopolistic control over the appointment of Roman Catholic Bishops, clergy and missionaries in Africa and East Indies on the Portuguese Crown:

> *These rights of patronage were one of the main factors which frustrated the attempts of Propaganda Fide, the congregation established by the pope in 1622 to supervise Catholic missionary activity, to intervene directly by sending missionaries to Africa, and in the eighteen century the French monarch succeeded in establishing a similar control over priest sent to Senegal (14).*

Gray also reported that most early Protestant missionaries were primarily sent to Africa to minister to Europeans who resided in the colonies:

> *The first English society, The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel founded in 1701, sought to assist our loving subjects in foreign parts who were in danger of falling into atheism, infidelity, popish superstition and idolatry, while the Danes and the Dutch sent chaplains to their forts in West Africa (14).*

Gray noted that the Capuchins in the Congo and the Moravian Brethren in South Africa had minimal link with colonial government, "but overwhelmingly, the early Christian missions in Africa, both Catholic and Protestant, were merely the religious arm of an increasingly secular intrusion, a decadent echo of the medieval union between church and state (15).

Christian missions and theories of imperialism

As a prelude to colonization, Europe had theories that justified the conquest and governance of non-European territories. These theories were based on pseudo-scientific racism and cultural arrogance. European did not only exude technological superiority over the African, but also displayed a feeling of moral and a racial superiority. Michael Crowder writes:

> *Christian Europe, which had abolished the slave trade, felt itself morally superior to heathen Africa... this sense of moral superiority was reinforced by theories of racial superiority which placed the white man at the top of the hierarchy, the black man at the bottom. Thus the European colonial powers found nothing wrong in*

> *occupying and ruling lands belonging to African*
> *peoples... (Crowder, 1968: 5).*

Philip Curtin in his *The Image of Africa*, asserted that the white man made himself a moral giant, and saw the African as inferior and senseless. A popular theory of imperialism was called "conversionism". This theory held that the best way to wipe away darkness, heathenism and collective ignorance from Africa was to impose European culture, religion and philosophy on Africa by force. Africans must be compelled to abandon their religion and culture, adopt western values. On humanitarian principles and from the point of conscience, Africa became "The white man's burden" or a "sacred trust". Crowder has this to say:

> *The Africans came to be treated very much as children*
> *for whom the European powers were happily arrived*
> *guardians... But here there was a difference in the*
> *approach of different European powers: some believed*
> *that the children they watched over could grow up into*
> *good Europeans; others believed they were*
> *permanently children, or rather, immutably separate*
> *and inferior to the European (Crowder, 1968: 5).*

It was speculated that through the process of intensive conversionism, a colony that excelled in adopting western values to the maximum may achieve a pseudo independent status and merit the description like "overseas France" or "overseas Portugal". Another theory of imperialism was called" permanent trusteeship", or "paternalism". For this school of thought, Africans were incurably inferior to Europeans and are naturally incapable of adopting the civilized standards of the "superior" races. There is no possibility of future improvement or development. Africans perpetually are to be protected, supervised and monitored by the "superior" races. The difference between "conversionists" and "trusteeship", was that the "conversionists" were at least optimistic that with intensive guidance and kindergarten-like tutelage, Africans may reach minimal maturity, but the "trusteeship" school were absolutely pessimistic on the possibility of transforming the African into a normal human being. Bohannan and Curtin observed that:

> *Believers in trusteeship nevertheless regarded Africans*
> *as human beings deserving the protection of their*
> *"superior". The best policy for a European empire was*
> *therefore to treat them as minors, incapable of running*
> *their own affairs, but entitled to the guidance and*
> *discipline of those who were wiser than they (Bohannan*
> *and Curtin, 1971: 331).*

The third and worst theory of imperialism was called "racial subordination". For this school of thought Africa did not deserve even minimal exposure to the process of westernization, and are completely incapable of autonomous development. Bohannan and Curtin elucidates further on the views of "racial subordination":

> *… the best possible future for Africans was neither westernization nor yet also autonomous development, but subordination as servants in a Western society and permanently so. It began with the underlying belief that anything Africans could develop on their own was not worth having. But as servants of Europe they would at least enjoy some of the material benefits of industrialization, they would be protected in their weakness... (Bohannan and Curtin, 1971:332).*

Europe saw Africa as a continent that suffered total and incurable dwarfism. A people with a defective religion and natural victims of psychic malfunction. That was the mind-set that prevailed in Europe when missionary interest was revived in European Christianity. The idea of a defective religion was anchored on the concept of heathenism, which was the preoccupation of missionaries in the nineteenth century. The conversion of heathens and abolition of pagandom at all cost was a task that must be done. Winthrop Jordan observed that "... the presence of heathenism in the world constituted an imperative to intensification of religious commitment. From its origin Christianity was a universalist, proselytizing religion, and the sacred and secular histories of Christianity made manifest the necessity to bring non-Christians into the field" (Jordan, 1982).

Missions and colonial mentality

N. S. S. Iwe has defined colonial mentality as a mind-set that sees Africans as people who are not competent, or mature to manage their own affairs. It also connotes lack of confidence in Africa and the African way of life. Colonial mentality sees the African as imperfect, wanting in self-confidence, dignity, resourcefulness and creativity, hence do not deserve any honor and respect from civilized humanity. Iwe explains colonial mentality further:

> *The belief that the white man or the west knows best and what is best for us in every instance and situations; unreflecting tenacity in the maintenance of colonial structures even if these have become outdated, outmoded, dysfunctional and irrelevant to the present needs of Africa; the perpetuation on and addiction to those futile, unfair and unprogressive colonial methods,*

procedures, techniques... which have served only to uphold the arrogance and pretensions of the colonial masters and to hold down the African in perpetual tutelage and thralldom (Iwe, 1985: 199).

Colonial mentality means a lower or negative self-image, lack of self-esteem and the belief in one's own inferiority. In colonial Africa, colonial mentality was the outcome of intensive European propaganda, brain washing and psychological warfare against Africans and anything African. Colonial mentality has affected all the segments of African society. Anything that is indigenous is looked down upon as unimportant. Unfortunately, Africans including the elites are ready to accept anything, if it has a western label. Islamic historian and philosopher, Ibn Khaldun observed that:

The vanquished always seek to imitate their victors in their dress, insignia, belief, and other customs and usages. This is because men are always inclined to attribute perfection to those who have defeated and subjugated them. Men do this either because the reverence they feel for their conqueror make them see perfection in them or because they refuse to admit that their defeat could have been brought about by ordinary causes, and hence they suppose that it is due to the perfection of the conquerors. Should this belief persist long, it will change into a profound conviction and will lead to the adoption of all the tenets of the victors and the imitation of all their characteristics (Khaldun, 1950: 51-52).

Khaldun further observed that the imitation of the victor by the vanquished may be an unconscious phenomena, or consciously due to mistaken belief that the victory of the conqueror was attributed not to their superior solidarity and strength but to the inherent inferiority of the customs and beliefs of the conquered. The purpose of the imitation is the false belief that such an imitation will remove the cause of defeat "Therefore we see the defeated always imitating the victors in their way of dressing, of carrying their arms, and in their equipment and in all their mode of living" (Khaldun, 1950:51-52). Perhaps, the greatest negative, psychological impact of colonialism in Africa is colonial mentality and inferiority complex, which plagues the entire continent.

Christian missionaries were also viable collaborators in killing self-esteem in the African. Missionary education and tutelage did not emphasize self-confidence, creativity and adventurous spirit. There is a lingering myth that the black man cannot aspire or compete favorably with the white man. This is a misconception based on Eurocentric propaganda and brainwashing.

Even though Africa has suffered more than any other continent in the world, from slave trade to colonial occupation which has culminated into total dependency and underdevelopment, the human spirit is resilient. Africa can rise to greatness through dint of hard work, self-motivation, profound courage and unwavering faith in human progress and productivity. The first ceremonial president of independent Nigeria-Nnamdi Azikiwe posited thus:

> *For the African to cultivate inferiority complex that he is inferior to the other races is to sign the death warrant of Africa... let the African know that he had a glorious future. Africans have been mis-educated. They need mental emancipation so as to be re-educated to the real needs of Renascent Africa... (Azikiwe, 1968:165).*

Conclusion

It cannot be denied that Christian missionaries paid the supreme price, at the risk of infection and even death to evangelize Africa, modem Africa owe so much to the sacrifices and resilience of good and dedicated missionaries. Christian missions in nineteenth century Africa represented a positive social force with tremendous vitality for the extension of the good part of European civilization to Africa. Missionaries did so much to redeem the negative image of European conquest and economic exploitation of Africa.

It is poor historical thinking to erase the numerous and comprehensive achievements of the missionary enterprise because of human shortcomings and failures. Commenting on the courage, faith and devotion of missionaries in Africa. Carl Gustavson writes: "They left the pomp and power of the mother church far behind and came, usually dressed in the most humble garments, relying only on their power of human personality and the word of God" (Gustavson, 1955: 48). Gustavson has also argued that for any body to view the missionary work in nineteenth century Africa only from economic perspective is to under-value the power of ideas:

> *To assume that the religious expressions of the Age of Discoveries were purely a cloak for other purpose is to misunderstand the age completely... there remains the mood of an age that believed that salvation of the soul was all- important. It drew many thousand devout men to the fat comers of the earth, into the wilderness, and among savage tribes at extreme self-sacrifices and danger (Gustavson, 1955: 49)*

Considering the circumstances that prevailed at that time, it was completely impossible for missionaries to have resources independent of the colonial powers to carry out their work. It was prudence for missions to

collaborate minimally with colonial powers to get certain things done. Such constructive and incidental cooperation cannot vitiate the point that missionaries were primum mobile of civilization, development and progress in Africa. Charles Ryan is justifiably uncomfortable with the extreme position, which Ayandele has adopted in describing the missionary enterprise:

> *... while admitting that missionaries were, consciously or unconsciously, agents of cultural change, it must also be pointed out that they were not the only, or always the principal agents of those changes. Ayandele's "Three C's -Christianity, commerce and colonization- should not be seen as a simple package brought by the "white man" as if the white race should be held jointly responsible for everything done by every white men that ever came to Nigeria. No doubt, some came to exploit and control, but generalizations, in this case, would seem to be grossly inaccurate. The traders, colonizers and missionaries frequently cooperated with each other and sometimes had dual roles but the separation of these roles, and the motivation behind them, is important, for valid history (Ryan, 1987: 211).*

Admittedly, as Christianity gathers momentum in various forms and expressions in modern Africa, we are yet to have the last word on the collaboration between the missionaries, traders and colonizers in Africa. Missionary work in Africa will continue to attract stringent and critical historical examination. No matter the level of criticism, it will tantamount to intellectual dishonesty for any scholar to write off the positive results of missionary work in Africa. What is being advocated here is historical objectivity and neutrality. Scholars who are prejudiced will not see anything good in the missionaries and that will be a disservice to scholarship. We shall conclude with the historical objectivity of Adiele Afigbo when he said:

> *Whether the European colonization of Africa was motivated by greed of profit, as is maintained by Marxists, or was the natural flowering of humanitarianism, philanthropy and evangelical piety as is claimed by those who preach the gospel of the white man's burden... or whether it came to do all this and more; it had to administer them somehow... this in turn involved understanding the colonials as much as possible (Afigbo, 1975: 19-20).*

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