

The Rise of Nationalism and Religious Politics in Nigeria

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Abstract: Man is basically political and religious. He is variously described as *homo politicus* and *homo religious*. In the course of the Millennia, he has also proved these affirmations to be true to his nature. However, the problem is often with the manner of man's application of these attributes. He is either too zealous with his religious obligations or he is brutal in the use of his political power. In the combination of these extremes, man renders both politics and religion a problem and often obstacle to human progress and development. In Africa and in Nigeria, particularly, the struggle to attain independence and autonomy from colonialism led to nationalist movements and eventual regionalization of such motif. In the long run, it has become difficult to differentiate between politics and religion in Nigeria leading to the question of how successful the struggles of the fathers of independence like Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Ahmadu Bello, and Obafemi Awolowo have been in the course of Nigeria's history. The paper uses a historical, expository, and analytical method to view the politico-religious evolution of Nigeria and arrives at the conclusion that after fifty-five years of Independence from Colonialism much has not happened to de-tribalize the myopic attachment to religious sentiments in order to cling to selfish manipulation of power and economic dissipation of the country. There is therefore need for further and consistent research and enlightenment of the masses to achieve better development and progress.

Keywords: Religious Politics, Rise of Nationalism, Colonialism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Patriotism and Nationalism work in hand in the development of any particular society. Both elements always reject any form of enslavement or subjugation. This is why the period before the political independence of Nigeria in 1960 was characterized by a struggle to attain self-rule from the colonial masters. It was not a wrong step because every human being natural craves for freedom and emancipation. The singular problem with Nigeria was that the supposedly attained freedom was so managed that today one would ask whether it was worth the effort put by the fathers of nationalism in Nigeria. A lot of mistakes have been made during the course of the years without denying some remarkable progress. The failure in the development of the country hinges mainly on the two-pronged misapplication of the roles of religion and politics, especially in a diverse society like Nigeria. In fact, religious politics has derailed the path of progress to the extent that sectionalism, regionalism, and partisanship have distorted the honourable dreams of the fathers of independence. There is therefore an urgent need to learn from the past and work hard to make the dream of developing Nigeria a reality.

2. HERBERT MACUALAY – THE FATHER OF NIGERIAN NATIONALISM

It is strongly believed that between 1934 and the 1950s – during the Independence struggles and preparations in Nigeria - Muslim and Christian differences gave birth to the nationalist movements, which became structured into political parties. African intellectuals, including Nigerians, scattered in various parts of the world strengthened the quest for independence. The greatest impetus at the time in question were the events of the *post-World War 1* which influenced the urge of these

few and scattered African intellectuals to petition London and request for a representative government and other democratic reforms. The first permission to participate in the colonial administration was given in 1923 when a restricted number of tax-payers in Lagos and Calabar were allowed to elect representatives. They were three (for Lagos) and one (for Calabar) respectively who were elected into the Nigerian Legislative Council.

It was at this time that the first political party for the struggle for independence called the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) was formed in Lagos by the late Herbert Macaulay, popularly known as the father of Nigerian nationalism. He was journalist, civil engineer, surveyor, and politician. The early political parties were established specifically and exclusively on a regional basis. At its formation, for instance, the NNDP had promised to be a radical vehicle of nationalism, which with time seemed difficult to fulfil. Perhaps, the hindering factors were its broadness and parochial orientation simultaneously. Macaulay's political programme was short-lived because of opposition, especially from the Lagos Youth Group, who frustrated by the seeming dimmed future for the youth, especially in the attainment of a prestigious position in government, resorted to the formation of the Lagos Youth Movement (LYM) in 1934 for the propagation of nationalist ideas on educational policy. To fulfil its political and national orientations, the Lagos Youth Movement was transformed into the National Youth Movement (NYM) in 1936, with the African *intelligentsia* living there, as its bedrock. The members were so called because they consisted of a politically conscious, educated minority, highly represented in the various professional bodies found in Lagos, but also mainly Christians from the first- and second- generation settlers from the Yoruba hinterland. Branches of the NYM were opened and established in strategic urban centres throughout the country, which made it become the first truly national political party in Nigeria, although its mentors were Christians. In Ijebu-Ode, Abeokuta, and Ibadan, the NYM recruited some members of the Ibadan Progressive Union (IPU), already in existence. In 1938 its local President was Dr. A. Agbaje (Chief Agbaje's eldest son and the first Ibadan to become a medical doctor) and its Secretary was T.L. Oyesina.

3. REGIONALISATION OF POLITICS IN NIGERIA

A special feature of the political development in Lagos as at the time – with regard to Christians and Muslims living there – was that some compromise needed to be reached in the composition of the NNDP and the NYM. Thus, since the indigenous people of Lagos, most of whom were Muslims, were loyal to the NNDP, the NYM was obliged to recruit its majority support from the non-indigenous working class of both Yoruba and non-Yoruba descent. The most prominent among the non-indigenous Yoruba supporters of the NYM was Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo from the Eastern part of the country (He was Born in 1904, to an Igbo family, his father was a clerk in the Nigerian Regiment. Nnamdi Azikiwe had the rare opportunity to study in the United States of America for 12 years. He returned to Nigeria in 1937 after having studied at the Lincoln University and at the University of Pennsylvania where he earned M.A in Political Science and M.Sc. in Anthropology respectively. He also obtained a Certificate in Journalism at Teachers College, Columbia University). The irreparable disagreement between the NYM and Nnamdi Azikiwe on the establishment of a rival newspaper as against the *West African Pilot* (with the motto: '*Show the light and the people will find the way*') of the latter cost a split in 1941, which made Nnamdi Azikiwe form another political party. The Igbo-born intellectual and politician, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was incontestably the leading figure on the Nigerian political scene in the 1950s. His party, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), formed in 1944, was striving strongly to be national in character, rather than regional. In fact, one could argue with certainty that since 1943, when Nnamdi Azikiwe published his Political Blueprint for Nigeria, nationalists have vigorously supported the re-organisation of Nigeria into a larger number of states based on the criteria of cultural and linguistic affinities. Herbert Macaulay was elected President while Azikiwe was elected general secretary. Nnamdi Azikiwe knew the advantages of incorporating the Muslim north and the Christian south, a move, which earned for his party, the acronym – radical nationalism. It was a decision for which most Igbos, who were Christians, still blame him, especially, bearing in mind the turn of events in the last forty years of Nigeria's independence. With a chain of newspapers, the 'Zikist Movement', and his popularity among the people, he tried to achieve his nationalist ambition. The Muslim-north could be said to be wary of the southern move towards a common political organisation. Thus, regional disagreement had been far more potent in holding back constitutional progress - the north continued to fear the domination of a more developed south and to stave off the day of self-government (Hastings, A, 1979, p.90). The NCNC delegation that toured the North in 1946 campaigning against the "Richard's Constitution" drafted by the then Governor of Nigeria, met a similar negative response as the West African Students' Union (WASU) in 1942. As a result, Awolowo openly stated that the fanatical and static nature of Islam was the main force that retarded the achievement of self-government. B.J. Dudley in his book, *Parties and Politics in Northern*

Nigeria, notes the negative reply given by Abubakar Tafawa Balewa – later Prime Minister of Nigeria - that if the southern politicians, who were all considered Christians, did not stop their attacks on the North, the Muslim North would be forced to continue its ‘interrupted conquest to the sea’, that is, to the South. The Northern leaders also amended a motion demanding independence for 1956 to read ‘as soon as practicable’. These tendencies were rooted in the fear that the more educated and developed South would dominate the North (B.J. Dudley, 1968, p.22). At the death of Macaulay in 1946, Nnamdi Azikiwe was elected the President of the N.C.N.C. – the platform on which he led the delegation to the Colonial Office in London – for the presentation of the nationalist case rooted on popular sovereignty and democratic elections based on universal suffrage. It is believed that the reforms of 1951 were a result of the exertions of the NCNC delegation on the Secretary of State in London, although it failed to obtain an immediate positive response during the debate in 1946. The Zikist movement or youth wing of the NCNC had always suspected regionalisation of Nigerian politics to be an outlet of ethnic rivalry and religious antagonisms. The situation in Nigeria today seems to prove those fears true.

4. THE EMIRATE STRUCTURE AND POLITICS IN THE NORTH

The first party to be introduced in the north was the Northern People’s Congress (NPC) which was basically a Hausa and Fulani (that is, Muslim dominated) organisation supported by the emirs. It was not surprising that in the North, the emirs and politicians were not eager for early independence. The response to the demands of the West African Students Union (WASU) in 1942 for cooperation in gaining self-government was negative and disappointing. The Muslims insisted, “Holding this country together is not possible except by means of the religion of the Prophet. Thus, if they (Christians) want political unity, let them follow our religion (Islam)” (Bello, A., 1962; Awolowo, O., 1947, p.51). The NPC has been described mainly as the symbol of regional nationalism in the pre-Independent Nigeria. The party, which was born as a child of political circumstance wanted to unify the north in order to resist the domination by southerners at the federal and state levels. This regional solidarity was shown to a large extent at the General Conference on Review of the Constitution, which took place at Ibadan in the early 1950. During the Conference, the delegates from Northern Nigeria disagreed seriously with their Eastern and Western colleagues on a lot of national issues. For instance, the Northern rebuffed the suggestion by the southerner delegates to ask for ministerial responsibility – a step in advance toward self-government – in the regional and central governments. The rejection of the southern proposal was obviously a direct indication of the unwillingness of the emirs to toe the same line of action as the southerners. The proposal on the distribution of capital based on regional need or volume of trade was also rejected by the northerners who rather opted for a fiscal policy based on the distribution of central revenues to the regions on a per capita basis. Their strongest argument was based on population distribution which they claimed favoured the northerners, and which they used to win an over 50% representation in the central legislature.

The political development in the North before the 1950s was greatly inhibited by the emirate structure and educational backwardness in comparison with the other parts of Nigeria – the West and the East. Whereas the southerners were highly influenced by their readiness of exposure to western education, the North could only have a tincture of political organisation from the few educated northern youths in the employ of both government and native administration. But it is fact that those few interested youth in politics were either children of the northern ruling class or those associated with it. In Northern Nigeria, nobility of birth matters enormously. The 1959 Northern House of Assembly elections showed that about 82% of the successful candidates were drawn from various segments of the class of traditional rulers. The most prominent examples included the Sultan of Sokoto, the Emir of Kano, the Shehu of Bornu, and the Emir of Katsina (Whitaker, C.S., Jr., 1964, pp. 389-391). Above all, they were mainly those who have had contact with southerners in various ways – education or employment. The first sign of political interest in the North is always associated with the College Old Boys Association, organised in 1939-1940 by the graduates of the Kaduna College, which was also the only secondary school in the entire region at the time. The other institution that produced the first group of Northern politicians was the famous Teacher Training College at Katsina. Afraid of their reformist tendencies, the young politicians’ groups were frowned at, by both the British colonial administration and the emirs; they were disbanded within a few years of their formation. Other similar developing political and social groups were stifled at birth to avoid rival voices to the emirate structure and the traditional northern political system. Some of them included the General Improvement Union at Bauchi, the Youth Social Circle at Sokoto, the Friendly Society at Zaria, etc. The effort at modern political meetings and interactions did not stop with the incessant collisions with the northern oligarchy. Thus, in 1948, a group of civil servants

in the native administration at Kaduna and Zaria organised themselves for the purpose of modernising the northern institutions. It was with the inauguration of the *Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa* (The Northern Peoples' Congress) in 1949 by delegates from several northern provinces that the supposedly first real strong political group in the North was born. Although the delegates called the conference 'a cultural and social organisation', its commitment to society and political reform was implied its motto – to war against ignorance, idleness, and oppression. The shielded identity could be understood in the face of the restricted political activity imposed on civil servants. Opposition party members were subjected at various times to multiple and pervasive restrictions on their freedom of action and expression. Judges in native courts, who enforced both statutory and customary law, mainly accomplished this. Basic differentiations were however made. For instance, customary law in the area of the emirate system was being defined as Islamic law, of the Maliki School, while the other type is called ordinance of Native Authorities.

The Northern Elements' Progressive Association (NEPA), whose leader was Aminu Kano, was established in 1946 in Kano, in opposition to the rather conservative orientation of the NPC. Its formation opened the door to the first radical political organisation in the North. It was also dominated by the Hausa and Fulani, but was rather critical of the established power elites in the North. Its special characteristic was rooted in the fact that it differed from the previous College Old Boys' Association and the Northern Peoples Congress because its members were mostly of low rank in the society. They consisted of junior functionaries or clerks in government establishments or firms. NEPA was deliberately constituted of opposing voices to the emirate conservative rule. It was also remarkable in the sense that it was closely associated with the NCNC in the south, proved by the fact that the general secretary of the NEPA was the president of the Zikist Movement. The radical orientation of the NEPA was soon to be given a serious control by the government and the emirate through the indiscriminate transfer of its leaders in government positions in Kano. But unyielding to the disorganisation, the Association was formed under a more radical banner called the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) (The Northern Elements Progressive Union and the United Middle Belt Congress were closely tied to the NCNC, upon which it depends for financial assistance, although the NEPU also maintains its organisational autonomy). In her "Declaration of Principles", NEPU proclaimed an open war based on 'class struggle' between the 'commoner class' (ordinary Talakawa) and the native administrations (The Sultan of Sokoto is the pre-eminent spiritual leader of Hausa land as well as the executive head of the Sokoto Native Authority).

5. THE UNITED MIDDLE BELT CONGRESS

In the Southern part of Northern Nigeria, whose population was predominantly non-Muslim (traditional religionist or Christian), two parties - the Middle Zone League (MZL) formed in 1951 and the Middle Belt People's Party (MBPP) - were very strong. The latter eventually developed into the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC). Opposition movements such as the Northern Nigeria non-Muslim League in 1950, and the Middle Zone League in 1951 were later fused to become the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), which supported Northern Christian interests and in protest to the identification of the Northern political parties with Islam. Consequently the first Northern Nigerian government in 1951, dominated by the N.P.C., appointed no Christians as ministers and even took steps to curtail missionary activities in the educational and medical fields, although the motto of the party was, "One North, one people, irrespective of religion, rank or tribe (Mala, S. Babs, May 1977). But in general, both were also established in opposition to NPC, whose regional orientation was strongly aimed at preserving the political unity of the Northern Region. The difference in political orientation between the core North and the Middle Belt is therefore not surprising considering the separatism in the former, which had also formed and informed the bedrock of political activities in the latter. Inhabited by many ethnic and linguistic groups, constituting about one-third of the region's total population, the Middle Belt form a cultural and social minority in comparison to the people of the emirate zone. The concentration of political power on the emirate helped to increase their agitation for a separate system of political governance.

The Northern Nigerian non-Muslim League (NNML) was organized in 1949 by a group of influential Christians to defend the interests of their Churches in the North. Soon afterwards, in 1950, the name was changed to the Middle Zone League in order to bring out clearly the intended goal of a separate region, and at the same time to refute any intention of fostering religious-political conflict. The MZL, comprising mainly of 800,000 Tiv Christians of Benue Province, enjoyed a lot of support and sympathy from the Christian missionaries in the North. For instance, David Lot, a pastor trained by Sudan United Mission, led it. The British saw this missionary sympathy for politics as representing an attitude that contributed to the creation of an unfavourable and negative political atmosphere. To emphasize the seriousness of their opposition, the

predominantly Christian Benue and Plateau provinces agitated vehemently for a separation from the Islamic North (the Middle Belt), which led to the setting up of a commission of Inquiry by the 1957 Constitution Conference. The Tiv and other minority leaders expressed fears of religious persecution, forceful conversion to Islam and discrimination in the North at the sitting (Tseayo, J.I., 1976, pp.76-89). In the end, no new state was created because the Muslim rulers and the British colonial administration thought that such a creation would delay the independence process.

Further into the North itself, there was the birth of another separatist group in 1954 among the Kanuri of Bornu. Although the Kanuri were a Muslim group with their own indigenous traditions of political organisation similar to those of the Fulani-Hausa, they felt uncomfortable with the conservative political set-up of the emirate. In effect, the Bornu Youth Movement was established to follow a similar political ideology like that of the NEPU, with which it was also allied. It was however different from that of the Middle Belt, for the BYM's quest for a separate North East State was less pronounced than its interest in reform of the emirate system.

6. THE POLITICS OF SUB-REGIONALISM

The politics of sub-regionalism did not stop with the Middle Belt. In the Midwest, the Edo-speaking people of Benin and Delta provinces, comprising the Western Igbo and the Western Ijaw – traditionally associated with the Benin Kingdom – also sought a separate identity and state. They resented the predominantly Yoruba regional government at Ibadan and gave a cold reception to the local branch of the Action Group, which was centred in an elite social and political club called the *Reformed Ogboni Fraternity* (Johnson, James, 1892, pp. 92-108). The same applied to the region of the Southern Cameroons linked to the Eastern Region. The Southern Cameroons was originally a United Nations Trust Territory of some 750,000 people, attached to the Eastern administration. The quest for separation was most manifest during the 1953 Constitutional and political crisis, during which the Cameroonian delegates resorted to an attitude of neutrality with respect to decisions concerning Nigerian party politics. Their political agitation yielded positive result with the creation of the quasi-federal territory for the southern Cameroonians in 1954 with independent government. Because of the success of the political agitation of the South Cameroons, other minor ethnic groups, harmonised into the Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers State Movement was born, as a cultural (and sometimes religious) separatist group from the Igbo majority. In the line of the separatist movement of the Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers minority groups, there was a common hostility towards the N.C.N.C.

7. THE POLITICS OF CULTURAL NATIONALISM

Another powerful and significant western politician - the Yoruba-born Obafemi Awolowo - was leading 'The Action Group' (AG) in 1953. The AG was a symbol of 'Cultural Nationalism'. The historical birth of the AG is traced to the affiliation of the NNDP to the NCNC in 1944. It was not a healthy development for the original Yoruba members of the NYM, who saw an unwelcome marriage and consequent dilution of what was supposed to be purely Yoruba (Conflicts related to ethnic politics, especially manifested in political parties also led to series of Constitutional discussions and various decisions by the Colonial Office in London. For instance, *CO 583/287/4, no.8, 26 July 1948/Yoruba-Igbo relations: inward telegram no.952 from Sir J. Macpherson to Mr. Creech Jones reporting the deterioration in ethnic relations in Lagos; CO583/287/4, no20, 4 Oct 1948/Inter-tribal tension: inward telegram no. 1375 from Sir J. Macpherson to Mr. Creech Jones on the easing of Yoruba-Igbo tension in Lagos*). To register their disagreement, the opponents of the NCNC decided to form a pan-Yoruba cultural organisation, named the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* or "Society of the Descendants of Oduduwa". Oduduwa was the mythical originator of the Yoruba clan. Awolowo, who was originally a leader of the NYM in Ibadan, inspired the formation of the AG while he was a law student in London in 1945, especially through his culturally oriented book, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*. In the book, he argued that each one of the cultural nationalities of Nigeria possesses its own indigenous constitution, conforming to the cultural traditions of the people concerned. Awolowo's political viewpoint was thus in total disagreement with a constitution like that of 1946 which gave the major nationalities the constitutional right to dominate smaller cultural groups. His dream was transformed into reality in 1948 at Ibadan with the formation of the AG as a political party. From being the general secretary of the Yoruba cultural society, Awolowo took over the leadership of the new political party, the AG. Being Christian, he was also suspect for the Muslim north. In general, one could agree with Adrian Hastings that Nigeria's comparatively cautious constitutional advance during the 1950s was not a consequence of political torpor. This is because

of the obvious active nature of the parties, especially in the south. Such slogans as: 'Wealth for All, Education for All', health for All, Freedom for All. Vote for the Action Group' existed in Awolowo's party.

8. RELIGION AS A PLATFORM FOR POLITICS

Shortly before the independence of Nigeria in 1960, there was understandably some tendency for political opposition to be linked either with a revival of traditional religion or with membership of an independent church. It was said that Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe even established his own church (in direct sarcasm of the NCNC), with the name, the National Church of Nigeria and the Cameroons, which in November 1952 officially canonised both him and the late Herbert Macaulay. It was carried by the West African Pilot (Zik's Newspaper) thus, 'Zik and Macaulay Take Their Place among the Saints' (*African Affairs*, vol.52 (April) 1953, p.97). Compared with southern Nigeria, ethnic group associations in the North play a comparatively minor role in politics. For instance, their absence among the historic Muslim communities could be attributed to the integrative force of religion and to the multi-tribal system in the Fulani Empire. It was also evident that ethnic associations affiliated with the NPC represented mainly peoples indigenous to the middle belt. In the same vein, associations based on religious affinity were closely related to the major parties. The AG in the Western Region formed United Muslim Council in 1957. It was later on known as the National Emancipation League, an ally of the Northern Peoples' Congress. In most cases also, leaders of Islamic congregations in southwestern Nigeria were highly partisan, especially in Lagos and Ibadan. In the Eastern Region, inter-denominational conflict over the issue of public support for parochial schools often brought the Eastern Nigeria Catholic Council (ENCC) into collision with the Convention of Protestant Citizens (CPC), although both associations were subject to NCNC influence. We have seen already that in Northern Nigeria, the leaders of the separatist UMBC were typically members of Christian mission congregations. The Mallamai or Muslim religious teachers were the principal instruments for the interpretation of religious doctrine to the masses in the North. They used their massive religious influence in the sphere of politics especially in the NPC. They were not only conservative but also reactionary to issue of modern and contemporary outlook. On the other hand, the religious-political tendencies of the Tijaniyya turuq (tariqa) or mystic brotherhood looked in the progressive direction of the NEPU. This reformist group (left wing) of the Tijaniyya was mainly known as the Yan Wazifa (adherents of the litany of the Wazifa) as against the 'right wing' of the Tijaniyya, which voted largely the NPC during elections. The Yan Wazifa as a reformist, puritanical, mission-minded group rivals the Khadiriyya – the other major turuq in Northern Nigeria – identified with the Sokoto traditional ruling house. This political distinction has been explained to mean that the Tijaniyya stands in relation to the Khadiriyya and orthodox Islam as a non-conformist sect to an established church.

Trade Unions were to a certain extent also affiliated to religious bodies. Three central Labour bodies: the United Labour Congress (affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions); the left-leaning Nigerian Trades Union Congress; and the Nigerian Workers Council (an affiliate of the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions). There was also an informal alliance of large, unaffiliated trade unions, under the leadership of Mr. Imoudu, called the Labour Unity Front. At occasions of general strike, solidarity was usually achieved through the agency of a nonpartisan Joint Action Committee.

During the late colonial period or the late '50s, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, saw the importance of religious unity and tried to promote a united front in the north by looking for ways of bringing religious groups together. In his 1959 Christmas message, after the North was granted self-government, he tried to lessen the fear Christians felt of oppression by a Muslim government after independence, by stressing the government policy of religious tolerance, and expressing his gratitude to the Christian missions for their contribution to the North in the following words: "Families of all creeds and colour can rely on these assurances; we have no intention of favouring one religion at the expense of another. Subject to the overriding need to preserve law and order, it is our determination that everyone should have absolute liberty to practice his beliefs according to the dictates of his conscience. I extend my greetings to all those of our people who are Christians on this their great feast day. Let us forget the difference in our religions and, remembering the common brotherhood before God, dedicate ourselves afresh to the great task which lie before us" (Oyelade, E.O. & Kenny, J., 6 March 1974).

Most scholars still consider Ahmadu Bello's speech as a political gimmick, aimed at hiding the heinous plans to attain Islamic supremacy over the Christians. It is true that his argument for the application of Islamic criminal law in the Northern Regional Legislature on 10 March 1955, was limited to Muslims, yet the reality of the Sharia today seems to prove the sceptics correct. A vivid incident in 1957 also remained in the minds of Christians. Four Christians (from Kilba) were arrested by the Muslim chief for holding an open-air meeting. The charge was that: a) they had spoken about politics; b) they had said that Christianity was better than Islam; c) they had broken the rule that if more than five people were gathered, permission had to be obtained from the Native administration; and d) they had preached secretly. It was also very difficult for the missionaries to get permission from the emir in Yola to start evangelist work in villages. This was the reason for many conflicts between Christians and the emir's people. On the whole however, Christians and Muslims, on the household and village level, were able to maintain an attitude of religious tolerance and mutual respect inherent to their African tradition (Three of the DSUM areas – Kilba, Chamba and Bata – were part of Adamawa Division and this had more than formal implications. The Adamawa Division comprised most of the traditional emirate sphere of influence and was in effect seen as the legitimate area of the emir. This had three important consequences for the work of the DSUM and for the political and religious history of the area in the 1940s and 1950s. Firstly, missionary work among the Kilba, Chamba and Bata was subjected to a different administrative system than in Numan Division, a system far more shaped by the interests of the Fulani elite of the emirate than was the case in Numan Division, which in colonial language was a 'pagan' area. Secondly, the administrative position of the Kilba, Chamba and Bata in the Adamawa Division made the working conditions of the missionary difficult since the colonial administration wanted to avoid the missionary presence as much as possible. Thirdly, the different political and religious conditions in Adamawa Division as compared with Numan Division created a distinctive political pattern. The relative political importance of religion and ethnicity developed differently in Adamawa Division than in Numan Division. Whereas a complete overlapping of religious and political loyalties existed in Numan Division, ethnicity became a more significant political factor in its own right in parts of Adamawa Division).

Immediately prior to independence, Christian-Muslim antagonism was softened to some extent, and ideas of religious unity entered the minds of some Muslims and Christians. The Christians however expressed a strong fear of persecution and discrimination by the Muslim majority after independence, especially if the latter took over the rule from the British and introduced an Islamic system without religious freedom. As a result of this founded fear, the missions were anxious to establish as many stations as possible. This was especially the tactic of the Danish branch of the Sudan United Mission (DFSM) and other missions, which handed over the property of the mission to Africans out of fear of Muslim domination after independence. These measures were simply to ensure a better chance of survival. One could interpret it therefore to mean that the primary interest on both the Muslim and Christian sides in Northern Nigeria was one of preserving their own respective religious traditions and practices rather than promoting unity and independence at the national level. It was also said that because of this unhealthy relationship, the missionaries did not notice that the traditional religious environments of Nigeria were hospitable and inclusive and that this had clearly influenced the Muslims in their search for religious solidarity and growth.

For Catholic missionaries, attitude towards the Muslims was a case of live and let live, since they recognised that the Muslims had their own religion. Catholic missionaries therefore did not have the kind of missionary urgency that could spark off anxieties. For instance, before the time of Governor Cameron, the presence of the missionaries had been firmly established in many of the non-Muslim parts of the Northern provinces. The authorities thought that it was more convenient to confine their activities in the 'sabon garis' (immigrant quarters) to maintain peace in the Islamic parts of the North. The immigrant quarters were meant to accommodate Southern Nigerian and other non-Muslim immigrants. Apart from the Roman Catholic establishments in Zaria and Kano, the C.M.S, the S.I.M., and other Church or Missionary organisations also had their own establishments. It was also clear that there was some considerable Roman Catholic presence in Sokoto and Gusau, both of which were occasionally visited by priests from Zaria to minister to the spiritual needs of the immigrant communities. It was obvious from this set-up that as long as the situation remained at the level of strict demarcation of sections of the townships and cities, the relations were conducive for co-existence. But hostility in the relationship rose enormously immediately the Christian missionaries wanted to get out of their enclaves for active work among the Muslims. In the south, Christians, and especially Catholic missionaries did not have to face this kind of anxiety with the presence of Islam, but with African Traditional Religion. In fact, E. Isichei argues that "Catholic and

evangelical Protestant missionaries had much more in common than either was willing to admit (since) both groups had a highly polarised vision of reality, a tendency to condemn most aspects of traditional religion and society as “the work of the devil”. Even J.C. Taylor himself of Igbo parentage, wrote: ‘may many come willingly to labour in pulling down the stronghold of Satan’s kingdom, for the whole of the Ibo district is his citadel’. The founder of the Holy Ghost Fathers’ mission in Nigeria warned his nephew that ‘All those who go to Africa as missionaries must be thoroughly penetrated with the thought that the Dark Continent is a cursed land, almost entirely in the power of the devil (Isichei, E., *op.cit.*, p.326; Crowther, S., and Taylor, J.C., 1859, p.325).

9. THE PRICE OF RELIGIOUS ‘COMPROMISE’ WITH POLITICS

In general, the nineteenth-century missionary was expected to keep a modest distance from politics. It was however not always easy to avoid or escape this temptation, because of the apparent advantages and protection involved. This confirms the saying that politics and religion are almost never separable, and there was no way in which the average missionary could avoid politics entirely. At times, they quoted Romans 13 as their guiding principle in normal relationship with politics. They would like to remain loyal to government, but government, whether colonial or African, often found it rather convenient to make more use of him than that. Even most missionaries were glad enough to be so used. Patronage and subservience have great prices to be paid, and both sides experienced it in full. That was how most of Africa, including Nigeria, came to be brought under full colonial control. Perhaps, they had not expected this development as a consequence of the relationship, but it was clear that the normal 19th century Protestant missionary in Nigeria did not separate the role of Britain from the providential opening of the world to the gospel in which he was taking part. Thus, the British Empire appeared as clearly part of the divine plan for the evangelisation of the world, and while it was not his task to extend the Empire, yet a missionary nudge at the right moment to those responsible seemed appropriate enough. Thus, the early Catholic missionaries on the Niger were favoured in Igbo eyes precisely because, unlike the CMS, they did not appear to be linked to the oppressions of the Royal Niger Society.

Religion - Christianity, Islam, or that of African Tradition - could rightly be termed a determining factor in the 1950s. It was a sanction for all that was most traditional in Nigeria. It was also closely linked with all that was most colonial, and it would be seldom far away from all that was most revolutionary. The Christian Churches were so much part of this world, and even of its political structures and motivation, that it could certainly not be properly described without them. In the Sokoto Caliphate, the Sultans and their governments were strengthened by the saying of Islamic prayers; the Christian Churches and their clergy opened every morning with the saying of Christian prayers and celebrating the Holy Mass; while the rites and intercessions of traditional religion remained a central concern of the Oba of Benin, the priest of *Ala* (earth goddess) in Igbo land, etc.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Every society requires a certain degree of synergy between religion and politics to development because both factors characterize every normal human being. In a pluralistic society like Nigeria where religion plays a very strong role in its daily governance, there is need for every citizen, especially those very active in politics to remain resolute in the promotion of peace and solidarity irrespective of creed. The materially fortunate ones should also use their wealth to promote the well-being of the citizens regardless of tribe, region, and religious cleavage.

11. CONCLUSION

The paper has exposed a situation of encounter and conflict between early Nigerian intellectuals and European colonialism, as well as the consequent quest for independence. Many Nigerians fought to liberate the country from perpetual colonial domination and oppression. However, their attempt soon proved to be bedevilled with regional interests and ethnic alienations. The wave of selfish interest has influenced the rate of development and mutual co-existence. Today, there is evident parochial blocks of religious politics – hidden in the name of Islam, Christianity, African Traditional Religion, etc. Religious fanaticism is carried into the arena of national politics such that Nigeria as a country is in a dilemma as how to proffer solution to the current dilemma it is facing in the hands of Boko Haram, the self-acclaimed enemy to Nigeria’s development and progress. The country can only achieve success if everyone embraces the welfare of each other as a nation driven by genuine patriotism and love.

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