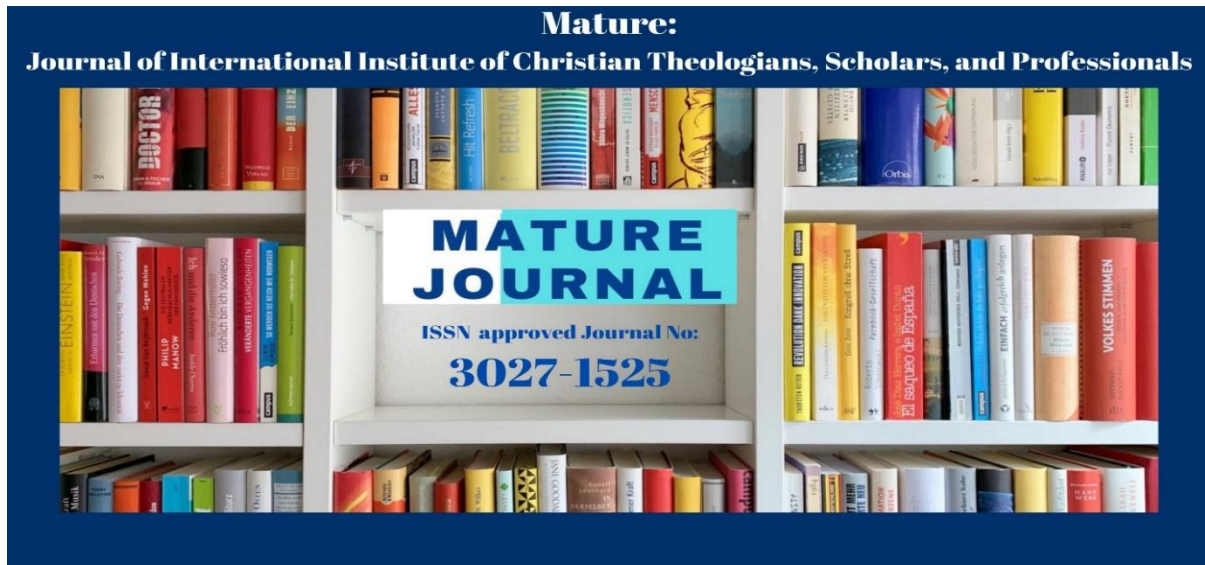


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Christianity and Educational Development: The Nigerian Experience

Dele Alaba ILESANMI, PhD

The Redeemed Christian Bible College

Associate Professor of Biblical Research and Christian Education,

Testament Theological Seminary

pstdeleilesanmi3@gmail.com +234-08062197040

Abstract

This study is an attempt to depict the contribution of Christianity to the development of Nigeria, particularly in the area of education. The work, however, portrays the giant strides Christianity has made in other areas, such as healthcare, language and human development, moral and spiritual development, etc. The major purpose of enumerating the contributions of Christianity to educational development in Nigeria is to correct the bad impressions that social critics might have generated and to disabuse the minds of some people who believe that Christianity has no appreciable contributions to nation-building. The paper argues that Christianity is not a mere religion but a *metareligion* and posits that Christian education is a systemic and veritable tool for national transformation and development. The research work adopted a historical approach. The findings revealed that Christianity has made more remarkable and indelible impacts in Nigeria than any other religion. The paper concludes with some crucial recommendations that require the urgent attention of the Nigerian governments, Christians, and non-Christians.

Keywords: metareligion, christianity. education, development, christian education, Nigeria.

Introduction

¹ In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. ² And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. ³ And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. (Gen 1:1 – 3)¹

The beginning of the biblical creation story cited above perfectly encapsulates the condition of the geographical area now called Nigeria before the arrival of a *metareligion*² called Christianity. Christianity is not the harbinger of light; it is the light itself. Wherever it is planted, darkness disappears. If it is well planted in a man, he becomes the conveyor and bastion of truth, light, peace, and development. If it is well planted in a nation, the nation becomes the epicentre of truth, light, peace, and development. Dele A. Ilesanmi (2023) describes Christianity thus:

Christianity is a representative of the Kingdom of God here on earth (in the world), but not of this world; hence, Christians have not been fighting for their God (John 18:36). Christianity represents the way, the truth, the life, the peace, and the light here on earth; anyone who is of the truth, peace, and light must pay attention to the Person of Christ (Isa 9:6; John 8:12; 9:5; 14:6; 18:37). Thus, Christianity can be seen as a Person or belief in an ultimate Reality. Christianity begins with Christ and ends with Christ. The word "Christianity" starts with the word "Christ." Similarly, "Christian" starts with "Christ." Thus, the word Christ-ian-ity is a three-morphemed word of three types of affixations: prefix (Christ), infix (ian), and suffix (ity). The suffix "ity" is belief in or the worship of God or God incarnate, or the way of life of the Christians in relation to their God, Jesus the Messiah, the Son of the living God. If religion is belief in a spiritual being or metaphysical reality, then Christianity, a *metareligion*, is belief in ultimate Reality (the Truth) or Jesus, the supernatural Reality.

C. Asadu (2015) asserts that Christianity is a transformative force. A critical analysis of Christianity demonstrates how powerfully enticing it is. It has left a profound mark on every human civilisation or institution it has entered. The moment Christianity arrived in Nigeria in 1842 through Badagery, Lagos, when it was well planted, Nigeria experienced irresistible transformations in education, morality, agriculture, medical science, political and economic life, and in all spheres of life. All this transformational growth resulted in national development. This lends credence to the assertion that Christianity is associated with development.

There are three major religions in Nigeria: the traditional (autochthonous) religion, Islam, and Christianity. The two other religions have been groping in "the dark cactus fence" area now called Nigeria before the advent of Christianity. For instance, Islam has been in Nigeria for over 400 years before Christianity. Islam was first introduced to Nigeria through Borno in the northeast in the 11th century through two geographical routes: North Africa and the Senegalese Basin (Ismail A. B. Balogun, 1969). On the other hand, Christianity arrived on the soil of

¹ Unless indicated otherwise, all biblical passages in this article are quoted from the *King James Version* (KJV).

² *Metareligion* is a new concept coined by this author, Dele Alaba Ilesanmi, to explain that Christianity is not a mere religion but a supernatural religion (beyond a mere religion) because it is the only religion whose founder is alive. For a better understanding, see Ilesanmi, D. A. (2023). Jesus' birth: The impact of his sonship and divinityship on humanity. In: *Mature: Journal of the International Institute of Christian Theologians and Professionals*.

Nigeria in the 15th century (Fafunwa, A. B., 1974; Ilesanmi, D. A., 2023). Ilesanmi explains further that the first Christian missionary's influence was nearly wiped out by the slave trade, which emaciated or devastated West Africa for almost 300 years. Christianity could not make headway until the second missionary endeavour in 1842. He stresses that this second missionary activity to Nigeria was the most popular one, which was marked by the advent of the English-speaking Christian missions in the land of Badagry, Lagos, Nigeria, on 24th September, 1842. We can clearly say that Islam has been on the soil of Nigeria for over 700 years before Christianity was well planted on the same soil. It should be noted that there was no remarkable impact in the areas of education, language, agricultural, political, and economic developments, medical sciences, motorable roads, human capital development, electricity, potable water, etc., before the arrival of Christianity in Nigeria. Religions were superstitiously mumbo jumbo; things were in a state of hocus-pocus and hotchpotch or higgledy-piggledy. There was no significant impact on the lives of the people. But when God spoke, "Let there be light," the light came in 1842 when Christianity arrived on the soil of Nigeria. No unbiased historian will briskly gloss over the remarkable and indelible marks made by this *metareligion—Christianity—in* Nigeria since its arrival.

Thus, this paper is set to correct the negative impressions that some social critics might have generated about the role and contributions of this *metareligion*, Christianity, in Nigeria. The paper argues that Christianity's role in nation-building cannot be overemphasised. And Christianity is the way to peace, truth, life, light, and progress.

Christianity and Educational Development in Nigeria

Christianity and Education

Development is a deliberate human effort to bring about change. According to the Chamber English Dictionary (1990), to develop is "to bring out what is latent or potential in; to bring to a more advanced or more highly organised state; to cause to grow or advance..." Development, therefore, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (1995), means "to grow or cause something to grow gradually." What is national development? Asadu (2021) says national development can be seen as a crucial principle that encompasses all facets of a nation's life. He stresses further that a nation's economy, culture, politics, and spirituality will certainly determine a nation's degree of growth. Christianity is a development personified because Christianity and education cannot be divorced from each other. As Ilesanmi (2021) pointed out in his PhD dissertation, *An Evaluation of Accountability in Christian Education in the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Nigeria*, he argues that Christianity and western (Christian) education are Siamese or conjoined twins in Nigeria. He asserts that "religion is the mother of education, while Christianity, as a form of religion, breastfeeds formal education that grows up to be a potent ally of religious reformation and human development in all spheres of life." He went further to cite Theodore Greene's concise statement on the watertight compartment relationship between education and religion, particularly metareligion:

Education divorced from religion is doomed to spiritual sterility; religion divorced from education is doomed to superstition...if religion is man's search for, and response to ultimate meaning, and if education is man's total preparation for a meaningful life, it follows that only religion can give ultimate meaning and depth to man's aspirations, intelligent, informed and creatively effective. So defined, religion and education are both absolutely essential to man's perennial quest for responsible freedom and enlightened dedication

Christianity, as a monotheistic faith, is unique in many ways. Its uniqueness is found in its singular claims about God, Jesus Christ, the Bible, and the way of salvation.³ Although there are other monotheistic

³ Horton, David(ed.). (2006). *The portable seminary*,(Bethany House publisher, 2006), 421-424

religions, such as Islam, Judaism, etc., only Christianity claims to have a true view of God – *Trinitarianism*.⁴ Christianity is also unique because of its teaching nature. It is a teaching metareligion, and has its root in divine revelation,⁵ which is the major source of epistemological reality from an ontological Reality (God) who provides objective knowledge relevant to the large questions of this life and beyond.⁶ This Christian metareligion is characteristically engaged in education, and this has been so ever since Christ chose His first disciples.⁷ Christianity and education are inseparable entities because the prime mover of metareligion is Christ, the great Teacher/Educator. Hence, Christianity is unique among all of the religions of the world. All religions make sweeping claims about truth and reality and yet none except Christianity can point to historical evidence to verify those assertions⁸.

Prior to the time when Lagos became a British colony in 1861, Christian missionaries had worked in Yoruba land for barely two decades. They laid the foundation of primary and secondary education in Nigeria and painstakingly bore the financial burden of its overall development, which includes, among other things, the remuneration of teachers, the provision of books and other writing materials, the building of physical structures, etcetera. They did this for years without any assistance from the colonial administration. According to Fafunwa (1974), Mr. and Mrs. De Graft founded the first known school in Badagry and called it 'Infant Church Nursery'. Most of the 50 odd pupils were Sierra Leone emigrant children, although some of the local converts sent their children to school as well. The Reverend Annear and his wife were succeeded by Mr. and Mrs. De Graft in 1844.

Education, without much ado, is a polymorphous concept that cannot be pinned down to a single definition. As we have different authors, we also we have different definitions of education. The Cambridge Conference on African Education, 1952, defines education as “the united concern of a people for the right upbringing of its children and the improvement of its national life.”⁹ According to Phenics, “education is the process whereby persons intentionally guide the development of persons.”¹⁰ In his own view, Farrant defines education as “the process of learning to live as a useful and acceptable member of the community.”¹¹ But Kneller looks at education as “the process by which society, through schools, colleges, universities, and other institutions, deliberately transmit its cultural heritage from one generation to another.”¹² Education is originally derived from the Latin word “educare”, meaning “to educate” or “to train”. This Latin word is also probably derived from two other Latin words, “e” and “duco”. If we combine these two words, education means “leading out” (i.e, to lead something out of a person).¹³ This word “educate” also means “to bring up”, “to nurture”, or “to train”. This concept is in line with the Scriptures, for instance, in Ephesian 6:4: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”, as well as, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).¹⁴ To this end, Education can simply be defined as a process of bringing up, nurturing, and

⁴ Ibid., 421

⁵ Norvell, Walter H, “The Great Commission imperative of Teaching: Why Christian Education Should Be On The Cutting Edge of the Church’s Mission Today”, Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry Vol. 1 No. 2 (Fall 2003): 94-106, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jbtm/01-2_094.pdf Retrieved 4/9/17

⁶ Little, A. Bruce, “Christian education, Worldviews, and Postmodernity’s Challenge”, JETS 40/3 (September 1997) 433-444

⁷ K. Kay William, Aim of Christian Education, A Journal of WAPTE, the Pentecostal Educator, <http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/pentecostaeducation/01-0/008.pdf> Retrieved 4/6/17

⁸ Bob Passantino. *Contend Earnestly For The Faith How Far Can We Trust The Bible?* Copyright 1992. See also Ilesanmi, Dele, *Reliability of Canon*, unpublished work, 2020.

⁹ Owolabi, S.O, Political and Cultural Context of Educational Planning(Aderibigbe Publishers, Ibadan, 1987) 6

¹⁰ Ibid.,7

¹¹ Ibid.,7

¹² Ibid.,7

¹³ This is analytically illustrated in the work of Rev, Prof. Dr Francis Nigel Lee, *The Biblical Theory of Christian Education* (3rd Edition, updated March 10th 2001), 2

¹⁴ See KJV of the Bible. All Scriptures are taken from King James Version(KJV), except otherwise indicated; see also a brief explanation of the word “educate” from the work of Stewart, Tom, “What is the Difference

developing God-given inherent potentials—gifts, knowledge, skills, and other virtues—in a person for the purpose of making him useful to himself, his society, and primarily for the service of the Lord. Akinpelu defines education as “the human effort to bring up children in such a way that they will be disposed to seek God, to live a godly life on earth, and to strive to progress towards divine perfection.”¹⁵ As McGucken puts it: “Education is the organized development and equipment of all the powers of a human being, moral, intellectual, and physical, by and for their individual and social uses, directed towards the union of these activities with their creator as their final ends”.¹⁶

In any way the concept of education is viewed, if it does not glorify God, it is humanistic, secular, or satanic. It cannot be truly Christian if it does not glorify God. That is why Christian education is distinctly different from other forms/systems of education. In a similar development, Christian education cannot be pinned down to a single definition. There is no single universally accepted definition of Christian education.¹⁷ Christian education can be that which is Bible-based, Christ-centred, Holy Spirit-controlled, learner-related, and socially applied, with the Scriptures being the final authority in all situations. According to Shinn, as cited by Taylor and Asare, Christian education is described as “the effort to introduced people into the life and mission of the community of Christian faith.”¹⁸ In buttressing the Shinn’s view, Vieth submits that “Christian education introduces the learner to knowledge about God, man’s relationship to God, the Bible, the Church and the meaning of Christian living..”¹⁹ In his own view, Case as cited by Miller and Asare, defines Christian education as: “The effort to make available for our generation – children, young people, and adults – the accumulated treasures of Christian life and thought, in such a way that God in Christ may carry on His redemptive work in each human soul and in the life of man.”²⁰ In their own views, John, Peter, and Eric²¹, look at Christian education in three ways: First, “Christian education is a process of teaching and learning the content of which is made up of Christianity.” Second, it is a “process of teaching and learning the content of which is Christianity and which has its purpose the fostering or deepening of the Christian faith of the students.” And third, Christian education is seen as “that education which flows from or is compatible with or is justified by the Christian faith.”

In any way this concept of Christian education is viewed, there are three factors that define it (Christian education): the centrality of the written Word, the Bible; the centrality of the Living Word, Jesus Christ; and the dependability of the Holy Spirit. In essence, Christian education is majorly designed to transform people, bringing them to faith, developing them in their faith, and leading them to minister to other people through the ministry of the church.²² Christian education happens when people: 1. Learn about God’s love as they hear the stories of the Bible; 2. Accept God’s grace because knowing the Bible is not enough; 3. Grow in Christian Faith; 4. Become part of a Christian community; 5. Answer God’s call to Christian living²³ If we are to practice education that is truly Christian, Justin Taylor outlined ten foundational presuppositions and

Between Christian Education and Public School Education? (1982)”, [http://www.whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/Christian Education.html](http://www.whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/Christian%20Education.html) Retrieved 6/2/14

¹⁵ Akinpelu, J.A., Themes in Philosophy of Education for Teachers,(Tafak Publications, Ibadan, Nigeria, 2005) 10

¹⁶ Ibid., 10

¹⁷Asare Emmanuel Amoah, op.cit., 49, 54.

¹⁸ Ibid.,47

¹⁹ Ibid.,47-48

²⁰ Ibid.,48

²¹ These three scholars jointly wrote an article titled “Realization of the Nature and Role of Christian Education in Modern Pedagogy” published in British Journal of Education Vol.2, No.5, pp.26-35, October 2014, by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK (www.eajournals.org)²⁹

²² Horton, David(ed.), The Portable Seminary, op.cit., 641

²³ See “Christian education? What’s that?” for comprehensive explanation,<http://www.umc.org/resources/Christian-education-whats-that> Retrieved 8/11/17

principles that would shape our approach in his article titled *The Great Vision of Christian Education*.²⁴ Without mincing words, “Christian education is educating people about Christianity.”²⁵ Christian education, not only plays a vital role in facilitating spiritual growth and discipleship of believers, it also undergirds all ministries.²⁶ Williams brilliantly posits that:

Christian education is Christian when teachers and learners are dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit in the learning environment. It is Christian when the purpose and goals are honoring to the Lord and to his kingdom. It is Christian when the curriculum is developed from the teachings of the Word and from an understanding of biblical theology. It is Christian when there is an overall understanding and perspective that God is in control and that teachers and learners are sincerely seeking to fulfill his will and purpose in all things.²⁷

Therefore, Ilesanmi concludes that authentic Christian education should be theocentric, Christocentric, pneumatocentric, and bibliocentric. In addition, teaching and learning should be put under the leadership and control of the Holy Spirit which he calls *pneumagogy*. Teaching and learning in Christian education are defined by a four-dimensional concept: *theogogy* (the way God leads or teaches His people), *christogogy* (the way Jesus Christ leads or teaches), *pneumagogy* (the way the Holy Spirit leads or teaches), and *bibliogogy* (the leading or teaching of God’s Word through the use of the Bible). Hence, Ilesanmi (2021) defines Christian education as:

a process of initiating or introducing the heathen into the culture of the Christian faith, transforming and equipping him through the power of the Holy Spirit, with the sole aim of bringing him into the right relationship with God and his neighbours through Jesus Christ to impact his society/world with the instrumentality of the Bible.

Contribution of Christianity to Education and Nation-Building in Nigeria

In his work titled, *Jesus’ Birth: The Impact of His Sonship and Divinityship on Humanity*, Dele A. Ilesanmi (2023) defines Christianity as a monotheistic metareligious faith that provides accurate meaning to life and accurate direction to the life and teachings of Christ. No doubt, Christianity has been linked to national development in a variety of ways. There are several reasons for this; some of them are as follows: 1. Christianity is an agent of transformation. Christianity is transformation; and Christianity is development. 2. The conviction that life never ends inspires people to pursue greatness and prosperity here on Earth in order to get ready for the hereafter. People who are motivated in this way are better able to make judgements that will benefit society as a whole as well as themselves. 3. Christian beliefs promote charitable giving within

²⁴ See Taylor, Justin, “The Great Vision of Christian Education” for vivid explanation of his ten foundational truths, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-great-vision-of-christian-education> 7/11/17

²⁵ See Herrinton-Hodge, Beth, “A Model for 21st Century Faith Formation”, <http://www.ecclesio.com/2012/10/a-model-for-21st-century-faith-formation-by-beth-herrinton-hodge/> Retrieved 8/11/17

²⁶ See Williams, C. Brennetta, “What Makes Christian Education Exciting” for better understanding, [http://www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/pdf/dialogue/ What Makes Christian education Exciting.pdf](http://www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/pdf/dialogue/What%20Makes%20Christian%20education%20Exciting.pdf) Retrieved 16/11/17.

²⁷ Williams, Dennis E, “Christian Education” pp.639-643 in Horton, David(ed.), *The Portable Seminary*, op.cit., 641-642

communities, which fosters understanding between various socioeconomic groups and gives the poor in society access to necessities like food and water. As a result, decreasing rates of poverty and promoting unity among all groups, regardless of financial status, 4. Christianity offers a motivation for moral behaviour, such as following laws and regulations, abstaining from personal corruption, and criticising public corruption, all of which contribute to better governance overall and, consequently, to improved infrastructure and national economic stability. 5. Christianity upholds principles of justice, equality, and human rights, which, by shielding residents from discrimination or exploitation, can aid in a country's social and economic development. 6. Christianity is not a religion but a metareligion – beyond religion – because it provides light, truth, way, and peace. It is a metareligion because it is life.

The advent of Christianity in Nigeria witnessed a process of systematic and systemic growth and development. Christian education was used as a medium and an indispensable tool of evangelisation and development. Christian education is a systemic and vital tool for the transformation and development of man and his society. According to S. Ademola Ajayi (2006), the early converts were taught how to read the Bible in local languages. This, in no small measure, helped to produce the first literate class in Nigeria, particularly in Western Nigeria. Christianity promotes national development through the vehicle of Christian education, now in the toga of western (formal) education. Unarguably, Christianity is the prime mover and promoter of national development. No religion has ever contributed more to national development than metareligion—Christian religion. As earlier pointed out, Islam has been in Nigeria for over 400 years before the light (Christianity) came, but there is no remarkable achievement that is evidently noticeable in the country. Formal education in Nigeria began with Christian education when the Christian missionaries introduced Christ officially to Nigerians through evangelism. The purpose is to make Nigeria and Nigerians better in all areas of life. Fafunwa (1974:61) confirms that the introduction of Christian education, called "western-oriented education," was exclusively due to the efforts of Christian missionaries. Emmanuel A. Ivorggba (2006) says, "Christian Religious Education in Nigeria began with the advent of Missionaries and Mission agencies in Mid 1800s. It was introduced in the form of Evangelism and as part of western missionary enterprise". Those who were receptive to Christian education were better than those who rejected it. The areas that received this type of Christ's education produced a more educated elite than those areas that were sceptical about it. For example, the First Professor of Education in Nigeria, Professor Fafunwa, documented an account of this attitude in his book, *History of Education in Nigeria*:

In 1853, the Reverend David Hinderer's wife, Anna, wrote in her diary about the response of Ibadan people to the western education taught at the day school: 'Our school does not increase at present, people are afraid to send their children; they think "book" will make them coward'

Fafunwa explains further by giving reasons for the Ibadans' attitude towards good and true education (Christian education). He says that the Muslim parents did not absolutely support such western (Christian) education in a Christian environment. They were afraid that their children would be converted to metareligion, Christianity, by such an education. Christianity, as a metareligion, promotes human capital development compared to other religions. Ilesanmi D. A. (2012) observed this in his work, *Christianity and Ekiti Educational Development (1893–1943)*, where he states that a state that is not dominated by Christianity is educationally underdeveloped. He compared Ekiti State to Oyo, Kwara, and the northern part of Nigeria. He gives reasons why Ekiti produces more educated people than other states in Nigeria. This is due to the Ekitis' receptivity to Christianity and its accompanying tool of evangelisation, Christian education.

The race for western (Christian) education started in 1842 in Badagery, Lagos... The Ekos (Lagosian), the Egbas, the Ijebus, and the Oyos started the race over 50 years before the Ekitis. But surprisingly to the three formers, who were more closed to where things were happening, at least 'westernly', the Ekitis overtook them and surpassed them educationally within 30 years of western education. The latter (the Oyos) were not receptive to western education on time, in spite of the opportunities staring them in the face. Although

Professor E. A. Ayandele, a renowned Professor of history, advanced reasons for the slow pace of the Oyos in education when he writes:

Indeed the Oyos were cursed not to be aware of the things which belonged to their greatness and progress when they refused to be stimulated by the existence in their father land of the Oyo Training Institution, later St. Andrew's College, which had been established in Oyo in 1896, and the Ibadan Grammar School which came into being in 1913. It was others – Ijebus, Ondos, Ekitis and Ifes – who patronized these institutions, thereby laying the foundation of the leadership roles they were to play in the intellectual and professional life of Yoruba land.

He further writes under the reference of the same chapter:

... There is no doubt that the contempt of the Oyos for western literacy for a long time was the main cause of their backwardness. For the Oyos, the literate person enslaved himself mentally and culturally to the white man and was therefore no longer a bonafide pure Yoruba. Hence the song in Ibadan:

Awa o mawe o (2ce) We know no book (2ce)

Oniye e o gbohun mi Custodians of knowledge hear my voice

Awa o mawe o We know no book

Enikeni to ba ma we Whosoever knows book

Ko ba oyinbo soro Let him talk with white man

A si di omo oyinbo And thereby become a child of the
whiteman

He emphasises that even if a few affluent Oyos in Ibadan were well-known for their wealth, their disdain for literacy was evident in the song that became well-known about them and pointedly excluded western education as something that a wealthy person should invest their income on. Hence, they did sing:

Ohun ti o ba wu olowo ni fi owo re se

O wu agbaje, o fi owo re joye

O wu Adebisi, o fi owo re kole

O wu Arowolo, o fi tire kobinrin jo

Translation:

A wealthy person spends his money on what he likes.

Hence Agbaje spent his money on chieftaincy

Hence Adebisi built houses with his own money

Hence Arowolo acquired wives with his own money.

Contrary to Oyo's attitude towards education, the Ekitis place a high premium on education. According to Professor Niyi Osundare,²⁸:

education was the core value and driving dream of the Ekiti of my youth. And I, standing before you today, am a grateful beneficiary of the Ekiti Ideal. Many fathers leased out their cocoa farms; many mothers sold their favourite clothes to fund their children's education. It was universally seen as the worthiest investment, as demonstrated clearly in the following song, which was one of my mother's favourites:

Elu o e

Elu o aaa

Ku 'ku ba ti mo mo p'omo mi lule oko o

Mo ti a p'itan ijo mo je o

Mo ti a p'itan ijo mom un o

Mo ti a s'eye Ologun Tisa o

Translation:

Elu o e

Elu o aaa

If death does not kill my children in my husband's house

I will one day tell the story of when I had enough to eat

²⁸ Osundare, N (2018). Full text of Prof Niyi Osundare's Lecture As Part Of The Inauguration Ceremonies For The New Administration In Ekiti State. October 16, 2018. <https://www.ekitistate.gov.ng/full-text-of-prof-niyi-osundares-lecture-as-part-of-the-inauguration-ceremonies-for-the-new-administration-in-ekiti-state/> 6/12/21

I will one day tell the story of when I had enough to drink

I will be the proud mother of the Gallant Teacher

The aspiration of every Ekiti mother and father was to become “Eye Tisa” (the teacher's mother) and “Aba Tisa” (the teacher's father). Olusola Ofi (2005), the former DVC, University of Ibadan, opines that “the Ekitis were thirsty for knowledge, and they went headlong to acquire it. They overtook even those who had started long before them”. The Ekiti secret of educational development is nothing but Christ, the prime mover of Christianity. The Ekiti people were receptive to Christian education brought by Christ through Christianity. The number of people who received Christ of Christianity was more than 98% of Ekiti who received Allah of Islam. This, in no small measure, accounted for the teeming population of educated people in Ekiti State. Today, Ekiti has the highest number of educated people in Africa. According to Ishola Filani (2005), “Studies have shown that Ekiti has the largest number of educated people per square kilometre in the black world” and, to buttress this, “... Talking of professors, Ekiti State alone, just one of the eight predominantly Yoruba-speaking states, has more professors than virtually all the remaining 35 states put together. (Aba Saheed, Nigeria Tribune, Monday, 17th April, 2000, p. 12). According to Professor Lucas:

The Ekiti people of Nigeria are academic-oriented people who have more professors than any other group of people, not only in Nigeria but probably in the whole of Africa. It is an undisputable fact that Ekiti academics help to build and develop many universities in Nigeria, especially the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), the University of Ibadan, and the University of Lagos. At Ibadan, we have the legendary contributions of Professor J. F. Ade Ajayi, the renowned historian; the late Professor Adegoke Olubunmo, the first Nigerian Professor of Mathematics; the late Professor T. Ajibola Taylor, the world-class entomologist; the late Professor Kayode Osuntokun, the physician of world repute; and Professor Kolade Adeyoju, Emeritus Professor of Forestry (Professor Lucas is of the Department of Agronomy, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, published on June 17, 2010; The Nation)

The initial philosophy of education developed by the early missionaries is still very relevant to this day. According to Rotimi W. Omotoye (2010, citing J. F. Ade Ajayi, 1965, p. 218), “the school was Crowther’s chief method of evangelization.” Many Pentecostal churches have nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools, and even private universities. Christian churches are at the vanguard of national development in Nigeria. For example, 97% of secondary schools established between 1859 and 1940 are Christian schools.

Table:

Post-Primary Institutions Establish in Nigeria (1859-1940)

No	Agency	Institutions	Location	Year of Establishment
1.	C.M.S.	C MS Grammar School	Lagos	1859
2.	C.M.S.	C.M.S. Girls’ School, Lagos (It later became St. Anne’s’ School Molete, Ibadan)	Lagos (Later Ibadan)	1868
3.	R.C.M.	St. Gregory’s College	Lagos	1876
4.	Methodist	Methodist Boy’s High School	Lagos	1878
5.	Methodist	Methodist Girl’s High School	Lagos	1879

6.	Baptist	Baptist Boy's High School	Lagos	1885
7.	Baptist	Girl's Convent School,	Abeokuta	1886
8.	Church of Scotland	Hope Waddell Institute	Calabar	1895
9.	C.M.S.	Abeokuta Grammar School	Abeokuta	1908
10.	Government	King's College (First Government Secondary School In Nigeria)	Lagos	1909
11.	Private African Institute	Eko Boy's High School	Lagos	1913
12.	C.M.S.	Ibadan Grammar School	Ibadan	1913
13.	C.M.S.	Ijebu-Ode Grammar School	Ijebu-Ode	1913
14.	R.C.M.	St. Mary's Convent	Lagos	1913
15.		Latori High School	Abeokuta	1920
16.		General Murtala Mohammed College	Yola	1920
17.		R. College	Zaire	1921
18.		Teacher's College (The First Secondary School in the Northern Region)	Kastina	1921/2
19.	Baptist	Baptist Boy's High School	Abeokuta	1923
20.	Methodist	Methodist Boy's High School	Uzoakoli	1923
21.		Duke Town Secondary School	Calabar	1924
22.		Dennis Memorial Grammar School	Onisha	1925
23.		Government Girl's Secondary School	Dada, Kano	1927
24.	R.C.M	St. Gregory's College	Obalende, Lagos	1928
25.		St. Charles Teacher Training College	Onitsha	1928
26.		Ibusa Colege	Ibusa	1928
27.		U.M.C. Ibadan	Ibadan	1928
28.		Teacher's College	Toro	1929

29.	Government	Government College	Umuahia	1929
30	Government	Government College	Ibandan	1929
31	Government	Government Secondary School	Dekina	1931
32		Teacher's College	Bauchi	1931
33		Teacher's College	Ihia	1932
34.		Iruekpen Grammar School	Iruekpen	1932
35.		Aggrey Memorial Secondary School	Arochukwu	1932
36.		Igbobi College	Yaba, Lagos	1983
37.		St. Theresa's College	Ibadan	1932
38.		Oduduwa College	Ile-Ife	1932
39.		Baptist Women's College	Abeokuta	1933
40.		Community Secondary School	Ohizeyin O.	1933
41	C.M.S	Christ's School	Ado-Ekiti	1933
42		Government Teacher's College	Gindiri	1934
43.		Holy Rosary College	Enugu	1935
44.		C.A.C. Secondary Commercial High School	Ilesa	1935
45		Girl's Vocational Training Centre	Umuahia	1937
46.		St. Thoma's Teacher Training College	Ogoja	1937
47.		Teacher Training College	Ifuho	1937
48.		Teacher's College	Muman	1937
49.		Women Teacher's College	Umuahia	1937
50.		Edo College	Benin City	1937
51.		St. Patricks College	Ikot Ansa	1938
52.		Women Teacher's College	Kaltungo	1938
53.		Teacher's College	Kangoro, Jema	1939

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Similarly, the church in Nigeria has more established Universities than any other religious bodies, even though the Pentecostal churches have the largest chunk. The following Christian Universities are owned by Christian churches and ministries in Nigeria²⁹ as of December, 2023:

1. Ajayi Crowther University - Anglican Communion of Nigeria
2. Anchor University - Deeper Life Bible Church
3. Babcock University - 7th Day Adventist
4. Bingham University - Evangelical Churches Winning All (ECWA)
5. Benson Idahosa University - Church of God Mission
6. Bishop Godfrey Okoye University-Catholic Dioecese of Enugu
7. Bowen University - Nigerian Baptist Convention
8. Caritas University - Rev Fr Ede
9. Catholic University of Nigeria (Veritas) - Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria
10. Covenant University - World Mission Agency (WMA) of the Living Faith Church.
11. Dominion University, Ibadan, Oyo State - Victory International Church (Rehoboth Cathedral).
12. Gregory University Uтуру (Catholic Church)
13. Crawford University - Apostolic Faith Mission
14. Joseph Ayo Babalola University - Christ Apostolic Church
15. Kings University (Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo)
16. Landmark University-WMA of the Living Faith Church
17. Madonna University - Rev Fr Ede
18. McPherson University-Foursquare Gospel Church
19. Mountain Top University - Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries
20. Obong University - Church of Christ Nigeria
21. Pan African University-Opus Dei
22. Redeemers University of Nations - Redeemed Christian Church of God
23. Rhema University - Living Word Ministries
24. Salem University - Foundation Faith Church
25. Samuel Adegboyega University-The Apostolic Church
26. St Paul's University College - Anglican Convention (Eastern Nigeria)
27. Tansian University - Rev Msgr John Bosco Akam
28. Trinity University - Babawande Majekodunmi.
29. Evangel University - Assemblies of God, Nigeria

²⁹ New Man (2023). full list of church and ministry owned universities in nigeria.
<https://www.thenewman.org.ng/2021/03/nigerian-church-universities.html>

30. Kings University(Land of Dreams)-Kingsway International Christian Centre
31. Precious Cornerstone University-Sword of the Spirit Ministries
32. Hezekiah University-Living Christ Mission
33. St Augustine University-Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos.
34. Clifford University, Owerinta, Abia - Seventh Day Adventist
35. Dominican University, Ibadan - Order of Preachers, Nigerian Dominican Community (Catholic).
36. Spiritan University Nneochi, Abia State - The Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans), Province of Nigeria South East (Catholic).
37. University of Mkar - Church of Christ in Sudan among the Tivs (NKST)
38. Wesley University of Science and Technology-Methodist Church Nigeria

The following proposed Christian Universities awaiting license as at January, 2019

1. WEBIC University - The Word Evangelical Bible Church
2. Monarch University - Christ Royal Family International
3. Proposed University - WMA of the Living Faith Church
4. CROWN University - WMA of the Living Faith Church
5. Proposed University - Daystar Christian Centre
6. Moses Orimolade University - Cherubim and Seraphim
7. Proposed University - Fountain of Life Church
8. Proposed University - Christian Pentecostal Mission
9. Victory University - Cherubim and Seraphim
10. Zion University - Dr Akin Olowokere
11. Pacesetters University - Salvation Ministries
12. CHOSEN University - The Lord's Chosen Charismatic Renewal Ministries
13. Rock University - Watchman Catholic Charismatic Ministries
14. Proposed University - House on the Rock
15. TWBC University - The Word Bible Church

Whereas there are only five Islamic-owned Universities in Nigeria³⁰:

1. Fountain University, Osun , Osogbo
2. Al-Qalam University, katsina
3. Crescent University, Abeokuta, Ogun State
4. Al-Hikmah University.
5. Summit University, Offa, Kwara State

³⁰ <https://www.legit.ng/education/1568976-full-list-islamic-owned-universities-nigeria/>

What is more, Christianity has contributed substantially to national development in many other areas that are too numerous to mention. The underlisted are just a few:

1. Preservation through the writing of major Nigerian languages (Yoruba, Ibo, Efik, Nupe, Hausa, etc.) thus creates linguistic homogeneity. For instance, we have what is called “the union Ibo,” into which the Bible was translated and synthesised into three major indistinguishable dialects. This became a bond unifying the third-largest West African tribe. (Ivorgbe, 2006; cited in Ayandele, 1966).
2. They also facilitated the social and moral development of the Nigerian people.
3. They made the administration create law and order in place of intertribal wars and anarchy. They ensured the suppression of abominable crimes repugnant to Christian morality, like Mary Slessor did in the abolition of the killing of twins in the eastern part of Nigeria (see Ivorgbe, 2006)
4. They also facilitated mobility by ensuring the safety of travel without the risk of being enslaved in Yorubaland, Iboland, or elsewhere in Nigeria.
5. They also contributed to social and moral regeneration through churches and schools, as well as preventing the demoralisation of society.
6. Apart from primary and secondary schools, the Christian missionaries established other training institutions for human development in Nigeria.
7. It helps to develop science and technology.
8. Christianity promotes peace, unity, and love in Nigeria.
9. One significant contribution of Christianity to Nigeria's growth has been the creation of human capital. The missionaries founded industrial schools to teach the impoverished Africans a variety of skills because they were worried about their liberation. According to Nwankiti (1996, cited in Asadu, 2021): “The first industrial school was established in Abeokuta in 1851 ... the first students who were sent abroad by CMS went to study brick and tile making, navigation, horticulture, and industrial management. (p. 39)”.
10. The missionaries took agriculture very seriously and educated the Africans on commercial farming.
11. Hospitals were built, pipe-borne water and light were provided, etc.

It should be noted that the Christian missionaries made enormous financial sacrifices altruistically, not only to convert the heathens but also to educate them without government assistance. According to Osokoya (1989:60, cited in George Asadu, 2021), until 1865, education received no assistance from the government. ‘It was only in the year 1872 that colonial masters made available the sum of 30 pounds to each mission society involved in education activities in Lagos’.

Recommendations

Governments at all levels should respect human dignity as laid down by Christian missionaries.

The government should return schools to their original owners. Since the government’s takeover of schools, the standard of education has failed, and the quality of products from these schools has lowered drastically.

The government should support and encourage Christian organisations financially to execute their projects that will engender national development.

The government should allot land to the church for developmental projects, as this will enable Christianity to work for the maximum impartation in the lives of Nigerian citizens (Asadu, 2021).

The Christian Bible should be used as a standard of judgement in the workplace.

The government should replace secular education with Christian education to have a better and more progressive nation.

Instead of utilising coercion, religious propagandists can take a cue from Christians and package their religions in a way that appeals to the masses.

Since Christian education is our root and a tool for national development, there is an urgent need to go back to it. This will help solve the present national problems that bedevil Nigeria. Christian education is the panacea to our educational problem; it makes education relevant and functional to the needs and aspirations of the people. Let us go back to the ancient landmarks because God is the foundation of Christian education (1Cohr 4:22; Prov 23:10–12).

The government and adherents of Christianity should follow the dictates of the Bible and see the Bible as the source textbook for all subjects.

Conclusion

This research work has attempted to portray the contributions of Christianity to the development of Nigeria, particularly in the area of education. The work, however, revealed the giant strides Christianity has made in other areas, such as healthcare, language and human development, moral and spiritual development, etc. Considering the huge contributions of Christianity to human capital development, language development, education, agriculture, health care, the economy, the maintenance of peace, and moral and spiritual development, this author is bold to say that Christianity is real and true. Christianity is ideal because its fundamental teachings are impeccable and life-changing. The study discovered that Christianity has had more remarkable and indelible impacts in Nigeria than any other religion. Thus, Christianity should be preserved and embraced because it is the only religion that can be considered a *metareligion* whose founder is alive and the only religion whose adherents are not troublemakers; they cannot force people to accept the founder's way of life. Christianity is real, Christianity is genuine, Christianity is true, Christianity is life, and Christianity is the way to go in educational development and nation-building.

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Notes on contributor

Pastor Dele Alaba Ilesanmi, DIP. (DPIT), OND (FIN. STD.), HND (B&F), B.Ed. (Ed. Mgmt.), PGDE (Soc.Sc. Ed.), HFC, SOD, PGDM, PGDTh., M.A., and Ph.D.) has been a lecturer at the Redeemed Christian Bible College (Satellite Campus) for over 15 years now and an Assistant Research Professor at Testament Theological Seminary (online) with expertise in Biblical Research and Christian Education with a special interest in Biblical Christian Educational Learning Theory and Practice (a field he is currently pioneering), Christian Education, Biblical Theory, and Theology. He is a pastor and teacher of the Word. He is a product of different learning institutions, such as Ekiti Parapo College, Ido-Ekiti, Federal Polytechnic, Offa, Lead City University, Ibadan, University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Redeemed Christian Bible College (main campus, Mowe, Ogun State, and Miracle Campus, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State), Northwestern Christian University, Florida, USA, etc. As of 2023, he has over 70 publications to his credit, including eight books and Christian research articles published in different reputable and registered journals and websites. Some of these works can be found on Google Scholar, Research Gate, Zenodo, Figshare, OSF, *ChristoPress: Journal of Christian Education and Biblical Research*, *African Journal of Kingdom Education*, *Mature: Journal of the International Institute of Christian Theologians*, *Scholars*,

and Professionals, etc. His bestseller is *Globalising True Education: A Divine Mandate*. In 2023, he developed four theories of learning for effective teaching and learning in biblical Christian (theological) education. The theories are theologogy, christogogy, pneumagogy, and bibliogogy. He is an editor of two peer-reviewed journals: the African Journal of Kingdom Education and the Mature Journal of the International Institute of Christian Theologians, Scholars, and Professionals. He serves as the President and CEO of ChristoPress Institute for Christian Education and Biblical Research (CICEBR), an online-based research institute. **To connect with this author: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4874-0759>; pstdeileisanmi3@gmail.com; +234-08062197040**