

The Role of Contemporary Christian Organizations in the Development of Mass Communication in Nigeria: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

The main aim of 'real' religion is development. This paper is a study of the contributions of contemporary Christian organizations in Nigeria to the development of Mass Communication in the country and in effect, their contributions to overall national development. Religious organizations have always in their various ways strived to contribute to national development. However, until recently, the contribution could not be said to be remarkable or significant in terms of helping to address issues of national needs. They were not able to make impactful contribution to national development due to regulatory constraints and their participation in developmental activities remained relatively dormant. A number of Christian organizations in the last few years have however contributed to recorded development in the Mass communication industry. While highlighting the various modes that the contribution has taken, the paper attempts to situate the various developmental roles of selected Christian organizations to the print and broadcast subsectors of mass communication in the general framework of development in Nigeria. The paper concludes that while the selected Christian organizations engage the print and electronic media in propagating their religious values, they actively contribute to growth in the advertising industry, training and education, employment generation and promotion of reading culture among others. Contributions to these indices of development make for agreement that these organizations have made input and are still contributing to national development through involvement in the media subsector.

Keywords: religious organizations, publications, development, contributions

Introduction

The Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism (WIN-Gallup International, 2012) places Nigeria in the second position among the world's most religious countries, coming only after Ghana, another African country. The WIN-Gallup International study, which set out to measure people's self-perception on beliefs, surveys 50,000 men and women in 57 countries. Among its findings is that the better off people are, the less religious they become globally. This conclusion is based on data, which show that while 66% of those in the bottom quintile or low income group consider themselves as religious people, only 49% of people in the high quintile or high income bracket see themselves as religious. Meanwhile, the index also show that while the average global drop in religiosity level in 7 years was 9%, Nigerians have been consistently religious from 2005 to 2012, as there is only 1% drop in the level of religiosity in the country in these 7 years. That Nigeria ranks second in the world in religiosity – which may be consistent with the fact that it belongs to the group of economically worse off countries – and that its people have remained consistently religious within the past 7 years only corroborate submissions that religion has been an important factor in the country's socio-political and economic history. The important role of religion among the Nigerian national population is played out particularly in the context of identity. Religious identity is one of the most salient in Nigeria; and as people identify themselves as either Christians, Muslims or traditional religion practitioners, their chosen identities reflect on their social, political and economic relationship with others in their immediate environment. Competition for political and economic resources is often based on religious identities and most times divisions on religious and ethnic lines have been responsible for major overt conflicts among the population (Robert et al, 2009). However, religious or faith based organizations (FBOs), especially Christian organizations in recent times, have come to be an integral and, most importantly, prominent part of the social reality of Nigeria and their proliferation is having noticeable impact on the pattern of development in the country. Christian organizations, it has been observed, actively engage in activities that are primarily targeted at spreading messages about the values and tenets of the religion, using available means of mass information. It is in this background that their activities have directly and indirectly been contributing to national development, vis-à-vis development of mass communication.

Theoretical Perspectives

Development theory as a conglomeration of theories about how desirable change in society is best achieved has drawn on a variety of social scientific disciplines and approaches. The two main directions have been historical and economic. Exponents of modernization theory which falls under the historical direction tend to uphold the view that development comes to underdeveloped countries when they are aided by developed ones. While modernization theory takes development and underdevelopment to be the outcome of internal and external conditions that differentiate one economy from another, dependency theory sees development and underdevelopment as relational, since rich nations are the core which, dominate the periphery, i.e. the poor ones that provide cheap labor and raw materials to the rich countries (Rostow, 1960).

Dependency theory advocates that to develop, underdeveloped countries must break ties with developed ones and pursue their own internal growth through policies that will enable them keep their foreign exchange reserves. Obstacles to the import substitution policy that was seen as the panacea for the problems of poor nations led to a little more creative and historical look at the relationship between rich and poor countries, more so since dependency theorists have concluded that poorer nations are in that state because they were late in adopting solid and modern economic practices. This thinking produced the world system theory, which argued that the persisting poverty in poor nations was a result of the evolution of the international political economy into a fairly rigid division of labor which favored the rich and penalized the poor (Ferraro 1996).

Introducing a triadic approach for the understanding of the relationship between the rich and poor nations, the world systems theory added a third component to the core and periphery. The introduction of the semi-periphery component was an attempt to explain why there could be some form of industrialization in less developed countries, holding that industrialization cannot be equated with development. Dependency theory leads to certain conclusions: that there are dominant and dependent states; that external forces are of singular importance to economic activities within the dependent states; these external forces include multinational corporations, international commodity markets, foreign assistance, communications, and any other means by which the advanced industrialized countries can represent their economic interests abroad; that relations between dominant and dependent states are dynamic because the interactions between them reinforce as well as intensify the existing inequality (Bodenheimer, 1971 cited in Ferraro 1996).

Dependency theory attempts to explain the present underdeveloped state of many nations in the world by examining the patterns of interactions among nations and by arguing that inequality among nations is an intrinsic part of those interactions. It is consistent with the theory of uneven and combined development credited to Leon Trotsky, which supports the view that the advanced capitalist nations are determined to maintain their dominance in the global economy. Any economic aid they give to an “underdeveloped” country will not be allowed to make their economies competitive with those of advanced capitalist countries, but rather to make them develop in a manner that is in harmony with the needs of the advanced capitalist countries - which means, in a sense, to keep them under-developed. The investments of business corporations from advanced capitalist countries are not designed to facilitate genuine modernization but to maximize profits for the businesses of the advanced countries. This explains why, for instance, U.S. political and economic interests preferred repressive regimes that would guarantee “stability” and higher profit margins (Le Blanc, 2005).

For many decades, [neo-classical] development strategies offered promises of a better life to millions of Africans through the classic instruments of state-building and economic growth. That vision however lost its appeal to most Africans in the 1970s and 1980s. Changes in world economic patterns such as inflation, rising oil prices, easy loans coupled with massive debts, and the beginning of the knowledge economy generally acted in disfavor for Africa. The World Bank and IMF’s suggested remedy of structural adjustment turned out to be a disaster. Consequently, many Africans now think about progress more in terms rooted in the continent’s longer history, in which religion has always played a public role. The challenge, then, is to create a new phase of development, this time based not on experts’ plans but on social realities – on life as it is actually lived.

The prevalent condition of perpetual dichotomy between the rich and poor nations despite all efforts aimed at closing the gap has led to an observation that development must take account of the worldview of the intended beneficiaries. Effective development can take place only if policy formulation and implementation take the ways in which people think about the world, and about their place in it, as a starting point (Ellis and ter Haar, 2007).

Religion always begins in an experience that an individual has or that a small group of people shares. It originates in an attempt to represent and order beliefs, feelings, imaginings and actions that arise in response to direct experience of the sacred and the spiritual. As this attempt expands in its formulation and elaboration, it becomes a process that creates meaning for itself on a sustaining basis, in terms of both its originating experiences and its own continuing responses (Connelly, 1996).

Whatever else religion is taken to be, it is a way of thinking about the world and reality in the broadest sense and for this reason it has a role to play in development, a process that must be assimilated into people’s ideas about their relation to the past and the future of their societies. Ellis and ter Haar (2007) have argued that

religion now forms the most important connection between sub-Saharan Africa with the rest of the world. It is a key element in the thinking of most Africans and it is increasingly evident in the public realm and politics, with political and government leaders publicly proclaiming to be Islamists or born again Christians.

Given this kind of situation, religion is beginning to receive attention as a potential agent of development. Attention has been drawn to the need to consider the future of development in Africa within the scope of a wider shift from a narrowly economic paradigm of development to a broader one, which includes spiritual and religious dimensions.

According to the UNDP, human development:

Is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests. People are the real wealth of nations. Development is thus about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value. And it is thus about much more than economic growth, which is only a means —if a very important one —of enlarging people’s choices. (UNDP, 2010)

This being the case, development needs to take religion into account, more so, since serving as the basis of the world view of many people in Africa, religion is known to provide a powerful motivation for action. With this background, an identification of the role of religion in development can start from the level of what is already being achieved or gained as a result of activities embarked upon by religious organizations without recourse to external aid.

The issue under discussion is of contemporary relevance. But contemporary issues often make greater sense if placed in historical perspective. For this reason, a brief account of the communication activities of Christian organizations that played key roles in the development of journalism in Nigeria from 1859 to 2000 is considered appropriate here. The perspective is presented under two historical periods: First Generation Christian Publications and Contemporary Christian Publications.

First Generation Christian Publications

The year 1859 marks not only the beginning of religious journalism in Nigeria, but also the birth of newspaper journalism in the country. In that year, *Iwe Irohin*, Nigeria’s first newspaper was published in Abeokuta by the Reverend Henry Townsend. Before this development, another missionary, the Reverend Hope Waddell of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland Mission, had in 1846, established a commercial printing press in Calabar. From this period till the time of Nigeria’s independence in 1960, many newspapers and magazines were published by different Christian organizations (Akinfeleye, 1985). Below is a tabulated summary.

Table 1: Some Selected First-Generation Christian Publications in Nigeria

Name of Publication	Founding Date	Ownership	Language of Publication
<i>Iwe-Irohin Yoruba</i>	1859	C.M.S Church Mission Society (Anglican) or Church of England	Yoruba & English Language
<i>Unwana Efik</i>	1885	Presbyterian Church of Scotland	Efik
<i>Obukpon Efik</i>	1886	Presbyterian Church of Scotland	Efik
<i>Old Calabar Observer</i>	1902	Presbyterian Church of Scotland	English
<i>African Church Gleamer</i>	1917	(ACON) African Church Organization of Nigeria	English
<i>Leisure Hours</i>	1918	CMS Church Mission Society of Nigeria (Anglican)	English
<i>African Hope</i>	1919	African Church Organization (ACON)	English
<i>Nigerian Baptist</i>	1923	Nigerian Baptist Convention	Bi-Lingual (English & Yoruba)
<i>Nigerian Methodist</i>	1925	Methodist	English
<i>African Christian</i>	1930	African Church Organization	English
<i>African Chronicle</i>	1930	African Church Organization	English
<i>African Challenge</i>	1934	Sudan Interior Mission (SIM)	English
<i>Catholic Life</i>	1936	Roman Catholic Church	English & Latin

Source: Adapted from Akinfeleye (1985)

Among other roles, the religious organizations that operated in the 19th and 20th centuries contributed to the development of Mass Communication in Nigeria in many ways: As noted by Ajibade (2003):

- They motivated other publishers and printers to establish similar publications in various parts of the country.

- They helped to meet the information needs of people literate in English.
- They trained or made room for the training of indigenous printers in Nigeria. The printers so trained became the human resource backbone of the print media.
- The newspapers covered politics, culture, religion, economy, agriculture, mission schools and tribal wars. By so doing they helped the economy to grow in several ways.
- Due to the close relationship that existed between the missions and their schools, they promoted such schools through their media. They also tried to educate their readers in several ways.
- They made efforts to develop in Nigerians the habit of reading, which is still a major problem today. In Duyile's account (1987:6), Townsend wrote: "My object is to get the people to read; to beget the habit of seeking information by reading. It is very difficult".

Only a few changes occurred in the role performed by Christian religious organizations throughout the 20th Century in the development of mass communication in Nigeria. The noted changes have been in the areas of introduction of color printing, focus on purely religious affairs and shift from newspaper to magazines.

Extant studies on the first generation Christian publications reported little or nothing about circulation figures, a factor very crucial in determining the influence of publications. Also, they shied away from the broadcast media probably because of the constitutional limitations discussed in subsequent segments. Thirdly, they omitted relevant contributions of book publishing houses which also published magazines or developed and translated local languages, thereby paving the way for newspaper and magazine publishing in those languages. The current study will attempt to address some of these issues.

Contemporary Christian Organizations and Publications

Unlike the early period, there are many Christian organizations in Nigeria today. Most of these organizations also engage in various forms of publication activities such as production of newspapers, magazines and books. These organizations and their publications include the following:

CONTEMPORARY ORGANIZATIONS	CONTEMPORARY PUBLICATIONS
Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA)	<i>Today's Challenge</i>
Catholic Church	<i>Nigerian Catholic Herald</i>
The Apostolic Faith	<i>Higherway</i>
The Jehova's Witnesses	<i>Awake</i>
Foursquare – Gospel Church	<i>Good News</i>
Deeper Life Bible Church	<i>Christian Women Mirror</i>
Deeper Life Bible Church	<i>Life</i>
Living Faith Ministries	<i>Winners World</i>
Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)	<i>Redemption Light</i> -
Mountain of Fire Ministry	<i>Fire in the World</i>
Deeper Life Bible Church	<i>Tender Life</i>
Deeper Life Bible Church	<i>Youth Life</i>
Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)	<i>Redemption Testimonies</i>

From the various organizations identified three are purposively selected for this study. These are:

- Bible Society of Nigeria, BSN (Non-denominational society)
- The Redeemed Christian Church of God, RCCG (Church)
- The Deeper Life Bible Church, DLBC (Church)

The three are selected because they are leading Christian religious organizations with presence in all states of the Nigerian federation and widely circulated publications.

Findings regarding their roles in the development of mass communication and inferentially in national development are presented under ten subheadings as follows:

Magazine Publishing

The Christian organizations, especially the churches, publish magazines that can be described as standard ones in terms of quality of writing, quality of production and consistency over time. Seven magazines are credited to the Redeemed Christian Church of God and Deeper Life Bible Church alone.

Table 2: Contemporary Magazines published by the selected organizations

S/N	TITLE	PUBLISHER	FREQUENCY/ CIRCULATION FIGURE
1.	<i>Redemption Light</i>	RCCG	Monthly (10,000)
2.	<i>Redemption Testimonies</i>	RCCG	Monthly (5,000)
3.	<i>Christian Women Mirror</i>	Deeper Life	Monthly (530,000)
4.	<i>Tender Life (Children)</i>	Deeper Life	Bi-Monthly (NA)
5.	<i>Youth Life (Youth)</i>	Deeper Life	Bi-Monthly (NA)
6.	<i>Campus Pearl (undergraduates)</i>	Deeper Life	Bi-Monthly (NA)
7.	<i>Life Magazine (Adult)</i>	Deeper Life	Monthly (80,000)

An examination of the listed titles reveals that there is evidence of professionalism in the writing and production of the magazines. In terms of consistency, *Redemption Light* and *Redemption Testimonies* were published first in 1997 and have since appeared monthly without a break. Neither are they published with any form of subvention. The *Christian Women Mirror* appeared first in 1992 with initial circulation figure of 30,000 copies and by 2006 it had attained a monthly circulation of 530,000 (*New Africa* October 2006, No. 455). By circulation, the *Christian Women Mirror* is probably the largest circulating monthly magazine in Africa. It is also read across denominations. This modifies the claim of Ajibade (2003) that contemporary religious publications are less influential. They may not dabble into politics but circulation figures of 10,000, 80,000 and 530,000 are significant enough to suggest that they are influential in their areas of focus. While *Redemption Light* is positioned for men and women, the *Christian Women Mirror* and the *Life* are positioned for adult women and men respectively.

Role in Local Language Publishing

The Bible Society of Nigeria, (BSN), an organization established to champion the cause of Bible publishing in local languages, has published in more Nigerian Languages than any other publisher in the country. It has published the Bible in the under listed formats and languages:

S/N	FORMAT	NO OF LOCAL LANGUAGES
1.	Complete Bible	13
2.	The New Testament	51
3.	Portions of the Bible	97
4.	Cassette	NA
5.	Braille	NA
6.	Children's Picture Bible	Series

Source: BSN

The breakdown is as follows:

Complete Bible in Nigerian Languages

1.	Hausa Bible	Large Print	Small Print
2.	Igbo Bible	Large Point	Small Print
3.	Yoruba Bible	Large Print Multi-lingual	Small print
4.	Igala Bible	-	Small Print
5.	Ijaw Bible	-	Small Print
6.	Ffulde Bible	-	Small Print
7.	Efik Bible	-	Small Print
8.	Isoko Bible	-	Small Print
9.	Boky Bible	-	Small Print
10.	Urhobo Bible	-	Small Print
11.	Nupe Bible	-	Small Print
12.	Kana Ogoni Bible	-	Small Print
13.	Tiv Bible	-	-
14.	Arabic Bible for northerners who are literate in Arabic	NA	NA

Source: BSN

New Testament Translations:

1.	Itsekiri New Testament
2.	Tangale New Testament
3.	Idowu New Testament
4.	Ebira New Testament
5.	Igede New Testament
6.	Irohin Ayo New Testament
7.	Bura New Testament
8.	Edo New Testament
9.	Rubassa New Testament
10.	Margi New Testament

Source: BSN

Standardization and translation of local languages are key to newspapers, books and magazines publishing in those languages for obvious reasons. We, therefore consider this particularly very fundamental in the study. The *Christian Women Mirror* is published in eight languages – English, French, Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Efik and Twi (a Ghanaian Language) as well as Swahili (Ankemah, 2006). The Concord Group of newspapers was the only conventional Nigerian media publishing house that attempted to publish extensively in local languages but it could not survive. These Christian organizations however seem to have come to stay in the various local languages in which they publish, be it book or magazine.

Role in Newspaper Publishing

Neither the *RCCG* nor the *DLBC* publishes a newspaper. The Bible Society publishes neither newspaper nor magazine but often prints and distributes leaflets and tracts. Christian newspapers are yet to survive in Contemporary Nigeria and the reasons are not far fetched: The financial cost of issuing a daily or weekly newspaper is prohibitive just as doctrinal issues may restrict the readership. There have been a few experiments. Aniete Ussen, a former *Newswatch* editor, published *Alive*, an evening Christian religious newspaper, between 1998 and 2000. Publications like *Endtime Journal*, *Signs of the Time* and *Body and Soul* have made brief appearances in Lagos but none appeared with as much promise as *Alive*.

Role in Printing

Redemption Light is printed in-house and sometimes by outside printers. In fact each of the three surveyed organizations has printing facilities ranging from simple offset press with Kord 64 machine to sophisticated multi-colour printers, as is the case at *Life Press*. A major difference between the early presses and the contemporary ones is that the contemporary ones keep themselves busy with in-house jobs without interest in commercial printing services. They rather sometimes, contract their printing jobs to commercial printing houses when they are unable to handle all assignments. The account published by *New Africa* shows that “Life Press established its own print-shop in 1978” to avoid disappointment from contracted outside printers who would not deliver jobs on time.

Another way in which they support the printing industry is by patronage. A good number of printers, who print Devotional Guides for Christian Organizations depend on them for a sizeable chunk of their incomes. The following devotional guides are produced quarterly, annually or biannually:

S/N	TITLE	PUBLISHER	FREQUENCY
1.	<i>Open Heaven</i>	RCCG	Annual
2.	<i>Daily Guide</i>	Sanittance Umon	Annual
3.	<i>Higher Everyday</i>	DLBC	Quarterly
4.	<i>Daily Manna</i>	DLBC	Bi-annual
5.	<i>Our Daily Bread</i>	RBC Ministries	Quarterly
6.	<i>Rhapsody of Realities</i>	Christ Embassy	Quarterly
7.	<i>The Word for Today</i>	Grace So Amazing Foundation	Quarterly

Hundreds of thousands of some of these publications are printed quarterly, annually or bi-annually. And the cost runs into multiples of millions.

Role in Broadcasting

Religious organizations in Nigeria do not have the enabling environment to make meaningful contribution to the development of broadcasting. It is therefore to their credit that they are able to play significant role in this sub-sector of the communications industry.

Section 10 of Decree No. 38 of 1992, which established the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), prohibits the granting of broadcast license to religious organizations. Section 39 of the 1999 constitution also

provides that:

- I. Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference.
- II. Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) of this section, every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions.

Provided that no person, other than the Government of the Federation or of a state or any other person or body authorized by the president, on the fulfillment of conditions laid down by an Act of the National Assembly, shall own, establish or operate a television or wireless broadcasting station for any purpose whatsoever.

In order not to violate these constitutional provisions, Christian organizations resort to the production of cassettes, audio CDs, DVD and independently produced programs aired through other broadcast stations. In 2003, the Deeper Life Bible Church introduced live broadcasts for its programs:

By December 2003, all the 36 states of Nigeria and 10 regions in Ghana were covered. Broadcasts of the Monday Evening Bible Studies started to go on this medium in early 2004... Now even non- Deeper Life Churches are connected to the Bible Studies by satellite and on the Internet.

(*New Africa*, October 2006)

A web-casting unit has been set-up to stream important messages live on the Internet at www.deeperlifeonline.org and to create online video message archives where viewers may watch or download after the broadcast. Transmission can take place from any place in Africa, both indoor and through outside broadcasts without the aid of a broadcast station. The RCCG, through Live Way Broadcasting Organization also streams live its Holy Ghost Service and other national programs through the Internet.

It is estimated that several hundreds of thousands of tapes and audio CDs are distributed annually by the Redeemed Christian Church of God while Life Tapes Ltd, owned by Deeper Life Bible Church, distributes 80,000 tapes and CDs monthly. The Bible Society of Nigeria is not left out in the area of electronic communications. It produces the Bible in tapes for various local language groups. It is possible that some other Christian organizations not covered in this study have equally made similar contributions.

Today in Nigeria, numerous Christian religious programs are aired weekly on radio and TV stations in the southern part of Nigeria. These programs range from lunch-hour shows to morning exhortations, morning-prayer programs and Sunday sermons. In a way, these broadcasts enrich the programs offering of the stations and attract listeners and viewers.

We may therefore summarize the role of Christian organizations in broadcasting as follows:

	Organization	Product/Programme
1.	Bible Society of Nigeria	Local Production of Cassettes
2.	Redeemed Christian Church of God	Local Production of Cassettes Local Production of CDs Radio, TV Programs, webcasting of the Holy Ghost Services
3.	Deeper Life Bible Church	In-house production of cassettes In-house production of CDs Weekly Satellite Transmission. Weekly Web-casting (Global) Online video messages archive

Role in Advertising

It has been widely acknowledged that early Christian publications advanced the cause of professional advertising in several ways. The contemporary ones are not doing any less. The three sampled organizations support the media industry through advertising patronage. In fact, the Redeemed Christian Church of God could be described as a heavy advertiser in the sense that many of its local churches in different parts of the country advertise frequently in various media. Programs advertised include the *Holy Ghost Service*, the annual Congress, Conventions, Crusades and Special Services. They patronize outdoor advertising companies by renting 40-sheet, unipole and other billboard sizes for their outdoor posters. The Bible Society of Nigeria recently adopted *outdoor* corporate advertising to enable the public to understand its mission and services. The Deeper Life Bible Church announces all its retreats, Africa-wide crusades and special programs through newspaper and radio advertisements.

Role in Training and Education

Whereas Townsend and Hope Waddel trained printers and writers on the job, the contemporary ministries and missions are adding a new dimension to journalism education and training. On the one hand, they train their

employees informally through a series of in-house programs and formally by sponsoring them on part time or full time training courses within and outside the country. On the other hand, some establish universities with departments of Mass Communication. A typical example is Redeemer’s University which has a reputable degree program in Mass Communication. It is noteworthy that the following Christian organizations, not necessarily within our sample, have universities with Mass Communication departments.

Table 3: Christian Organizations with universities offering Mass Communication

ORGANIZATION	PROGRAMME/INSTITUTION
1. The Seventh Day Adventist Church	Babcock University (Mass Communication Department)
2. The Redeemed Christian Church of God	Redeemer’s University (Mass Communication Department)
3. The Anglican Communion	Ajayi Crowther University (Mass Communication Department)
4. The Catholic Church	Caritas University (Mass Comm.)
5. The institute of Ecumenical Studies	Madonna University (Mass Communication)
6. Tansian Christian Organization	Tansian University (Mass Communication)
7. The Evangelical Church of West Africa ECWA	Bingham University (Mass Communication)
8. Winners Chapel	Covenant University

List not exhaustive

In addition, these organizations receive students from other Universities for internship, industrial training or attachment, or the National Youth Service Corps programme. All these constitute relevant training experiences for the interns or Corps members and help in no small measure to produce the much-needed communication skills.

Employment

It is not clear what the staff strength of Hope Waddel’s press was. Neither do we have information on *Iwe Irohin’s* staff strength. Whatever the case, it is unarguable that they employed some Nigerians. Contemporary Christian organizations seem to employ more professionals, especially those that hold university degrees. For instance, the Managing Editor of *Redemption Light* holds a Masters degree in Mass Communication and has other graduates under him. In fact, majority of the eleven full time employees are skilled communicators. The *Christian Women Mirror*, *Life Press*, *Life Tapes* and *Life Transmissions* employ over 150 Nigerians and create jobs for many people who market the tapes and publications. The BSN provides employment for linguists, graduates of Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and other Nigerian Languages. These highly skilled employees may be full-time or part-time staff and work as translators, writers and researchers.

Role in Promoting Reading Habits

The fact that many Nigerians hardly seek information by habitual reading has been emphasized by many communicators including Henry Townsend (Duyile, 1987; Sobowale et al, 2011). Where people find it difficult or unnecessary to read, newspaper, magazine and book publishing will suffer a serious setback (Okoye, 2004). These organizations realize that before they can pass across the gospel message through these media, they must first, like Townsend, help the people beget the habit of seeking information by reading and afterward provide the literature. Except this is done, we will see in Nigeria a replication of the Indian case, where it is said that “The missionaries have taught us to read, but the communists have given us the literature” (Hanks (2001:190). Hanks also writes that in the *Daily Mirror* of October 2, 1950 “attention was drawn to the distribution of literature by communists into the hands of the newly literate people of Nigeria. And therein lies the danger to the cause of Britain and the United Nations”.

The essence of alluding to these statements on reading habits is that the sampled organizations seem to be fully conscious of the danger of not causing literate people to seek information that would impact positively on their lives. So they encourage them to read and provide the magazines, books and devotional guides. The devotional guides ensure that the users read some portions of the Bible in addition to the guide on a daily basis. Deeper Life Bible Church has also introduced what they term book-of-the-month programme by which workers are made to read one selected title each month. They gather at the end of the month for a review of the book and to buy another title for the next month. Other churches have different ways of encouraging their members to read. It goes without saying that joining a Pentecostal Church in Lagos has become one sure way of returning to leisure reading. The Bible Society of Nigeria promotes reading among the blind by providing Braille editions of the Bible in Local languages and generally encourages reading among people who are not literate in English.

Export and Globalization

While African scholars are busy arguing for a more balanced world information order, some of these Christian organizations are busy balancing the order. The *Redemption Light* is read in the 120 Countries where the RCCG

has missionaries. One might argue that the Print-run of 10,000 is too low for significant impact, but the truth is that they only need to embark on wider circulation as they win more souls in those countries.

With the French, English, Twi and Swahili editions, the *Christian Women Mirror* reaches up to 44 countries in Africa. This explains in part why the monthly circulation figure is as high as 530,000. Through the Life Transmission Programme and Web-casting, Weekly messages are broadcast to viewers in 44 African countries and 16 others in Europe, Asia, South and North America.

Summary of Current Trends

- There is a clear shift from socio-political issues to core religious and motivational issues in terms of editorial focus.
- There is an increased effort to reach the ever-increasing Christian audience through radio and television programmes
- New media are being embraced to make up for limitations imposed by the constitution in the area of ownership of broadcast stations.
- From bi-lingual magazines and newspapers, we now have multi-lingual publications, some in up to seven languages.
- Missionary efforts of the organizations have made globalization attractive to Christian organizations who now distribute their publications in as many countries as they have missionary outreaches. This has positive economic and Public Relations implications for Nigeria.
- More and more women are getting involved in the writing, production and distribution of communication materials, unlike the situation in the 19th and 20th Century publications.

Conclusion

The contributions of contemporary Christian organizations to the development of mass communication is not only impactful but extensive. In terms of print and broadcast communication, advertising support, printing, local language development and publishing, global outreach, employment and manpower development, their influence is growing.

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