

BOOK REVIEW

a. Nicholas Ibeawuchi Omenka. **THE SCHOOL IN THE SERVICE OF EVANGELIZATION: THE CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL IMPACT IN EASTERN NIGERIA 1886—1950.** Leiden: Brill, 1989; 317 pages.

This book is a very detailed documentary exposition of the Nigerian history, particularly Eastern Nigerian, in its missionary setting, with special emphasis on the catholic educational impact in Eastern Nigeria (1886—1950).

Partially, the point at issue is the motives and the methods of the missionary movements. Whereas the protestants integrated the school (education) into the art of nation building, the catholics used education (schools) essentially as a medium of proselytization. This difference was reflected most prominently in the attitudes of the two confessions towards: (a) the provision of post primary education, which the catholics did not begin until of late, (b) the political formation of their adherents, and (c) the promotion of an independent local church. In all these the protestants were pioneers, the catholics only followed behind mainly because of pressure from the natives and the colonial government.

In using the school as the medium of proselytization the missionaries were inspired by the slogan, "whoever has the youth has the future" and also the exhortation of Pope Pius XII to the missionaries that "the youth in particular, who is as flexible as wax, can easily be educated to understand, value and accept catholic doctrines". The problems of the faith at the present time, namely: shallowness and lack of inculturation could be traced to this orientation towards the youth.

It is this and other issues that Omenka delicately handled in this book under seven chapters. The gradual development of catholic education in Eastern Nigeria 1886—1905, began with the years of experiments 1886—1899. The school began in a

very rudimentary way, being largely a quasi catechism class in which one father or brother did his best to communicate strange ideas to excited children in a language the children could hardly understand. Also basic instructions that are given infants in any normal school—reading, writing and arithmetic—were offered in 1886 in the Onitsha Wharf school.

The school was made up of abandoned children, orphans, refugees, outcasts and condemned criminals rescued by the missionaries, at these initial years. These also constituted the christian village.

In these early stages Fr. Leon A. Lejeune made a shift from a charity-oriented evangelism to a new missionary policy which emphasized labour and self-help. Some catholic adherents were alienated and this threatened the established schools. But by the beginning of the 20th century the schools were already firmly established as effective means of evangelization. There were out-stations and schools at Onitsha, Nsugbe, Aguleri and Ossomari.

In Chapter Three Omenka deals with the colonial and mission interests in education. The missionaries look upon schools as instruments for making converts, while the colonial masters or the government view them as instruments for making good and useful citizens. Though the missionaries have also in their mind the issue of character formation, discipline and the fear of God. The chief problem with the mission schools is the fight between the different denominations. This made some people, like Sir Ralph Moor, to think that government control of schools was the only sound system under which educational policy could be satisfactorily implemented, because they would drastically check the problem of having unqualified teachers or non-certificated teachers.

Since the first phase of catholic education in Eastern Nigeria was largely charity—oriented, the missionaries took care of everything concerning education. But this phase changed with the revolution of Fr. Lejeune, now people had to be involved. And since the missionaries were few in number catechist-teachers, drawn from the natives assumed paramount importance.

The working condition of the teachers was awful. It was generally acknowledged that the life of a teacher was one of

sacrifice and service. They were over controlled and supervised by the managers to the extent of creating manager-teacher tension. But a teacher in the mission era was no ordinary christian: he was more of a missionary than a school master. Possibly the service of the teacher-catechists may have improved if catholic schools were as assisted as protestant schools. However, the colonial government used the policy of assisting certain schools to check the standard of the schools operated by the missionaries.

Omenka portrays catholic educational polices in conflict with the colonial educational polices—1920—1950. In pursuing the principle of maintaining the standard of education and the quality of teachers the government set up in 1926 the following guidelines:

- (1) The registration of all teachers without which no person was allowed to teach in the schools of the colony and southern provinces:
- (2) The order to obtain government permission to open new schools and the right of the governor to close down those considered ineffective and unnecessary;
- (3) The fixing of minimum wages for teachers;
- (4) The creation of mission supervision of schools which received grants-in-aid;
- (5) The assurance of mission representatives on the Board of education.

Following the demands on numbers one and two, many village schools were shut down, and this affected the work of the missionaries. Nevertheless the catholic leaders were still ready to cooperate with the government.

In the issue of post-primary education, the catholics came very late on the scene. Infact they were afraid of what they called godless schools established by the government. They were however, forced to change their policy by the economic and political needs of the natives, who want the kind of education that will help them in their nationalist movement. The protestants were conscious of this nationalist demands in good

time and so they integrated nation building and politics in their education system right from the start. By the mid-20th century almost all the vital government offices were headed by protestants. As a reaction, to catch up with the protestants, the catholics began later to establish secondary and high schools.

In conclusion I would say that Omenka has done an indepth historical research on catholic education in Eastern Nigeria. He is quite objective and creative in his use of sources.

Educationists, historians and theologians will find this book very useful.

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b. Jude Ikenna Ibegbu. **NATIONALISATION OF SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA AND THE PARENTS' RIGHT TO THE CHOICE OF SCHOOL: A Moral Evaluation in the Light of Catholic Social Teaching.** (a Dissertation for Doctorate in Moral Theology). Rome: N. Domenici—Peuceux, 1991; 124 pages.

In his introduction Jude Ikenna Ibegbu explains that the right of parents to educate their children is at once original, primary and inalienable. This right involves a freedom to choose the mode and model of education they desire for their children. It is a right that requires the context of educational pluralism for its full expression. The author laments over the infringement of the parents' rights brought about by the nationalisation of schools in Nigeria which dates back to 1970. Chapters one and two of this dissertation which deal with the clarification of the concept of education and of the true educational agents respectively, are not published in this volume under review.

In chapter three Ibegbu argues that "the nationalization of schools by the Nigerian government which created educational monopoly is a violation of the primary educational right of the family and the family's right to choice of school, as these are upheld by official catholic teaching" (p. 19). How does he arrive at this conclusion? First, he makes a brief historical survey of the stages of Western education in Nigeria: