

The Changing Face of African Christianity within the Context of Historical and Contemporary Expansionism of Judaism, Christianity and Islam

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Abstract:

Historical war of the empires, violent religious and political conflicts, and persecutions of religious adherents inaugurate expansionism and enable the spread of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the world. The expansion of Christianity cannot be discussed without the Western-initiated missionary movement. The explosion of Christianity in twenty-first century Africa is a profound development that has transformed the world's largest religion. This calls for a paradigm of the hegemonic view that perceives Christianity as a product of imperialist expansion and Africans as passive recipients of the ecclesiastical concept of the western mind. The phenomenon that characterizes African Christianity involves movements that epitomize African creativity with its peculiar character, shape, and form called contextualization. This paper, using critical philosophical analysis and historical methodology examined the role played by the three religions in contemporary expansionism. It also discusses the key contributing factors of the massive growth of the church in Africa. The religions' roles activate the desire for spiritual, moral, and cultural influence over the entire world. The theologies of the religions' show God and His Character to the whole world. The African creativity to contextualize Christianity to local aspirations is commendable. But the expansionism of these religions should establish sustainable peace in the world, but the contrary is the case. This paper advocates peaceful co-existence for humanity in the growth of African Christianity.

Key Words: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, African Christianity, Conflicts, Expansionism, and Ecclesiastical Concept.

I. Introduction

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam were all born in the Middle East, called "Abrahamic religions," because they trace their history to the Biblical Abraham, and are inextricably linked to one another. Christianity was born from the Jewish tradition, Islam developed from both Judaism and Christianity. The three religions are the most influential in world history, and they all claim Jerusalem to be the holiest city in the Holy Land. While Judaism is not as large as Christianity and Islam, its impact on the world is still profound.

Palestine was home to the Jews and Judaism, Christians, and Christianity as well as Muslims and Islam. Palestine was situated at the hub of three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa. It covers a region of the Eastern Mediterranean Coast from the sea to the Jordan valley and from the southern Negev desert to the Galilee lake region in the north. Palestine though small was an important one that every power wanted to control; powers like Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Rome; each of them wanted to have a firm control of Palestine. Consequently, Palestine was involved in political and religious conflicts.

Jesus was born at this time of fractured and fractious political and religious environment in Palestine. The Jews believed that God was about to fulfill the messianic prophecies by sending the 'Messiah' to sweep away the wicked kingdoms of human sovereignty and filled the earth with righteousness. The people anticipated forceful conflicts with those in power, but Jesus said he did not come to destroy the wicked kingdoms of this world but the Kingdom of Satan. In the midst of Jesus demonstrating and declaring his mission, there was an inevitable conflict with the culture, religion, and politics of the Palestinian leaders. With the inception of Islam in the 7th

century A.D, the earliest community of Muslims saw itself in continuity with Jews and Christians. The Ottoman Turks, who were non-Arabs but religious Muslims, ruled the area for 400 years (1517-1917). Under the Ottoman rule, the Palestine region was attached administratively to the province of Damascus and ruled from Istanbul. The name Palestine was revived after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in World War I and applied to the territory in this region that was placed under the British Mandate for Palestine.¹ The name "Falastin" that Arabs today use for "Palestine" is not an Arabic name. It is the Arab pronunciation of the Roman "Palaestina."²

The Pentecostal churches of Nigeria represent a demonstration model of African creativity.³ With the growth of Christianity in Africa, it has emerged as a major hub of Christianity. In recent years Nigeria, a country in Africa Continent has become increasingly polarized leading to religious conflicts, and terrorism due to the activities of extreme religious fundamentalists. The activities of the Islamic terrorists have caused great dispersals of Christians from their bases to other places.

II. A Brief History of Judaism

Judaism is the oldest surviving monotheistic religion, arising in the Eastern Mediterranean in the second millennium. Abraham is traditionally considered to be the first Jew to have made a covenant with God. There was a small community of Jews in historic Palestine, but in 73 A.D., the Roman Empire dispersed them after an insurrection against Roman authority. Most Jews later lived in Diaspora⁴as minorities in their communities, until the founding of the state of Israel in 1948. When Jews from all over the world came to settle in modern Israel, they found that various subcultures had developed in different areas with unique histories, languages, religious practices, customs, and cuisine. Judaism is more concerned with actions than dogma. In other words, observance of rules regulating human behaviour has been of more concern than debates over beliefs in the Jewish tradition. According to Orthodox Judaism, Jewish law, or Halakhah, includes 613 commandments given by God in the Torah, as well as rules and practices elaborated by scholars and custom. Jewish law covers matters such as prayer and ritual, diet, and rules regulating personal status (marriage, divorce, birth, death, inheritance, etc.), It also covers observance of holidays (like Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement; and Passover, the feast celebrating the exodus of the Jews from slavery in Egypt). Jews do not believe in the prophets after the Jewish prophets, including Jesus and Muhammad. Therefore, they do not subscribe to the idea that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God, nor do they believe in the teachings of Islam.

Expansion of Judaism and the Role in History:

There were much more Jews outside Palestine than there were in it. Deportations of prisoners of war, but especially the interest of commerce, spread Jews in all directions from Palestine. It is estimated that during the time of the early Roman Empire there were about two and one-half million Jews in Palestine. There were one million in each of the areas of Egypt, Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia, in addition to about one hundred thousand in Italy and North Africa. Smaller colonies were scattered throughout the empire.⁵ The New Testament reference to the Dispersion is impressive: John 7:35, Acts 2:5-11, with many other references throughout the book of Acts, James 1:1, 1 Peter 1:1. Inseparable from the Dispersion was the Synagogue. Together they established a natural base outside Palestine for the missionary proclamation of the gospel. The most important centre of the Dispersion was Alexandria, Egypt. There the Jews occupied whole quarters of the city. There the Old Testament was translated into the Greek language in 250B.C thus making it available to the Greek-speaking world. The foreign intercourse of Judaism was restricted by the several Levitical rules and regulations. It looked as if the heathen were to be excluded from having any share in the religious truth revealed to Israel and which Israel was so precious. On the one hand, the heirs of the prophets were not persuaded to share their holy inheritance with the unclean heathen.

For centuries the Jews had been spreading beyond Palestine. There was a constant stream of emigrants overflowing its boundaries in all directions. Jews were in almost all cities of the world. There were significant numbers of them in the lands of the Tigris and Euphrates; and Asia Minor. Alexandria in Egypt was divided into five districts, two of which were occupied by Jews. In the Nile Delta, it was estimated that there were more than a million Jews.⁶ The Jews were along the coast of North Africa. The towns and cities of Macedonia and Greece contained Jewish colonies. In Rome, there were about 30,000 of Jews. In their wanderings and long residence in foreign lands, they had undergone a substantial change. They produced a new culture, modern civilization, composed of the best elements of Judaism and Hellenism. Judaism' Ideal was the knowledge and perfect obedience to the law of God as contained in the OT. It was monotheistic and intensely religious. The Greek civilization was far under and more varied than it. The new Hellenistic civilization was a union of the two. It got its religion from Judaism, its philosophy, and it's learning from the Greeks.⁷ There was no difference between them and their brethren in Palestine, and they kept their ties with the Holy Land. They met every Sabbath to study their law. Synagogues were established wherever they were Jews. They upheld the truth of their religion. They tried to keep the law, but

¹ http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_mandate.php

² http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_mandate.php

³ Sunday Babajide Komolafe, "Missiology: An International Review," Vol. XXXII. No. 2, April 2004

⁴ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/mideast/glossary/term/diaspora.html>

⁵ Harry R. Boer, A Short History of the Early Church, Daystar Press, Christian Council of Nigeria, 1976 Copyright, Michigan: Win B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976; Reprinted 1983, 2003, 7

⁶ Oliver J. Thatcher, "The Expansion of Judaism", *The Biblical World*, Vol.1, No.2 (Feb.1893), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press Stable, 99.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3135459>

⁷ Oliver J. Thatcher, 100

it was not possible for them to remain Pharisees. A liberal movement was started among the Jews in the Diaspora, which was different from the Phariseism of Palestine. It was a movement from the letter to the spirit, from the form to the contents, of a religion of rites and ceremonies to a religion of the heart.⁸ The zeal of the 'Diaspora Jews' for God led them to become missionaries to the heathen living around them. For some centuries, Judaism made earnest efforts to become a universal religion in an attempt to convert the world. But Christianity, which proved to be a powerful rival, drove Judaism from the mission field. Judaism drew back from the free movement and settled down into a rigid, legal orthodoxy. The desire to convert people led them to present only the most attractive features of Judaism to their hearers. They took from the OT a few great ideas and laid all emphasis on the essentials of their religion. They made use of all forms of literature to recommend Judaism and make its teachings known. They produced a rich and varied missionary literature for three centuries. They translated the OT from Hebrew into Greek. They omitted or altered some expressions that would have been offensive to the Greek taste and conceptions. They made various changes because of their desire to make Judaism more attractive to the heathen. They wrote commentaries on the Scriptures, by the best teachings of the philosophers and to please the Greek. They also used epic poetry and drama to explain Judaism to the heathen and fill them with the keenness for Judea's history and religion. The Sibyls were mysterious prophetesses at the time and were held in high reverence by the heathen. Judaism missionaries made use of the name of the Sibyl to propagate the Jewish Faith. In the 2nd Century BC, some religious Jews wrote work, which was purported to be by a Sibyl. In the prologue, she was made to say that she was a daughter of Noah that she had been with her father in the Ark at the time of the Flood. That she had moved from Babylon and the Greeks had given her a false name. Sibyls foretold many prophecies that were widely read and had a significant influence on the people.

Vergil and Tacitus knew the prophecy and made use of them in their writings. Under the names of the most celebrated Greek poets and philosophers, they were alleged to have forged poems and histories in which these are made to teach the purest Jewish Doctrines and sound forth the praises of the faithful people of God.⁹ This is indubitably enough to show that the Jews were serious in their efforts to convert the world. The influence of Judaism was far more significant than has been believed. Many heathens became proselytes. They were circumcised, observed the law and lived entirely as Jews. More people were influenced by their religious teachings but wavered to take the vital step. These people are willing to observe some of the laws but not in its entirety, which they found exacting and burdensome. It can be established that these people learned much from Judaism. They got the true religion from the Jews, receiving the truth and framing their lives by it. The ceremonial part of Judaism was repellent to many of the people, and they thought it was not necessary. In conclusion, the scattering of the Jews activated expansionism of Judaism. The expansionism was a blessing. It was instrumental in spreading a higher conception of God and Purer moral standards. Many people learnt about God and of His Character from Judaism and not only in religious education but also in the development of the world and reception of Christianity.

III. A Brief History of Christianity

Christianity started as an offshoot of Judaism in the first century A.D. Christian Church owes much to the social and religious culture of the Jewish nation in her emergence. Until emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in 324 A.D., early Christian communities were often persecuted. It was then that the Roman Empire became the Holy Roman Empire, and its capital relocated from Rome to Constantinople (formerly Byzantium and now Istanbul). The development of Christian groups derived from major and minor splits. The Orthodox Church and its patriarch split away from the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope in 1054 C.E. because of political and doctrinal differences. In the 16th century, Martin Luther, upset at the corruption of the Catholic papacy, spearheaded a reformation movement that led to the development of Protestantism. Christian missionaries proselytize all over the world, and there are significant populations of Christians on every continent on Earth, although the forms of Christianity practiced vary. Christians in the Middle East today include Copts, Maronites, Russian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholics, Assyrians, and Protestants. These groups have different liturgical languages, rituals, and customs, and different leaders who direct their faith. There are also Christian communities of different sects living today in Syria (10 percent of the population), Jordan (6 percent), the West Bank (8 percent), and Iraq (3 percent), with smaller percentages in other Middle Eastern countries.¹⁰ In the 19th and early 20th centuries, many Christians from what is now Syria and Lebanon (then the Ottoman Empire) emigrated to the United States and other countries. Although Christians are a minority in the Middle East today, more than 75 percent of Americans of Arab descents are Christian.

Jewish Socio-Cultural Influence on Christianity:

The Jewish home was religious in all perspectives. Jewish spiritual life can barely be separated from the social, economic, and political life. The Jewish religious activities were not limited to the Temple or Synagogues, but some religious practices were also carried on in their houses. King Solomon built the first Temple known as the Golden Temple in the tenth century (c.960 – 950 B. C). Phoenician skilled workers built the magnificent Temple for good seven years, was looted and ravished by the Babylonians in about 587 B. C. There were also other Temples like Zerubbabel's Temple and Herod's Temple. The Temple at Jerusalem provided an excellent meeting point for Jesus to propagate His Message to the house of Israel, especially during the annual nation feasts and

⁸ Oliver J. Thatcher, 101

⁹ Oliver J. Thatcher, 106, 107

¹⁰ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/mideast/themes/religion/>

festivals. In the New Testament, the Christian community as the eschatological congregation of Jesus Christ is described as God's "new Temple"¹¹ More than any other institution the Synagogue gave character to the Jewish Faith and above all set the phase for Christianity.¹²

Historical and Contemporary Expansionism of Christianity:

The Apostles were the great promoters of the spread of Christianity, in obedience to Christ's commandment to proclaim the gospel to all nations. The earlier bearers of the gospel were ordinary, humble people like civil servants, soldiers, slaves, and businessmen. By the time the Church obtained its freedom, in the 4th century, Christianity was deeply rooted in many parts of the near east: Syria, Asia Minor, and Armenia; and in the West; Rome and its surrounding area in Latin Africa. The gospel also had a considerable presence in the Nile valley and various parts of Italy, Spain, and Gaul.¹³ St. Paul's missionary journeys took the gospel to Asia Minor and Greece, where he founded and directed many churches. Paul's long captivity gave him an opportunity to bear witness to Christ before the Sanhedrin, the Roman governors of Judea, and King Agrippa 11. When Paul was taken to Rome, he was set free by Caesar's courts and probably made a missionary journey to Spain during this period. Paul was imprisoned for a second time when he was found guilty and died as a martyr in the imperial city. Christianity spread by way of four tactics that are still effective today:

- 1). Conversion of people from their former religions to Christianity. The conversion started with the people of Palestine and then in Rome. The conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine (306-337 A.D.), made Christianity a legal and State's religion. Rome was converted and set off the spawn of conversions over the whole of Europe and the rest of the world. Ancient Persia was converted, but the Islamic whirlwind wiped out all the gains. Converts are of two types: Direct converts and Crypto-Christians. Crypto-Christians are secret converts to Christianity and are found mainly in (a) scheduled caste converts, (b) tribal converts, and (c) Socially well-placed converts. The scheduled cast converts lose their constitutional rights to reservations on open conversion and sustained campaigns to extend reservations to "scheduled caste" Christians. The tribal converts are seen where there is a strong and violent reaction within the particular tribes to conversions. The conversion is hidden until the converts achieve enough numbers to come out openly. The socially well placed feel they serve the cause better by remaining crypto-Christian and working in secrets than declaring their conversion openly.
- 2). Military Strategy: This strategy sees conversion as a perpetual war carried out on war tactics with full military precision. There are International Bodies that serve as think tanks with multi-billion dollar budgets, which plan and execute the conversion campaigns in different countries with armies of foot soldiers of Christ. Their budgets and strategies are not secret documents or products of the fevered imaginations of opponents: they are set out in detail in black-and-white in their publications and are referred to and quoted by opponents.¹⁴
- 3). Hidden Indoctrination: This is hidden indoctrination through educational institutions. A significant proportion of the white collar and the upper crust segments of society are educated in English schools, and Catholic or other Christian organisations run most of them. Now an increasing number of educational institutions run by Christian organisations also give education in regional languages, particularly in semi-rural and tribal areas. These educational institutions turn out ex-students in the millions who occupy positions of importance in all fields of society.
- 4). Popular Perception-Building: This tactic builds up a popular image and perceptions that neutralizes public opposition to Christian expansionism. This takes Christian influence beyond its converts, strategic allies and indoctrinated students, into the domain of common people not otherwise influenced by Christianity in general. The people are attracted to Christianity due to the communistic life. Christians' houses were a sort of hospitals, in which all the poor and the forsaken found asylum and succor. Christianity expansionism was indeed a great blessing to the world. Along with Judaism, Christianity was instrumental in spreading a higher conception of God and Purer moral standards. Many people learnt about the Trinitarian God: God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit from Christianity. Christianity is the only religion that deals effectively with humankind sins. Jesus Christ is the central focus in the Bible from the Old Testament to the New Testament. To believe in Jesus Christ in the Biblical sense is an act of the will of God and not of the intellect. To have eternal life is to come directly and personally to Jesus Christ and believe that He died for human sins. His death, resurrection and coming again are the triangular anchor of Christian faith. Christianity's view of salvation encompasses the past (Adamic sin), the present (present depravity), and the future (eternal life). Past deliverance points forward to present and future deliverances that in turn look back to past deliverance. The death and resurrection of Jesus are the focal points. 'Being saved' from sin to righteousness, therefore comes about through calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ - (Rom. 10:9-13). And the name of Christ involves entrance into the kingdom of God (Mark 10:23-27) and into the church as the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-28). No legitimate scholar today denies that Jesus is a historical figure that walked on this earth over 2,000 years ago, that he did remarkable miracles and acts of charity, and that He died a horrible death on a Roman cross just outside Jerusalem. The emotionally charged

¹¹ See 1 Cor. 3:16f; 2Cor. 6:16, 17; Eph. 2: 19-22; 1 Peter 2:5; cf. 1 Cor. 6:19f

¹² S. A. Fatokun, and Tiwalola A. Falaye, "Jewish Socio-Cultural Influence on The Rise of Christianity" in *Transformation: Crowther Journal of Theology and Missions*, Vol. 1. No. 1. November 2016, Abeokuta: Crowther Publishers Nigeria, 2016, 31

¹³ Jose Orlandis, *A Short History of the Catholic Church*, 2001

¹⁴ In India, notably in the writings of Ram Swarup, and in related Voice of India publications

dispute focuses specifically on whether Jesus was God incarnate who rose from the dead three days after His Crucifixion. Many people have dealt with this "spiritual" dispute by intellectually accepting Jesus as a great man, great teacher, or great prophet. However, Jesus and His inspired followers didn't mince words when they declared Him to be God (John 1:1-3, John 10:30-38, Matthew 16:13-17, Mark 14:61-64, John 14:6, Hebrews 1:8, Colossians 1:16, John 12:40-41 (Isaiah 6:1-10)). Therefore, any type of intellectual compromise calling Jesus a "good man" is logically inconsistent. Jesus himself claimed to be God when he said, "I and the father are one"- John 10:30. Christianity's encounter with early philosophers formed the bedrock of major scholarly works and scientific fields that include philosophy, chemistry, medicine, mathematics, arts and music.

IV. A Brief History of Islam:

Early Islam was intensely expansionist. Religious fervour, as well as economic and social factors, fueled this expansionism. Conquering armies and migrating tribes swept out of Arabia and spread Islam. By the end of the Islam's first century, Islamic armies had reached far into North Africa and eastward and northward into Asia. Among the first countries to come under their control was Egypt, which Arab forces invaded in 640 A.D. Amr ibn al-As, an Islamic convert and contemporary of the Prophet Muhammad was the military commander in charge of the conquest of Egypt. By 641 A.D., he had conquered Cairo and renamed the city Al Fustat. By 647 A.D., after the surrender of Alexandria, the entire country came under Islamic rule.

Historical and Contemporary Expansionism Of Islam:

Islam arose in the early seventh century A.D. in the settled desert community of Mecca (in present-day Saudi Arabia). It developed from both the Judeo-Christian tradition and the cultural values of the nomadic Bedouin tribes of Arabia. Islam expanded into areas controlled by the Byzantine Empire (largely Greek-speaking and Orthodox Christian, but with a diverse population) and the Sasanian Empire (officially Zoroastrian and Persian-speaking, but also diverse). By the mid-eighth century, Islam had spread west into North Africa and Europe, and east into Central Asia. Over the centuries, Islam continued to grow in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. As Islam expanded, the new Islamic societies adopted and synthesized many of the customs they encountered. As a result, Muslims in different areas of the world created for themselves a wide array of cultural tradition. The culture of Islamic Spain, for example, was so cosmopolitan that some Christian and Jewish parents complained that their children were more interested in developing their knowledge of Arabic than in learning Latin or Hebrew, respectively. Many elements of Islamic society became integral parts of medieval and Renaissance European culture, like the notion of chivalry, and certain forms of music (the lute, the arabesque) and poetry. On the eastern end of the Islamic world, many Indonesians converted to Islam between the 15th and 17th centuries. Preexisting animist beliefs were often incorporated into the local practice of Islam. A Shi'ah dynasty, the Fatimids, conquered Egypt in 969 A.D. and ruled the country for 200 years. By the 9th century A.D., most Egyptians had converted to Islam. Islamic ruler Amr allowed Coptic Christians and Jews to continue their beliefs as protected people. Jews and Christians in Muslim territories could live according to their religious laws as dhimmis (tolerated subject peoples) but would have to give up certain political rights and also pay a special tax. Although the Fatimids endowed numerous mosques, shrines, and theological schools, they did not establish their faith (Ismailia Shi'ah Islam) in Egypt. – Numerous sectarian conflicts among Fatimid Ismailis after 1050 may have been a factor in Egyptian Muslim acceptance of Saladin's (Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb), of the Kurdish Ayyubids, reestablishment of Sunni Islam as the State religion in 1171.

In the 15th and succeeding centuries, Muslim navies roamed the Mediterranean, attacking European ships and coastal towns. Raids were carried out as far north as England and Ireland. Muslim fortunes, however, were reversed in Spain, where, after centuries of glory, they suffered a steady loss of territories under the Christian Reconquista. The struggle for sectarian control ended with the union of the Spanish kingdoms under Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella of Castile. By the turn of the 15th century, Muslims in Spain had to choose between conversion, emigration, or death.

Islamic communities

Within Islam, there are many different communities. Many of these divisions, like the Sunnis, Shiis, Ismailis, Alevis/Alawites, and Druze, originate in political and doctrinal differences in the community. Sufism is the mystical tradition of Islam, where direct experience of the divine is emphasized. The 13th-century poet Jalaluddin Rumi is a well-known Sufi figure whose work has become popular in the United States today. Throughout the nearly fifteen centuries of the Muslim-Christian encounter, individual adherents of both traditions often have lived peaceably with each other. At the same time, Muslim expansion into Christian territories and Christian imperialism in Muslims lands has fostered fear and ill will on both sides. Repercussions from the Crusades continue to resound in the contemporary rhetoric employed by defenders of both faiths. It is important to note some of the nonmilitary, cultural, and intellectual ways in which East and West encountered each other. In some cases each side found in the other chivalry and respect worthy of admiration and even emulation. For the most part, however, European thinking had little influence on Arab culture. Conversely, the West found great benefit from early Islamic thought in the fields of culture and science. In fact, it discovered that in the Islamic world the concept of divine unity led to an understanding that the arts and sciences, as we would call them today, are but different dimensions of the unified study of God's many-faceted world. Westerners learned from their encounters with Islamic civilizations in all major scholarly and scientific fields, including philosophy, astronomy, chemistry, medicine, and mathematics as well as the arts and music. It is well known that ancient Greek philosophy and science came to the West through the medium of Arab translation. Arab-Islamic medical science had a significant influence on the development of the disciplines of medicine in Europe.

V. The Changing Face of African Christianity: Nigerian Template:

In the transforming ecclesiology; there are three known epochs of Nigerian Christianity:

The First Epoch: 1841 - 1918 include

- Abolitionists
- Planting Denominationalism
- European Dominance
- Theological Formation

The Second Epoch: 1918 - 1980s include

- Indigenous Reading of Scripture
- Cultural Signification
- Creative Adaptation
- Totally African

The Third Epoch: 1980s – 2000s

- Reconstructionist Group
- Regenerative Theology
- Empowering Theology
- Self-Conscious Modernity
-

The first transition that spanned thirty years have Mission-Planted Churches (Cultural Nationalism and Ethiopianism):

1. Ex-Slaves from Freetown in 1839
2. First Niger Expedition in 1841
3. The Methodist in 1842
4. The C. M. S. in 1845
5. The Presbyterians in 1846
6. The Baptists in 1853
7. The Catholics in 1867
8. First Session (Native Baptist Church) in 1888
9. Blyden in Lagos in 1890
10. Ajayi Crowther (death) and United Native African Church in 1891
11. Bethel African Church in 1901
12. Garrick Braide in 1914 and
13. Precious Stone Society in 1918

The second transition spanned thirty eight years and comprised the Aladura Churches that are Classical Pentecostal:

1. C & S in 1925
2. Revivals and Oshitelu in 1930
3. The Apostolic Church (TAC) in 1931
4. AOG in 1939
5. Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) in 1941
6. Apostolic Faith (out of CAC) and Student Christian Movement of Nigeria in 1944
7. CCC in 1950
8. RCCO (out of C & S) in 1952
9. Foursquare (out of TAC & AOG) in 1955
10. Campus Movements in 1960s
11. Idahosa (COGMI) in 1971
12. Deeper Life (out of Apostolic Faith) in 1982

The third transition comprises of the Neocharismatic Churches (3rd Generation Pentecostals) starting with Independent Pentecostals in the 1990s. African Christianity is varied and diverse as the intra-ecclesiastical debates that have engrossed Western Christianity. In African experiential character of the Christian faith in contextual ways could determine the direction of how a relevant church in the world should be. This is the reorientation that has resulted in the Neocharismatic model of Christianity. The attempt to contextualize Christianity is the hermeneutical key to African Spirituality. Domineering the space of the divine has been the preoccupation of the church in Nigeria. "No other ecclesiastical tradition exhibits an attitude for reshaping the socio-political order, as do the Neocharismatics."¹⁵ The third generation Pentecostals contributed immensely to the changing face of African Christianity. Late David B. Barrett in his book claimed that classical Pentecostalism constituted the largest unit in the Protestant family. He also showed that four including the top three of the world's largest congregations were Pentecostal.

VI. Conclusion and Inter-Faith Issues:

Some verses in the Qur'an call for treating Christians and Jews with respect as recipients of God's divine message, in reality, many Muslims have found it difficult not to see Christians as polytheists because of the doctrine of Trinity. Christians, for their part, traditionally have viewed the Qur'an as fraudulent and Muhammad as an impostor. Old sectarian rivalries play out with severe consequences for minority groups, both Christian and Muslim. Conflicts in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere for much of the 20th century were often labeled as ethnic, political, or ideological perpetuations of long-standing struggles over land, power, and influence. These conflicts now tend to be labeled in agreement with the explicitly religious affiliation of their participants. It is difficult to imagine a time in history at which there is a greater need for severe interfaith engagement than now. It is also essential to understand how members of the two communities experience each other in specific areas of the world today, including the United States, taking note of efforts currently underway to advance interfaith understanding and cooperation. The events of September 11, 2001, and the resulting American invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan have led to ugly commentary reminiscent of medieval hyperbole. Right-wing evangelical rhetoric in the United States against Islam has been fueled by incidents of international terrorism involving Muslims, while the well-funded Islamophobia industry in the United States has been producing and distributing large amounts of anti-Muslim materials. Since the events of September 2011, American Muslims, caught in a painful position, have decried the acts of the 9/11 terrorists and defended Islam as a religion of peace.

By the close of the middle Ages, hostilities between Islam and Western Christendom once again were intense, with active warfare for several centuries. Some events served as a kind of transition from the Middle Ages to a new era of international engagement. The fall of Constantinople in the middle of the 15th century and the final expulsion of Muslims from Andalusia at the end of that century illustrate this transition. For some eleven centuries, Constantinople had stood as the capital of the Byzantine Empire. Its fall to the invading Turks in 1453 signaled a dramatic change in the power relationships between Islam and Christendom. The specter of a Muslim takeover of all of Europe was raised anew. Initially under Christian rule Muslims were the recipients of a policy of toleration. Gradually, however, the two communities became segregated entirely, and a rising tide of anti-Semitism had consequences for both Muslims and Jews.

The rise of rationalism, a fascination on the part of the West with the cultural trappings of the East, and the necessities of international political and economic exchange soon drew the worlds of Islam and Christendom closer together. At the same time, under the influence of Western missionary agencies, a very negative perception of Islam continued to develop in Europe. For an extended period Western scholarly research on Islam was dominated by the desire to convert Muslims to Christianity, resulting in analyses of Islam that were apologetic and highly polemical. It is only in the 20th century that more objective scholarship has emerged, especially efforts launched following the publication of Edward Said's epic *Orientalism*. Umar Habila Dadem Danfulani in his article¹⁶ highlighted on some of the early conflicts in Nigeria. The struggle for political power has come to entail the manipulation of the symbols and beliefs of Islam and Christianity. August 26th, 2011 was a sad day for Nigerians as it went down in history as a day that suicide bombing brought the country to an international prominence and focused the world on the giant of Africa.¹⁷ Danfulani quoted¹⁸ that:

It is axiomatic that Christianity and Colonialism introduced values, institutions, and worldviews that were at variance, and therefore, bound to be a conflict with traditional ones in most of Africa.

The fundamentalists within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam cause religious conflicts. It is crucial therefore to decode the fundamentalist imagery so that one could understand what fundamentalists in all the three 'Faiths' are trying to express because these movements express an anxiety and disquiet that no society could safely ignore. In conclusion, these conflicts/persecutions that lead to

¹⁵ see Ruth Marshall, "God is not a Democrat: Pentecostalism and Democratisation in Nigeria," *In The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa*, Paul Gifford, ed. (New York: E. J. Brill, 1995) cited in Sunday Babajide Komolafe, "Missiology: An International Review," Vol. XXXII. No. 2, April 2004, 226

¹⁶ Written in Swedish *Missiological Themes*, 89, 1 (2001) on Religious Conflict on the Jos Plateau: The Interplay between Christianity and Traditional Religion During the Early Missionary Period

¹⁷ Josephine Olatomi Soboyejo, "A Theological Study of Jesus' Responses to Conflicts In Relation to Select Ethno-Religious and Political Conflicts In Contemporary Nigeria," Ph.D Thesis in Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary, April 2014, 1

¹⁸ cf. Nengel 1999, 19

dispersal of people have the positive effect of expansionism the main key to spiritual growth. In fact, Christendom has benefitted, and Africa Christianity has also benefitted.

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