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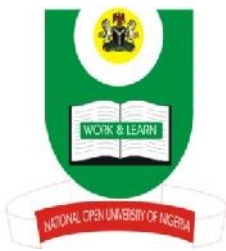
## **SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**COURSE CODE: CTH 849**

**COURSE TITLE: THE RISE AND GROWTH OF WESTERN CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA**

## COURSE GUIDE

Course Code	CTH 849
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**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

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## **MODULE ONE**

### **UNIT 1: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA**

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2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Background of Christianity in Africa

4.0 Conclusion

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#### **1.0 Introduction**

This piece is meant to introduce to students the background of Christianity in Africa thoroughly on how it all started and the degree at which it has expanded. It specifically expatiates on the foundation that prompted the rise and growth of western Christianity in Africa. This will throw more light on how Africa has become the giant continent that embraced Christianity world over and the effects and subsequent developments that followed comprehensively in the fullness of time.

#### **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

- i. Appreciate the earnest efforts made by the Western missionaries to propagate the word of God in Africa that yields enormous results.
- ii. Identify the dimension at which Africans responded to the gospel and the level of expansion that has been ever witnessed.
- iii. Grasp with the reasons for the emergence or proliferation of different churches on African soil so far.

### **3.0 Main content**

#### **3.1 Background of Christianity in Africa**

Christianity began as a Jewish sect in the mid-1st century emerging out of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. The life of Jesus is narrated in the New Testament of the Bible, one of the core texts of Western Civilization and stimulation for immeasurable works of Western art. Jesus' birth is commemorated in the festival of Christmas, his death during the Paschal Triduum, and what Christians believe to be his resurrection during Easter. Christmas and Easter continue as holidays in many Western nations. Jesus learned the texts of the Hebrew Bible, with its Ten Commandments (which later became prominent in Western law) and became an influential wandering preacher. He was a credible teller of parables and moral philosopher who urged followers to worship God, act devoid of violence or discrimination and care for the sick, hungry and poor. These teachings have been profoundly influential in Western culture. Jesus criticized the opportunity and hypocrisy of the religious organization which drew the rage of the authorities, who persuaded the Roman Governor of the province of Judaea to have him executed for rebellion. In Jerusalem, around 30AD, Jesus was crucified.

It is affirmed that the early followers of Jesus, including Saints Paul and Peter approved a new theology concerning him all through the Roman Empire and beyond, sowing the seeds for the expansion of the Catholic Church, of which Saint Peter is remembered as the first Pope. Catholicism, as we know it, materialized gradually. Christians often faced persecution during these early centuries, predominantly for their rejection to join in worshipping the emperors. However, carried through the synagogues, merchants and missionaries across the known world, the new internationalist religion rapidly grew in size and influence.

The Christian religion was established in what is in the present day Israel and Palestine 2000 years ago at the inauguration of the *Common Era*. Christianity is based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, a Jewish teacher and prophet. Early *Christians* (followers of Christ) understood that Jesus was divine in that he was the son of God. This is a major distinction between Christianity and Judaism and Islam, the two other major monotheistic religions. Judaism does not maintain that any of their great prophets were divine. And though God spoke straight to Mohammed through the angel Gabriel, Islam does not give him the status of being divine.

Though the early Christian church suffered persecution at the hands of Roman officials, the fact that Palestine was part of the Roman Empire it made easy the rapid spread of Christianity. This means that followers of these religions consider that it is their responsibility to share their religion and try to convert others to their religion. Early Christians came from the Jewish tradition, but they understood that the message and teachings of Jesus were meant for all people, and they used the transportation networks (roads, shipping routes) to spread the message of Christianity all the way through the Roman Empire-or the *Mediterranean World*-areas of western Asia, North Africa, and southern Europe that bordered the Mediterranean Sea.

The growth of Christianity in Africa has been very impressive and outstanding. Africa is on record as the continent with the maximum numerical Christian growth rate in the world. And the Bible has been identified as "a major contributor" to this phenomenal growth of Christianity in Africa. The Bible is undoubtedly very much valued and used by African Christians. Given the oral tradition that forms the background of these African Christians and the literary tradition that the Bible represents, the question of the relationship between the Bible and culture in African Christianity becomes a stimulating one. How is the Bible used in the cultural environment of Africa by African Christians? Here we shall not be comfortable ourselves with basically describing the present situation of Bible-culture interaction in Africa. There is every need to go further and ask more probing and significant questions with an end to assessing the suitability of this way of relating the Bible to culture. If we find the present model of Bible-culture relationship in African Christianity insufficient, as we most unquestionably shall, then we shall recommend or prescribe another model which we believe will prove more appropriate for the understanding of the mission of African Christianity which is basically aimed at contextualization.

African Christianity: there is an African Christianity that was and there is an African Christianity that is. The former African Christianity prospered geographically in the northern third of Africa in the first seven centuries of the Christian era and fashioned such Christian giants as Clement, Justin Martyr, Origen, Athanasius, St Monica and her renowned son, St Augustine. That Christianity all but vanished in the face of the Islamic expansionism of the 7th century C.E. leaving only a leftover in the Egyptian Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox churches. Present-day African Christianity, on the other hand, is geographically outstanding within the southern two thirds of the continent and is simply between one and two centuries old. Today African Christianity is said to have four dissimilar strands, and these are: (i) Ancient Christianity, with a history dating back to the earliest era of Christianity, today represented by the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt

and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, (ii) Missionary Christianity, founded between the 18th and 20th centuries by European and later American missionaries, now principally indigenous, comprising all mainline Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical confessions, (iii) Independent Christianity, founded by Africans who had benefitted from, but were discontented by, the teachings and practices of missionary Christianity, and who have no allegiance to any mother Christian churches outside Africa; (iv) Immigrant Christianity, founded by European immigrants with no missionary curiosity, no attention in native African membership, but only in maintaining the vested interests of European immigrants, epitomized by the Dutch Reformed Church that sustained the apartheid policy in South Africa.

The topography of African Christianity is, as a result, a vast one, and it would be more or less unfeasible to do justice to all the multiplicity in African Christianity within the restricted scope of this work.

In contemporary times, the most generally known things about Africa appear to be the “breaking bad news” that the worldwide media disseminate about the continent and its many peoples. Africa is a continent of poverty, disease, corruption, wars, and political instability. Some identify portions of Africa as objects of tourist inquisitiveness. Certainly, very few know that Africa is the land with the largest amount of natural resources and the continent with the largest numbers of practicing Christians. Africans are a profoundly religious people, where there are many religious traditions, the three most significant being indigenous religions, Christianity and Islam. These religions fuse in creative ways to produce rich and pioneering religious cultures and ways of life for the assorted populations of the continent. For many Africans at present, religion provides noteworthy personality resource; more appreciably, in the period of rapid social change with exceptional distortions to economic, social and political lifestyles, religion offers a genuine means of anchor and stability and a corridor to momentous social existence. It is estimated in 2005 that Christians comprise 46% (or 400 million) of the total population of the continent of nearly 890 million, a rise from 9% in 1900. Africa represents the greatest increase in Christian population worldwide. Considerably, this increase is witnessed among young, educated, urban, upwardly mobile segments of the population. As we shall see, African Christianity is dynamic, vibrant and multifaceted. Progressively more, scholars have come to acknowledge as an essential religious revolution of the twentieth century the “shift in the centre of Christianity” from Europe and North America to the poor South of Latin America, Asia and Africa. Elizabeth Isichei is right when she writes that “Christianity in Africa is of global significance, and the directions it takes are of importance to Christians everywhere”.

Christian Churches regarded the expansion of Christianity in Africa principally as a missionary activity under the supervision of European clergymen whose prime goal was to save souls by bringing the Gospel to Africa and converting the heathen. The most important instrument for converting the African masses was through schooling. Outside the French colonies, most western education took place in mission schools which, in addition to teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic, attempted to indoctrinate Christian values. The Protestants placed a great deal of stress on translating the Bible into African languages and the importance of studying and understanding scripture. Students who went to mission schools adopted Christian names, European dress, and Christian life styles. They were anticipated to give up old ways like polygamy, fetishes, recourse to witchdoctors, veneration of ancestors, and animal sacrifices. If they went to Protestant schools run by Evangelical missionaries, they were also anticipated to give up smoking, drinking and dancing. Bush schools accounted for an estimated 90% of conversions.

Christianity seemed to do best in the countryside, in areas where Islam had not established a toehold, and in Animist societies which had not sternly resisted the colonial invasion. It expanded rapidly between 1920 and 1960, a period that corresponded with the speeding up of educational opportunities and a sharp increase in the number of European missionaries working in Africa. Pope Pius XI (1922-1929), known as the Pope of the missions made missionary work in Africa the cornerstone of his papacy and raised money to send thousands of Catholic missionaries to Africa (Baur, 1994). Between 1920 and 1960 the number of Catholic priests leaped from 2,000 to 10,000. Catholic sisters time and again outnumbered the male priests with 4,000 in 1920 and 14,000 in 1960.

Independent African churches also came into view during the colonial period which discarded dominance of the Church by European missionaries and emphasized the right of Africans to develop indigenous forms of Christianity that would integrate aspects of traditional African culture like polygamy that had been rejected by Christianity (Hastings, 1994:493-539). Independent African churches took diverse forms. South Africa had 2000 independent Zionist churches that had broken away from the Dutch Reform and Anglican churches (Sundkler, 1961). These churches put emphasis on faith-healing, baptism, and speaking in tongues and referred to the necessity to reinvent Zion or Jerusalem in their own land on their own terms. Independent African churches, like the Aladura, were in Western Nigeria, in the Belgian Congo where Simon Kimbangu became known as a prophet and the founder of a movement which led to mass conversions of the Bakongo to Christianity in the early 1920s, and in Nyasaland where Joseph Chilembwe, who had been educated in a black Baptist college in America started an independent African church and a movement which in due course evolved into a uprising against the colonial system.

By 1950, there were at least twenty-three million Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa (Hastings, 1979:43-50). Approximately eleven million were Roman Catholics, ten million Protestants, and two millions members of independent churches. Catholics were

most intensively determined in the Belgian territories which had 3.5 million. The Catholics were also well-built in Uganda which had 1 million Catholics and Tanganyika with 700,000. About five million of the ten million Protestants were in the Union of South Africa which had two million white Protestants and three million black Protestants. Regardless of Belgium's favoring of the Catholic Church, Protestant Christianity was astoundingly strong in the Belgian Congo with 1.5 million adherents and in most of British Africa, and feeble in Portuguese and French West Africa.

Christianity has been estimated to be growing rapidly in South America, Africa, and Asia. In Africa, for instance, in 1900, there were only 8.7 million adherents of Christianity; now there are 390 million, and it is expected by 2025 there will be 600 million Christians in Africa. The number of Catholics in Africa has increased from one million in 1902 to 329,882,000. There are now 1.5 million churches whose congregations account for 46 million people. The numbers of Christians in Nigeria has grown from 21.4% in 1953 to 48.2% in 2003. This is due to the high number of missionaries who worked in Nigeria. In South Africa, Pentecostalism has grown from 0.2% in 1951 to 7.6% in 2001.

Men with strong Christian heredity materialized as leaders in many African countries. Julius Nyerere had been educated in Catholic mission schools in Tanganyika; Kenneth Kaunda was a member of Presbyterian Church prior to joining the African Methodist Episcopal Church and had strong ties with the Protestant churches in Northern Rhodesia; William Tubman, Liberia's president, was a lay preacher and the son of a Methodist clergyman; Albert Luthuli was vice-president of the Christian Council in South Africa before being chosen as leader of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1952; Fulbert Youlou, a Catholic priest, emerged as Congo-Brazzaville's most accepted politician. During the last phases of colonialism, the Christian churches had outstanding relationships with the colonial governments all through Sub-Saharan Africa (Hastings, 1979:94-107). In British Africa, relations between the colonial authorities and the Catholic Church had warmed. In the Belgian Congo, Protestant missionaries were getting a fairer agreement. In French Africa, anti-clericalism was on the decline.

By 1990 the number of Africans on the continent claiming to still fit into traditional African religions had diminished to 14% whereas Christianity claimed 44% and Islam 42% of the continent's around 600 million people (Baur, 1994: 526-527). These figures are only estimates given that many national censuses did not take account of religious link and may have inflated the percentage of Christians because they came from Christian sources. In most of the recently independent African nation-states, church-state relationships remained comparatively affable in Sub-Saharan Africa during the early years of independence. Though the new constitutions adopted in Africa established secular states, they also insured religious independence.



Independent Christian churches also flourished. These churches implemented a great assortment of governance structures. Some were led by charismatic leaders who ruled their congregations like autocratic monarchs; others were more democratic in structure. Although many integrated traditional African religious practices into their rituals and church life, some like the Aladura Church in Western Nigeria officially discarded traditional African religious practices. Independent African churches tended to spread more rapidly in areas where Protestant missionaries had been powerfully present. There were fewer independent churches in Angola and Mozambique where the Catholics were obviously the leading Christian group and where most of the population remained emotionally involved to their traditional African religions.

At some point in the 1990s and first half of the new millennium, Christian church leaders more and more incorporated accepted sovereignty and protection of human rights as part of the Gospel message (Njoya, 2003 and Afan, 2001). In Kenya, where President Moi relied on the support of conservative Independent African churches, Catholic and Protestant clergymen strengthened their criticism of violations of human rights and the lack of fair and open elections. Their unyielding force ultimately forced Moi to retire and to hold fair elections in 2003 which his party lost after being in power since independence. Somewhere else, Catholic Peace and Justice Commissions have been at the vanguard in attacking violations of human rights and non-democratic regimes.

Studies have suggested that in the twenty-first century there may be more Christians in Africa than in any other continent (Barrett 1970). Already there are more Anglicans in church every Sunday in Nigeria than in all of England, the U.S.A. and Canada put together. With growth rates in African churches by and large exceeding those found anywhere else in the world this is not amazing. As Lamin Sanneh has opined, "the eruption of Christian forces in contemporary Africa is without parallel in the history of the church." (1989, 188). This fact alone should be reason enough for westerners to take a look at what is happening in African Christianity, but even if this were not the case the very dynamism and vibrancy of African church life shows promise to a western church which, at best, often seems to struggle simply to continue to exist in an increasingly secular culture.

Moreover interest to sociologists, anthropologists and theologians is the fact that although Africa is now known to be the poorest continent, economically, theologians in sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa) have not commonly gripped "Liberation theology", rather, most have chosen to go their own way, for the form of oppression which they think most eagerly is not economic oppression, but rather a cultural oppression; the derogation of African people and things African. This is what E. Mveng and the other African theologians have referred to as "anthropological oppression" (Fabella and Torres, eds, 1978).

Signs of African Christian dissatisfaction with the style of white missionary activity were already evident as early as 1821 in Sierra Leone, with the development of an African Independent Church (AIC) there. In Nigeria, Independent churches began forming in the 1890s. The United Native African church formed as a breakaway faction from the Anglican Church in Lagos, Nigeria in 1891. From that time to the present there has been a great proliferation of new independent churches, each with its own specific stress, and each attempting to safeguard the African taste, to become more genuinely African than churches planted by the European and American missionaries. In 1970 the AICs claimed 15,971,000 adherents in 5,980 denominations (Barrett 1982, 815) and their growth rates averaged 4.33 % per year between 1970 and 1985 (Barrett 1982, 782). Now, these churches number well over two thousand in Nigeria alone. In some countries, particularly Ghana, it is estimated that members of Independent churches will outnumber those of either Protestant or Roman Catholic churches by the year 2000 (Barrett 1982, 323). The skill of these Independent churches may be called, in one sense, the first phase of African theology, for apart from the churches of ancient Ethiopia and Nubia, here was the first expression of a Christian theology by sub-Saharan black Africans on their own terms. There is great body of literature on the African Independent churches, and the African theologians in the denominations planted by mission churches from the west often submit to them as one source of African theology. Nevertheless, the focus of this work is principally upon the expression of this type of sensation from within the existing mainline churches planted formerly by western missionaries. Reference to the Independent churches shall be made when it is necessary in order to understand developments in academic African theological discourse.

Within the Roman Catholic Church in Africa the most important early questioning of western Christianity was a gathering of articles entitled *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent* written by a group of nationalistic African priests in 1956. They articulated some of their questions and doubts about the very European and foreign manner of their church life and theology, and argued for "adaptation" of the church to the African context. When related feelings existed in the Protestant churches they often had issued in the development of independent churches, but expressions within the mainstream Protestant churches also started calling for a new type of Christianity in Africa at this time. In 1958 an inter-church conference of African church leaders was held at Ibadan, Nigeria, which gave expression amongst the widest range of denominations thus far to the new aspiration for an Africanized church. This conference led in due course to the construction of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) in 1963 at Kampala, Uganda.

This period coincided with the appearance of new works from anthropologists such as E. Evans-Pritchard (1956), Marcel Griaule (1966) and scholars of religion such as G. Parrinder, (1954) which sought to examine African Traditional Religion (ATR) in a more positive and sympathetic manner than had previously been the case. At the same time *Présence Africaine* began publishing in Paris, with an agenda very much consonant

with the new, more sympathetic approach in anthropology. With the convergence of these developments and the rise of African nationalism in the 1950s a "new wind" was blowing.

Christianity's explosive growth in Africa was completely unforeseen at the dawn of independence from colonial rule. It is part of a startling turnaround in world history. Christianity is no longer the religion of the West. Over two-thirds of the world's Christians now live in the global South—with Africa growing the fastest—and all signs point to this trend abiding. Africans are turning a page in world history.

Africa, the second largest continent on planet earth, shows for Christians in the Western world the fascinating news story coming from Africa is the explosive growth of Christianity. Once called the Dark Continent by Europeans and Americans because they knew so little about Africa, the 20th century saw the speedy spread of the Gospel of Light. Once known among missionaries as "the white man's graveyard," because their life expectancy was only eight years, Africa is at the moment sending missionaries overseas.

Many scholars in the West don't recognize the reason for the explosion of the Christian faith in Africa. Many Western correspondents don't comprehend the dynamics of religion. They lack the idea of seeing people from drastically diverse backgrounds turn to Christ. They are educated in postmodern universities/ colleges, where multiculturalism and political rightness are the norms.

Many associate the advance of missions with the rise of colonialism. And indeed, most 19th and early 20th century missionaries believed that colonialism was a good thing and helped the growth of their particular homelands. Today a large body of scholarly and popular works argues that mission work was the religious version of Western political and economic imperialism, offering Africans a virtuous formula of ethereal disruption while foreign conquests proceeded unconcealed. They believe that both missions and colonialism had damaging consequences of Western intrusion in African societies, with missionaries being among the most menacing influences.

Hospitals, clinics and other medical services were established principally by missions. Until the late 1930s mission hospitals were still setting the pace in medical care and leprosy treatment, with the aid of government grants. Through the improvement of medical care the life anticipation of people increased and much suffering was disallowed or relieved.

Indeed Mbiti has argued for the vital role of the indigenous factor, including the indigenous religious setting in the spread and growth of Christianity in Africa: "The rapid spreading of the Christian faith where people have been primarily followers of African religion provokes motivating questions. That which had been seen as the enemy of the gospel turns out to be undeniably a very welcoming friend. African religion has prepared

people to listen to the gospel, to ascertain significant passages in the bible, and to shun detrimental religious conflict.” The Christian missionary work in Ghana was indeed initiated by European missionaries who believed, strongly, that the Christian message was, entirely, worthy for both the spiritual and material advancement of humanity, including Africans. They risked their lives in the face of, sometimes, indigenous opposition leading to loss of lives with the heavy death toll caused by malaria. They provided the early financial and human resources in terms of leadership. Though, these splendid sacrifices would have been fruitless without the indigenous involvement and the story of Christianity in Africa.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

The growth of Christianity in Africa has been exceptionally fabulous. Africa is on documentation as the continent with the uppermost statistical Christian growth rate on the planet earth. And the Bible has been recognized as a most important contributor to this unparalleled growth of Christianity in Africa. The Bible is unquestionably very much appreciated and used by African Christians. Independent African churches furthermore came into sight for the period of the colonial era which discarded superiority of the Church by European missionaries and lay emphasis on the right of Africans to build up indigenous forms of Christianity that would incorporate characteristics of traditional African culture like polygamy that had been abandoned by Christianity. A lot of people correlate the press forward of missions with the rise of colonialism. And without a doubt, most 19th and early 20th century missionaries believed that colonialism was a good thing and helped the growth of their finicky native soil.

#### **5.0 Summary**

Christianity began as a Jewish religion in the mid-1st century up-and-coming out of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. The life of Jesus is documented in the New Testament of the Bible, one of the core texts of Western Civilization and inspiration for incalculable works of Western talent. The rise and growth of Christianity in Africa has been very remarkable and stupendous. The western Christianity prompted the proliferation of African independent churches and the emergence of African Christian theology which enabled a lot of developments. The awareness of Christianity on African soil has never been fruitless.

#### **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

- i. Who is actually responsible for the rise and growth of Christianity in Africa?
- ii. What led to the development of African Indigenous Christianity?
- iii. How does this piece enable you to understand the foundation of Christianity in Africa?
- iv. Mention the four different strands of Christianity in Africa

## 7.0 References for Further Reading

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## **UNIT 2: THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTIANITY IN NORTH AFRICA**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Beginning of Christianity in North Africa

3.2.1 The first century theory

3.3 Status of the Church during the first two centuries

3.4 The Expansion and Persecutions of the Church (200 AD - 313 AD)

3.5 Early Christians in Egypt and North Africa

3.6 Christianity in the Age of Colonialism; factors for growth

4.0 Conclusion

3.0 Summary

4.0 Tutor Marked Assignment

5.0 References for further Reading

### **1.0 Introduction**

This section is meant to explain how Christianity started in North Africa like a mustard seed and was able to spread rapidly covering the whole continent today. It goes further to highlight to students the pioneering theologians in Africa who stood firm by accepting the gospel of Christ. There is furthermore an overview of early Christians in the kingdoms of Nubia, Askum and Kongo in Africa.

### **2.1 Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

- i. Relate the story of how Christianity began in North Africa and was launched into other parts of the continent
- ii. Give an appraisal of Christianity in Nubia, Askum and Kongo
- iii. Define the significant role of Kimpa Vita as regards the expansion of Christianity in Africa
- iv. Describe what caused the rapid expansion of Christianity in Africa

### **3.0 The Main Content**

### **3.1 The Beginning of Christianity in North Africa**

Christian theology is not a tenderfoot to the African continent. There is a powerful tradition that St. Mark launched the Christian faith into Egypt in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and undoubtedly from the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD it was the early fathers of the Church in North Africa, such as Tertullian and Augustine, who supplied the foundations of Christian theology, while the North African Church was mostly a Latin-speaking one, there is substantiation that Christianity also expanded beyond the Roman Empire to peoples such as the Berbers. Further east, in Egypt, there built up a more philosophical type of theology in the city of Alexandria, primarily through the writings of Origen. Athanasius, who became bishop of that city in 328, had previously played a large function in putting together the statements of Christian doctrine in the Nicene Creed. It has therefore been said with some rationalization that Christianity is a 'traditional' African religion. While it is true of course that before the emergence of Islam North Africa was appropriately part of the case that by the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century the Christian faith had gone through south-wards as far as Ethiopia.

It was the Portuguese Catholics who first introduced the Christian faith to African south of the Sahara, from the last part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Whereas this mission work founded no lasting Church, it did create at least one convert who seems to have seen Christianity in African terms. This was Kimpa Vita a young Congolese girl, She acknowledged Jesus and the apostle with the black race, saw Christ's role as a redeemer from poverty and oppression, and looked forward to a black millennium' on earth. In about 1706 Kimpa Vita was burnt at the stake, but her ideas have reappeared in more recent times in the teachings of some of the 'independent' Churches.

The starting of the huge drive of Protestant missions into Africa came in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and had their origins in the Evangelical Awakening. In spite of efforts from time to time to indigenize the African Church, very small emerged in the way of authentic African Christian thinking. In West Africa, it is correct, there were calls from such men as Bishop Samuel Adjayi Crowther and James Johnson who wanted the Church to become more indigenized, but these were voices crying in the wilderness. In most ways the African Church, and even more its theology, remained patterned on European models. It has been only within the most recent forty years or so that an actual move towards rethinking the Christian faith in African terms, and of doing theology in an African context has been in progress.

#### **3.2.1 The first century theory**

The opportunity of the arrival of the gospel in the first century is acknowledged without question by many Church historians and missionary historians. Some historians base their theories upon the evidence of the Bible, particularly Acts: 2:9-114; 8:26-40; 11:20; 13:1-2; and 21:8. Building on such biblical references, John Foster believes that African Christians had before now had a key responsibility in spreading the gospel in the first century. Herbert Kane, a missionary historian, also insists that the Church established

itself in Cyrene. This is reliant upon the witness of Luke concerning an African called Simon from Cyrene, who carried the cross of Jesus, and seemed to have been a Christian. His two sons, Alexander and Rufus, were moreover well known to the Christians for whom the Gospel of Mark was written.

Besides the verification of the Bible, the expansion of Christianity in the first century can be established by numerous historical references. Tertullian testifies to the conversion of the indigenous tribes, like Imazighen and the Moors, where the Romans did not reach. Tertullian says that the expansion of Christianity in the area did not occur from the *Pax Romana*, but from individual itinerant Christians. John C. Thiessen moreover mentions the movement of early Christian refugees from Jerusalem to Morocco to keep away from the persecutions of Titus in 70 AD. In addition, Robin Daniel refers to the early Christian graves found in Cyrene among the tombs of the Jewish community.

### **3.2.2 The second century theory**

It is asserted by some that the North African Church inaugurated in the second century with the "blood of martyrs". On the one hand, Boer argues that Christianity had almost certainly been established in Carthage at the opening of the second century under Roman influence. On the other hand, based on historical records, such as *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius or *Apology* of Tertullian, and various archaeological proofs, most Church historians maintain that the Church was established at the end of the second century. The first record is that a number of Christians were found in a small town called Scilli, in Numidia, far beyond Carthage. Eusebius seemed to categorize these Christians with the first martyrs of North Africa in Scilli, who were accused of carrying 'books and letters of Paul'.

According to *Ecclesiastical History*, seven male and five female Christians, from the city of Scillium, in Numidia, were all put to death in Carthage for the sake of the gospel on the 1st of August 180 AD. As a result, it is believed that the African Church was inaugurated by martyrdom, and furthermore it is argued amongst historians that the place where the Church started was Scilli not Carthage.

### **3.2.3 Status of the Church during the first two centuries**

With regard to the situation the Church found herself in, two most important features should be painstaking: one is the massive growth of the number of Christians, and the other is the translation of the Bible from Hebrew into Latin. On the one hand, it appears that North Africa already had a large population of Christians by the end of the second century. Tertullian, in his *Apology*, written in Carthage in 197 AD, mentioned the rise and expansion of Christianity in the Roman world: We are but of the recent past, and we have filled every place among you - places, the very camp, tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum - we have left nothing to you but the temples of your gods.



We do not identify the precise number of Christians in North Africa at this time, but we are capable to estimate the number of Christians in Carthage as something like ten percent of the population, from Tertullian's *To Scapula*. Tertullian tells Scapula, the governor of Africa, of many thousands of multitudes of men and women, persons of both sexes and every age and status. Nevertheless, it does give the impression that the mass conversion to Christianity among native peoples, such as the Berber and the Punic, was uncommon in this area. The Christianizing of the Punic population would have meant their Latinization, and this they strongly refused to accept it. An additional factor, which should be mentioned here, is the development of the Episcopal system. The Church had already been structured and controlled under bishops. It is not definite when the term 'bishop' was used for the first time, nor how Church government was activated. Philip Stafford Moxom upholds that the president-bishop began to lay claim to a teaching, as well as to a ruling function, by the end of the first century.

Alternatively, it is powerfully believed amongst historians that the first translation of the Bible in North Africa from Hebrew into Latin, took place before 200 AD. It was in all probability this translation which was repeatedly quoted by Tertullian. If this conception is truthful, it is probable that the North African Church rather than Rome was the first Latin-speaking Church in the world and the first centre of Latin theology. Furthermore, Christian writings from the first and second centuries have two general features due to the influences of Hellenism: they are all written in Greek and they are comparatively small in quantity. The Roman Catholic Church, too, had only used a version of the Psalms and of the New Testament at that time. So, this translation is thought to have been the model for St. Jerome's Latin Vulgate, published in the fourth century.

### **3.2.4 The Expansion and Persecutions of the Church (200 AD - 313 AD)**

For two and a half centuries, the North African Church stumbled upon three connecting events: the expansion of Christianity, two great persecutions, and controversial ecclesiological schisms - as the result of persecutions.

Even in times of persecution, the progress of Christianity appears to have been more than ever rapid in the third century. The Christian gospel, according to Cyprian, had spread all over the place in all parts of the provinces by 250 AD.<sup>29</sup> There are two foremost opinions amongst historians regarding the reasons for the expansion of Christianity during the third century in North Africa. K. S. Latourette observes the 'rapid Romanization' and the mass conversion of heretical communities as the main reason while J. S. Mbiti sees the resemblance of African culture with Christianity as a major factor. As a result of the expansion of Christianity, the worship of Saturn, a traditional religion, almost ceased between 240 AD and 275 AD. The Church seems to have been strongest in the cities, for the most part within the Latin-speaking portion of the inhabitants. For that reason, the conversion of both the Punic and Berber tribes appears to have been uncommon in this era.

Nonetheless, we could not envisage of the expansion of Christianity devoid of considering the development of the Church system, particularly that of the bishop. As mentioned above, the Episcopal system had already been launched into Africa in the first century. As early as the middle of the third century, the Christian Church and its bishop were acknowledged as a regular part of the community in most cities of Roman Africa. According to Stephen Neil, every town, and approximately every village had its bishop, while the rest of the Christian world had bishops only in cities. There seems to have been a huge increase in the number of bishops through the third century: seventy-one African and Numidan bishops converged at Carthage in 220 AD.

Following that gathering, their number appears to have more or less doubled in the next fifty years, so that by the outburst of the Diocletian persecution, about two hundred and fifty bishops were said to have been in office. Frend upholds that by 245 AD, North Africa had ninety bishops, and a well-organized disciplinary system that could unseat a bishop accountable for mistakes and sins. These figures entail that substantial progress had been made, and at this stage of the Church's organization a bishop represented only a single city.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Christianity came to the African continent and was fertile. A powerful tradition revealed that St. Mark commenced the Christian faith into Egypt in the 1<sup>st</sup> century immediately after the dispersion of the apostles in Jerusalem. Indisputably from the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD it was the early fathers of the Church in North Africa, such as Tertullian and Augustine, who promoted the growth of Christian in North African Church. Christianity also stretched out beyond the Roman Empire to peoples such as the Berbers. Before the appearance of Islam North Africa was aptly part of the case that by the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century the Christian faith had gone through south-wards as far as Ethiopia. Subsequently thousands of Christian missionaries from Europe, North America, and the West Indies worked throughout the African continent. The mission of the missionaries was to spread Christianity in Africa and the work had witnessed enormous achievement which can be verified today.

#### **5.0 Summary**

It is confirmed that St. Mark first of all brought the Christian faith into Egypt in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and in the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD it was the early fathers of the Church in North Africa, such as Tertullian and Augustine, Origen and Athanasius. In Egypt the *Gnostics* had influence throughout North Africa. In subsequent times it appears persecution came upon the church in Africa yet the expansion of Christianity was still unrelenting in North Africa.

## 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment:

- i. What is the major role of St Mark as regard evangelism in North Africa?
- ii. Mention the early church fathers in North Africa you know and their contribution to the growth as well as sustenance of Christianity in Africa
- iii. Determine the goals of Christian missionaries and colonial masters and their interaction in Africa

## 7.0 References for Further Reading

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## **UNIT 3: EARLY CHRISTIANS IN EGYPT AND NORTH AFRICA**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Early Christians in Egypt and North Africa

3.2 Christianity in the Age of Colonialism; factors for growth

7.0 Conclusion

8.0 Summary

9.0 Tutor Marked Assignment

7.0 References for further Reading

### **1.0 Introduction**

This segment further expresses the details of the commencement of Christianity in Egypt and North Africa in general. The spread of Christianity in the northern area of Africa persisted until the arrival of Islam which stagnated its success until it almost stamped out the gospel in North Africa. In addition to the main target is to highlight Christianity in the Age of Colonialism and considering factors for growth and its advancement.

### **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

1. Narrate and discuss the activities of Christianity in Egypt and North Africa
2. Give appraisal on the work of missionaries in North Africa
3. State and explain the effects of Islam on the growth of Christianity in North Africa

### **3.0 Main Content**

## **Early Christians in Egypt and North Africa**

It is not astounding that Christianity spread to Egypt and North Africa in the first century C.E. certainly, Egypt, predominantly the city of Alexandria, became a significant center of this new religion. Regrettably, Christians today do not recognize much about the rich tradition of Christianity in Egypt and North Africa. This is because of the partitions that developed in Christianity in the first centuries of its survival.

One significant faction was centered in Egypt and had influence throughout North Africa. This group was known as the *Gnostics*. You in all probability have not heard of this group, even though they were very imperative and influential in the early history of Christianity. One of the other major factions of the early Christianity was concentrated in Rome. This faction was very much predisposed by the teachings of the Apostle Paul. This faction turned into being prominent in the fourth century C.E. when the Roman Empire with authorization became Christian. Recognizing the value of a sacred text in solidifying their power over Christianity, the Roman faction brought together a compilation of writings by early Christians and proclaimed these writings were motivated by God and that they were the true testament of the life and teachings of Jesus. This collection is called the New Testament and is a fundamental part of the Christian Bible. However, in creating the New Testament the Roman group discarded as *heresy* all other writings about Jesus' life and teachings, including many books written by North African Gnostic Christians. Therefore, a small number of people know of the significance of these early African Christians.

In spite of the subjugation of the Gnostic Christians by Roman Christians, Christianity persistently continued to prosper throughout North Africa until the arrival of Islam in the seventh century C.E. The Christians in this area were known as Coptic Christians, named after the foremost language of the area. By the time of the influx of Islam, the Coptic Orthodox Church had lost most of the Gnostic influence, although the Coptic faith, like the Gnostics placed a great deal of prominence on *contemplation* and *monasticism*. In construction, it was analogous to the Church of Rome in that it practiced the same sacraments, and the church structure was made up of priests and bishops. Like the Roman Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church is headed by a *Patriarch* (comparable to the Pope in the Roman Church) who lives in Alexandria.

Even after Egypt had been taken over by Arab Moslems, the Coptic Christians continued to shape a small but imperative section of Egyptian society. Undeniably, Coptic Christians today encompass more or less fifteen per cent of the Egyptian population.

## **Early Christians in Nubia**

The kingdom of Nubia was positioned in present day Sudan. As you will keep in mind, Nubia was an ancient kingdom whose historical roots go back to the time of the period of the Pharaohs in Egypt. Christianity was introduced in Nubia by Christian monks and traders in the fifth and sixth centuries C.E. By the seventh century, the rulers of Nubia and most Nubians had converted to Christianity. In practice and construction, the Nubian church was parallel to the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt.

Moslem Arab traders came to Nubia in the eighth century C.E. For the next a small number of centuries, they lived in synchronization with the Nubian Christians. However progressively, most of the Nubian ruling class converted to Islam. By the 16th century, the majority of Nubians were Moslems, and Christianity was no longer practiced in Nubia.

### **Early Christians in Aksum**

The kingdom of Aksum occasionally written as Axum, in English, founded more than 2000 years ago, is in history associated to the modern nation-state of Ethiopia. Ethiopia, which as well-read was never colonized by outsiders, is the oldest uninterrupted nation-state in Africa. In the fourth century C.E., the rulers of Aksum converted to Christianity after Christian travelers and traders brought the religion into the region from Egypt and western Asia. Over the next 1,600 years, a characteristically Ethiopian form of Christianity developed and turned out to be well-established in Ethiopia. It is imperative to identify that Aksum became a principally Christian nation about the same time that the Roman Empire authoritatively became Christian. This means that Christianity in this part of Africa was entrenched many centuries before Christianity was introduced into countries in northern and Western Europe, areas that are more often than not linked with Christianity.

By the time Islam was established into the region of north east Africa in the eighth century C.E., Christianity was steadfastly entrenched in the structures of state, society, and culture in Ethiopia. While Nubia to the north west of Aksum and the coastal areas to the east of Aksum (present day Eritrea and Somalia) progressively converted to Islam, Aksum remained Christian.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church was parallel to the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt and the Syrian Orthodox Church in western Asia in composition. Church leadership was comprised of nuns, priests, and bishops, with a Patriarch (Pope) as its head. As with the Coptic Church in Egypt monasteries that were home to *contemplative* orders of monks and nuns were significant in the Ethiopian church. These monasteries were in addition centers of learning. Monks played a significant role in writing and interpreting the history and traditions of the Ethiopian kingdom. In this responsibility, they helped build up a general identity among the peoples of Ethiopia. A strong identification with the church

and the kingdom of Ethiopia helped keep Ethiopia united and able to defend against external threats.

### **Christianity in Kongo**

In the first millennium of the Common Era, Christianity had spread into North Africa and North East Africa from Palestine where Christianity started. On the other hand, the flourishing spread of Islam into North Africa and by the side of the coastal regions of East Africa put walls in the way of the growth of Christianity into the interior of Africa until the sixteenth century.

In the fifteenth century, European countries began to rummage around for a new sea trade route to Asia. Spain supported the explorations of Christopher Columbus who believed that by sailing to the west, Spain could build up a new trading route to Asia. At the same moment, Portugal was sending ships down the west coast of Africa in the hope that they would uncover a sea route around Africa to Asia. As the Portuguese worked their way around Africa, they built contact with African peoples in the Canary Islands, Cape Verde Islands, along the Guinea coast, in equatorial Africa (Kongo), Angola, Mozambique, and Kenya. In the early years of contact with African peoples, the Portuguese had a twofold program. First and foremost was to launch trade and secondly, to spread the Christian religion in the area. In their effort to turn people to Christianity, the Portuguese supported Roman Catholic missionary priests. By using a related approach as the Moslems used in West Africa, these priests first endeavored to work with the rulers of the African kingdoms with whom they had made contact with. They believed that if the rulers become Christians, their people would go after the paradigm set by the ruling class. This policy met with mixed accomplishment. Some African rulers discarded the efforts of conversion. The Portuguese missionaries had their furthest achievement in the Kongo Kingdom.

Kongo speaking peoples lived along the west coast of African and along the Kongo river in the modern day countries of Gabon, the two Congos, and Angola. The first relationship between the Portuguese and the Kongo Kingdom came in 1483. By 1491, the Portuguese sent missionaries to the Kongo and almost immediately afterwards King Nzinga a Nkuwu was baptized as a Christian, and he permitted his son Nzinga Mbembe to be taken to Portugal where he got a Catholic education. When he returned to the Kongo, he substituted his father as king and changed his name to King Alfonso I.

King Alfonso I developed an intimate trading and cultural relationship with the Portuguese. Missionaries opened schools across the kingdom, and many Kongolese were converted to Christianity. The rapport between the Portuguese and Kongolese was reciprocally advantageous until the beginning of the slave trade in the seventeenth century C.E. The Portuguese did not raid the Christian Kongo for slaves, but strongly encouraged the Kongolese to raid neighboring non-Christian groups for slaves.

Unavoidably, slave raiding weakened the Kingdom of the Kongo until it was a weak doll state of the Portuguese.

In the eighteenth century, a young Kongolesse woman, Beatrice Kimpa Vita, decided to go out of the Catholic Church claiming that St Anthony had appeared to her in a vision in which he persuaded her to start a movement that would lead to the refurbishment of Kongo kingdom.

Beatrice Kimpa Vita taught that Jesus had been born in the Kongo and had been baptized in the Congo River and that the Virgin Mary also came from a bordering area. She did not criticize the Pope nor did she explicitly work against missionaries, but she did build up an order of priests and a new Africanized church *liturgy* that incorporated African music, drumming, and dancing. Her group, known as the *Antonine* movement (named after St. Anthony), developed speedily reflecting disappointment with the Portuguese and her own recognition. On the other hand, Beatrice became such a threat to the Catholic Church and Portuguese control in the Kongo that in 1706 she was captured and burned at the stake as a *heretic*.

The *Antonine* movement is the beginning model of what is called *African Independent Church* movement. Beatrice Kimpa Vita, sought to institute a type of Christianity that was independent from the European missionary church. Additionally to claiming that Jesus was really from the Kongo, she formed practices that were inclined to Kongolesse cultural beliefs.

One could regard the Coptic Church in North Africa and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as the initial examples of Christian independency in Africa. For though these Christian churches had much in common with Christian groups in Western Asia and in Europe, in teaching, beliefs and their practice of Christianity, there were noteworthy differences from Christian practice in other parts of the world.

It is furthermore very essential to recognize the role of African Christians in fighting against slavery which gave rise to growth of Christianity in Africa. Many African slaves throughout the America progressively converted to Christianity. As they learned to read, they read the Bible. Their interpretation of the Bible was very unusual than the interpretation of White slave holders. African Christians believed that the teachings of both the Old and New Testaments were in antagonism to slavery. African slaves, ex-slaves, and Christians in Africa used Christianity as a foundation for their resistance to slavery.



### **3.6 Christianity in the Age of Colonialism; factors for growth**

At the commencement of the nineteenth century when the Atlantic slave trade was gradually coming to an end, there were only a small number of pockets of Christianity in Africa. There was a little population of Coptic Christians in Egypt. There were also little communities in the Cape region of South Africa where Dutch settlers had lived since 1652. Besides, there were small Christian communities in the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique. The biggest Christian community at this time was in Ethiopia. However, over the next two hundred years there was a rapid expansion of Christianity in Africa. Definitely, these days at the beginning of the twenty first century, over forty percent of the African population classify themselves as Christian.

What caused this rapid expansion of Christianity? There are many factors that contributed to this growth, but the most imperative historical factor indisputably was the colonization of Africa by European powers. With the coming of colonial rule, a *symbiotic* relationship built up between colonial rulers and Christian missions. Colonial rule made available a politically serene and accommodating atmosphere for the work of Christian missionaries. At the same instance, colonial governments saw Christian missionaries as essential allies. Colonial officials understood that Christianity would afford support for colonial rule. That is, they thought that Africans who converted to Christianity would be probable to see the importance of colonial rule and would not be in opposition to European rule. Nevertheless, as you will bear in mind from, this was not constantly the case. Many of the early African nationalist leaders were educated Christians.

The mutual relationship between colonial governments and Christian missionaries was strongest in colonies that did not have hefty Moslem populations. More so, colonial governments instituted systems of *indirect rule*. In colonies that had large Moslem populations, colonial governments dispirited Christian mission work in view of the fact that they did not want to upset Moslem leaders and endanger their alliances with these leaders.

The rapid expansion of Christianity in Africa is in marked dissimilarity to the expansion of Islam into the interior of West and East Africa. It is acknowledged that the adoption of Islam was a steady process in each area, time and again taking centuries before whole communities became Moslem. Islam, of course, did not have the advantage of the support of colonial governments, nor did they have large number of missionaries working in Africa.

#### **Christian Missionaries**

Starting in the early nineteenth century until African colonies became independent more than a hundred years later, several thousands of Christian missionaries from Europe, North America, and the West Indies worked throughout the African continent. While

European colonialism paved way for the progress of the work of Christian missionaries, these missionaries did not come to Africa for the reason that they were invited by colonial governments. The most important schedule of the missionaries was to spread Christianity through the conversion of as many people as they could reach with their message.

If the goals of Christian missions were self-determining from the colonial agenda, why didn't Christian missionaries work in Africa in large numbers before the beginning of the colonial era? This is an excellent question. European and North American missionary efforts were straightforwardly tied to a Christian *revivalist movement* that transpired in the nineteenth century. Religious revivals take place in all religions, including Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. These movements frequently happen at a time of social disturbance and improbability when religious leaders give confidence to people to return to a faithful religious practice. A fundamental message of the nineteenth century Christian renewal was a call for *proselytization*. Christians were powerfully encouraged to spread the Christian message to all regions of the world, including Africa.

Christian missions in Africa were inaugurated by a multiplicity of Christian denominations. Many dissimilar Roman Catholic orders built mission work in Africa, as did many Protestant denominations. In actual fact, it would be easier said than done to recognize a Protestant church in the early twentieth century that did not have mission work in some part of Africa. Furthermore, missionaries did not merely come from principally White churches. The African Episcopal Methodists and National Baptist Convention, among other African American churches, had vigorous mission work in Africa.

The most important goal of Christian missionaries was to convert as many Africans to Christianity as they can. To smooth the progress of meeting this goal, missionaries determined their efforts on teaching and preaching on the subject of Christianity. To reach the enormous majority of African people, missionaries had to gain knowledge of their languages. To additional curiosity in and understanding of Christianity, missionaries worked to translate portions of the Bible into local languages.

Nevertheless to read the recently translated Bible, people considered necessary to learn how to read. As a result, education and schooling became imperative supplementary goals of Christian missionaries. All over Africa, everywhere missionaries went, they established schools. In the beginning, the core focal point of these schools was to train reading and religious instruction. Missionaries believed that the capability to read the Bible was of crucial importance in the conversion procedure. This focal point is not unusual from the Moslem Quranic schools that focused on the learning of the holy Quran.

As the colonial era progressed, mission education expanded to include full primary and secondary schooling. While these schools were obtainable to only a small minority of

African children, they were significant since in most African countries, the colonial governments were not willing to squander money on education for their subjects. In addition to their work in education, some mission societies were enthusiastically engaged in health work, opening hospitals and clinics in rural and sometimes remote areas. These areas enabled the penetration of the gospel in the innermost heart of Africans and progressively brought expansion of Christianity in the continent.

In all of their activities-evangelism, education and health care-missionaries brought with them values and attitudes that replicated their understanding of Christianity and their view of African religions and cultures. For a lot of missionaries, it was rigid to disconnect indispensable Christian values and teaching from their European or American culture. As a result, many missionaries implemented extensively held beliefs among Europeans and Americans of that day. Several people believed that European cultures and social structures and practices were better-quality to African cultural and social structures and practices. In reality, many believed that African cultures were *archaic* and that only through experience to Christianity and Western culture would Africans be able to build up as individuals and as communities.

This viewpoint provided a lens through which many missionaries interpreted their experiences in Africa. Unluckily, this lens provided a *distorted* and erroneous understanding of African cultures, social practices and religions. Nonetheless, as Christianity became established in Africa, African Christians using their interpretation of the Bible and the teachings of Jesus, disputed distortions on the part of missionary understanding and practice.

## **10.0 Conclusion**

The narrative provides two broad reasons why so little is known about Christianity in North and North East Africa. First, there was a deliberate "silencing" of the Gnostics Christians by the faction of the Christian church centered in Rome. When Rome officially became Christian in the fourth century, the Roman church was able to silence dissenting Christian factions. Secondly, by the tenth century Islam had become the dominant religion in North Africa. Although the Coptic Church survived, it was very small in comparison to Islam.

The narrative provides several reasons for the survival of Christianity in Aksum/Ethiopia. Aksum/Ethiopia had a strong centralized system of government and long before the arrival of Islam in the area, the government was thoroughly Christianized. In neighboring areas, Islam was successful because Moslem missionaries were able to convert the ruling class, but not so in Aksum/Ethiopia. Moreover, the strong centralized government and military were able to resist attacks from neighboring Moslem dominated peoples.

Beatrice Kimpa Vita formed the Antonine Christian movement because she was dissatisfied with the way the Portuguese missionaries and emissaries in the Kongo had weakened the Kongo kingdom. Moreover, she felt that Africans were not treated as equals in the Catholic Church, and that the church did not recognize the importance of Kongolesse religious beliefs and practices. The Portuguese felt very threatened by the Antonine movement, tried to suppress it, and finally killed Beatrice by burning her at the stake as a heretic.

## 11.0 Summary

It is confirmed that St. Mark first of all brought the Christian faith into Egypt in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and in the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD it was the early fathers of the Church in North Africa, such as Tertullian and Augustine, Origen and Athanasius. In Egypt the *Gnostics* had influence throughout North Africa. Christianity spread to the kingdom of Nubia in Sudan today around fifth and sixth centuries CE whereas the kingdom of Askum in Ethiopia today was in the fourth century CE. The Portuguese supported Roman Catholic missionary priests to build trade and bring Christianity to African peoples in the Canary Islands, Cape Verde Islands, along the Guinea coast, in equatorial Africa (Kongo), Angola, Mozambique, and Kenya. Christian missions in Africa were inaugurated by a multiplicity of Christian denominations. The most imperative goal of Christian missionaries was to convert as many Africans to Christianity as they can. As the colonial era advanced, mission education expanded to incorporate full primary and secondary schooling. Mission societies were passionately occupied in health work, opening hospitals and clinics in rural and sometimes isolated areas. These areas enabled the infiltration of the gospel in the deepest heart of Africans and increasingly brought growth of Christianity in the continent.

## 12.0 Tutor Marked Assignment:

- iv. Highlight the factors responsible for the growth and spread of Christianity in Africa
- v. Explain the impact of Islam in North Africa that almost crumbled the first century Christianity

## 7.0 References for Further Reading

Henry Melvin Gwatkin, *Early Church History to A.D. 313* (London: Macmillan, 1912), p.237;  
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## **UNIT 4: HISTORICITY OF THE MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES IN WEST- AFRICA (NIGERIA)**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The piece discusses the chief trends in history of church growth and development in West Africa and particularly Nigeria. The history of church growth and development in Nigeria is seen in five phases: the advent of Latin Christianity in the 15th and 16th Centuries, the era of missionary activities in the 19th Century from 1842 and beyond, the development of independent Churches, the stage of indigenous African Churches and the time of the dawn of Charismatic and Pentecostal Churches. Church growth led to numerical vigor of churches as seen in the rise of churches in Nigeria.

### **4.2 Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

1. Narrate briefly the history of missionary activities in West-Africa and Nigeria
2. Pinpoint the implication of proliferation of Churches to Church Growth in Nigeria
3. Define the role of CAN in the Nigerian context

### **4.2 Main Content**

Historicity of the Missionary Activities in West-Africa (Nigeria)

4.3 Conclusion

4.5 Summary

4.4 Tutor Marked Assignment

4.6 References for further Reading

### **4.2 Main Content**

#### **HISTORICITY OF THE MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES IN WEST-AFRICA (NIGERIA)**

Christianity in Nigeria began in the 16th century when the Portuguese initiated Latin Christianity in Benin and Warri. Considering Christianity from that early beginning to the present time, many stages of growth had taken place resulting to the planting and growth of churches.

The birth of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) which divided the Christian church to five major groups aided the growth of the church in Nigeria. The time from 1980 to 2010 is amazing as it witnessed the spread, growth and spread of churches in Nigeria.

Church growth led to numerical strength of churches as seen in the spring up of churches in Nigeria today.

In 1472 till the close of the 18th Century, a period of about three hundred years marks the 'first contact of Europeans with the natives of the Delta region'. At this moment, "Christianity failed to gain any stable grip in Benin, Warri, Bonny, and Calabar". Antonio Galvao, the 16th century historian, accredited the first Portuguese voyage through the Bight of Benin to one Ruy de Sequeira in 1472. The last habitation of the Portuguese in the Bight of Benin began in the 1480s through the accessibility of slave, just as gold was obtainable in the Port of Elmina. Portuguese trade with Benin brought political ties, and under King John II, Christian missionaries were sent out with traders<sup>2</sup>. Christianity was brought into the kingdom of Benin by opportunity. It was unplanned because the Portuguese were in the West Coast of Africa chiefly to trade in gold, ivory, pepper and slave. As a Christian nation, they aimed at the decisive alteration to the catholic faith in their trading partners. Accordingly, the king and the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church at home encouraged them. Again the Portuguese sought the conversion of their native trading partners because, "as Christians, they were looking for allies against Islam.

Missionary activity in the 15th century was smallest because the superseding commercial curiosity in trade in slave and pepper had been popular. Nevertheless, the 16th century witnessed a notable interest in missionary activities on the part of the Portuguese. Because of this, Esigie (1504-1550), the Oba of Benin sent an embassy to king Manuel of Portugal in 1514, and in the following year Christian Priests came to in Benin. Egharevba put it that churches were built, the Oba's son and some prominent men were baptized and began to learn how to read and write. Esigie's successor, Orhoghua, was said to have been educated by the Portuguese in their school and was baptized.

On the other hand, by Mid-Sixteenth Century, the Itsekiris had turned into rivals to the Benin in slave trade, and when the Portuguese Missionaries were rejected in Benin in the period, they were received by the Itsekiri rulers and the kingdom developed through contact with the Europeans under the order of the Bishop of SaoTome, Gasper Cao (1556-1565, 1571-1574). Christianity was brought to Warri by a group of Augustinian Monks sent to Warri, who established a Christian settlement, called Santo Augustino. The primary achievement of the Augustinian Missionaries was sent to Portugal in 1600 to be educated, and returned to Warri some years later with a noble Portuguese wife and three priests.

For the next two hundred years, "Roman Catholic Missionaries" travelled to Warri, though occasionally, sometimes going with trading parties and often times exclusively on their own. At the close of the 18th Century, European trading vessels no longer visited Warri, because of the fall in the capacity of trade accessible to the Europeans in Warri. What went on at this moment were the Association of Missionary Enterprises with the enthusiasm of trade, intermittency and long interval between the postings of Missionaries, insufficiency in the number of missionaries, meagerness in the number of Missionaries obtainable at any time and their deficient in insight of their job because they

were not trained for it and lack of material aid for the few missionaries obtainable. Besides language barrier, concentration was heading for many places at the same time and the base was far from the field. For instance, Sao Tome was made the base for missions to Fernando po, Elmina, Principe, Warri, Ughoton, and Inland town of Benin. Additionally, from the Warri know-how, the proselytizing effect of the Roman Catholic Missionaries was reduced by their high death rate because of the detrimental atmosphere only the palaces or courts were visited by the missions and efforts of the Portuguese or Italian priests were stories of Jesus and not Christianity based on the Scripture. All the aforementioned features led to the breakdown and end of the mission.

### **The period of Denominationalism and Missionary Activities.**

In 1840, missionary bodies formed in Europe and America around 18th century thrived in converting Nigerians to Christianity and set up stable mission stations among the people. This was just after the abolition of the slave trade; the obliteration of slave trade motivated a fresh religious interest among the Europeans and Americans. By the aid of the missionary bodies the freed slaves in places like Sierra Leone and Abeokuta encouraged missionary enterprises. At this moment many churches from the British Isles and America sent missionaries to the coast and interior of Nigeria. The Anglicans under the Church Missionary Society (CMS) were the first but the Niger Expedition in which they came in 1841 was unsuccessful. Nevertheless, the first victorious access of Christian mission into the interior of Nigeria was made in 1842, when the Wesleyan Methodists on the call of the freed slaves who had settled at Badagry and Abeokuta, sent Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman and an assistant William de craft and his wife from the Gold Coast (Ghana) to Badagry and sometime afterward Henry Townsend to Abeokuta.

In the Cross River in the old slave-trading town of Calabar, the Presbyterians sent Rev. Hope Masterton Waddell followed by Mr. and Mrs. Edgerl A. Chishalm and E. Miller, who landed in Calabar in April 1846, to set up the church of Scotland Mission. Their toil was very thriving because a Presbytery, the Presbytery of Biafra, was instituted in 1858. The American Baptist Mission started work in Nigeria in 1850. Rev. Thomas J. Bowen, the Pioneer Missionary, founded stations at Ijaiye and Ogbomoso. The Roman Catholicism, through the Society of the African Missions, came in 1862. The ex-slaves were structured and stations opened in Lagos and Abeokuta. When the Italian Priest, Father Broghero, made a trip to Lagos in 1863, there was a catholic church in Yorubaland. The Holy Ghost Fathers began work among the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria in 1885 through Father Joseph Lutz working at Onitsha. Samuel A. Bill started the Qua Iboe Mission in the Qua Iboe River area from 1887, however it was not successful until 1891 that the Qua Iboe church was formed as an Independent evangelical and inter-denominational body.

Mission work in Northern Nigerian began in 1893 all the way through Rolland Bingham, Walter Gowans, and Thomas Kent in 1904, the Sudan United Mission (SUM) joined the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) in the mission work in the North, focusing in the regions of Adamawa, Benue and Bornu.



It is to be distinguished that this phase was portrayed by missionary activities being based on denominations and restricted to the Southern part of the country. The missionaries who came were taught and actually organized; nonetheless many were brought down by the climate. The language barricade that had existed was reduced to the bare minimum by the use of interpreters and the missionaries themselves learning the language; Trained Nigerian Ministers started to come forward; churches and later schools and hospitals were built. More significantly, baptism was administered to the converts as an unforgettable mark for the new faith they had received and the old ways they had abandoned.

### **Implication of Proliferation of Churches to Church Growth in Nigeria**

The implications of rise of churches in Nigeria have both the positive and negative impacts. One positive impact of proliferation of churches in Nigeria, is that it makes people to become conscious that Nigeria is very religious and that many Christian churches abound in the country. More so, the Christian body under one umbrella name called Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) stands as a pressure group in the nation at whatever time a major rule which affects the Christian group or the overview of the country is made by the government. A distinctive instance was the issue of Nigeria becoming a member of the Organization of Islam countries (OIC) in the 1980s and 1990s. The Christians critically mounted pressure against this and emphasized that Nigeria should hang about in her secular status. Consequently, Nigeria, turn out to be an onlooker then until when Maccido, the emir of Sokoto pronounced that Nigeria had become a full member of OIC. In responding to the assertion made by Maccido, Augustine Madu-West and ex-chairman of CAN Kaduna State said “The government should be aware of the danger it is doing to this country, if its secularity is tampered with”. In the direction of Augustine Madu-West, the end result of joining OIC full membership means that the economy of any member state and leadership (of OIC) would have to be Muslim oriented and that it was not good for Nigeria as a country because it would tend to enforce religion on the constitution of the country which to him was not reasonable. To Madu-West’s response the government then kept silent having comprehended what it could breed into in the country.

An additional way by which CAN stand as a pressure group is when an action is taken by the government that is disadvantageous to public interest. An instance was during Abacha’s regime in Nigeria when many people were put in imprisonment because of their views and opposition to government policy, the Christian Association of Nigeria’s leadership act in response to that effect in their diverse protest statements. Example of such objection statements were made by Ondo State CAN chairman Bishop Gbonigi at Akure and Bishop Olubunmi Okogie the National CAN Chairman in Lagos.

There are furthermore the negative impacts of proliferation of churches. The doctrinal differences that originate as a result of division more often than not confuse the members of the churches. Nevertheless, some churches are founded for commercial purposes with the aim of enriching the founders. As a consequence, it is shown that the proprietors or

overseers of these religious sects both foreign mission and indigenous have become splendidly rich at the expense of their congregations.

Generally speaking, explosion of churches, has led to the birth and growth of churches in Nigeria as churches spread very wide here and there. It is to be known that the Deeper Life Bible Church, Living Faith Winners Chapel and Redeemed Christian Church are among the fastest growing churches in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general at the moment.

### **1.3 Conclusion**

It is noted that in 1472 till the end of the 18th Century, a period of about three hundred years marks the ‘first contact of Europeans with the natives of the Delta region’. At this moment, “Christianity failed to gain any stable grip in Benin, Warri, Bonny, and Calabar. The Portuguese were the people who brought Christianity to Nigeria in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Christianity spread henceforth to many regions in Nigeria. What we have seen today are the efforts of Roman Catholic Church, the Anglicans under the Church Missionary Society (CMS), Wesleyan Methodists, Church of Scotland Mission, the Presbyterian Church, the American Baptist Mission and Qua Iboe Mission. Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) stands as a force in the nation. CAN kicked against Nigeria becoming a member of the Organization of Islam countries (OIC) in the 1980s and 1990s which she succeeded.

### **1.4 Summary**

Christianity in Nigeria began in the 16th century when the Portuguese commenced Latin Christianity in Benin and Warri. The birth of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) which divided the Christian church to five major groups aided the growth of the church in Nigeria. The association also helped in fighting against Nigeria becoming an Islamic nation. The period from 1980 to 2010 is remarkable as it witnessed the spread, growth and spread of churches in Nigeria. In 1840, missionary bodies formed in Europe and America around 18th century thrived in turning Nigerians to Christianity and set up stable mission stations among the people. This was just after the abolition of the slave trade; the obliteration of slave trade aggravated a fresh religious awareness among the Europeans and Americans. By the support of the missionary bodies the freed slaves in places like Sierra Leone and Abeokuta encouraged missionary enterprises. At this moment many churches from the British Isles and America sent missionaries to the coast and interior of Nigeria. The Anglicans under the Church Missionary Society (CMS) were the first but the Niger Expedition in which they came in 1841 was unsuccessful. Mission work in Northern Nigerian started in 1893 all the way through Rolland Bingham, Walter Gowans, and Thomas Kent in 1904, the Sudan United Mission (SUM) connected the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) in the mission work in the North, focusing in the regions of Adamawa, Benue and Bornu.

There are the depressing impacts of explosion of churches. The doctrinal disparities that began as a result of division typically confound the members of the churches. Even so, some churches are instituted for commercial purposes with the aim of enriching the pioneers. Hence, it is shown that the overseers of these religious sects both foreign mission and indigenous have become marvelously rich at the expense of their worshippers.

### 1.5 Tutor Marked Assignment

1. State the missionary activities in West Africa and Nigeria
2. What is the implication of Church growth in Nigeria?

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## **Unit 5**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The main thrust of this unit is to neutrally evaluate the general impacts of the establishment of Christian missions in Nigeria on her people and nationhood. It is intended at challenging the Christian leaders of nowadays to re-appraise their obligation to the social aspect of the Church’s call. While using an critical and descriptive historical approach to the study of the activities of the Christian missions in Nigeria between the 19th and the 20th centuries, this research has discovered that the contributions of the European and American missionaries who assumed pioneer missionary work in the country have been misjudged in earlier historical records. The missionaries in reality contributed greatly to the development of Nigerians independently and corporately in several areas including Education, Medicare, Agriculture and Commerce.

### **5.2 Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

1. Explain how the Christians missionaries who came from Europe and America evangelize Africa and Nigeria
2. How slave trade was abolish in Africa and Nigeria
3. State the role of Church Missionary Mission in slave trading

### **5.3 Main Content**

#### **The Establishment of Christian Missions in Nigeria and Abolition of Slave Trade**

The Niger area (that part of Africa that was called Nigeria during the colonial era by the British authority) was an over-ripe missionary field in the 19th century. This was very challenging to the Christian missionaries who came from Europe and America to evangelize the area owing to the grave socio-economic conditions in which the people were living. Corroborating this fact, Baur (1994) wrote: On arrival, the Christian missionaries who came to Africa (Nigeria inclusive) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century found themselves struggling to avoid the danger of creating what in China was described as ‘Rice Christians’. This is a situation where the motive of conversion to the Christian faith becomes material help instead of internal acceptance of the Christian faith. This also posed the danger of creating beggars in the society (p.419).

Nevertheless, the missionaries saw the need to help the people out of their socio-economic problems and they did so in many ways. In the first place, there is the profit of missionary education, enabling a significant part of the population to earn their living through salaried work or to start their own trades. Health care was also worthwhile: it liberated many Nigerians, especially those from the South, from so many diseases and premature death, giving them more strength and joy to work for their livelihood. There was also the introduction of cash crops which slowly developed into other major money spinners of national economies and the population of labour through the construction and maintenance of mission buildings, the employment to mission personnel: casual labour in garden, fields and roads.

The different Christian missions made significant contributions to the socio-economic development of Nigeria in many areas of human life such as Education, Medicare, agriculture, commerce, politics, etc. Nevertheless, Education and Medicare are the major areas in which the missionaries made impact on national development in most African nations. For the purpose of this paper, we shall treat all the Christian missions who laboured in Nigeria during the 19th and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as a single entity in terms of their socio-economic impacts on the Nigerian nation.

The Christian Church took its origin from Jerusalem, the historic capital city of Israel. It was from Jerusalem that the Church expanded to other parts of the world. Jerusalem was to remain important to the Christian Church until the Roman Army destroyed the city in A.D. 70, after which time, Rome became the headquarter of the Christian Church

(Dowley, 1990). The rest of the Roman world which comprised mostly of European countries may have received the Christian gospel as early as the 2nd Century.

In the 15th to the 17th centuries, the Portuguese, the French and the Italian Catholic governments and missionary bodies made several efforts to evangelize parts of what is known today as Nigeria, particularly Benin and Warri areas. But their efforts ended in fiasco. Later on, in the later part of the 18th century, the British government and some English missionary and charitable groups became interested in West Africa. Freetown in Sierra Leone was consequently established as a settlement for freed slaves in 1787. In 1841, the British government sponsored the first expedition to the Niger with the aim of establishing a Christian mission in the area. Ajayi Crowther, a Nigerian of the Yoruba extraction, one of the freed African slaves in Sierra-Leone. The year 1841 thus marked the beginning of the movement to re-establish Christianity in Nigeria after the failure of the earlier Catholic Missionary efforts in Benin and Warri. This phase, however, was only the “nursery” stage in preparation for the success period of the missionary work in Nigeria that came later with the British rule. Between 1841 and 1900 Nigeria witnessed the work of five missionary societies, namely, the Church Missionary Society of the Church of England, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society from England, the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Southern Baptist Convention of the United States, and the French Catholic Society for African Missions (Ajayi, 1965).

There were some significant differences between these different missionary societies, both in doctrine and missionary approach. Each missionary society tended to emphasize those things that differentiated them from all others. But the contribution of each mission to the common factor of Christian missionary presence in Nigeria was not equal in men, material or significance. Initially, the Anglican Mission was the largest and the most significant, being part of the established church based in London the home of the colonial government. For this reason, the Church Missionary Society had the greatest influence on the British government and its missionaries were actively connected with the government sponsored Niger Expedition of 1841.

The Methodist was the first to establish their mission in Nigeria, precisely at Badagry in 1842 but they were poorly represented. The Anglicans (CMS) established in Badagry later the same year and in Abeokuta in 1846, and hence led the missionary expansion into other parts of the Yoruba land. They established on the Niger (Igbo land) later in 1857 from where they extended the mission southwards to Delta and Rivers areas and northwards to Lokoja and beyond. While the Methodists had only a short-lived mission station on the Niger at Egga, the Anglicans had several stations both on the Niger and in Delta areas. The Presbyterians arrived in Calabar in 1846 where they concentrated their efforts most exclusively with only a few outstations on the Cross River. The Baptists established their first station at Ijaye in 1853, and expanded into Yoruba hinterland but their work was interrupted following the American Civil War, and they had to start all over again after 1875 (Ajayi, 1965).

The Roman Catholic Mission came later than all others, in 1867, at Lagos. But hardly had they arrived when the Franco-Prussian War and the consequent civil disturbances in France disrupted their work (Ajayi, 1965). Outside Lagos, they were just making their initial contacts after 1875. The Holy Ghost Fathers arrived at Onitsha in 1885, 28 years after the arrival of the Church Missionary Society.

Missionary expansion became largely incidental to the establishment of the colonial rule in the Country between 1891 and 1960. It was from 1841 to 1891 and 1900 to 1960 that missionary work had its distinctive significance in Nigeria. It was in these periods that the missionaries had a greater measure of initiative and their work had its own decisive influence on Nigerians apart from the colonial influence.

The abolition of slave trade which was achieved through the efforts of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) of the Church of England was particularly beneficial to Nigeria as one of the freed slaves who became a Christian in Sierra-Leone and later joined the Anglican mission to Nigeria was a Nigerian from the Yoruba extraction. He was by name Samuel Ajayi Crowther, baptized in 1842, ordained in 1845 and consecrated Bishop in 1864 (Adiele, 2001).

Slave trade was started by the Portuguese in 1441 by one of explorers named Gonzalves who returned to Lisbon with some African slaves after visiting West African Coast (Agha, 1999). The Dutch entered the trade when they conquered Brazil and took over her plantations. By this time the Dutch and the Portuguese were the leading slave trading nations. Britain and France took over the lead in the eighteenth century. Because of the large profits that accrued from the trade, European monarchs gave official backing to the traders to carry on with the trade in the interest of their national prosperity. However, when all the evils connected with slave trade became clearly known, many good Christians and Christian Organizations began to speak openly against its continuation.

The C.M.S. preached for the abolition of slave trade on the ground of brotherly love and sympathy as prescribed in the Christian Bible. With the passing of time, the movement for abolition of slave trade became influential even in the British Parliament. Victory crowned the labours of the C.M.S. on 23rd February, 1807 when the back of the opposition against abolition of slave trade was broken. The battle, however, continued for complete emancipation until age and poor health forced the leader of the Evangelicals, William Wilberforce, out of the parliament. The skills of a young evangelical named Thomas Fowel Buxton were immediately enlisted and he assumed the leadership of the "Holy enterprise". On 25th July, 1833, four days before Wilberforce died, the reality of the passage of the Emancipation Act by the British Government came, freeing slaves throughout the British Empire (Shelly, 1970:388).

## **5.4 Conclusion**

The socio-economic conditions of Africa during the advent of the European and American Christian missions were deplorable and piteous. This was particularly the case with that part of the continent that was later named Nigeria by the British colonial authority. To help or not to help the people economically therefore became one of the greatest problems of the missionaries owing to the vastness of the area and the large population of the people occupying it. Nevertheless, the missionaries saw the socio-economic assistance to the less-privileged and poor natives as a missionary imperative. The solution was found in the system of indirect socio-economic assistance of the converts. This was inherent in the works of all the missionary groups that brought the Christian gospel to Africa. Consequently, the Christian missions worked hard to develop the Nigerian nation since the 19th century. The abolition of slave trade was attained by the pains of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) of the Church of England and had been predominantly advantageous to Nigeria.

## **5.5 Summary**

The Niger area the part of Africa that was named Nigeria for the period of the colonial era by the British authority was viable for missionary field in the 19th century. The Christian missionaries who came from Europe and America to evangelize the area found it challenging due to the severe socio-economic conditions in which the people were living. The outstanding benefits were the profit of missionary education, leading the people to earn their living through salaried work or to start their own trades. Health care was also meaningful: it releases numerous Nigerians, above all those from the South from several diseases and untimely death. There was also the opening of cash crops which gradually developed into other major money making venture.

It is learnt that between 15th and 17th centuries, the Portuguese, the French and the Italian Catholic governments and missionary bodies made some attempts to evangelize parts of Nigeria, for the most part Benin and Warri areas. Although they were not successful but subsequently in the 18th century, the British government and some English missionary and charitable groups had their way as they became attracted in West Africa. Freetown in Sierra Leone was later a centre for freed slaves in 1787. In 1841, the British government sent the first expedition to the Niger with the plan of building a Christian mission in the area. Ajayi Crowther, a Nigerian of the Yoruba origin was one of the freed African slaves in Sierra-Leone.

The Methodist was the first to set up their mission in Nigeria, specifically at Badagry in 1842 but they were inadequately represented. The Anglicans (CMS) set up in Badagry



afterward the same year and in Abeokuta in 1846, and therefore led the missionary growth into other parts of the Yoruba land.

The Baptists launched their first station at Ijaye in 1853, and extended into Yoruba locality. The Roman Catholic Mission came later than all others, in 1867, at Lagos. The abolition of slave trade was attained by the efforts of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) of the Church of England. The C.M.S. preached for the abolition of slave trade on the ground of brotherly love and compassion as approved in the Christian Bible. The Victory of the works of the C.M.S. came on 23rd February 1807 when the support of the hostility against abolition of slave trade was broken down.

### **5.6 Tutor Marked Assignment**

1. Explain briefly how missionary groups struggled in bringing Christianity to Africa
2. What are the benefits of mission work to Africa and Nigeria?
3. Mention European nations and churches that participate in evangelizing Africa
4. How did slave trade came to an end

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## **Unit 6**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This unit discusses the establishment of missionary schools and medical services which brought development to the people. It brought emancipation from illiteracy to literacy and provision of white collar jobs for Africans. In addition, education also liberates women from oppression by men. Medical services have taken a second place in the missionary activity of the pioneer Christian Missions in Nigeria, second merely to the tangible preaching of the gospel.

### **6.2 Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

1. Explain how Western education enhance development on African land
2. Highlight the activities of Western missionaries beside education
3. Why did medical services improve the lives positively?

### **6.3 Main Content**

#### **Inauguration of Western Education, Medical Services and Institutions**

The founding of Western education in Nigeria could well be seen as the guide of the country's development hence schools were the most significant missionary social institutions in the country. The larger number of children were sent to schools in order to have the white man's knowledge, the secret of his power, and generally, to learn in order to get a job. Whatsoever the motives in the historical and sociological perspectives may be, the mission schools were the furthestmost service done to Nigerian people by European missionaries.

Education was in addition a stepping-stone in the liberation of women, one of the greatest achievements of the missions above and beyond general education. The school gave to the girls a new self realization and equipped them to earn their own living as teachers, nurses, etc. This act released them from cultural restrictions in so doing making them self-determining in choosing their life careers, husbands and in running their family affairs. Education was moreover a reason for professional training. Besides general education, this gave the educated Nigerian the prospect to secure the white-collar jobs, exceptional schools made available opportunities for professional training and advancement. The Europeans instituted Teachers' Training Colleges, Nursing Schools and Secondary Schools, which turned out teachers, nurses and clerks correspondingly among Nigerian natives.

It is noted that Nigerian natives who received basic education from the European missionaries at Sierra Leone were channeled into villages and towns outside Abeokuta, Lagos, Ibadan and Onitsha which were the main Christian centres at the time where Europeans were openly accountable for running of the missionary schools. In the villages, the educated natives also could initiate evangelization of other natives through education and preaching of the word. Besides, Sunday schools were set up in which those who could read and write in Yoruba and Igbo languages were allocated to teach. By this time, that was, before the 20th century, there was no official schools acknowledged by government in rural areas. If truth be told, government was only based in Lagos then (Adebiyi, 1994). At this moment, the European missionaries organized the undertaking of educating the Nigerian children with the plan that they would be converted and taught how to read and write the foremost languages of the people and therefore be used for the work of the mission in their areas.

Accordingly, to begin with, the missions implemented native languages, to be precise vernacular, as language of instruction in their schools. This entails that missionary education in Nigeria was introduced in stages. The first was literacy education followed by commercial and industrial education, then the Secondary and Grammar school education and lastly, the Teacher's Training Education.

Ali Mazrui was a Muslim who first made the strongest evaluation of the Christian missionary education in Africa in his article titled "Churches and Multinationals in the Spread of Modern Education" (Third World Quarterly (i) 1979). He on the other hand,

claimed that the task of missionary schools in Africa was inconsistent in that they formed what he called “techno-cultural gap” that did not make for noteworthy social development. By this he observes that missionary education in Africa did not commence technological culture and as such it could not effectuate significant development in the Continent. Grimley and Robinson in Agha (2012) alternatively, affirm that the Christian missionaries made very considerable contribution to general progress in Africa through the opening of both Primary and Secondary education. On the other hand, Basil Davidson in Agha (2012) concurs with Mazrui that missionary schools offered an inferior education for the people who were said to be inferior. This remark is comparatively true in relation to the type of education that was going on in the Whiteman’s home at the time. Nevertheless the fact of low standard of education introduced by European missionaries in Africa could be accredited to the low academic qualifications of those who volunteered to come to render services to the Africans.

The yearning for Western Education, as said by Falk (197:435) pledged to bring speedy results in evangelization and education of the people of Africa. The outcome was that it produced a learned Christian laity who in turn served the missionaries as catechists, teachers and clerks. The missionaries absorbed the Biblical principles of training a child in the way he should go and the guarantee that later in life he will not depart from the training (Prov. 22:6). The children came to the mission schools and received both secular and religious education concurrently. This equipped them for later life. The school has since then fashioned many renowned scholars, politicians, teachers, technicians, civil servants, leaders in key posts and positions in Nigeria. These people were instrumental to the progress of Nigeria as a Nation.

Before the arrival of the European missionaries in Nigeria, the mortality rate among the people was so high. There were no known medicines to cure some very deadly diseases, which went wild rapidly and caused a heavy death toll among the people. Besides there was total lack of knowledge concerning many of these diseases. In many cases four out of five children died before they were two years old. Some of the most common diseases, which were major causes of death, included malaria fever, dysentery, diarrhea, and sleeping sickness. When the missionaries came to Nigeria and found the magnitude of mortality they felt compassion for the people and therefore, decided to leave no stone unturned until the solution was found.

Medical services occupied a second place in the missionary activity of the pioneer Christian Missions in Nigeria, second only to the actual preaching of the gospel. Just as Christ was primarily moved by genuine compassion to heal the sick, so also the European missionaries who came to Nigeria in Christ’s name were moved not only to preach the gospel in words but also to do so through healing the sick. No doubt, for the pioneer missionaries their medicine chest was like a magical box working miracle of healing and

winning the people's confidence where their preaching would have failed. In rural areas simple medical care was until quite recently part of a missionary's daily routine. This would have been the proper task of the government but the colonial government was even slower in becoming aware of their duty to provide health care for their citizens than they had been in accepting their responsibility for education. Government support for mission hospitals was again in the form of grants. The Christian missionaries, the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Missions, were more responsible than the government in this respect.

According to Baur (1998:416) comparably, the Protestants were well ahead in this respect and the Anglican missionaries were the pioneers. A spotless example was the pioneering Anglican medical services in Igboland through the Iyienu Hospital. According to Onyeidu (2001: 41) "Perry Brown who was stationed at Lokoja was the first medical staff of the Anglican Mission in Niger Diocese". Then, that was, about the year 1883, Niger Diocese was the whole of the Country Nigeria apart from the Yorubaland. This was in the year 1883. Achunike (1995) asserts that a hospital was established in Onitsha in 1893. In September, 1905 the Mary Slessor Hospital was established at Itu by the Church of Scotland Mission (C.S.M). The same group started mission in Uwana on 25th October, 1888 and a mini-hospital in 1913, which is now known as the Presbyterian Joint Hospital. The Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.), the Church of Scotland Mission (C.S.M.) and the Methodist Mission jointly established the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Umuahia on 24th March 1956. In 1896, the C.M.S. opened a hospital with numerous maternities at Dobinson and this was later transferred to Iyienu in 1907 (Dike, 1982). The Methodist Mission established a hospital at Amachara in Umuahia in 1929. The Roman Catholic Mission was not left behind in the pioneer medical work in the development of Nigeria. Fr. Lutz (1885-1900) was the pioneer Roman Catholic missionary in the establishment of Medical Services East of the Niger (Heerey in Agha, 2012). St. Luke's Hospital at Anua was opened in March 1933, while six dispensaries and four orphanages were established in Igboland, (Missionary Annuals, Vol. 17, 1935) the same year. Holy Rosary Maternity hospital was opened in Onitsha in 1935. The Mt. Carmel Hospital at Emekukwu was commissioned in 1935 (P.Falk:1997), Matter Misericordia Hospital was established at Afikpo and Bishop Shanaham Hospital was established at Nsukka. Medical Services were carried on throughout Nigeria wherever the missionaries founded their church.

The establishment of hospitals also attracted the opening of Leper Colonies throughout the country. The Presbyterian mission opened a leper settlement at Itu in 1928, and another one at Uburu the same year. In 1939 the C.M.S. opened the Oji River Leper Settlement while the Methodist missionaries opened a leper colony at Uzualoli in 1930. Another leper colony was established at Garkida. In these settlements the lepers were not only cured, relieved and comforted, but they were also trained in carpentry and wood work. They were also taught how to mend shoes, work on palm oil press, Raffia weaving, fishing, and other trades, which helped to sustain them and their families.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

The white missionaries who came to Nigeria in the 19th century with their new religion from different parts of Europe and America contributed extensively to the growth and development of the country. As we have well-known above, they bequeathed not only education and medical services but moreover other significant aspects of development that touched the social, economic, political and moral life of Nigerians. The larger proportion of the food crops we benefit from today were introduced into Nigeria by the missionaries on their advent. The introduction of foreign food crops, fruits, and vegetables has not only developed Nigeria but has also been a source of good health and the growth of the population.

## **6.5 Summary**

Western education in Nigeria had been established to be the foundation of the people's development for this reason schools were the most significant missionary social organizations where learning was obtained. Many children were sent to schools in order to acquire knowledge and generally to learn in order to get a job. The children came to the mission schools and received both secular and religious education accordingly. Missionaries also brought medical services to improve the health of people by providing medicines and treating them of different kinds of sicknesses. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) alongside other churches played the significant role of evangelism in Nigeria.

## **6.6 Tutor Marked Assignment**

1. Which groups of missionaries were responsible for establishing schools in Nigeria?
2. What development or benefits did Western education brought to Nigeria?
3. Compare and contrast the Nigerian society before and after the coming of Western education

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## **Unit 7**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Christianity is a religion that does not accommodate other traditional practices that are against the Bible. Therefore by the coming of missionaries witchcraft, ritual murder, human sacrifice and killing of twins had been common practices in Nigeria. However, Christianity brought sanity and people stepped out from the darkness to light.

### **7.2 Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

1. Explain how abominable cultural practices were abolished by Western missionaries
2. Enumerate the abhorrent cultural practices on African land
3. Give an overview of how Nigerian politics gradually developed under the British colonial administration

### **7.3 Main Content**

## **Abolition of Detestable Cultural Practices and Growth of Nigeria's Nationhood**

The Christian missions did not only constitute a religious factor on its arrival in Nigeria, they also constituted a veritable socio-cultural force acting on the traditional life and practices which the people had lived and observed for many millennia before the advent of Christianity in the country. With such development, cultural changes became apparent in the country. Before the advent of the Christian missions in many parts of the country, especially in the South, the natives were traditionally immersed in some obnoxious cultural practices. In those days, witchcraft, ritual murder, human sacrifice were common practices in Nigeria. The twins were victims of circumstance because they were killed at birth or abandoned to die after birth. In many cases both the mother and the innocent twins suffered the same fate. The various missionary societies in Nigeria did not leave any stone unturned in their war against the evil cultural practices -wherever they existed (Agha, 2012).

The Church Missionary Society, like other early European missionaries who came to Nigeria and Igboland in particular, trained their new converts to advance their evangelistic cause by fighting against all forms of idolatrous and obnoxious traditional and cultural life in any community they were engaged in (Okwueze, 1989). Such war was to be directed on virtually every aspect of the people's traditional practices including religious objects, system of worship, sacrifices and rituals, burial rites, secret religious cults, etc. The missionaries were especially out against religious and cultural forms of man's inhumanity-to-man that were meted on some members of the society in the name of religion and culture. These included human sacrifice, cult slavery and killing of twins. With the assistance of the colonial government, human sacrifice and killing of twins were stopped. Adherents of the traditional cults, oracles and shrines who insisted on continuing these obnoxious practices were reported to government agents who arrested and punished them severely while those who were already earmarked for such acts were liberated and protected by the government agents. Iyienu Hospital, Ogidi was particularly known as a place where twin babies were taken for protection through government assistance (Onyeidu, 2001).

Some of the twins grew up to become national leaders, great politicians, scholars, and teachers in their various societies. Also, the Christian missionaries were not comfortable with some tribal marriage laws and practices. They vehemently opposed some cultural laws and practices against women. Education was extended to the females. Girls were also admitted in schools. Today such obnoxious marriage laws and treatment against women are no more in existence. Women can now contribute effectively to the development of their communities and Nigeria in general. Nevertheless, efforts to abolish cult slavery, known among the Igbos as osu caste system, proved abortive during the missionary days, especially among the Igbo. The so-called free-born continued to treat those who had the stigma of slavery hanging on them with contempt in many parts of



Igbo land until recently when State Governments began to grant such people autonomy as separate communities free from the so-called free-born.

The above contributions of the Christian missions to the socio-economic development of the people of Nigeria invariably contributed in no small measure to the development of Nigeria's nationhood. Speaking on a similar subject, one of the greatest African leaders and protagonists of Ghana's independence, Kwame Nkrumah who was himself a former student of a Catholic Mission school adumbrated in a seminar shortly after the achievement of his Country's independence, "The rise of our country is properly due to the missionaries. To their work and their assistance I and others owe what we now are" (Pax Romana Seminar, 1957).

Certainly, most of the leading African nationals were educational products of the Christian missions. For Nigeria, these include Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Herbert Marcauley, Anthony Enahoro and a host of others. Without these Christian personalities the dream of having a sovereign Nigeria in 1960 would not have been realized. The development of the national politics of the country was also directly or indirectly the contribution of the Christian missions. The missionaries worked hand-in-glove with the British colonial administrators in Africa, and Nigeria in particular. With the gradual penetration of the Europeans and American missionaries into Africa, they began to attract other Europeans who felt that God has called them not only to colonize but also to civilize the natives. To this effect, originally, most African peoples saw no distinction between a missionary and a colonial official. A Kikuyu proverb summarizes this fact thus: Gutiri mubea kana muthungu, meaning, "there is no priest and European: both are the same, the one like the other" (Onyebuagu, 2002). Thus, European colonial activities gradually progressed in Africa along with missionary work. This was especially so in Nigeria as a colony of the British government whose personnel were mostly Christians.

The British introduced modern politics in Nigeria through a gradual process of colonial administration. Between 1900 and 1960 the colonial masters established series of constitutions in Nigeria through their representatives such as Lord Lugard, Sir Hugh Clifford, etc. In response a Nigerian, a nationalist, a man who formed the first political party, Herbert Marcauley, a surveyor by profession, attacked the constitutions vigorously. His party Nigeria National Democratic Party was formed in 1923. After Clifford's Constitution was the Author Richard's of 1944 while that of Sir John Macpherson came up in 1951. There was also the Oliver Lyttleton's Constitution of 1954 which marked the beginning of Federal system of government in Nigeria (Esedeke, 2001). But earlier in 1953, a member of Parliament, Chief Anthony Enahoro had stunned the British by moving a motion that Nigeria should be self-governing by 1956. Accordingly, in 1957, a Constitutional Conference was held in London from May 23rd to June 26th under the chairmanship of Allan Lennox-Boyd who made way for internal government for the

Western and the Eastern Regions of Nigeria. The North was to achieve the same status in 1959 (Esedeke, 2001:60). On October 1, 1960, Nigeria became an independent nation.

The Anglican mission played a pioneering role in the national politics and also made substantial impact on local politics, especially in Southern Nigeria. In the words of Adediran (1994): This however could be largely explained by the fact that unlike most other Christian denominations such as the Methodist, the Roman Catholic and the Baptist, the CMS (Anglicans) enjoyed a quasi-official status because it was usually associated with the agents of the British Government. Thus semi-official recognition was used to a great advantage by the (Anglican) church. Its agents missionaries and converts made abundantly clear that they worked for the same goal with agents of the British Government and therefore had a sacred duty to interfere in politics. For these reasons, the church made attempts to control the indigenous ruling elite and influence the British agents. (p. 126) This however was not the case in all parts of the country. In some places there was the collision of interests between the church and the colonial administrators and the administrators in such cases pursued lines of action independent of the church. This was for example the case in Northern Nigeria where until the 1930s the British officials preferred to fraternize with the Muslim leadership rather than the CMS Missionaries. Nevertheless, throughout the colonial era, the Anglican Church pressurized British officials to establish an administrative framework that would ensure a fruitful germination of Christian ideals which are usually development oriented (Adediran 994).

Consequently, the Nigerian politics gradually developed under the British colonial administration with some measure of influence from the missionaries and their products, especially those of the Church Missionary Society most of who were fellow British nationals with the colonial administrators. The subsequent democratic constitutions which evolved in the post-independent Nigeria to a great extent still have some subtle Christian undertone. This is one of the principal factors that underlie the often dissatisfaction and disaffection of the Muslims with democracy in the country.

#### **7.4 Conclusion**

The contemporary Christian missionary outfits of the various denominations in Nigeria should continue the good works of the European and American missionaries who pioneered the task of developing Nigeria socio-economically. The church of today should not leave the entire work of economic development of the nation to the government. Present day church leaders should not continue to run after government officials for material and financial donations. The church has unfortunately become too materialistic and this leads to the dilution of the gospel so as to please political office holders, and often time, to the failure to speak the truth in matters of social concerns. Pastors should commit themselves to the work of God's vineyard and allow God to provide for his work.

The church should stop laying financial burdens on their members most of whom are poor beyond subsistent level. On the contrary, the present day church should take a clue from the charitable attitudes of the 19th century Christian missions and begin to work towards empowering their members socio-economically instead of exploiting and impoverishing them. The church of today should develop more interest in politics not only in praying for successful elections but in active participation in partisan politics. In other words, the various church denominations in Nigeria should encourage their members to register into the membership of political parties and to participate actively in political activities so as to be able to bring Christian influence to bear in shaping national life and fostering national development.

#### **7.4 Summary**

It is learnt that before the advent of Christianity African continent was in the dark by involving in detestable practices that were unchristian. In those days, witchcraft, ritual murder, human sacrifice and killing of twins were common practices in Nigeria. The European missionaries convinced those who were immersed in such acts to turn to Christianity. It is observed that more light was thrown on the land thereby womenfolk had to be liberated from been oppressed by men.

Most of the leading African nationals were educational products of the Christian missions. For Nigeria, these consist of Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Herbert Marculey, Anthony Enahoro and a host of others. Devoid of these Christian personalities the dream of having a sovereign Nigeria in 1960 would not have been achieved. The British launched modern politics in Nigeria through a continuing process of colonial administration. Between 1900 and 1960 the colonial masters set up series of constitutions in Nigeria through their representatives such as Lord Lugard, Sir Hugh Clifford, etc. The efforts solidly made Nigeria to stand as a nation.

#### **7.5 Tutor Marked Assignment**

1. What are the cultural practices in Nigeria considered by the European missionaries to be abhorrent?
2. Elucidate the role of missionaries towards the development of African land
3. Mention the outstanding figures in Africa who contributed immensely in building African politics

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## **MODULE 2**

### **THE RISE OF AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES (AICs)**

#### **UNIT: 1 The Rise and Proliferation of AICs**

##### **Introduction**

This section is designated to present the rise and growth of African Independent Churches which emerged as a result of western missionary Christianity. The influence of this movement provoked the spread of Christianity in Africa to such an extent that it cannot be overemphasized.

##### **Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

- i. define African Independent Churches (AICs)
- ii. discuss the growth and rise of African Indigenous Christianity
- iii. identify the categories of African Independent Churches

##### 2.2 Main Content

###### 2.2. 1 What is African Independent Churches (AICs)?

###### 2.2.2 The Growth and Proliferation of African Indigenous Christianity

##### 1.0 Conclusion

##### 4.0 Summary

##### 2.0 Tutor Marked Assignment

##### 3.0 References for further Reading

### **3.1 What is African Independent Churches (AICs)?**

African Independent Churches (AICs) are members of a grassroots Christian movement which draws its values and beliefs from African tradition and the Hebrew and Christian

Scriptures. They stand for a prolongation of many African traditional values into the Christian faith. They are numbering up to, some 60 million members across the continent and in the African Diaspora; they are separated into thousands of different denominations. The greater parts of these denominations are very small, and opposed to system of government, but there are a small number of large churches with membership numbering in the millions. Members of AICs are by and large drawn from the poor and less knowledgeable populace of the rural areas and the informal urban settlements (shanty-towns or slums). The potency of the churches lies in their spiritual and social capital, which is strongest at the grassroots.

The churches variously acknowledged as African Independent, African Instituted, and African Initiated Churches, it can simply be called by the acronym 'AICs'. AICs are churches established in sub-Saharan Africa by Africans during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They share a scheming revelation rooted in the African traditional understanding of men and women in the world, which has been taken up and developed in and through their Christian faith. For most AIC founders their stumble upon the Christian gospel and the Hebrew and Christian scriptures occurred during the period of western colonialism. In their inventive and exclusively African appropriation of the faith, AICs were furthermore one of the earliest expressions of African nationalism. Undeniably they sought constantly to oppose the colonial and missionary institutions brought from Europe, and many of their associated values, such as individualism, secularism, and the consumerism of capitalist society. However, they are still responsible for spreading the gospel in the African continent.

AICs can be assembled for effortlessness into three categories: '*nationalist*' or 'Ethiopian' churches, which believed they were mandated by God to work politically and in other ways to remove from power colonial rule; '*Spiritual*' churches, otherwise known as Zionist, Apostolic, Roho, Akurinu, and Aladura churches, in which the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit are notable in a close symbiosis with African culture; and more newly, *indigenous African pentecostal churches*, which furthermore focus on the Holy Spirit, but are orientated more to contemporary globalized humanity. All these churches are fundamentally oral communities of faith, by and large defiant to bureaucratization and the systematization of faith in written texts. In this perspective at least AICs bear a resemblance to pre-modern societies. Numerically at the present time their adherents number some 60 million on the African continent and in the diaspora.

AICS are miscellaneous in their forms, structures and beliefs. In this piece examples are drawn across the continent, concerning Organization of African Instituted Churches. The AICs' perception of poverty is both material and spiritual. Poverty is attributed to

exploitation, and to a crash in relationships; to the work of evil spirits, and to the breakdown of Christians to maintain the blessings from God that are their due. Characteristic attempts of AIC members to haul up themselves out of poverty are savings and credit schemes, where well-trusted principles of reciprocity support people to start small businesses. Such initiatives transmit well to the AICs' thoughtful of justice as relational and political rather than legal. In the AIC background justice may be defined as the widened appliance of love. Without a doubt some AICs, whose members' own faith can be exceedingly legalistic, draw a comprehensible difference between God's law of the Spirit, and the law of the State. The legal systems inherited from colonialism are seen as foreign and unapproachable, the tools of the authoritative elite. Such systems have in history marginalized AICs as institutions, over and over again denying their right to put in order legally. Members of AICs similar to many other poor people often twist thus to more easily reached forms of justice, even where such forms are themselves 'illegal'.

How then can AIC members be authorized to partake in and make claims on a legal system that they over and over again look upon with distrust or despair? Individuals and groups working to lessen poverty will frequently build up to a point where they can make legal claims for the release of services and for justice for orphans and widows at the village level. Development beyond this level is comparatively sluggish. Little will be achieved by legal empowerment at the macro-level until there is a more considerable social change. This should comprise an indigenization of alien legal systems as a precondition to the successful legal empowerment of the poor, among other reforms. The undertaking is disheartening, but cannot be postponed.

Initially a lot of Africans accepted Christianity, but they did not for all time hold in their arms the messengers who brought Christianity to the continent. As early as the eighteenth century, there was an instance of the Kongolese prophet Beatrice Kimpa Vita who developed an African Christian movement that opposed some of the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic missionaries in the Kongo.

By the late nineteenth century all the way through the continent, there were African Christians who determined to break away from missionary churches and form their own churches. Over the past century, there have been wide varieties of African Christian movements, some of which are to a certain extent different from one another. Nevertheless, in spite of these differences, scholars call these churches *African Independent Churches (A.I.C.)* since all of the churches established self-sufficiency and self-rule from mission churches.

There are several inter-related reasons why Africa Christians decided that it was indispensable to form churches that were independent from mission churches:

*Racism:* often times, missionaries were guilty of mistreating African Christians. A number of missionaries acknowledged the prevalently held impression that Africans were not intellectually or culturally equal to Europeans. These attitudes were a incredible insult to African Christians and disturbed the efforts by educated African Christians to get hold of leadership positions in the mission churches. Some African Christians believed that the only way that they could attain positions of church leadership was to depart from the mission churches and form their own independent churches free from racism and in which there would be African leadership.

*Rejection of African culture and religious beliefs/practice:* several missionaries acknowledged African cultures and religions to be *primitive* and *pagan*. Accordingly, these missionaries tried to compel African Christians to discard most of their cultural and religious beliefs and practices. When African Christians read the Bible, they did not interpret what they read as reproving all or most of their cultural and religious beliefs and practices. In reality, some African Christians believed that there are connections between the practices documented in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible and their own cultural and religious practices. Faced with continued missionary opposition to adapting Christianity to African culture, some Christian leaders determined to go away from mission churches and form their own independent churches that integrated features of African cultural practice that they felt were not in agreement with Christianity.

There is a broad multiplicity of belief and practice among A.I.Cs. Undeniably by 1980, there were more than 7,000 different independent groups with a membership of more than twelve million in Africa. In the face of differences between A.I.C.s, scholars who learn these movements divide the A.I.C.s into two wide-ranging groups.

***I. Ethiopian Independent Churches:*** despite their name, the Ethiopian independent churches are not openly connected with either the country of Ethiopia-most Ethiopian churches are situated in southern and West Africa-or with the very old Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The Ethiopian churches received this description because of the number of times that Ethiopia is pointed out in the Bible. To the early leaders of African Independent Churches, these representations of Ethiopia confirmed God's long-standing curiosity and participation in Africa.

Ethiopian churches were established by African Christians who were unwaveringly occupied with established mission churches but who were aggravated by the racism in these churches that kept them from holding positions of leadership. Ethiopian churches did not vary much from mission churches in fundamental teaching and worship. The principal differentiation was in leadership. Whereas the leadership of mission churches was completely missionary, the leadership of the Ethiopian independent churches was absolutely African.



Two of the initial Ethiopian Independent Churches were inaugurated in the late nineteenth century in southern Nigeria where missionaries had worked for virtually a century. In 1889 a Baptist minister, Vincent Mojola Agbebi, broke away from the mission Baptist Church to establish the Native Baptist Church. Three years afterward in 1891, Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the first African Anglican bishop, broke from the Anglican Episcopalian church in Nigeria to establish the African Anglican Pastorate. In both situations, these illustrious African churchmen felt that the mission churches discriminated against African leadership.

From this commencement in Nigeria, several new churches were formed in West, East, Central, and Southern Africa by African church leaders who were irritated by the racist attitudes of the established mission churches.

**II. *Zionist Independent Churches:*** Zionist independent churches are also acknowledged Spirit churches for the reason that they put emphasis on spiritual and physical healing through the intercession of the Holy Spirit. This prominence reflects the influence of African religious conviction and practice. Zionist prophets, as their leaders are called, in many ways are parallel to priests and healers in African indigenous religions. Zionist worship is characterized by singing, dancing to drums and other African musical instruments, control by the Holy Spirit, and healing of illnesses. Zionist churches brought together elements of Christian and indigenous African religious belief and practice. Christian Zionism is not a denunciation of Christianity. Rather it is the adaptation of Christianity to African cultural values, beliefs, and practices.

Zionist Christians can be distinguished from adherents of Ethiopian churches by their distinguishing style of dress. Both women and men dress in long gowns of solid colors. Each Zionist group has their own emblems that are often sewn on pockets or on their head-dress. A lot of Zionist groups, though Christian, go after the Old Testament Jewish tradition and observe Saturday as their holy day. Whether in the cities of Durban, Harare, Lusaka, Nairobi, or Kinshasa, it is not extraordinary to perceive groups of Zionist worshipers with their typical uniforms meeting in open spaces all the way through these cities on a Saturday afternoon.

In spite of dissimilarities between African Independent Churches, there are important areas of agreement and harmony. These areas of unity are significant in what they tell us regarding African articulations of Christianity.

- All A.I.Cs. are headed by strong *charismatic* leaders who claim a express relationship with God.
- There is a stress on straight communication with God through prayers, but also through dreams and possession by the Holy Spirit.
- Women play energetic leadership roles in many A.I.Cs.
- Adaption of Christianity to indigenous beliefs, values, and practice.

In the early twenty-first century, African Independent Churches, predominantly those of the Zionist influence are the fastest growing religious group in Africa. Experts approximate that by the middle of this century over one third of the Christians in the world will live in Africa, and of this number, half will belong to African Independent Churches.

### **3.2 The Growth and Proliferation of African Indigenous Christianity**

What has come to be called African Indigenous/Initiated/Independent/Instituted Churches (AICs) in the literature on Christianity in Africa are theoretically those churches which, at the beginning of the 20th century, either broke away from mission churches or missionary/mainline Christianity or were founded autonomously of European missionary activities and are headed by Africans. It is by and large established that the movement first surface in South Africa in 1884. There are so many reasons for the establishment of these churches. As the mission churches expanded and took roots, the bible was translated into indigenous languages and Africans appropriated the message of the gospel according to their local worldviews, often breeding quarrels and disagreements. The African worldview is powerfully charismatic and alive; the gospel was interpreted in a vigorous manner and infused with several culturally appropriate elements. There have been long debates about finding a suitable nomenclature for these churches: sometimes they are called “Separatist Churches”, a disparaging term that is only used by outsiders to denote the “Otherness” of the new churches.

But since not all of the AICs “separated” from mission churches, the term hardly ever does justice to the complication of the phenomenon. Some of the churches, predominantly in South and West Africa, broke away from the mission churches for political reasons. Internalizing the imperative of Psalm 68: 31 which reads “Let Ethiopia hasten to raise its hands to God”, pioneers of the protests against Euro-American dominance in the “colonial churches” soon constructed “the self-government of the African church under African leaders” according to Sundkler who first adopted this class of “Ethiopian Churches” in 1948. Ethiopian churches are those who broke away from mission churches principally on racial ground or as a result of “the struggle for prestige and power”. The first African church to separate from a mission church in Nigeria was in 1888 and the reason was to protest against American handling of a local leader. There are many such churches in diverse parts of Africa. Consequently, these churches that broke away from mission churches for political reasons are now called “Ethiopian churches”, signifying that they are indigenous initiatives without foreign financial or doctrinal aid designed to recover indigenous leadership roles and traditions. They are also absolutely African in ecclesiology, emphasizing independent Christian life and administration.

Ethiopianism is a movement of religious and cultural protest against maltreatment of Africans in some mission churches.

A large group of the AICs in Nigeria is called the Aladura (i.e. Praying) movement while in South Africa a related group is known as Zionist Churches. The Aladura movement in West Africa has its roots in the 1918 eruption of influenza in Yorubaland in Nigeria. A small group within the Anglican Church resorted to prayers alone to deal with the problem posed by the influenza but soon ran into doctrinal and ritual difficulties with the authorities of the church which kicked them out by 1925. The group emphasized prayer, healing and visionary guidance and grew rapidly in the 1920s and 1930s. The Eternal Sacred Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim movement (C&S) was founded in 1925 by Moses Orimolade and Christianah Abiodun Akinsowon; the Church of Lord Aladura was founded in 1930 by Josiah Oshitelu; the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) was established in 1947 by Samuel Oschoffa (1909-1985); the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star (BCS) was founded by Olumba Olumba Obu (born ca 1909) in 1958 after a vision. In South Africa, the “Zionist” churches emerged chiefly against political and social discrimination against Africans. Because Africans were constrained in terms of residence, labour, association and movement, the followers of these churches nursed the aspiration to put up “Zion”, a land of freedom, a home free from oppression and suppression. Many of the churches had “Zion” as part of their official names. According to Sundkler, Zionist churches historically have “their roots in Zion City, Illinois, the United States. Ideologically they claim to emanate from the Mount of Zion in Jerusalem”. A popular example of Zionist churches is Zion Christian Church (ZCC). There are well over 7000 different Zionist churches in South Africa alone. According Allan Anderson, 30% of the South African population is made of members of African Zionist and Apostolic churches. For both the Aladura and Zionist churches, their three most significant characteristics are: i) self-financing, ii) self-governance and, iii) self-supporting. In addition to these are: iv) the emphasis on cultural appropriation of noteworthy themes and practices such as the use of indigenous music and language; v) emphasis on the activities of evil spirits such as witches and demons and the claim by the leaders to have the power to set free people from the influences of these baneful spirits; vi) dynamic role given to women as some even became church founders. At the outset these churches were regarded with great condescension by who ridiculed them by calling them “schismatic movements” and regarding them as syncretistic, and for that reason, impure churches.

The colonial administrators also looked at them with great distrust and perceived them as a peril to their colonial agenda predominantly as these churches engineered mass revivals in many parts of colonial Africa. In some cases, the leaders of these churches such as

Garrick Sokari Braide and Joseph Babalola were arrested and imprisoned by the colonial authority. As well the leadership of the mission churches poured scorn on them with bizarre names such as “white garment churches” or “mushroom churches”. However, it was shortly to turn out to be palpable that the AICs represented attempts to Africanize Christianity, to make it applicable to the cultural needs to the African people; they were part of embryonic efforts to decolonize the continent from exterior religious, social and cultural influences.

The spread of the AICs has been phenomenal not only in Africa where they constitute more than 10% of the Christian population but in Europe and North America where they are undoubtedly striking to a large segment of diaspora Africans. As Africans migrant to remote locations in search of work, education and better life, they hold their religious traditions with them. As they face new forms of life crises produced by modernity and its anxieties, these indigenous forms of Christianity turned out to be ever more appealing to many Africans whether in Africa or in Europe.

In the 21st century, there are evangelical churches dynamic in Sudan, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, South Africa, and Nigeria. They have grown in particular since independence came in the 1960s, the strongest movements are based on Pentecostal-charismatic beliefs, and encompass a way of life that has led to uphill social mobility and demands for democracy. There is a wide range of theology and organizations, including some supported by European missionaries and others that have emerged from African culture such as the Apostolic and Zionist Churches which enlist 40% of black South Africans, and their Aladura counterparts in western Africa.

In Nigeria the Evangelical Church Winning All formerly "Evangelical Church of West Africa" is the biggest church organization with five thousand congregations and over three million members. It sponsors two seminaries and 8 Bible colleges. It also sponsors 1600 missionaries who serve in Nigeria and other countries with the Evangelical Missionary Society (EMS). There have been severe disagreements since 1999 between Muslims and evangelical Christians standing in opposition to the expansion of Sharia law in northern Nigeria. The confrontation has radicalized and politicized the Christians.

In Kenya, mainstream evangelical denominations have taken the lead in promoting political activism and backers, with the smaller evangelical sects of less significance. Daniel Arap Moi was president 1978 to 2002 and claimed to be an evangelical; he proved intolerant of dispute or pluralism or decentralization of power.

The Berlin Missionary Society (BMS) was one of four German Protestant mission societies energetic in South Africa before 1914. It appeared from the German tradition of Pietism after 1815 and sent its first missionaries to South Africa in 1834. There were little

optimistic reports in the early years, but it was particularly active 1859-1914. It was in particular strong in the Boer republics. The World War cut off contact with Germany, but the missions continued at a reduced pace. After 1945 the missionaries had to deal with decolonization across Africa and principally with the apartheid government. At all times the BMS gave emphasis to spiritual inwardness, and puritanical values such as morality, hard work and self-discipline. It proved unable to articulate and act determinedly against injustice and racial discrimination and was disbanded in 1972. Since 1974, young professionals have been active proselytizers of evangelicalism in the cities of Malawi.

In Mozambique, Evangelical Protestant Christianity appeared around 1900 from black migrants whose religious conversion took place in the past in South Africa. They were supported by European missionaries, but, as industrial workers, they paid for their own churches and proselytizing. They made southern Mozambique of for the spread of evangelical Protestantism. During their time as a colonial power in Mozambique, the Catholic Portuguese government tried to oppose the spread of evangelical Protestant ideology.

The appearance of AICs on the continent of Africa has been a trend so rapid and widespread that it has forced its way onto the academic program of the study of religious movements in Africa. Ever since the first academic research on this religious incident, writers have pondered the cause or causes of the growth of this new religious movement. Each AIC has its specific and distinctive sets of reasons that have contributed to its emergence and development within its own national and local setting, and in spite of comparisons, causes must not be universalized. All together, on the other hand, this movement can be placed in the wider context of the rapid spread of Christianity in Africa all through the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

AICs, principally, as a new religious movement reacting to religious needs, Harold Turner, who conducted wide-ranging research on Aleatory churches, stresses the sacred nature of these churches, arguing that, they offered security, fellowship and spiritual guidance in the midst of breakdown traditional structures and the invasion of foreign religious groups. Religious factors are more often than not based upon the traditional critique of western mission in Africa as one failing to meet the cultural and religious needs of Africans. The inability of western missions to appropriate Christ predominantly and Christianity usually into African context in a way that was significant and affirmative of Africans, constituted a major reason why western Christianity was resisted by many.

It is believed that reaction to European missions was the general cause for the emergence of AICs across the continent, because western missions had exhibited a 'failure in love' in their approach toward African people. It was not just their inattentiveness to African culture that caused this obvious reaction to their message, nevertheless, but it was moreover the insufficiency of the message and its effectiveness for an African planetary point of view. An instance of this was the church's approach towards witchcraft and evil

spirits, which was more often than not unconcerned as opposed to recognizing that, for the African, they constituted a genuine and immanent threat against which one needed to be protected.

The failure of western mission churches to grapple with the salvatory needs of the African was most obviously articulated in the area of *illness*. The missionaries, by and large, damned traditional healing practices, and the provision of western medicine through hospitals and clinics was in short supply to meet the needs of the expanding Christian community all over the country. At this point, the church merely had no message and provided insufficient alternatives, which, thus, left a vacuum appropriately filled by a proliferation of faith-healing Prophets.

In addition to the disappointment and dissatisfaction with missionary Christianity experienced by African, there was also a unwillingness to continue to recognize the patronizing attitudes and racialist inequalities meted out by white colonial church officials. Adrian Hastings, in discussing the causes and motivations of independency and Prophetism writes:

...it was, still more, the racialism within the church, the impression - in most cases, very well grounded - that even able and experienced African ministers remained second-class members of the church, constantly mediocre to even the most junior missionary recently arrived from Britain. This was a matter of authority exercised, of salary, of details of human behavior, such as the sharing of meals. The missionary churches were so integrated into racialist society that their membership was deeply alienating for black people. In the West African context, the fall down of Bishop Crowther's Niger Episcopate at the hands of CMS missionaries, determined to declare their position of power, was a case in point and, which some would argue, set the stage for the proliferation of indigenous Christianity across West Africa.

## **Conclusion**

African Indigenous/Initiated/Independent/Instituted Churches (AICs) in the literature on Christianity in Africa are supposedly those churches which, at the launch of the 20th century, either broke away from mission churches or missionary/mainline Christianity or were founded separately of European missionary activities and are headed by Africans. There are several reasons for the founding of these churches. As the mission churches stretched out and took roots, the bible was translated into indigenous languages and Africans approached the gospel according to their local worldview. The African worldview is moreover charismatic and culturally oriented.

## **Summary**

The emergence of AICs on the African land has been a trend so rapid and widespread that it has influenced the rapid spread of Christianity in Africa during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. AICs, principally, as a new religious movement had been responding to religious needs of the Africans accordingly. The unwillingness of western missions to appropriate Christ predominantly and Christianity into African context in a way that was significant and affirmative of Africans, formed a key reason why western Christianity was opposed. European or western missions had demonstrated a 'failure in love' in their attitude toward African people. This is their thoughtlessness of African culture that caused this evident reaction to their message. An obvious case in point was the church's altitude towards witchcraft and evil spirits, which was usually dismissive as opposed to affirming that, for the African, they formed a real and looming threat against which one needed to be protected. The desire to interpret the teachings of Christ from a non-western viewpoint has led to spread of AICs in Africa.

### **Tutor Marked Assignment**

1. Why did Africa Christians decide that it was necessary to form churches that were independent from mission churches?
2. African Independent Churches are the fastest growing churches in Africa. In your opinion why is this so?
- 3.

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## **UNIT 2: DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES (AICs)**

### **Introduction**

The discussion in piece is hanging basically on the struggle by the Africans to free from unfavorable reaction of Western missionaries to embrace African culture in Christianity and their racial attitudes towards Africans. Then, scriptural translation has been a considerable contributing factor toward the development of African indigenous churches because Africans were able to read the bible and interpret in their own language. This development goes a long way to give rise to evangelical Christianity in Africa which embrace or accommodate African culture, for instance, Apostolic and Zionist Churches which enlist 40% of black South Africans, and their Aladura counterparts in western Africa.

### **Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

- i. express the cause for rapid expansion of African indigenous Churches
- ii. identify translation of the Bible into African languages as the contributory factor to the growth of African Christianity
- iii. explain the role of Evangelical Christianity in Africa

#### 2.1 Main Content

#### 2.2 The Quest for Self-expression and Freedom from Western Missionary Tutelage

#### 2.3 Translation of the Bible into African Languages

#### 2.4 Evangelical Christianity

### 2.0 Conclusion

- 3.0 Summary
- 4.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 5.0 References for further Reading

## **Main Content**

### **2.1 The Quest for Self-expression and Freedom from Western Missionary Tutelage**

The unfavorable reaction to missionary Christianity and their racial attitudes towards Africans in part hurried a number of secessions from western mission churches in Ghana. These churches, to varying degrees, were characterized by a desire for African self-expression and freedom from missionary control. In Ghana, they included the National Baptist Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and the Nigritian Church. Dr. Mark Hayford founded the National Baptist Church in 1898 and it is purported to be the first established African Church in Ghana. The significance of this church movement was that Mark Hayford forged effective links with other separatist movements across West Africa in an effort to consolidate churches seceding from western missions. In the same year, he officially organized a fellowship of independent Baptist Churches from Sierra Leone to Cameroon: This was a new era of independence. Another church that emerged in this climate of secession was the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (A.M.E. Zion). This church originated in America within the Methodist Church as a black protest movement for self-expression and determination in 1796. It was established in Ghana under the direction of Bishop Small and placed under the leadership of Reverend Egyir Asaam and Reverend T.B. Freeman, who started a branch in Keta, in 1898. At a time when the hegemony of western missionary Christianity stifled the African personality and undermined their cultural expressions and selfhood, their message of native effort, self-reliance, independence and self-respect rung loud in the ears of Ghanaians. The formation of the Nigritian Church is an example of secession triggered by a desire for self-expression against restrictive church policies. Reverend J.B. Anaman, a former Methodist Minister, founded the Nigritian Church in 1907. He led a group of forty dissident members of Anomabu Methodist Church, who had been expelled for flouting the church's ruling concerning singing bands. The rigorous vernacular singing and music, which drew upon traditional African rhythms, were seen by the church authorities to desecrate the church, as well as belonging to the annals of their traditional fetish past. The Nigritian Church's usage of the vernacular and singing bands was in accordance with the growing national aspiration for African self-expression and a longing to worship freely and independently of foreign interference.

### **2.2 Translation of the Bible into African Languages**

David Barreau asserts that, scriptural translation is a considerable contributing factor toward the development of African indigenous churches. The Holy Scriptures were translated and published in the tribe's own language. Kwame Bediako is of the view that there is most likely no more vital single explanation for the massive presence of

Christianity on the African continent than the accessibility of the Scriptures in many African languages.

The most significant role that vernacular Scripture played was in enabling the African Christians to discern between what was taught by the missionaries and what was taught in Scripture. The Scripture translated into the vernacular became an independent standard of reference and it shortly became obvious that much of what was taught by missionaries was more of an indication of their own cultural cases than from the Bible. The Old Testament was of particular interest because it resounded with much of what was significant within an African viewpoint on life: the significance of fertility and sexuality, the place of ancestors, polygamous practice, the importance of land and a host of other cultural and religious similarities. It was, above all astounding to see the practice of polygamy in the Bible, which the missionaries fought hard to stamp out by imposing strict prohibitions on members. Predominantly striking was the agreement between the African worldview and that of the Old Testament. Though the missionaries - as good Protestants - believed in the centrality of the Bible, they were not accustomed to making the connections or seeing the continuity between the Biblical context and the contemporary one that the Africans were discovering.

The translation of the Bible into the vernacular was as well a factor in a new process of growing self-awareness. A nation, whose culture had been, up till then, diluted, was, however, important enough to have the Bible – the Word of God – in their own mother’s tongue. The impact of the Bible was so important that, many of the indigenous church leaders modeled their leadership style and imagery on Old Testament Prophet figures, which were, most likely, recognizable figures in Africa before Christianity arrived. Although the above, principally religious factors, contributed significantly towards the origins and developments of AICs in Africa. The strength of the general movement toward independence was in the combination of socio-political factors that overlapped with the religious factors.

### **2.3 Evangelical Christianity**

The widespread belief is that Evangelical Christianity, as a subset of universal Christianity (to include Catholicism, Greek and Eastern Orthodox, etc.) is a new trend on the African continent. Indeed, Africans who were veterans of the American Civil war and Black British soldiers came back to the continent and spread Christianity with missionary enthusiasm. Contemporary Evangelical and Pentecostal Christian movements in Africa, nevertheless, exhibit certain propensities to strengthen material conditions that favor outside forces rather than economic and political steadiness within individuated African countries.

Christianity as practiced by Africans is as assorted as the cultural and ethnic composition of the continent itself. Religious pluralism is one of the hallmarks of Evangelical and

Pentecostal Christianity in Africa. The continent has some of the oldest Christians (the Coptic Christians of Egypt and the Ethiopia Orthodox churches) and the newest, which comprise sects such as the Kimbanguists (based upon the beliefs of an African Faith healer who died in a Belgian prison in the 1920s). The weight upon individual interpretation and an undeviating experience of the Godhead (Gnosis) that typifies Evangelical and Pentecostal churches is a grassroots and populist form of Christianity that is predominantly suited to the African cultural state of affairs as it is seen for today.

Christianity was adapted to local indigenous belief systems, to a certain extent because of Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity's stress upon individual gnosis and direct experience of God. Accordingly, the path was opened for many supernatural elements, which in addition find expression in American Evangelical and Pentecostal Church services. This has led to schisms between Northern and Southern branches of Protestant denominations, most predominantly and spectacularly exemplified by the Anglican Church. And yet, the Evangelical phenomenon transcends denomination, since Evangelical adherents exist in Methodist, Presbyterian, Anglican and Lutheran denominations.

Africa in the 21st century is facing a lot of geographic issues coming from the background to famine and warfare, to political turmoil. The legacy of colonialism restrained the growth of Christianity to some extent, due to the strictures placed upon the full African expression of religious commitment. Black American euphoric churches, Baptist, Pentecostal, and so on, are paradigms of this incidents and how it diffused into Protestant Christianity. It has turned out to be understandable, as a result, that the attempt to Europeanize Africans through the missionary system was unsuccessful. Color consciousness and the involvement of Christianity with the colonial process were unavoidable side-effects of European Colonization that resulted in clairvoyant and spiritual harm to indigenous African peoples, cultures and belief systems. Cognitive difference was the predictable result of the dichotomous roles that Christianity and Colonization played in the suppression of the African continent. The coaching of many Africans through the missionary school system had the added side-effect of creating a awareness of European market structures and norms that served the rationale of informing generations of Africans about the positives and negatives of capitalism. This environment set the stage for the contemporary spread of Evangelical Christianity.

It observed that Christianity was by no means seen as 'a White Man's Religion' by many Africans. So, the continent was prolific floor for Evangelical Christianity. Some consider, and will dispute, that Christianity is an Afro-Western religion, while Islam is an Afro-Asian religion. The places in Africa where Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity have taken the strongest hold are also places where traditional religious values are the strongest (Yorubaland in Nigeria, illustrated by the Aladura, also known as the Cherubim and Seraphim Society). Many of the social values that Christianity espouses were before

now intrinsic African social values, to consist of an emphasis upon marriage and commitment to family life.

African society is principally non-acquisitive, and non-material in nature (traditional). As a result, consumerism has not yet taken a solid hold upon the continent. Social intercourse and relationship building have been of much more magnitude, traditionally speaking. Community is more important than individuals, and material possessions are less important than retaining interpersonal relationships (traditional). Many of these ideas, which are traditional African beliefs, are revealed by the Bible and Christianity.

The yearning to interpret the teachings of Christ from a non-western standpoint has led to a renaissance of Christianity in Africa and the get-together of Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations to the undertaking of consolidating contrasting belief systems within one holistic and encompassing social and cultural body. There has been increasing recognition that a definite amount of pluralism under the auspices of Christianity is a desired goal and rests upon two fundamental beliefs and one modification of the historical record: Theology is intrinsically local. Christianity reinforces ideas that have been traditionally propagated by local belief systems, and Pre-Christian beliefs were measured to be polytheistic by Europeans. This misnomer has resulted in the failure of many to really understand the significant spread of Christianity in the last 40 years and its capacity to incorporate local belief systems while still retaining its essential Christian character.

### **3.0 Conclusion**

The desire to interpret the words of Christ from a non-western viewpoint has given birth to a renaissance of Christianity in Africa and the common fight of Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations to take the responsibility of developing African indigenous Christianity. This is meant to incorporate and respect cultural local belief systems while still retaining its fundamental Christian values.

### **3.0 Summary**

The inauspicious reaction to missionary Christianity and their racial attitudes towards Africans in part hurried the rise of African indigenous Churches. The most significant role that vernacular Scripture played was in enabling the African Christians to differentiate between what was taught by the missionaries and what was taught in Scripture. The widespread belief is that Evangelical Christianity, as a detachment of universal Christianity (to include Catholicism, Greek and Eastern Orthodox, etc.) is a new trend on the African continent. Undeniably, Africans who were veterans of the American Civil war and Black British soldiers came back to the continent and spread Christianity with missionary zeal.

Religious pluralism is one of the hallmarks of Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity in Africa. The craving to interpret the teachings of Christ from a non-western perspective has led to a renaissance of Christianity in Africa and the get-together of Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations to the task of consolidating divergent belief systems within one holistic and encompassing social and cultural body.

#### **4.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

1. What made Africans to dissent Western Christianity to form AICs?
2. Explain the impact of translating the Bible into African languages
3. Discuss the role of Evangelical Church on African soil

#### **5.0 References for further Reading**

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## **UNIT 3: THE INFLUENCE OF THE AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES**

### **Introduction**

Africans fall back on the Independent Churches for practices of healing, divination and prophecy on the one hand and emphasis of faith in God on the other. The fundamental causes for the growth of these independent Churches are theological, not religious factors. More often than not, the Aladura Churches and the like focus primarily on spiritual and religious movements striving for cultural integrity and spiritual autonomy; they are a creative reaction to the crash of old forms of African society by the development of new groups for providing friendliness, safety and cultural acceptance.

### **Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

- i. elaborate on the influence of the African Independent Churches
- ii. highlight the teachings of the African Christianity
- iii. to define and state the significance of *Theologia Africana*

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### 3.1 The influence of the African Independent Churches

Conclusion

Summary

Tutor Marked Assignment

References for further reading

### **3.1 The influence of the African Independent Churches**

A lot of authors, European, American and African fall back on the Independent Churches for a response. These groups, we are told, practices healing, divination and prophecy on the one hand and emphasize faith in God on the other. Without a doubt, they give the impression to be drawing large number of Christians from the historic Churches to themselves.



Dr. D.B. Barrett's figures stagger the reader.

Western Africa	938,600
Northern Africa	12,000
Southern Africa	3,719,000
Central Africa	1,212,600
Eastern Africa	980,000
Total	6,862,200

(From D.B Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa*. An analysis of six thousand contemporary religious movements).

Barrett considers that numerous factors are responsible for the formation and growth of independency. In a number of cases, the fundamental causes for the growth of these independent Churches are theological, not religious factors more often than not known to the participants. But Harold Turner, known for his study of the Aladura Churches, perceives these movements:

*As primarily spiritual and religious movements striving for cultural integrity and spiritual autonomy; they are a creative response to the breakdown of old forms of African society by the formation of new groups for providing fellowship, security and some sanctions and guidance for the living.*

Harold Turner in his monumental two-volume work on the Aladura movement gives a jam-packed account of 'the essentially African form of the Church' in terms of worship, the training and ranks of the ministry, a concern for water, the position of women and the 'battle with the world of evil spirits'. 'Africanisms and Africanizations abound'. It encloses within itself the total African tradition with an accent on community life. In one sense, according to Turner, the Independent Churches are the 'end-products of Christian missions in Africa', but in another, 'they represent new Christian beginnings'. He consequently recognizes that the Aladura Church is African yet worldwide, possessing the notes of the true Church in a way comparable to the historic creeds and formulations. At the same point in time, he outspokenly acknowledges that the Aladura Church is 'devoid of theological or historical understanding'.

Turner's formula of 'Africanisms and Africanizations' flourishing in the Aladura Church are correct of all the other independent Church sects. He expresses joy in the contemplation that independent Churches are a creative growing point for the faith in

Africa. He acknowledges prospective threats but 'it is at the danger point.... that a true African theology will be born, not out of any syncretism, but out of understanding'. So Beetham is correct, when he finds fault of the slothfulness of the historic Churches in turning into an African Church; but the supplementary phrase, 'in worship and theological understanding', thus presents a standard not voluntarily appropriate to the Independent Churches, in accordance with Turner. It is for that reason to be of the same opinion with the well-known assertion to G.C. Oosthuizen, that 'all efforts to relate Christianity to the "Soil" in Africa are overdue'.

It is without a doubt attention-grabbing to bring to mind that at the first Assembly of the "All Africa Conference of Churches" in Kampala in 1963, special attention was given to the selfhood of the Church. The Report explicitly declares that the Church in Africa has not accomplished selfhood. The reasons given may be summed up in this manner:

1. There is a large quantity of Churches in Africa. By means of Barrett's figures it refers to 5,000 independent Church movements which have come into sight since 1962 in thirty-four African nations and colonies with, 1967, a projected seven million (7,000,000) adherents. In addition to these the large quantity of Pentecostal Churches from the United State of America, the Seventh-Day Adventist Groups, and the multiplicity of Churches connected to the historic Churches and we have a long tale of dissonance.
2. Christians stroll alongside two ways-the old and the new. Undeniably Christianity is nevertheless a foreign religion; hence the Independent Churches are indicative of a 'more honest unsophisticated rebellion' in opposition to the form of Christianity established by the missionaries.
3. The Church in Africa is put together on 'hot-house' circumstances supplied by a 'well-planned organization for the Christian nurture of African'.
4. The Church deals in foreign, prefabricated theology, which has, regrettably, not grown 'out of the life of a living Church in Africa'.
5. There has developed a faulty theology of the Church which 'has resulted in a lack of a sense of sacrificial giving'.
6. The Church in Africa trained teachers 'without giving them an adequate scholarly and spiritual training so that they could question' their faith 'for themselves'.

Professor Idowu's tone of voice rings out noticeably. The Conference therefore called for 'an adequate and clear theology' and the progress of African liturgies born out of 'the devotional experience of the Church'. For the meantime, there has been a serious problem that with the rise of African nationalism, Christianity (perchance as asserted within the historic Churches) is looked upon as a 'white man's religion,' connected with the now out-dated colonialist powers. In the speedy social alteration which has come

upon Africa the Churches must as a result discontinue and scrutinize their point. The need for such an assessment is beyond doubt pressing.

### **1. Some Criteria for Selfhood**

In summary of the preceding discourse it observed that there is in West Africa, for instance, a very old documentation of efforts to adapt Christian worship to the African context. The Nigerian atmosphere by now is familiarized by the escalating uses of African music-patterns in some other countries provide evidence to this assertion. The independent Churches, naturally, with dancing and drums offer the examples which create a center of attention. But worship and theology go together. Harold Turner adopts language which recommends that 'African theology will come not out of anti-syncretism but out of understanding'. Understanding of Th. Muller-Kruger's bridges and the implied bridgeheads appear into prominences. Such bridges and bridgeheads of which theological understanding could be recognized require a close and warm study both of the religious life and thought-forms of the numerous African peoples in addition to that of the New Testament. The current writer has the remark that such understanding is not achievable by a straight jump from the natural theology of African rites and their connected myths to the profound notions enclosed in the New Testament devoid of the sway of the Old Testament revelation. Harold Turner has, opportunely, provided instances of the lack of a sound Christian point of view in the Aladura Churches on the ideas linked with God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, to select three major topics. He for that reason opines that they fall short to grasp the conception that God is not only 'one and universal, almighty... yet loving and merciful; but also holy and righteous. The God whose glory makes Him the God of history appears not to be known by them. So he commented that:

*While the Church of the Lord emphasizes the severity of the judgment of God and reverences Him with awe, it has hardly felt the full biblical sense of His holy righteousness when sin can still be dealt with merely by repentance and without atonement.*

Turner has gone on to put in plain words how sin could be dealt with simply by repentance and devoid of atonement according to the New Testament. Parallel references to defects in the views held by the Aladura concerning Jesus Christ are distinguished by Turner. According to Turner, Jesus Christ,

*Seems to be cast in the role of the traditional African intermediary who preserves due order in our approach to God, and at most may try to help us; he is far removed from the Christian concept of the mediator, who not only provides communication but also removes the barriers of sin and guilt that separate man from God.*

Definitely Jesus is thought of first and foremost in terms of the ‘speaker’, or of the ancestors or trivial divinities ‘who are links between men in this world and the gods beyond’. A similar comment about the women of Johannesburg by Mia Brandel-Syrier in black women in search of God avers;

*The status of Jesus amongst the ancestors and other spirits is not clear. He may have become ranged next to the ancestors, and if over and above these, the possibly only in His role as the strongest of wonder-workers.*

In accordance with Turner Jesus Christ is more a symbol of power through His rising from the dead, to the Aladura Church. Obviously God is Himself power who no power can triumph over. For a second time in relation to the Holy Spirit, because of what Turner calls ‘an impoverished conception; of Jesus Christ, in spite of the sturdy pneumatological feature of the Aladura Church, the Spirit is ‘thought of as the Spirit of God, as the way in which God is at hand in power in the Church.

Two additional issues call for concise declaration. First and foremost, sacrifice which for the Christian is superlatively apparent in the sacrifice of Jesus. To the Aladura, ‘prayer is Sacrifice’. Turner says that the sacrifice of Christ is acknowledged by the Aladura in terms of being patient in persecution, hardship and suffering in trustworthiness to the faith. The Aladura accordingly fail to comprehend the vicarious nature of the sacrifice of Christ’. Turner contends that the Aladura are deficient to ‘interest in the sufferings or death of Christ’. They give the impression to grasp ‘an attenuated form of the moral influence theory of the atonement’ even though ‘it contains seeds of development’.

Secondly, their approach to man is in the same way flawed, because of the defective grip of the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Sin is thought of in terms of the judgment of God, but they have a flawed grasp ‘of the full Christian idea of sin and forgiveness’. Man is certainly surrounded by enemies; ‘his liveliness and power are destabilized more by these evil forces than by his own sin and weakness. At the same instance, the veracity and enormity of this demonic realm, is not permissible to absolve men from personal responsibility for their own sin’. But the gravity of human sin when silhouetted against the holiness of God is not completely understood.

These and other flaws in the religious life of the Aladura make it improbable that the advocates of African Theology can really use the independent Churches as their standard. The Aladura approach to Jesus Christ specifically reminds us of the essential observation of Fred Welbourn that ‘the difference between the old gods (of pagan Africa) and the God of Christianity is far greater than the distinction between g and G. They cannot be measured against one another’. More so: ‘at the same time, many converts to Christianity find themselves struggling with a conflict of loyalties.’ in a lecture given by Professor John Mbiti in 1969 at the Annual Meeting of the Christian Churches Educational Association, on Christian Education in the background of African Tribal Religion, he

recommended that far more concentration be given to the traditional culture and religiosity within which Christ comes as Lord who makes all things new.

But certainly the difficulty remains. One East African student who was apparently wrestling with the difficulty is quoted as having said.

*There are times when the Christian belief confuses me because it was only last year that my grandmother got very sick. No doctor could cure her and although she is a Christian she decided to contact a witch-doctor. The doctor gave her some medicines and also said that there was someone bewitching her, but he promised to deal with the person severely. How my grandmother believed this! And after having taken the medicine she was restored back to her normal self. How should I call this evil because my religious teacher told me that I should not believe in such things, or should I call it good because it cured my granny when the Christian or foreign doctors had failed?*

## **2. The Case for a Theologia Africana**

Here we have the nitty-gritty of the substance of an African Theology. We could first of all lay emphasis on the term is somewhat misleading as in its contemporary handling. We live in a world of epithets; it must be remembered that Tertullian, Cyprian and others were connected with an African Theology in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries of the Christian era. The advocates of African Theology from Diedrich Westermann onwards consider of African theologians as the interpreters of Christian theology in a way dissimilar from that possible to foreign theologians. But as one pays attention to discussions on African Literature in English one tends to become more and more skeptical concerning the use of the term African in these perspectives. A lot of Europeans write articles and books in English, every now and then with a distinguishing method which marks them off from a native English writer. But these books are never referred to as German or Czech literature in English. Alternatively, there seems to be a case for saying that Africans understand the culture of the soil on which they are nurtured better than most foreigners would.

Dr. Mulago's thesis gains recognition that common position exists between Christianity and the Africa traditional religious thought-forms in, for instance, the belief in the one Supreme Being as the Source, the 'first source', of life, who cares for all His creatures, for the reason that He is their Father. But this is only one aspect of theological discussion. A Christian theologian who tries to utilize the ingredients of the 'African soil' to construct a theology designed to meet the African condition must be familiar with the place of spirits, ancestral and otherwise in the African worldview. Here we are faced with a diversity of rites and religious practices which have turned out to be with shaping factors of the life of the average man and woman. Thus in reality even as, like the Christian, African people for the most fraction believe in one Supreme Being, all together He is not the chief directing agent of the historical factors of life. There are additional areas which have to be cautiously scrutinized if African theology is to be projected to translate the Christian and hence biblical concept of God and creation, man, sin and

redemption, Jesus Christ, son of God and Mediator, the Holy Spirit, the Church, and the like.

In a paper presented in 1969 to the Theology Faculty Conference for Africa by the Lutheran World Federation, by the Finnish theologian Raimo Harjula., lecturer in Systematic Theology at the Lutheran Theological College at Makumira, the author pleaded for a 'Theologia Africana', which should search to survey the 'African heritage' in view of Christian communication. He listed several topics to be incorporated in such investigation, e.g.:

- a. Traditional ideas of creation, fall and man
- b. Traditional beliefs and ideas concerning death and 'life after death'
- c. African concept(s) of time and Christian eschatology.
- d. Traditional offerings and sacrifices; their 'doctrinal' or 'philosophical' background.
- e. Witchcraft and sorcery.
- f. Traditional healing and the Healing Ministry of the Church, in addition to the basic ideas held on the Supreme Being.

Harjula captivatingly, even if in some way, leads us to reflect on the criteria, if one could use the phrase, which would direct the construction of a *Theologia Africana* in the current milieu.

If without a doubt as Tom Beetham figures out there is only one 'eternal Word of God, unchangeable', and as a result there 'can then be only one theology' which has to be made incarnate in the African condition, after that care must be taken to guarantee that African versions of the fundamental biblical teachings are not devised to generate a layout appreciatively reasonable to those who have determined ideas on what should be African. Thus two approaches are stated; first, Bishop Bengt Sundkler, for instance, regardless of this grip of the African independent Churches appears to have a favored benchmark devised out of the pervasiveness of creation myths, the attractiveness and conceivably prepared applicability of the Old Testament to African life and customs and the 'clan of community of the Living and the Dead.' Accordingly dreams turn out to be essential factors in the appraisal of the psychological composition of the African pastor and layman in a similar way but moreover in the case of the pastor's call to the ministry.

Secondly, Fred Welbourn has preliminary from a psychosomatic argument, gotten a difference between 'guilt' and 'shame'. Both may have an interior or an exterior allusion, but they are dissimilar in substance. Welbourn approves the definition of guilt-feelings 'as arising from knowledge of a ban touched or transgressed, and of disgrace-feelings as reply to a goal not attained'. He associates these responses with 'tradition-directed' societies and with 'inner-directed' society's correspondingly, the latter being more puritanic in its persuasion. Thus, members of tradition-directed societies learn to project to supernatural beings much for which men who are inner-directed would presuppose

personal conscientiousness. The chat opens out captivatingly as Welbourn develops his theme. There is an essential disparity between the approach of Welbourn and Sundkler correspondingly to the ingredients of the 'African soil'. Welbourn could rationally be described as adopting a philosophical approach to a basic socio-religious factor of human society. Sundkler on the other and uses a mythopoeic approach to attribute to psychic phenomena an enlightenment of the career to the Christian ministry in particular, and the Christian way of life in broad-spectrum. Therefore, it is proposed that if any *Theologia Africana* is to be cultured, Welbourn's path instead of Sundkler's will dish up the desired rationale. To be precise, an African theology must be developed on a philosophical starting point. It is expected that every concern must be exercised to make certain that the biblical doctrines are completely understood and satisfactorily taught to African Christians. In the same way, it is observed that the genuine exercise in translating Christian ideas into forms understandable to the African lies in the area of 'Systematic Theology'. Undoubtedly Church History must be given extraordinary concentration and must be related to local history to turn out to be accurately intelligible. But Systematic theology per se will make available the stage for the argument of the great Christian doctrines of creation, redemption, Christology, pneumatology, ecclesiology and eschatology with the thought-worlds and world-views of the atmosphere. again, carefulness must be ensured not to make complicated statements like Turner's reference to 'the full biblical sense of his (God's) holy righteousness when sin can still be dealt with merely by repentance and without atonement'.

To demonstrate from West Africa, in order to read between the lines the Christian doctrine of regeneration to the Akan, one must according to Dr. J.B. Danquah request to comprehend the weight laid on the birth and life, with death as a transition phase. An exhaustive study of the subject matter in the framework might voluntarily shed fresh light on the traditional assumptions of Western theologians with regard to the fall. Once more, a close learning of the ideas of life after death might lead to spanking new ideas on the doctrine of purgatory, mortal and venial sin, and related questions like, where does the death go? Is reincarnation a Christian concept? How do we figure out original sin as taught in Western Christendom to Africans who believe that the human soul is unadulterated and devoid of sin?

A *Theologia Africana* stood on sound philosophical dialogue require hence not be a 'native' product, but a searching exploration into the content of traditional religious thought-forms with view to erecting bridgeheads by which the Christian gospel could be successfully conveyed to the African peoples. One aspect which is possibly most hopeful in this regard is the 'community'. The African observes himself as part of a cultic community-a community which is deficient devoid of the supernatural world. The worship of the ancestor, the attitude to birth and death, sin, sickness, forgiveness and health all converge on the central role of the community. At this juncture doctrine and liturgy interconnect and the responsibility of the Church as a worshipping community with a message and mission can be made authentic, both to Christians who are before now within as well as to those outside the faith. We do not experience capable to

acknowledge the comment that 'Liturgy as an aim in itself and the relative disconnection of religious life and morality... may well remain distinguishing traits of African Christianity. In the so-called primitive West African communities we have premeditated, there is not characteristically detach 'religious life and morality which could be acknowledged as having been carved out from a superior multifaceted of behavior. As an alternative, the communal life is one consistent complex as well as work, legal and social obligations intermingled with religions and morals. It appears Fred Welbourn is closer the mark when he says, 'Most men...find the meaning and purpose of their lives in membership of a community; but the chief function of their 'religion' is to keep that community intact. In other words, there is a proposition that the genuine value of a *Theologia Africana* is more probable to be one of 'function' than of stringently 'new content'. The universal theology of the Christian faith will and must at all times continue to be one; but red between the lines in terms of the African soil, a *Theologia Africana* might correct the current disproportion caused by the stress on historical theology among many Western theologians.

We would nevertheless end with two notes of warning. First, a *Theologia Africana* must shun any over-readiness to adopt African indigenous ideas and practices simply because they captivate foreign theologians on the one hand, or on grounds of nationalistic patriotism, on the other. It is to the recognition of Harold Turner that he can say that the Aladura Church is devoid of theological and historical understanding, even if we do not consider that Turner truly describes their outlook. And members of the Independent Churches are moving along safer line of progress than other Africans who are struggling to determine more suitable means of evangelism within the historic Churches. Secondly, even as African theologians must be susceptible to the difficulties created by the so-called introduction of Western theology and liturgy into Africa, they should at the same time adopt a useful manner through watchful study and a reasonable appraisal of the material they explore in the African environment. This appraisal must also be backed by an open-minded challenge to study both the biblical teachings and the philosophical discussions of the doctrinal affirmations. A *Theologia Africana* must be element of the main stream of the tradition of the Church at the same time as attempting to bring fresh insights into man's understanding of the work of God.

Eric James makes two comments which are appropriate to this discussion. First, The Church has not a past history but it now is this history. Secondly, theology is not the logo of man about God because of the personification of the Logos, theology is not primarily what man thinks about God in an abstract way, but rather what God has done and is doing to men.

It is in this circumstance that we would criticize any effort or define a *Theologia Africana* as particularly devised and produced for Africans per se. in spite of the stir caused by the emergence of James H. Cone's Black Theology and Black Power, the book fails to make available any fresh theological insights. It does of course express disapproval of racism as demonic and evil, and advocates practices expressions of Christian love. 'All men are



insignificant apart from God's love', and 'all are worthy basically because God loves them', declares the writer.

But the whole book is, on the one hand, a sustained condemnation of Christian or so-called Christian society in which whites show favoritism against blacks and, on the other, a plea for the acknowledgment of the negro as a human being of equal value to all other human beings and to Christians, specifically, in the sight of God. So, the writer says;

*In a white racist society, Black Theology believes that the biblical doctrine of reconciliation can be made a reality only when white people are prepared to address 'black' men as black men and not as some grease-painted form of white humanity.*

Indeed, 'the task of Black Theology is to make the biblical message of reconciliation contemporaneous with the black situation in the United States of America.' We would for that reason lay pressure on the fact that a *Theologia Africana* must not be based on such contemporary factors brought about as in the United State of America by men who give the impression to be barely aware of the sufferings of their fellow men, perchance because of a desire to safeguard an objectionable social difference simply on the basis of the colour of the skin of their less favored compatriots.

A *Theologia Africana* is predisposed to go through from the serious defects of a universal generalization which covers a yet incompletely carted continent which on a diagram can embrace Japan., India, Europe, New Zealand, USA (without Alaska), all the islands in the Caribbean and Iceland. The political criterion of citizenship by birth or adoption also excludes many who, like the Asians of Kenya, may beyond doubt feel they belong to Africa. We would, consequently, go on to adopt the proposition that the term 'African' is first and foremost a mythological term, expressive of love for a continent or dedication to an ideal here lies the basis for African unity for Christians, the African or otherwise. A *Theologia Africana* should as a result afford a widespread medium by which Africans and non-Africans, but even more so, the multiplicity of Christian groupings, could start to think together, first in the African continent and maybe, in the providence of God, in other parts of the world. In an age of Christian ecumenical thinking, a *Theologia Africana* might very well be the means of making Christian of various groups think together and so worship together. Christian witness might accordingly turn out to be truly successful at the village level as in the large townships. It could supply the bridge by which Christianity in African can be both African and yet worldwide.

### **3.0 Conclusion**

African independent churches are forms of African Christianity which are primarily spiritual and religious movements striving for cultural integrity and spiritual autonomy; they are a innovative reaction to the breakdown of old forms of African society by the formation of new groups for providing fellowship, security and some sanctions and

guidance for the living. African theologians utilized the elements of the 'African soil' to build a theology designed to meet the African condition of spirits, ancestral recognition and the African worldview.

#### **4.0 Summary**

The African form of the Church is fundamentally concerned with worship, the training and ranks of the ministry, a concern for water, the position of women and the 'battle with the world of evil spirits'. 'Africanisms and Africanizations abound'. It encloses within itself the entire African tradition with a pronouncement on community life. In sense, the Independent Churches are the 'end-products of Christian missions in Africa', but in another, 'they signify new Christian beginnings'. Africanisms and Africanizations' thriving in the Aladura Church are correct of all the other independent Church sects. The independent Churches are a creative growing point for the faith in Africa. Absolutely Jesus is thought of first and foremost in terms of the 'speaker' or of the ancestors or trivial divinities 'who are intermediaries between men in this world and the gods beyond'.

#### **5.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

- i. Discuss the impact of African independent Churches on African soil
- ii. State and explain the need for the emergence of African theology
- iii. What is the role of African theologians towards development of African Christianity

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## **UNIT 4: THE FACTORS PROMPTING THE GROWTH OF THE AICS**

### **Introduction**

It is noted that, a number of factors prompted the origin and growth of African Independent Churches which are Bible translation, African nationalism, religious paternalism and cultural revivalism. The materialization of the AICs demonstrated a reaction to take-over, a result to European domination in politics, economics, social and church life.

### **Objectives**

At the end of this unit the students should be able to:

- i. pinpoint the factors that promoted the origin and growth of AICs
- ii. Discuss African Christianities
- iii. State the problems accompanying African Christianity

### **Main Content**

4.1 Factors influencing the origin and growth of the AICs

4.2 African Christianities: Features, Promises and Problems

Conclusion

Summary

Tutor Marked Assignment

References for further Reading

## **Factors influencing the origin and growth of the AICs**

Daneel (1987:70-73) affirms that, some years back Turner, Oosthuizen and Hastings, amongst others, had worked out contributory factors behind the AICs. Their arguments are well captured by Claasen (in Masuku 1996:444): African believers questioned the denunciation by missionaries of the ancestor cult, circumcision and polygamy. European doubt with reverence to spirit-possession alienated black church members who found Biblical evidence for their vision of world and life. Their accommodation of African culture made AICs eye-catching. The lack of opportunities for African leadership and Western denominationalism were other causes. The emergence of the AICs represented a reaction to take-over, a reaction to European domination in politics, economics, social and church life. Africans sought to build their own institutions free of white control. It is apparent that the causative factors attributed to emergence of AICs are wide-ranging. However, only four are highlighted: bible translation, nationalism, religious paternalism and cultural revivalism.

### **1. Bible translation**

According to Barrett (1968:26), the translation of the Bible into local languages was one of the most important factors in the development of the AICs. The principal aim of translating the scriptures into an African language was to make them easily reached to local people in the vernacular. Mission schools played a very significant role in enabling people to read the Bible in their own tongue (Daneel 1987:84). Bediako (1995:72) postulates that translating the Bible into other languages is similar to the doctrine of incarnation; it is a means “by which the fullest divine communication has reached beyond the forms of human words into the human form itself”.

The translation of the Bible into local languages manifests another noteworthy change: at this moment, for the first time, people were able to draw dissimilarity between the missionary and Scripture. Daneel (1987:84) indicates, for example, that intellectual African Christians discovered that the Biblical message conveyed to them by missionaries was reductive, in the sense that it was restricted to the soul and its redemption, but botched to touch issues of social justice. More outstandingly there was, in Scripture, impulsiveness, vitality and dynamism, which were apparently basically lacking in the rigid structures of the missionary agencies.

Furthermore, while reading the Bible Africans discovered that it resonated with their African world view and was stuffed with so many things that they knew very well before coming into contact with Christianity, particularly the Old Testament dimension. For instance, Africans found Biblical legitimacy for some of their practices, such as polygamy, which was profoundly challenged by some missionaries, as the Old Testament does not denounce it, and people like Abraham, to mention but one, were polygamists. As Oduro (2002:31) has appropriately discerned, those who translated the Bible into African languages, in a sense provided a means for the Africans to compare and contrast the

Christianity which was wrapped in Western philosophies and worldview, and the Christianity that can be inferred from the Biblical world.

## **2. African nationalism**

Oduro (2002:31) maintains that colonial interests varied from one African country to another. For example, the principal aim of colonialists in South Africa was settling on the land, with no target of returning to Europe. In contrast, the interests of West African colonialists were more economic, i.e. gathering wealth through trading. These diverse interests dictated how Africans were treated in their own countries and regions. There were, conversely, some embarrassing treatments and perceptions of Africans that were general to the colonialists. African politicians generally perceived the colonialists as usurpers of the powers, privileges, wealth and positions of Africans.

With the self-respect of Africans stained by some Europeans, many Africans did not make a difference between the politician and the missionary, in view of the fact that the churches were patronized by European missionaries and politicians. For example, in bitterness at the substandard status accorded to him the parent denomination, Rev Mangena Maake Mokone withdrew from the Wesleyan Church in 1892 to form the Ethiopian Church (Pretorius & Jafta 1997:214). This courageous move by Rev Mangena Maake Mokone heralded a new chapter in the effort to inquire about autonomy, and was an apparent signal that Africans desired both independence in church matters and the chance to administer their own affairs. To them, this meant planting a self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating African Church. In addition, the break away from the Wesleyan Church awakened the minds of many Africans to question the motives of Western missionaries.

## **3. Religious paternalism**

Religious paternalism was exceptionally apparent in most Western mission-founded churches; it was analogous to the tendencies that led to the development of the Ethiopian movement, the only distinction being that there were no political inclinations (Oduro 2002:32). Some Western missionaries ostracized many of the African Christians when it came to high-ranking leadership positions in the church, even though many Africans were involved in evangelizing, teaching new converts and translating the Bible into African languages.

A case in point is Samuel Ajayi Crowther of Nigeria, who was ordained the first African Bishop of the Church Missionary Society. According to Oduro (2002:32), he served his Church with meticulousness, but Western missionaries over and over again made a ridicule out of his leadership qualities, to the degree of replacing him with a European bishop, which displeased the Africans who were members of his church.

In similar vein, Pambani Mzimba broke away from the Scottish Mission on account of struggles over the custodianship and use of funds. According to Maluleke (2001:11), even though Mzimba had himself raised substantial funds when he was invited to Scotland, the Mission Agency wanted to order how he should use those funds. This controversial issue was the straw that broke the proverbial camel's back. So he affirmed: But to me it is clear that even the Black man in Africa must stand on his feet in matters of worship like people in other countries and not always expect to be carried by the White man on his back. He has long learnt to walk by leaning on anybody except his God so that the work of the Gospel should flourish. The child itself feels it must walk it stumbles and falls takes one step at a time but the end result it walks (Pambani Jeremia Mzimba in Maluleke 2001:11). It is observed that paternalism on the part of Western missionaries was synonymous to "ignorance" and caused some African leaders to break away from mission churches to establish their own.

#### **4. Cultural revivalism**

Bosch (1991:84) identifies the 'Gospel and Culture' as one of the prevailing missionary motifs in post-Enlightenment missionary activity. Many Western missionaries held that supplanting African cultures with that of the West would bring "the abundance of the good things that modern education, healing and agriculture would provide for the deprived peoples of the world" (Bosch 1991:85).

The outcomes, as we all know, were disastrous, because Africans sometimes be liable to be antagonistic to this Western worldview. At the differing extreme, Western missionaries held the African beliefs and practices, i.e. polygamy and ancestor veneration, in derision. The consequence was, and still is, nervousness between Western Christianity and the African expression of Christianity.

Oduru (202:35) points out that Western missionaries did not conceive replacement to the beliefs and practices they destabilized or banned. Their failure to notice left many African Christians with nothing to grasp onto in times of crisis. Many became alienated socially, culturally, psychologically, philosophically and religiously. Bosch (1991:96) sums it up sound, saying that "identity crisis was the overall result". These cultural impositions by some Western missionaries and their African allies by hook or by crook prepared a fertile ground for the institution of AICs. These churches have been inventive in fusing African culture and Christianity. The optimistic reaction by Africans is an attestation that people take responsibility for the Church when they can transmit its beliefs and practices to their own context.

#### **5.0 Conclusion**

Christian missionaries assisted colonial officials in a number ways: they taught that Christians respected and obeyed those in authority; they provided a European presence in areas where, at times, the colonial government had no presence, they helped provide

educational and health services that the colonial government would not provide, in the process reducing opposition to colonial rule. Colonial governments provided missionaries with a peaceful environment in which they could do their mission work. Moreover, mission groups were often provided with land to build their mission stations by the colonial governments. However, their attitude towards Africans as inferior to the whites and prohibition to practice Christianity in African context made them to construct their own theology that would be suitable for them.

## **6.0 Summary**

Christianity in Africa naturally bore and still bears the marks of those who introduced it into Africa. At the same time, for various reasons including the self-styled superiority of the culture of the West, little attention was paid by the early missionaries to the religious thought-forms and practices of the African peoples. Christian African leaders seem, however, not to have felt fully at home with the 'imported' forms of worship. Today, African Christians and missionaries alike are calling for an intensive study of the ingredients of the indigenous religious thought-forms and practices in order to ensure a truly effective communication of the gospel. So drums and dancing, offering of sacrifices to the gods and to the ancestors are receiving greater attention. It is reasonable to suggest that with the emergence of independent African States, nationalistic feelings may be behind the trenchant criticisms of contemporary Christian teaching and worship.

## **7.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

1. What are the main factors influenced the origin and growth of AICs?
2. List the ways in which (i) Christian missionaries and their activities may have helped colonial governments, (ii) colonial governments may have assisted Christian missionaries in their attempts at converting Africans.
3. State the two main reasons why some African Christians broke away from missionary churches to form African Independent Churches.

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## **UNIT 5: AFRICAN CHRISTIANITIES: FEATURES, PROMISES AND PROBLEMS**

### **Introduction**

In this unit, a thorough study on African Christianities has been carried out to highlight the features, promises and problems. This will go a long way to throw more light on how African Christianity is been practiced in our contemporary society.

### **Objectives**

At the end of this unit the students should be able to:

- i. Expound on the diversities of African Christianity
- ii. Discuss African Christianities
- iii. State the problems accompanying African Christianity

### **Main Content**

5.1 Diversity of African Christianity

5.2 African Christianities: Features, Promises and Problems

Conclusion

Summary

Tutor Marked Assignment

References for further Reading

Christianity is both old and new in Africa. It is old because its first contact with the continent was soon after the disciples of Jesus dispersed from Jerusalem after the events of Pentecost. It should also be considered that the gospel of Matthew narrated that Jesus and his mother were refugees in Egypt, a story that was cherished to the hearts of Coptic Christians of Egypt. In addition, the Copts of Egypt cherish the ancient tradition that it was St. Mark who brought Christianity to them. Coptic Christians in Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan make up the oldest traditions of Christianity in Africa today. The theologians produced by the Egyptian church defined Christian doctrines and dogmas, formulating such theological concepts as “the trinity” (coined by Tertullian of Carthage, 160-220 CE), “the original sin” (coined by Augustine of Hippo, 354-430 CE, born in what is today Algeria). By the 11th century, nevertheless, much of what was “Maghrib Christianity” had noticeably been wiped out by the unremitting expansion of Islam such that, in 1317, the Dongola Cathedral in Nubia was converted into a mosque, signalling the eclipse of the first of phase of Christianity in the continent.

### **Diversity of African Christianities**

There is a considerable amount of diversities in what is by and large described “African Christianity” but rather it will be worthwhile to adopt the plural of the term “African Christianities” to give emphasis to these diverse strands or traditions that may or may not be compatible one to another. The differences often demonstrate the degree of vitality and pioneering approaches to local appropriation of Christianity. The argument still ranges on if one or the other strand could be regarded as a branch of Christianity or a dissimilar religion altogether. Considering the multifaceted histories, organization structures and dogmas, and to emphasize the divergences rather than the convergences, the use of “Christianities” needs to remain, at least for the moment. For the sake of generalization, there are three broad types of Christianities practiced in Africa, each internally multicolored, to be precise:

- i) Mission Christianity;
- ii) African Initiated Christianity; and
- iii) African Pentecostalism.

#### **i) Mission Christianity**

The first grouping, Mission Christianity, stands for those churches established by Christian missionary agencies from Europe and America in Africa during the 18th and 19th centuries. More often than not, these churches came with the beginning of European colonialism, although there are some exceptions, for example, in Nigeria, where the first contacts between the indigenous peoples and European missionaries was in the 16th century when Portuguese Catholic priests visited the Kingdoms of Benin (1485-1707) and Warri (1574-1807). Though the type of Christianity planted in these areas afterward died out because so many reasons, there were cultural traces still existing till this day as a

result of this early encounter. The Portuguese missionaries resorted to “a church – state” model of planting Christianity by targeting local chiefs and anticipating that once these chiefs have converted, their people will follow suit. Because the new faith did not issue from the people’s religious passion, and because the Portuguese were more concerned with commerce than missionary duties, Christianity did not take unfathomable roots. In 1733, for instance, the local chief in Warri went back to indigenous religion and with him his people because the new religion failed to end a spell of drought; they smashed a statue of Jesus to exhibit the failure of Christianity to be of practical benefits to them in their search for a momentous and mutual relationship with the divine. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to take away slaves from the West Coast of Africa to Europe; they popularized the dishonorable slave trade. Furthermore, this was possibly the strongest reason why the Christian message they purported brought was scorned and therefore unproductive. Moreover the first contact between European missionaries and what is today Ghana was in the 15th century when Portuguese Catholics visited the Coast. But concentration in trade superseded the evangelical imperative, and also the harsh climatic conditions made European continued existence immeasurably complicated, particularly as quinine, the anti-malarial drug, was yet to be discovered about this moment.

The second endeavor to bring in Christianity in Nigeria came in September 1842 when ex-slaves from Sierra Leone, led by the Methodist missionary, Thomas Birch Freeman, reached Badagary near Lagos. In South Africa, by the 1820s missionary Christianity has been introduced in some isolated areas by the Congregationalist of the London Society (CLM). Missionary Christianity, typified by such organizations as the Catholic, the Anglican, the Presbyterian Churches, the Methodists and the like, stretched out little by little but steadily, making itself striking not just by preaching the gospels, but more outstandingly, by bearing other valued goods, technical skills and the pre-eminence of their guns over spears, bows and arrows. Africans belonging to this strand of mainstream Christianity compose more than one half of the total Christian population. African Catholics alone make up 17% of the Christian population of the continent, for case in point.

There are some perceptible features of missionary Christianity in Africa. Though it came in wide-ranging denominational incarnations, they all carried with them, Euro-American formalized theology, liturgy and method. Because of their long historical traditions of theological expression and systematization, doctrines and ways of worship arrived cast in thought categories foreign to the people. This formalized construction of dogma progressively more alienated the indigenous peoples to whom it was directed. What further heightened this emotion of religious alienation was the use of foreign language in

the transmission of teachings. Because the whites could not speak the language of the people, they were duty-bound to hire the services of locals such as catechists and translators who, in many cases, did much of the work but also introduced distortions and misunderstanding. In addition, because missionary Christianity came with the luggage of Euro-American culture, the sensation of superiority by the missionaries unintentionally caused them to demonized indigenous cultures and the whole thing African.

The missionaries viewed Africans as ‘savages’ who needed western/missionary intervention in overcoming their ‘barbaric stage’ of growth and access ‘civilized stage’ which the missionaries represented. While there were some exceptions to this practice such as was apparent in the works of the Anglican Bishop Colenso of South Africa who was pro-Zulu culture and suffered so much persecution for it, much of the agenda of missionary Christianity was to stamp out African cultures and substitute them with Euro-American ways of living. This is not just true with material aspects of culture but moreover with non-material aspects such as names, drinks, organizational systems, dress codes, etc. Missionary Christianity was appropriately engaged with the totality of African ways of life, a reason that soon caused schisms in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in these churches in Africa as we shall see in a while.

Missionary Christianity is an importation from the West; it also had a leadership structure that was dominated by non-Africans. Foreign leadership of any organization is often perceived as authoritarian and exploitative. It was not long, therefore, before such sentiments were translated into action such as agitations for self-governance and self-determination by the local membership of some of these churches. In Nigeria, for example, the first break-away group left the American Baptist Convention in 1888, principally because local members were discontented with the leadership of Americans. Because Africans were conceived of as “uncivilized”, one important defining social feature of missionary Christianity was, and still is, its engagement in social services: education and hospital works. In some places like Nigeria, the Church of Scotland in Calabar established the first printing press in 1846. Rev. Henry Townsend, a Church Missionary Society missionary in Abeokuta, published the first newspaper in Nigeria, Iwe Irohin, on 3 December 1859.

Missionary Christianity makes available significant strategies of social transformation through the construction of schools and health care facilities in many African cities and towns, thus creating a new cadre of educated African elites obligatory to man the new bureaucracy of colonialism. While these projects introduced new forms of learning and knowledge, they additionally demonized and discredited African indigenous knowledge and medical traditions and systems. What counted as knowledge was the ‘Whiteman’s

ideas' and, in some places, there were legal strictures to discontinue the people from using indigenous medicines and taking part in indigenous religious rituals. Perchance the most significant image of missionary Christianity was, and still is, its recognition with colonialism. It was perceived as a religion of "the Whiteman" which came with the cultural baggage of the Euro-Americans who did not disconnect the gospel message from western cultural practices and idiosyncrasies. For the reason that colonialism was seen as unfair, oppressive and repressive, Christianity was as well perceived as an ally or collaborator in a system of unwarranted economic, cultural and political exploitation. Such perception not only bred bitterness, it almost immediately became one of the most imperative weaknesses of missionary Christianity.

Colonialism was connected with the loathsome trade in Africans as slaves; this was a fundamental inconsistency in the integrity and sincerity of purpose of the gospel message the same group of White men and women claimed to bring. According to Isichei, "There was a basic contradiction between converting Africans and purchasing them as slaves". In addition, colonialism enthusiastically produced racism and discrimination based on the colour of one's skin; many of the missionary churches also had a policy that looked down on the Africans as inferior and incompetent of self-management. The above features of missionary Christianity fuelled the materialization of a new strand of Christianity which aimed at remedying these social, political and religious ills, whether authentic or perceived.

## **ii) African Initiated Christianity**

Masuku (1996:442) points out that, before answering the question as to who the AICs are, the explanation behind this acronym AIC is considerable. The first two letters give the thought not to pose a problem, as we know the "A" denotes that these movements are African in their own right, and the "C" basically implies that they must be cherished and seen as churches. However, the sticking point has been the "I", because many interpretations can be attached to it. For example, the "I" is synonymous with "Independent", "Initiated", "Instituted" or "Indigenous". It is therefore general to call these churches "African Independent", African Initiated", "African Instituted" or "African Indigenous".

Some political scientists refer to them as resistance movements, while some missiologists use terms like sectarian, syncretism, messianic or prophetic movements. According to Daneel (:30), such terms carry a negative connotation and time and again put the AICs at risk of being labeled as not "authentic churches". For the sake of uniformity, AICs in this study refer to African *Initiated* Churches, because this term emphasizes the creative inventiveness of African Christians in establishing and developing their own churches.

Turner (1979:12), a distinguished researcher of AICs, has defined an African Initiated Church as “a church which has been founded in Africa, by Africans and primarily for Africans”. Nevertheless, that the forebears of the AICs are Africans, I share the sentiments of Oduro (2002:17) that it is insufficient to emphasize that they were founded “primarily for Africans”, as if churches founded by Westerners in the West were mostly for Westerners. The origins of a church and the race of its founders do not at all times prohibit people of other races from membership of that church. For example, the missiological activities in Africa of churches founded in the West are evidence of to this fact. In this regard I find the definition of African Initiated Churches by Oduro (2002) very stimulating and, more outstandingly, it fits very well with the cessation debate. He defines African Initiated Churches as congregations and or denominations planted, led, administered, supported, propagated, motivated and funded by Africans for the intention of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and worshipping the Triune God in the context and worldview of Africa and Africans (Oduro 2002:17).

In other words, even though African Initiated Churches endeavor in their worship to find the Triune God within the worldview of Africa, evangelism is not restricted to Africans. In the same way, Westerners cannot claim monopoly over evangelism, even though there are many traces of the Western worldview and philosophy in the life of Western-founded churches, even those in the non-Western world.

African Initiated Churches have been grouped into different typologies. According to Uka (in Masuku 1996:4430), the three typologies commonly used by scholars are the “African/ Ethiopian” type, i.e. AICs which were founded on nationalistic and politically-motivated grounds, Zionist (*Aladura*), and Messianic. The Zionist group views the centrality of the Holy Spirit in relation to African cultural practices. The third or last group, the Messianic, characterizes groups developed around a single leader who claims extraordinary powers, and who seems to commandeer the role of Christ in the mind of the followers. Nonetheless, it must be said that, as much as these “typologies” have been accommodating in the past in categorizing the AICs, recently there seems to be less willingness to grasp and comprehend these multifaceted phenomena. The African/Ethiopian type, for example, is practically non-existent in post-independent South Africa. One would find it easier said than done to point to an AIC that owes its emergence to political motives. Since the typologies are distorted, it seems that before one embarks on categorizing these churches, it will be crucial to ask the members how they observe themselves.

### **iii) African Pentecostalism.**

Neo-Pentecostalism, the cross-cultural Classical Pentecostal missions are the precedents to the third response of Africans to the missionary message. What is generally called

‘Pentecostalism’ or ‘charismatic movement’ still covers a great variety of movements, and churches, each with its particular history, interconnected to local circumstances.

In Burundi the Pentecostal Mission started activities in 1935, but counted by the end of the century one tenth of the population to its followers, thus outnumbering the Baptists and the Anglicans who were much longer in the country.

This openness to the African world view remains a general factor in the development of the Pentecostal churches, in all the diversity. In the course of the 20th century revival movements had been active in the mainline churches, and Pentecostal missions from overseas created a variety of Pentecostal churches. In the 1970s all over Africa, in Malawi as well as in Nigeria, young puritan preachers from secondary schools and universities gave the prior genres of Pentecostalism a different stamp. Many countries witnessed the sudden surge of young puritan preachers, which ‘signified a new cycle of revivalism that swept through the continent in the post-independence period’.

Accordingly, the Neo Pentecostals outshine the older revival movements and is attractive for Africa’s upwardly mobile youth, lay oriented leadership, innovative use of modern media, and fashion –conscious dress code. Repeatedly these passionate puritans challenged the more easy ethics of the leaders of the mainline churches, and fulminated against traditional authorities accusing them of acquiring power through witchcraft, sorcery and by patronizing ancestral cults and covenants. They started as interdenominational Bible study and prayer groups among students, but lastly developed into churches with their own structures.

In the 1980s modern Pentecostalism took other unusual forms. It turned to modern media such as television. This created a new culture, values and meaning system. Electronic media technology became accessible to both American Pentecostals and their African networks. With the creation of a new culture, it means the rise of ‘the big man of the big God’. The preacher is the television star, using modern sales techniques, selling books, videos and audiotapes. The leaders of these churches time and again gave themselves striking titles, such as Doctor, Professor or Bishop or even Archbishop or Apostle.

This movement, visible in greater cities: Nairobi, urban centres of Ghana, and Nigeria, and Kigali, created new forms of Christianity, often united in mega churches, which have been judged another way. Some have pointed out that the stress on a conversionist theology of Television preachers with their sturdy emphasis on sanctification, with a tendency to prosperity Gospel, tends to be apolitical. Others called for attention for the



fact that the increased media use has shaped a 'youth-oriented culture' (Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu).

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Some African Christians were very unhappy with the racist actions of some missionaries. Few if any Africans were given positions of leadership and responsibility in mission churches. They were treated as children, as inferiors. The leaders of the breakaway AIC churches felt that this was the only way for them to gain the authority and leadership positions that they rightfully deserved. Secondly, many missionaries denigrated African traditional cultural and religious beliefs as pagan or evil. However, many African Christians believed that their cultural beliefs and practices should be honored within the Christian Church. They did not see an inconsistency between most of the teachings in the Bible and indigenous beliefs and practices.

There are many ways in which AICs-particularly Zionist Churches-incorporate indigenous African religious beliefs and practices. First, is the emphasis on the spiritual world and revelation that can come to Christians through communication with the spiritual world, particularly through possession and dreams. Secondly, like indigenous religions, many AIC have a strong emphasis on healing within the church. Thirdly, performance, dance and instrumental-drums and percussion-are very important in most AICs.

Students should be able to come up with a variety of reasons why AICs have been so successful. Reasons could include the ability of AICs to connect the past "tradition" with the present, to combine elements of indigenous cultural beliefs and practices with outside "modern" influences. To many, AICs provide a home-a place of security-in an increasingly unsafe and insecure world.

#### **5.0 Summary**

In spite of the difficulties inherent in the term African, there is a strong case for a *Theologia Africana* which will seek to interpret Christ to the African in such a way that he feels at home in the new faith. The independent Churches have pointed the way to adaptations of Christian worship to suit the African world view. But in their present stage of development, no clear theological thinking has yet been evolved by them. Care must therefore be exercised to avoid both syncretistic tendencies as well as a hollow theology for Africa. To the present writer, the answer lies in the rigorous pursuit of systematic theology, based on a philosophical appraisal of the thought-forms of the African peoples. The greatest expansion of Christianity in Africa began with the larger scale arrival of missionaries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some scholars who study

Christianity in Africa suggest that this rapid expansion of Christianity in Africa was facilitated by a symbiotic relationship between Christian missionaries and colonial governments.

## 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment

1. List the ways in which (i) Christian missionaries and their activities may have helped colonial governments, (ii) colonial governments may have assisted Christian missionaries in their attempts at converting Africans.
2. What were the two main reasons why some African Christians broke away from missionary churches to form African Independent Churches?
3. In which ways do African Independent Churches, particularly the Zionist Churches, incorporate aspects of indigenous African religions into their beliefs and practices?
4. African Independent Churches are the fastest growing churches in Africa. In your opinion why is this so?

## 7.0 References for Further Reading

Journal of African Instituted Church Theology. *Vol. II. No. 1, 2006 African Indigenous Church in Ghana*

boosters for Ghanaians, who were previously considered too inept to be at the helm of church leadership.

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## **UNIT 6: AFRICAN THEOLOGY**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
  
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 What is African Theology?
  - 3.2 Factors Leading to the Development of African Theology
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References for further Reading

### **4.0 Introduction**

This piece is structured to expatiate on the meaning of African theology. Then, it has gone a long way to discuss the factors leading to the development of African Christian theology which is one of the great tools used by Africans in spreading the gospel as they came to embrace Christianity. It has to do with contextualization of the gospel in African way of life. Moreover, African nations were becoming independent politically, therefore, the church in Africa shouldn't continue primarily controlled by European missionaries. This thought has given rise to African theology which is crucial and inevitable if Christianity in Africa is to be discussed.

### **5.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

- i. Define African Christian theology
- ii. Pinpoint factors that led to development of African theology
- iii. Expatiate on the impact of African Christian theology on African soil
- iv. Discern if really African Christian theology is involved in syncretism or not

## 1. What is African Theology?

Canon Harry Sawyerr, who died in 1987, was perchance the most momentous of the older generation of African theologians. He was born in Sierra-Leone and studied both in his own country and at the University of Durham in the UK. He was the first African Principal of Fourah Bay College, and afterward Professor of Theology there. His books include *Creative Evangelism and God, Creator or Ancestor?*

Sawyerr's idea begins by pointing out that, regardless of some in the early hours calls for the indigenization of theology, Christianity has not been offered in Africa in such a way that the Africans may 'feel at home' in his faith. At the same time as Sawyerr acknowledges the African-ness of the Aladura (independent 'prayer') Churches of West Africa, he is significant of what he sees as their inadequate perception of imperative doctrines, such as Christology and Atonement. He sees a more potential approach in exploring the universal ground between Christianity and African religious thought. For the Christian theologian a solid grip of philosophical and systematic theology is indispensable. African thought-forms should in that case be evaluated with a sight to 'building bridges' by which the gospel may be significantly communicated to Africans. At the same time African theology should position unwaveringly within the main stream of the Christian tradition and should be indisputably ecumenical.

The prospect for evangelism has never been bigger than it is now in Africa; but it will take a Church which is active and energetic with the power which only God can make available to be equal to the task.'

Idowu supposes that the Church in Africa, and Nigeria specifically, had come into being 'with prefabricated theology, liturgies, and traditions', and now bears modest, if any, genuine relation to the indigenous beliefs and practices of the people to which it was brought. Consequently on the other hand, Idowu considers the fact that the Church 'has every right to claim that she is the pioneer, or even the author of African nationalism', but on the other, he asserts that because the Church is built on a prefabricated theology it has become susceptible to the attack of the 'resurgence of the old gods', he for that reason maintains that, the Church in Africa must be rescued from a grave quandary through indigenization. There he recommends that this quandary of the Church can best be resolved by training African workers of quality and in proper numbers who would read between the lines the Christian Faith to their neighbors with a true sense of belonging. In

the present day, it is observed 'African leadership is not enough both qualitatively and quantitatively.' Idowu sets out the predicament with rational perceptiveness even if we may not wish to subscribe to his language in every case.

It is observed that, undoubtedly within the subsequent years, with the development of nationalism and the guarantee propagation of the indistinguishable term 'African personality' and its French counterpart 'negritude, the Church in Africa is confronted with a clamant need for an interpretation of the Christian faith, in a confident hope that such an interpretation, when fashioned, would make available a means of bringing home to Africans the truths of the Christian gospel in an idiom correlated to the African state of affairs. We bring to mind that William Vincent Lucas, Bishop of Masasi (1926-1944), had advocated a close relation between the infant Christian Church and the life of the tribe, without inconsiderately accepting 'pagan standards and customs, (and) not knowing the jeopardy that lurks within... Vincent Lucas condemns the fact that tribal life in some parts of Africa was decomposed in favour of European ways of life: 'the world over will suffer defeat if the African renounces the contribution he unaccompanied can make through striving to impound himself in moulds that are not his...' He as a result advocated the adoption of the 'rites and customs' of the people who were being converted into Christianity. Vincent Lucas was born in 1883 and wrote these words as a result of his Masasi familiarity which started in 1926.

In West Africa, there was before now a well-built move in this path. James Johnson, the Sierra Leonean clergyman who had gone as missionary to Nigeria in 1877, had expected Bishop Lucas by saying that the Church should be 'not an exotic but a plant become indigenous to the soil'. Johnson advocated 'a reform of the liturgy to go well with home conditions'. In 1886 Bishop Adjayi Crowther moreover reported on the use of 'native airs' at Otta in Yoruba land accredited to the colonist catechist, James White, who had served in Otta from 1854 to 1890.

Analogous attitudes were held by other West African Christians. Dr. Edward Blyden in a speech delivered in 1876 refers appreciatively to the observation made by Johnson to the result that 'as the African Church failed once in North Africa in days gone by, so it will fail again, unless we read the Bible in our own native Tongue.' Previously Blyden himself arguing on the foundation that there is 'a solidarity of human nature which needs the absolute development of each part in order to (ensure) the effective working of the whole', had avowed that Africans 'can attain to a knowledge of science, receive intellectual culture, acquire skill to develop the resources of their country, and be made 'wise unto salvation', without becoming Europeans'. In another place he infers that if Christianity is to take root at all in Africa, or to be to the indigenous anything more than a form of words', then two assembled policies should be chased. First and foremost, 'a wholesome interference' with the ancestral organism should be introduced 'from without'. Secondly, the Africans should be so educated that the foreign ideas which are induced 'should be so assimilated as to develop and be fertilized by native energy'.

It is apparent to say confidently that from 1854 beyond even though there seems to have been no substantiation of any thoughtful theological education among them, West African Christian leaders, lay and clerical, had felt and without a doubt prompted schemes to indigenize the Christian faith. A short time ago, there have been overabundances of advocates for the adaptation of Christian theology to worship. Professor E.B. Idowu, previously referred to, has been one of the most heard voices. The Reverend T.A Beetham, in earlier times Africa Secretary of the Methodist Mission Headquarters in London, writing in 1967 refers in pointed language to the sluggishness of the Church 'in becoming an African Church in worship and theological understanding'. Beetham identifies that there is only one 'eternal word of God, unchangeable', and therefore there 'can then be only theology'. But he goes on to say:

*The word becomes incarnate for each generation and if it is in every generation to be 'touched and handled' so as to be universally recognized it must be incarnate in the life of every people. In this sense, there is need for an African liturgy and an African theology. In this sense, then, the Church has been slow to become African.*

It is in this background that the term 'African' becomes truthfully noteworthy. It was noted at the AACC Ibadan Conference in January 1958 that much had been and was being done by way of Africanizing the Church. Music, thank-offerings, Uniforms, Puberty and confirmation rites, marriage, and funerals were more than ever pointed out. At the same moment in time, the account definitely recommended that there was 'a need for Christian to reconsider African beliefs about the ancestors in the light of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints'. The similar Report stressed the significance of 'education into Christianity' to make available a security against the strains and stresses of the contemporary world. Beetham writing nine years afterward optimistically refers to the enormous service before now delivered by the Church of Africa, mutually through the education afforded by Christian schools and by the fellowship created and maintained among African Christians. But he also acknowledges that the current concern is how far the worshipping community of Christians can prolong in post-independent Africa to continue living and be an activating leaven in society. So he asks, with West Africa principally in mind:

*Have the roots of the Christian Community gone sufficiently deep in African society, with its traditional belief in the Supreme God and the Spirit-World, its ritual for purification, and consequent protection of individuals from harm within the family and clan? Has it a continuing place in that society as it now responds to the joint demands of nationalism and bureaucratic technology?*

### **Factors leading to the development of African theology**

There was number of factors-not all of them stringently theological-which helped to produce weather in which African theology could begin to grow up. One was undoubtedly the movements towards independence in many colonial territories during the 1950s and 1960s. It seemed incompatible to African Christians that while African nations

were becoming independent politically, the church in African should continue fundamentally controlled by European missionaries. In addition, some of the leaders for the new nations in African were themselves converted Christians, Kenneth Kaunda, for example, was the son of Presbyterian catechist, and both Julius Nyerere and Leopold Senghor were practicing Catholics. The first two of these, in particular, began to question why the church in their countries was not more African.

A second factor was the rediscovery of the significance of traditional African culture, which also received a great thrust from the literary movement in French-speaking African known as *Negritude*, which was more than ever connected with Senghor. In the same way the significance of African traditional religion was coming to be more and more cherished, not only through the monographs of skilled anthropologists but even more through the more accepted surveys of Geoffrey Parrinder, a former missionary and later lecturer at the University of Ibadan. In South Africa the Black Consciousness movement, which came into view in the early 1970s principally as a result of the activity of Steve Biko, strained the dignity of 'blackness' in the face of exploitation by a white-controlled government. For many African Christians all this led to a passion that the African legacy and current state of affairs could no longer merely be discharged as 'pagan' but considered necessary to be taken critically and somehow associated to the truths of the Christian faith.

An additional factor was the manifestation from 1990 onwards, of an ever-increasing number of new African-controlled Churches, more often than not cooperatively termed 'African Independent Churches'. Despite the fact that these movements varied to the highest degree in their level of orthodoxy, they did demonstrate obviously that African Churches were quite competent of organizing themselves without European missionary supervision. They furthermore thrived in producing their own very unique forms of Church government and worship, which demonstrated in many ways to be more hospitable to Africans. Though they have fashioned little written theology in the authoritarian sense of the word, they have developed liturgies and hymn books which have obviously found a prepared reply in the experiences of their members.

It would be disrespectful to take no notice of the role of a number of Europeans in the interest group towards developments of African theology. In 1947 Fr Tempels had launched his write-up on Bantu Philosophy, in which he had watchfully argued that African religious contemplation is systemic and logical. A little later Parrinder began his somber and compassionate study of African religion. Bishop Sundkler, in 1960, wrote a piercing assessment of the Christian Ministry in Africa, and he and others (conspicuously Dr Harold Turner) began to observe the independent Churches with enormous understanding and insight. Other non-Africans began to give confidence to African theologians by editing collections of essay and conference papers in order to promote the development of Christianity in African context.



## Western Missionary Christianity

On the whole, nevertheless, as African theologians began to see it, Western missionary Christianity had some grave shortcomings inasmuch as it gave rise to the explosive growth of Christianity in Africa. While Christianity itself was profoundly significant, it was felt that the form in which it had been offered and failed to break through to the heart of African traits. Two most important areas of criticism were recognized.

To begin with, there was consciousness that Christianity had been established in Africa during the colonial period, and seemed to have prospered fundamentally, because it had been supported by the ruling European powers. Not simply did it give the impression of being foreign in itself, but it also in a sense shared in conscientiousness for unfairness carried out by the colonialists. Nonetheless, this does not bring to a standstill from progressing to hit the highest point it has reached in the present day.

One proclamation by Third World theologians set it as follows:

*In the early phases of Western expansion the Churches were allies of the colonial process. They spread under the protection of the colonial power; they benefit from the expansion of empire. In return they rendered special service to western imperialism by legitimizing it and accustoming their new adherents to accept compensatory expectation of an eternal reward for terrestrial misfortunes, including colonial exploitation, (the Emergent Gospel, ed. Torres and Fabella, p. 266).*

With the purpose of being realistically African, Christianity in Africa considered necessary for that reason, to liberate itself from all the continuing manipulations of the colonial periods. The question being raised here was the correlation between the Christian faith and political power in Africa.

As the Second point, there was the inclination of missionary Christianity to fail to recognize traditional African culture and in particular to give notice to traditional religion as heathen or pagan. This stance left no room for a compassionate positive reception of all that was good in African culture, nor for the incorporation of traditional ideas and rituals into Christianity. A leading West African theologian has expressed this problem as follows:

*Western missionaries stressed aspects of discontinuity between Christianity and African cultures and traditional religion to such an extent that they excluded aspects of continuity between Christianity and African cultures and religions. They condemned without proper evaluation African religious beliefs and practices and substituted western cultural and religious practices (E. Fashole-Luke in Christianity in Independent Africa, p. 357).*

The sharp separation between Western missionary Christianity and ‘pagan’ African culture, tended to lead to a quandary in the experience of many African Christians. At the same time as some African converts were able to blow apart totally with their traditional inheritance, more frequently the implementation of the new faith fashioned Christians with a foot in two worlds, who found it easier said than done to resolve their sense of belonging to their African heritage with a western structure of Christianity. President Kaunda presented his remark to this tight spot when he confessed that he felt within himself ‘a tension created by collision of two world-views, which I have never completely reconciled’. Archbishop Desmond Tutu makes the similar point when he speaks of Africans ‘suffering from a form of religious schizophrenia’ for the reason that of the struggle between their Christianity and their African-ness, as a result African Christians started to concentrate themselves to the question: ‘How can we be Christian and African?’ The difficulty being pointed out here is the affiliation of Christian theology to the culture in which it finds itself.

One practical characteristic of the cultural approach to theology in Africa has been in the growth of new forms of worship. A good number of the African Churches inherited the Church organization and forms of liturgy from the Western Churches to which they owed their origins. Divisions which appropriately belonged to European Christendom were transplanted into the African continent, and with them forms of worship which were not at all times important in the African context. It began to be seen that the true indigenization of the Church in Africa meant, not only that Africans themselves should turn out to be its leaders, but also that its structures and liturgy should be converted into truly African.

### **Concern of Present-Day Christian Theology in Africa**

African theology has contributed immensely in the rise and growth of Christianity in Africa because of its contextualization. The two principal concern of theology in Africa are, thus, on the one hand its relationship to political power, and on the other its link to African culture. To one point or another concern run through most of the readings presented here. There are of course differences of emphasis-often quite considerable-which are related to the diverse contexts in which each theologian works in his own country. A number of writers particularly such as Tutu, Buthelezi and Boesak from South Africa are in particular concerned with the political implication of the gospel; others, such as Nyamiti and Dickson, are more attracted in relating it to cultural factors.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to draw too sharp a division between the two approaches. Archbishop Tutu shows that South African theologians as well discover that there is some significance in the cultural approach to theology, although it may become gravely insufficient if it entirely neglects social and political considerations. In the same way, theologians outside South African have acknowledged the need to relate the gospel to present-day social and political problems even though these issues may not be so

pressing in their own countries as they were in South Africa. Bishop Tshibangu points out that the political and cultural approaches must be interconnected if Christian theology is to deal sufficiently with the problems with which it is faced, and Dr Appiah-Kubi tries to put this into practice in his dealing of the essential feature of Christian doctrine. While there are differences in distinction still they do show that the approaches of both political theology and of cultural theology are important in Africa, and that they are by no means communally special.

The most important concern of political theology is the rapport of the Church to the state and society. The independence of all countries south of the Sahara has meant that the issue of colonialism is no longer an issue. On the whole political theology in the continent, beside apartheid of South Africa, has tended to give support to the ruling governments. President Nyerere's policy of Ujamaa in Tanzania and President Kaunda's Humanism in Zambia both had their theological supports. Moreover, in recent times the Reverend Canaan Banana has given his passionate, if gullible, support to the Zimbabwean socialist revolution, which he sees as a materialization of the Kingdom of God. The plea to the Churches to commit themselves to national progress by active collaboration with their governments is well set out in president Nyerere's address, which was in the beginning delivered to Catholic workers.

It is simply in South African 'Black Theology' that Christian theology became a voice of remonstrance against the ruling government. South African writers generally make a distinction between 'Black Theology' meaning the political theology of black South Africans, and 'African Theology,' by which they connote what we have so far referred to as 'cultural theology'. This dissimilarity is made apparent by Archbishop Tutu, and his definitions should be kept in mind when reading the hand-outs of South African theologians. 'Black Theology' owes something to the movement of the same name which arose in North America, but more to the 'Theology of Liberation' which developed in Latin America in the 1960s, and which has turned out to be increasingly imperative since then.

This approach to theology draws attention to the necessity of the Church to side energetically with those who are suffering from oppression and poverty and who are demoralized by their own rulers. South African Black Theology does not refute the importance of the African heritage, but its most important concern is with the black people in South Africa, who under apartheid were deprived of basic human rights in their own land by a ruling white minority government, a minority which itself also asserted to be Christian. For black Theology, liberation is not basically an issue of the saving of the soul: rather salvation is the emancipation of the whole individual from all the forces which oppress and exploit, so that people may be liberated to be accurately human in the way that God determines them to be.

The great effort for true humankind, consequently, in which Black theologians are involved, is fundamentally a Christian great effort for the self-respect of all men and

women, created in the image of God. Black theology, like the Theology of Liberation, is a theology of 'orthopraxis'-right action or practice-more willingly than merely of 'orthodoxy'-right belief or teaching. Archbishop Buthelezi and Dr. Boesak demonstrate Black theology's deep concern for the complete liberation of the whole human being.

The cultural approach to theology ('African Theology' in Tutu's vocabulary) has a special highlighting. Its most important concern is the relationship between the Christian faith and African culture and tradition. This approach begins from the assurance that all cultures are God-given, and are part of the natural revelation of God to humankind. African culture is far from being 'pagan' or satanic, for that reason provides an indisputable, if restricted, knowledge of God. It may be seen as being groundwork for the gospel just as Paul's speeches in Acts 14:15-17 and 17:22-31, or as having an authentic saving significance. This view was well set out at the essential conferences of African theologians which were held at Ibadan in 1966.

*We believe that God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of Heaven and Earth, Lord of History, has been dealing with mankind at all times and in all parts of the world. It is with this conviction that we study the rich African heritage of our Africa people, and we have evidence they know of Him and worship Him.*

*We recognize the radical quality of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, and yet it is because of this revelation we can discern what is truly of God in our pre-Christian heritage: this knowledge of God is not totally discontinuous with our people's previous traditional knowledge of Him (Biblical Revelation and Africans Beliefs ed. Ellingworth and Dickson, Lutterworth 1969, p. 16).*

On this foundation it is argued that there are elements of African culture which may throw light on aspects of the Christian faith and which may be useful compared to them. The great value of the community in African life for instance may shed light on the meaning of the commonality of the people of God in the Old Testament and the Church as the Body of Christ in the New. Once more, the idea of divine 'live-force', which is discovered among many African peoples, may be seen as analogous to the works of the Holy Spirit in the human race. Still the special role of the ancestors in African religion may be used to throw some light on the doctrine of the communion of saints.

The aim of cultural theology, in that case, has been to scrutinize traditional concepts understandingly, and to bring into play the insight gained from them to make biblical ideas more bona fide to the African understanding. This kind of approach has normally been called 'adaptionism' or 'adaptationism', because it tries to acclimatize traditional ideas in such a way that they may be supportive in enlightening the Christian faith. Adaptionism has been used in particular by French-speaking Catholic theologians, such as Mulago and Tshibangu both from Zaire. The most simply easily reached examples of this approach are found in the volume *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, from

which it is quoted above. Adaptionism has produced a number of very important contributions to African theology. It does have some disadvantages; nevertheless, it is indispensable to make use of it with concern. It is likely, for instance, basically to draw rather on the surface parallels between the biblical world and African culture devoid of concentration to the genuine meaning behind African beliefs. It is moreover likely to choose definite features of African culture which have some correspondence to Christianity while leaving behind those which are extremely dissimilar, the 'discontinuous' elements.

The mission facing the African theologian doing cultural theology, in that case, is to glance profoundly into the real impact of religious ideas within his or her own culture and then truthfully ascertain whether or not they can be interrelated to the Christian faith. The idea from Professor Pobee set out the necessity to take African culture into account in formulating an appropriate theology in Africa, in conjunction with the more accustomed sources of the Bible and Christian tradition. The contributions by Nyamiti and Dickson present illustrations of how this may be successfully carried all the way through.

Liturgical theology is seen as the practical upshot of cultural theology in the worship of the Church. It is concerned with the way in which traditional essentials may be introduced into Christian worship. At an uncomplicated stage this may take the appearance of the use of African instruments and songs. At a more developed level efforts have been made to integrate definite aspects of traditional rites, e.g. initiation rituals, into the sacraments of the Church. While practical experiments of this type are being practiced in several countries there have been comparatively a small number of detailed written examinations of this technique hitherto. Two passages dealing with liturgical theology have been incorporated here. The first, by Abbe Marc Ntetem, surveys the potentials of Christianizing the traditional initiation rites of his people in Cameroun. The second passage, by J. A. Aina, is one of the few theological writings to come out of the Independent Churches. It is significant not only because of its very early manifestation (in 1932, long before the main-stream Churches took up the need for indigenous theology), but furthermore because it deals with an characteristic of the Christian faith-physical healing which, while to some extent ignored in the West, is of great significance to African Christians.

## **Conclusion**

The Church in Africa is faced with diverse problems from those which face most Churches in the Western world, problems to which European theology can make available no applicable expedient responses. African theologians are trying to come to grips with these problems, and to communicate the gospel to the practical issues, whether social and political, or cultural and liturgical, which confront them. As such, theology in Africa is not only a practical task, but one whose results are able to reach the highest degree and to enrich Christendom all together.

## **Summary**

It appears Christianity has not been offered in Africa in such a way that the Africans may 'feel at home' in his faith. African Christianity emerged to correct that mistake. Africans 'can attain to a knowledge of science, receive intellectual culture, acquire skill to develop the resources of their country, and be made 'wise unto salvation', without becoming Europeans'. African Christian leaders, lay and clerical, had felt and without a doubt prompted schemes to indigenize the Christian faith. There have been overabundances of advocates for the adaptation of Christian theology to worship. E.B. Idowu has been one of the most heard voices.

African Christians saw that while African nations were becoming independent politically, the church in African should not continue fundamentally controlled by European missionaries. The rediscovery of the significance of traditional African culture gave rise to development of African theology. African theology has contributed immeasurably to the rise and growth of Christianity in Africa because of its contextualization. The two major concern of theology in Africa are, therefore, on the one hand its relationship to political power, and on the other its link to African culture.

This approach to theology draws attention to the necessity of the Church to side energetically with those who are suffering from oppression and poverty and who are depressed by their own rulers. South African Black Theology does not refute the significance of the African heritage, but its most vital concern is with the black people in South Africa, who under apartheid were deprived of basic human rights in their own land by a ruling white minority government, a minority which itself also asserted to be Christian. For black Theology, liberation is not fundamentally an issue of the saving of the soul: rather salvation is the setting free of the whole individual from all the forces which oppress and exploit, so that people may be liberated to be accurately human in the way that God determines them to be.

### **Tutor marked assignment**

- i. What is African theology?
- ii. Mention the factors that led to development of African Christian theology
- iii. State and discuss African theologians whose unyielding efforts led to the development of African theology

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## **UNIT 7: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN THEOLOGY**

3.0 Introduction

4.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.3 Development of African Theology

3.4 Phases of African theology

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment

7.0 References for further Reading

### **Introduction**

This segment is meant to elaborate on the development of African Theology. The development of African theology has inexorably caused the formation of African Independent Churches (AICs). The path to African theology has three phases; adaptation, incarnation and cultural setting. This work will highlight and discuss all these phases in order to pinpoint its influential role in developing African Christianity.

### **Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:



- i. Discuss the extent through which African theology has developed
- ii. Appreciate the efforts of African leading theologians to spread Christianity by making it for Africans to feel at home
- iii. Pinpoint the phases African theology has gone through

### **3.1 The Development of African Theology**

Studies have recommended that in the twenty-first century there may be more Christians in Africa than in any other continent (Barrett 1970). Already there are more Anglicans in church every Sunday in Nigeria than in all of England, the U.S.A. and Canada put together. With growth rates in African churches usually exceeding those found anywhere else in the world this is not astonishing. As Lamin Sanneh has observed, "the eruption of Christian forces in contemporary Africa is without parallel in the history of the church"(1989, 188). This reality alone should be reason enough for westerners to take a look at what is happening in African Christianity, but even if this were not the case the very drive and vibrancy of African church life shows promise to a western church which, at best, often seems to struggle purely to survive in an increasingly secular culture.

Of supplementary interest to sociologists, anthropologists and theologians is the fact that though Africa is now acknowledged to be the poorest continent, economically, theologians in sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa) have not usually embraced "Liberation theology", rather, most have chosen to go their own path, for the form of oppression which they experience most intensely is not economic oppression, but rather a cultural oppression; the derogation of African people and things African. This is what E. Mveng and the other African theologians have referred to as "anthropological oppression" (Fabella and Torres, eds, 1978).

Signs of African Christian disillusionment with the style of white missionary activity were already evident as early as 1821 in Sierra Leone, with the construction of an African Independent Church (AIC) there. In Nigeria, Independent churches began forming in the 1890s. The United Native African church formed as a breakaway group from the Anglican Church in Lagos, Nigeria in 1891. From that time to the present there has been a great proliferation of new independent churches, each with its own meticulous emphasis, and each attempting to safeguard the African flavor, to become more truly African than churches planted by the European and American missionaries. In 1970 the AICs claimed 15,971,000 adherents in 5,980 denominations (Barrett 1982, 815) and their growth rates averaged 4.33 % per year between 1970 and 1985 (Barrett 1982, 782). Nowadays, these churches number well over two thousand in Nigeria alone. In some countries, especially Ghana, it is anticipated that members of Independent churches will outnumber those of either Protestant or Roman Catholic churches by the year 2000 (Barrett 1982, 323). The know-how of these Independent churches may be called, in one sense, the first stage of African theology, for apart from the churches of ancient Ethiopia and Nubia, here was the first expression of a Christian theology by sub-Saharan black

Africans on their own terms. There is huge body of literature on the African Independent churches, and the African theologians in the denominations placed by mission churches from the west often refer to them as one source of African theology. Nevertheless, the target of this unit is chiefly upon the expression of this kind of feeling from within the existing mainline churches planted originally by western missionaries.

In the Roman Catholic Church in Africa the most important early questioning of western Christianity was a compilation of articles entitled 'Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent' written by a group of nationalistic African priests in 1956. They articulated some of their questions and doubts about the very European and foreign manner of their church life and theology, and argued for "adaptation" of the church to the African context. When related feelings subsisted in the Protestant churches they repeatedly had issued in the creation of independent churches, but voices within the mainstream Protestant churches in addition began calling for a new type of Christianity in Africa at this time. In 1958 an inter-church conference of African church leaders was held at Ibadan, Nigeria, which gave expression amongst the widest range of denominations thus far to the new yearning for an Africanized church. This conference led eventually to the formation of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) in 1963 at Kampala, Uganda.

This time corresponded with the manifestation of new works from anthropologists such as E. Evans-Pritchard (1956), Marcel Griaule (1966) and scholars of religion such as G. Parrinder, (1954) which sought to scrutinize African Traditional Religion (ATR) in a more positive and considerate approach than had beforehand been the case. At the same time *Présence Africaine* began publishing in Paris, with an agenda very much agreement with the new, more compassionate approach in anthropology. With the meeting of these developments and the rise of African nationalism in the 1950s a "new wind" was blowing.

### **3.1.2 Phases of African theology**

#### **1: First Phase: "Adaptation"**

The main target of those writing and directing the course of African theology in the first chapter was "adaptation". The driving force of this movement was to make Christianity adapt to its African milieu. This was typically conceived of in terms of such practices as wearing African clothes, using indigenous African music in liturgy, and the indigenization of the clergy: the work of evangelism and pastoral care was to be reallocated to Africans. This in itself was not a new thought; really, it was the goal of Henry Venn, General Secretary of the Anglican Church Missionary Society from 1842 to 1873, whose guidelines for missionaries stressed that the new churches in Africa must be "self-planting, self-supporting and self-propagating" (Kalu 1978, 348). But Venn's guiding principles were chiefly ignored in the field, and the result was that the new churches in Africa remained very European in nature. Indeed the 1880s and '90s saw the

collapse of African agency in Christian missions due partially to the increased efficacy of malaria prevention, which allowed Europeans to enter the African mission field in much larger numbers. European supervision of missions insured a very European way of church life, which continued until the pressure for "adaptation" began to mount in the 1950s and '60s.

The first documented use of the term "African Theology" emerged in the context of a debate between Zaïrean theologian Tharcisse Tshibangu and his theological teacher Alfred Vanneste, held by the Cercle théologique du Lovanium at Kinshasa, Zaïre in January, 1960. The proceedings of this argument were published in *Revue du Clérge Africain* in that year. In the "Débat Sur La Théologie Africaine", Tshibangu posed questions as to whether definite aspects of African traditional religion might be used as points of contact with Christianity and disputed that a definitely African theology should be possible. Vanneste argued that Christian theology is widespread, and thus an African theology was neither possible nor attractive. At this time, Tshibangu, as he did in the 'Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent', stayed, for the most part, at the level of posing the question of whether an African theology might be achievable.

Following the independence of most African nations in 1960, there was rising approval of the agendas of the adaptation movement, by the European missionaries (some of whom were primary advocates of it) as well as by African Christians, who were beginning to see it as the evaluate of the maturity of Christianity in Africa. In 1963 the All Africa Conference of Churches was shaped at Kampala, and in 1966 it sponsored the first Consultation of African Theologians at Ibadan, Nigeria, which stressed the need for an African theology. This conference was responsible in the development of African theology as a separate movement. The papers from this conference were later on published in the volume *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs* (1969).

In the Roman Catholic church Vatican II (1963-65) brought huge changes in Catholic attitudes towards other religions. Ever-increasing approval of African identity was designated when in 1969 Pope Paul VI, visiting Uganda for the canonization of the Ugandan martyrs, told the Roman Catholic bishops: "you may and you must have an African Christianity". Aylward Shorter reports nevertheless, that despite the great volume of talk about "adaptation" and "Africanisation" in the Roman Catholic Church in the years between Vatican II and 1975, in practice it had only resulted to: "the production of vernacular liturgical texts and the creation of local musical settings for these texts." (Shorter 1975, 146).

In the Protestant churches the 1970s saw the introduction of African musical instruments and African musical styles in most of the Protestant churches, as well as the evangelical churches, many of which clinched to Africanized worship most passionately (Olson 1971). The Africanisation of the clergy became practically comprehensive in most Protestant denominations: by 1976 it had become unusual to see a white missionary

acting as an evangelist or pastor of an African congregation in Nigeria. But in terms of grave attempts to make the Church African at the core, "adaptation" had gone very little further than in the Catholic Church, and Shorter's comments that little had been done to come to grips with traditional religious ideas, or to create classically African Church structures is approximately uniformly related to the mainline Protestant mission churches. One exemption was the Methodist Church of Nigeria, which adopted a new "Africanized" structure with a "Patriarch" at the head of it, Bolaji Idowu. He tried to move the church towards African structures and thought, a progress that was praised by many of his fellow African theologians, though it caused a division in the ranks of the Nigerian Methodist Church.

### **(ii): The "Négritude" Movement and "African Philosophy"**

In 1928, the young Léopold Sédar Senghor left his home in Senegal to study in Paris. Disheartened by the maltreatment of Africans in France and its colonies, he united with his friend Aimé Césaire in 1929 to establish a review called *L'Étudiant noir*, which asserted the theory of *négritude* (Guibert 1962, 15). The *négritude* movement sought to revalue the idea and culture of traditional Africa (Mudimbe 1988, 83). Embittered with the racism they experienced in the French Communist party in Paris, the *négritude* group in the long run broke with many aspects of communist ideology. In 1948 Senghor gave up his membership in the S.F.I.O. (Guibert 1962, 24). Césaire maintained his communist attachment longer, but he too left the party in 1956 (Mudimbe 1988, 91). However they preserved an appraisal of western imperialism, the aspect of it which they most criticized was its absolute disrespect for the conquered peoples, their achievements and cultural values. The idea of "African personality" was central in *négritude* philosophy. The *négritude* scholars carried out research into the oral traditions of their own people and published these traditions so that the world could share the profound cultural riches of Africa. They also penned poetry as part of the cultural revaluation process. Senghor afterward became ruler of his country, Senegal, upon independence in 1960.

Connected with the *négritude* movement was the growth of the discourse of "African Philosophy", which attempted to comprehend traditional African worldview in philosophical terms, to say that Africans did without a doubt have something of worth to present to the world in the field of philosophy. The Belgian missionary Placide Tempels was significant in the development of the term "African philosophy." Tempels came to the conclusion that "Bantu behaviour...is centered in a single value: vital force" (Tempels 1959, 44), which is rendered variously in the French edition as *force vitale*, *vivre fort*, *la force*. This fundamental vigor Tempels saw as the central kind of "Bantu philosophy" (Tempels 1959). Both these concepts were customized and adapted by the African scholar theologian Alexis Kagamé, in works which are now measured classics in the field. "Bantu philosophy" invented in the 1940s, was found valuable by Senghor and Césaire, and became well-liked among the French-speaking élites of Africa.

Anglophone African theologians adopted a more skilled, more pragmatic and less tentative approach, and many have not referred to "African philosophy" per se, nonetheless they aim at the equivalent essential goal, the revaluation of traditional African thought, culture and religion. For instance, though Mbiti uses the term "African Philosophy" in his 1969 work, he rejects Tempels' "vital force" concept, while holding that Africans accept as true in the existence of "force" permeating the universe, similar to what anthropologists call mana (1969, 16). The disparity in approach between the Anglophone and Francophone theologians may shoot moderately from the fact that Africans from British colonies learned from the British school of anthropology, which is more experimental, while Africans from French colonies learned from the French school, which is more theoretical and exploratory.

By the late 1970s "Bantu philosophy", *négritude* and "vital force" as categories had come under increasing fire from African neo-Marxists, and from anthropologists of all schools, and in their unique formulations are now principally considered "passé". Éla points out (1988, 171) that at the very split second in 1969 when Pope Paul VI was praising *négritude* in Kampala, it was being dismissed as old-fashioned in Algiers. Among African theologians still working with the concept of "vital force" at the moment is the most outstanding Vincent Mulago.

## **2: Second Phase: "Incarnation"**

The subsequent chapter of African theology sought Christianity more intensely and genuinely rooted in African soil. One of the ways this assignment was undertaken was to research the traditional African religions of the assorted ethnic groups from which the African theologians arose. In view of the fact that many of them were second or third generation Christians by this time, it necessitated a substantial alteration process and the chase of research methodologies more recognizable to anthropologists than to theologians, but in contrast to anthropologists the African theologians had the benefit of knowledge of the indigenous languages as their own mother tongues.

In 1962 Bolaji Idowu's book 'Olódùmarè: God in Yoruba Belief' came into view, challenging many assumptions then up to date about the inimitability of Judaeo-Christian monotheism. In 1963 Harry Sawyerr wrote an article on the nature of theology in Africa which was one of the first articulations of the new atmosphere. All through the 1960s it was obvious that new winds were blowing. Approval of the agenda of the adaptation movement was to persist to grow, even into the 1970s. But by the end of the decade of the '60s it was already becoming noticeable to many that mere "adaptation" was not going far enough: simply replacing a white pastor with a black one who did precisely the same things in precisely the same ways as did the Euro-American pastor helped very small, if at all. A few rather apparent changes in musical styles and dress still left the central core of the problem unhurt. In addition, Africans were beginning to voice suspicions that much of the passion of the European missionaries for "adaptation" was conceived within

a framework in which European theology still set the parameters, outside which Africans must not go, therefore preserving a definite theological control for Europeans (Fasholé-Luke 1981, 22).

One of the results of the new research undertaken by African theologians on their own traditional religions has been the appraisal of western scientific anthropology. The initial phase of anthropology had sought to put discourse about the societies which Europeans called "primitive" into a scientific framework. This was to be an upgrading over preceding discussion on such societies because it was to be systematic and "objective", contrasting the observations of travelers and missionaries. Leading anthropological thinkers such as E.B. Tylor, J.G. Frazer and Lévy-Bruhl built theories of the evolution of human consciousness which, in one way or another harkened back to Auguste Comte's "trois états" of humanity, a division which split the human circumstance itself into three rather imbalanced parts (Mudimbe 1988, 67). Given the concurrence of this classification with the era of colonialism, an African response was unavoidable, and when it came it was fairly a sharp one. In a progression of scholarly conferences in the 1960s and '70s African theologians "broadened the scope of the analysis of anthropology and the philosophy of mission activity" (Mudimbe 1988, 60-61). They criticized the ideological assumptions which motivated anthropological and missionary thought, even in the works of actually sympathetic anthropologists such as Marcel Griaule and E. Evans-Pritchard, and missionary/anthropologists such as Placide Tempels.

African scholars in this era analyzed and criticized the Euro-American definitions of Africanness more painstakingly. One aspect of the myth of white superiority is the definition of the "otherness" of Africans in respect to their religion. In the 18th and 19th centuries, accounts written by travelers generally affirmed that Africans "had no religion". These attitudes have infuriated African theologians and they have been at pains to show that Africans traditionally did indeed have a religion that it was not simply "magic", but that it had a creator God who supplied for the needs of humanity. John Mbiti commenced his book 'African Religions and Philosophy' with the words: "Africans are notoriously religious" (Mbiti 1969, 1). Bolaji Idowu of Nigeria wrote the words "Africans are in all things religious" (Idowu 1962, 1-10) and even "Africans are incurably religious" (Idowu 1973). Some latest research has tended to qualify these statements to some extent by pointing out the secular and pragmatic motives and orientations which can time and again lie behind obviously religious practices in Africa. A theme issue of the 'Journal of Religion in Africa' (1985, no. 3), dedicates some articles to this insight (Platvoet 1985, Chakanza, 1985). But these cautionary notes are a relatively minor footnote in a corpus which has tremendously stressed the all-encompassing religiosity of Africans.

This is still so much the case that the western tourist to Africa may at first be taken backward by the quite diverse connotations which the term "religion" has there. While "religion" or "religious" is most frequently used in a disparaging mode in Euro-American contexts, the word has positive connotations to Africans. The phrase "It is good for a man

(or a woman) to have a religion" is often said with proverb-like resonances. Symbols of religious conviction are all over the place in such countries like Nigeria. Even the taxis and minibuses (called "matatus" in East Africa) habitually have religious mottos or names on their windshields. In Nigeria, for instance, the most familiar names are names like "God is Great", or "Allah Ya Kiyaye Hanya", (Hausa for "God guard the road") or "Halin mutum sai Allah" meaning "the character of man only God knows." Even the small "food hotels" or roadside diners in Nigeria often have names like "God's Glory" or "God Provides Food Hotel".

In the opening chapter of almost every book on ATR written by an African scholar of religion, one can get a list of the words used by European travelers, anthropologists and missionaries to delineate African religion: "fetishism, animism, ancestor worship, naturism, tribalism, paganism, primitive religion" etc. The African theologians have revealed how each phrase is scarce to depict African religion and is derogatory in its intent. "Fetishism" was a general clarity in the first half of the nineteenth century. The word came from the first Portuguese visitors to Africa, who saw a match between the charms used by Africans and their own amulets, and so called these objects 'charm'. In the 18th century European scholars started using the word as a common expressive term. African theologians disapprove this description, for it had come to be used in a derogatory way, planned to stress difference between Africans and Europeans: when an African performs a certain action, it is called "fetishism" or "fetish-worship", while when a European does precisely the same thing, it is called "owning an amulet."

Pioneering anthropologist E.B. Tylor in his 1871 work 'Primitive Culture' had laid out his theory of primitive religion as "animism", by which he meant that "primitive" cultures believed all things are animated with "spirit" or "breath, life". African scholars dispute that ATR's adherents did not maintain that all material things are animated with spirit, simply that certain objects are, and also, that one cannot define all of African religion by this one side of it.

Another phase of the ideological myth of white superiority was the so-called "curse of Ham". Research has exposed that even after thirty years of independence, entrenched feelings of racial inferiority still persist in Africa and people of African descent. This is, in large measure, a heritage of the colonial scheme, which indoctrinated Africans with the myth of racial inferiority, and the resultant psychological effects have been devastating.

The African theologians are critical of the growth of categories of thought based on evolutionary models which constantly placed Africans at the floor layer of humanity, as if they were not quite human. The work then, of African theologians in this second phase has been to rehumanize Africans by altering the modes of discussion about them, through an affirmative re-examination ATR. This led to a bulky research attempt focused upon the traditional religions of the ancestors of the African scholars, a focal point which was to turn out to be the major concern of most African theologians in the period from 1966

to 1983 approximately. Prior to 1960 there were only a little major published books by Africans on their own traditional religions.

The writing of this movement is directed principally to the African church, both clergy and laity, and as such is not in the same style as academic theology in Europe. It is planned to make the masses more aware of their religio-cultural roots, and in this it has been very thriving: Mbiti's 'African Religions and Philosophy' (1969) can be found in every secondary school and college library in English-speaking Africa and has profoundly affected most African students in the present day. Since the 1970s ATR is a course on the post-primary school core curriculum in Nigerian secondary schools and teachers' colleges, and several African students have taken at least one course in it by the end of secondary school.

By 1974 it was emerging that the main drive of African theology was no longer just adaptation of Christianity to an African environment, but the "Incarnation" of Christianity with truly African roots. By 1974 the Roman Catholic Church in Africa had come to the point of making the selection: the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) conference formally cast off the theology of "Adaptation" in 1974, and preferred the theology of "Incarnation" in its place. The difference was brought to a sharp center in the title of Aylward Shorter's 1975 work 'African Christian Theology - Adaptation or Incarnation?'

What African theologians were now in exploration of was a church with African leadership, with strictly African mind and spirit, and where Africans could feel free to survey the meaning of a truly African Christianity, devoid of restrictions imposed from outside mission agencies, exclusive of Euro-American Christians always looking over their shoulders. They wanted the freedom to innovate in their efforts to Africanize Christianity in a way related to the founders of the African independent church movements. By the mid-seventies the trickle of African theologians studying and writing on the traditional religions of their ancestors had grown into a mighty river.

Throughout this era there was an enlarged sense of self-belief in the African personality and African national pride, leading to a call in 1974 from the AACC for a moratorium on missions from the west, an addition of the extensive reaction against western imperialism in all its diverse forms. The incentive was what the African participants at the first Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) meeting in Dar es Salaam recognized as the "anthropological oppression" of the African. In this, the African representatives held opposing views with their Latin American contemporaries who were pioneering Liberation theology at that time. The Africans stressed that the chief type to them was not economic oppression, but an "anthropological oppression", which appeared itself in the derogation of all African people and African cultural attributes. The total of discourses by African theologians in this time was marked by exhibition of cultural



conflict, the upsetting impact of western imperialism in its anthropological and cultural appearances.

The decade of the 1970s was a vital one in the growth of African theology. At its onset, the work of surveying ATR was only now starting; in the end, the movement was so sturdily developed that many scholars who had gained their higher education through the church were demonstrating greater concern in ATR than in Christianity, at least as a scholarly pursuit. A development in the work of Joseph Omosade Awolalu, who got Bachelor of Divinity, Sacred Theology Major (STM) and Ph.D. degrees through his church, and at the doctoral level changed his interest to the study of Yoruba traditional religion.

### **3: The Third Phase**

#### **(i): Cultural Setting**

By the early 1980s it was perceptible to some African scholars that out of the procedure of revaluation of ATR certain nervousness arises. Some have begun to voice distress that much of the work is being done in a vacuity, for it does not fit the day by day context in which most Africans now live. The contemporary African truth is one in which many traditions and customs have died out to the extent that they cannot now be appropriately recovered, while "modern" and western ways have not been completely established. In a context neither wholly current nor entirely ancient, a majority of Africans live with a everyday veracity of grinding poverty in which clean water, food and the basic necessities of life are more and more hard to get hold of. Moreover, Africa is now much more developed and educated than it was in 1960.

The trouble of Liberation theologians such as Jean-Marc Éla has been to reveal this truth and direct the concentration of the African church to it as a matter of prime concern. Whereas he shares the appraisal of anthropology and several of the concerns of John Mbiti, Bolaji Idowu, Kwesi Dickson and others working within an "Incarnational" paradigm, Éla is disturbed that a preoccupation with the past should not be difficult to understand the causes of poverty and oppression in the present. His voice is the clearest and sharpest theological critique of négritude philosophy in Francophone Africa and some of his works, translated into English in the eighties, are beginning to have an impact in Anglophone Africa as well. Concern for the poor and for human liberation is in addition found in the works of Bénédet Bujo of Zaïre and Fabien Eboussi-Boulaga. These concerns have been echoed in a diverse way in Anglophone Africa by John Pobee, Mercy Amba Oduyoye of Ghana, Laurenti Magesa, J.N.K. Mugambi and Bishop David Gitari of Kenya, but because négritude as a distinctive philosophy had never been sincerely adopted there, the critique of it is subdued and unimportant.

The theological text written by African scholars today is usually not in the exceptionally refined modes of discourse one discovers in the academic theology of the European university. They are writing to more common listeners whose main concerns are frequently very unusual from those of Europeans and Americans. Also, interactions and travel within Africa are very hard and books and journals are often much more hard to acquire than in the developed countries of the west. As a result theological conferences and oral exchanges between African scholars have a greater significance. Mbiti observes (1986) that the most acknowledged theology in Africa today is oral theology. One of the developments to watch in African theology is the interest given to oral theology. Mbiti's 1978 article entitled "Cattle Are Born With Ears, Their Horns Grow Later; Towards an admiration of African Oral Theology" is a start; this, and Pobee's 1989 work are signs of what one imagine to be a very successful line of inquiry. Pobee goes extra than Mbiti in approving oral theology, appropriating the phrase "preferential option for the poor" in regard to the necessity to give worth to the stories of those peoples without writing.

The sharpening process is the increasing insistence upon the term African Christian Theology as opposed to the frequently used term "African Theology". Although Shorter had made this difference obvious in one of his works (1975) it has not been until the 1980s that numbers of leading African theologians have started to claim upon this term. One issue contributing to perplexity and inflamed polemics in the mid-seventies was Byang Kato's confusion of what was meant by "African Theology" as that phrase had been used by Agbeti and by Turner (Kato 1975, 54); a disorder which Kato passed on to Adeyemo and several others in the "evangelical" wing of the church in Africa. Kato had taken that term to mean the backing of a full revisit to ATR by African Christians, or a kind of syncretism. The designation of African Theology projected by Agbeti and Turner had possibly left space for that interpretation, but they were not the only persons, nor even the leading persons, in the movement. Some mystification remained, due not only to Kato's misapprehension, but moreover (Dickson 1984, 121ff.) to the sometimes blurred expression of the goals of African theology by its proponents. Illumination of this point by Dickson (1984) and by Mugambi (1989c) has led the way to a less polemicized environment and greater understanding. Therefore, Osadolor Imasogie and Kwame Bediako go on in an evangelical mode of discourse in the 1980s, and '90s but they replicate none of the errors and "straw man" arguments of Kato, thus bringing a more peaceful spirit to the discussions.

Coupled with the shift back to biblical studies is a rising concentration in Christology. In 1979 Pobee posited a Christ as ruler or chief Christology, and Christ as ancestor has been anticipated in several alternative forms. Ever since 1981 penned books on Christology have proliferated speedily. Several African theologians have proposed a Christ as Healer model, while one has posited a Christ as Guest model as most suitable for the African context. In the 1980s the Christ as Liberator model has reached wider addressees than earlier. Meanwhile, the Christus Victor model appears to take pleasure in a 'de facto' popularity in the churches, predominantly in the Independent churches, where

emphasis is upon the Christ as liberator from all the an assortment of forces which oppress humanity, such as illness, spiritual oppression, and poverty.

One rational expansion of the curiosity in ATR is to integrate significant elements from it into African Christianity: this is sometimes called "syncretism". "Syncretism" however, is a word which has derogatory connotations and is more often than not used to denote a method of religion which the user considers to be excessively compromised and/or lacking in the non-negotiable essentials of Christian faith. The missionary theologian Hendrik Kraemer warned of the sway of "syncretism" in his broadly influential work 'The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World' in 1938, and this warning rang in the minds of most missionaries since that time, whether they had really read the book or not. While fear of "syncretism" still remains in African missionary discussion, most now desire to speak of the affirmative aspects of "contextualization" as the appropriate designation for their work, which signifies an appropriate recognition of social context and an assimilation of one's life into that context, while at the same time preserving the essential(s) of the Christian faith.

The course of incorporating important elements from ATR has proved to be the most accepted option for African theologians today, and it is strongly held that except the African church has the liberty to experiment at the edges of what the western church would deem "orthodoxy" then it is not actually free. African theologians commonly speak favourably of the Independent churches as one authentic expression of an African Christianity, and hold that the mainstream churches must have this autonomy as well, whereas also maintaining that there are really limits to the procedure.

Nevertheless, we must be aware of the fact that Christian familiarity in Africa is not restricted to the Independent Churches: the ideas, structures, sermons, (oral theologies) and halting innovations of mission founded Churches must not be ignored in the creation of African Christian theologies. Nor are they less African, because they have opposed the dangers of syncretism; even if it is at the critical stage between syncretism and orthodoxy, authentic African theologies will come into sight.

As theologians have cuddled ATR in their theological proposals, accepted support for drastic changes (polygenic accepted) at the grassroots stage of church congregations has not been as great as one might envisage. Most Nigerian pastors have really discarded any radical changes. Nigeria has been the head in the movement to indigenize music and even dance in many churches. These changes are extensively popular, and have been broadly acknowledged in the Protestant, Catholic and Evangelical churches of Africa. But the pouring of libations to ancestors, clitoridectomy and certain healing practices with supposed occult overtones have not commonly been accepted. The most consistently cited reason for the growth of African independent churches is their strong prominence upon healing. By and large, while African theologians have spoken optimistically, and even thoughtfully, of the independent churches in this regard, the discussion has tended

to stay at the level of question-asking rather than performance, for the mainstream churches have resisted most moves towards a greater healing emphasis in practice. Up till now, most exceptions to this rule have been dealt with strictly; the case of Roman Catholic Bishop Milingo being a dishonorable one (Milingo 1984), another being the excommunication of charismatic youth movements inside the Anglican church in Benin State, Nigeria (Barrett 1982, 527).

Proposals of using Eucharistic elements more ethnically recognizable to Africans, such as millet cakes or pounded yam instead of wheat bread, and palm wine in preference to wine from the grape, have been repeatedly voiced by scholars, such as Éla, and by some pastors, but the churches have been unhurried to implement such changes.

The Anglican Church took what many people considered to be a foremost step forward in the recognition of African culture when it approved in 1988 to accept polygamous men into full communion. The 1988 Lambeth Conference of the Bishops of the world wide Anglican Communion approved to this alteration, principally due to pressure of the Ugandan bishops. Earlier than this, the only mainline church to adopt such a policy was the Lutheran church in Liberia in the 1970s. Nevertheless, there is also a growing number of eloquent African women theologians who viewed the Lambeth pronouncement critically, because they were not allowed even to voice their opinion on the matter (Mercy Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro, 1992, 1). There seems to be an emerging acknowledgment that any noteworthy changes in church order (such as the admittance of polygamists) are going to have to be shown to have a decisively biblical rationale.

Pastoral problems in the African context in unique situations facing African families, such as divorce in polygamous families, the role of ancestors, witchcraft and occultism, secret societies and curses are outstanding. These problems are dealt with progressively more from a pastoral point of view which takes into account the enormous amount of knowledge and sensitivity which African scholars have gained in the past thirty years from the study of African traditional religion.

In the Roman Catholic Church, the trip of Pope John Paul II to Africa in 1980 marked another significant moment, for he reaffirmed the endorsement of African culture made by Pope Paul VI in Uganda eleven years until that time and further encouraged African theological investigation and indigenous liturgies. The effect of these affirmations was to further increase African theological confidence.

#### **4.0 Conclusion:**

African theologians were now in exploration of was a church with African leadership, with strictly African mind and spirit, and where Africans could feel free to survey the meaning of a truly African Christianity, devoid of restrictions imposed from outside mission agencies. This is exclusively contextualization devoid of Euro-American

Christians influence. They wanted the freedom to innovate in their efforts to Africanize Christianity in a way related to the founders of the African independent church movements. By the mid-seventies the trickle of African theologians studying and writing on the traditional religions of their ancestors had grown increasingly. African theology sought Christianity more deeply and authentically rooted in African soil.

## **5.0 Summary:**

African theology has contributed immeasurably in the rise and growth of Christianity in Africa because of its contextualization. The two most important concerns of theology in Africa are, thus, on the one hand its correlation to political power, and on the other its connection to African culture. The true indigenization of the Church in Africa intended, not only that Africans themselves should develop into its leaders, but also that its composition and liturgy should be converted into really African.

## **13.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

- i. List the most famous African theologians and their contributions to the rise and growth of Christianity in Africa
- ii. Highlight the shortcomings of western missionaries on African soil
- iii. Explain briefly the three phases of African theology

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## **MODULE 3**

### **AFRICAN PENTECOSTALISM**

#### **Unit 1**

##### **1.1 Introduction**

In this segment it is understood that Pentecostalism is the greatest rising stream of Christianity in Africa and the world today. As a matter of fact, Pentecostalism may be seen as that flow of Christianity which emphasizes personal salvation in Christ as a transformative practice empowered by the Holy Spirit. In addition to preliminary experience, such pneumatic phenomena as "speaking in tongues," prophecies, visions, healing, miracles and signs and wonders are most importantly appreciated and encouraged among members as substantiation of the active presence of God's Spirit. The contribution of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity in Africa has been knowledgeable at all levels of African civil life in conjunction with economics, education and politics.

##### **1.2 Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

1. Explain the nature of African Pentecostalism and charismatic Christianity
2. What are the elements of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity?
3. Give an overview on the main theology of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity

### 1.3

#### **AN OVERVIEW OF AFRICAN PENTECOSTAL AND CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANITY**

Pentecostalism is the fastest growing stream of Christianity in the world today. If truth be told, the association is reshaping religion in the twenty-first century. Pentecostalism” may be defined as that stream of Christianity which emphasizes personal salvation in Christ as “a transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit. Following to that preliminary experience, such pneumatic phenomena as “speaking in tongues,” prophecies, visions, healing, miracles and signs and wonders have come to be acknowledged, valued and encouraged among members as evidence of the active presence of God’s Spirit. Charismatic by and large refers to historically younger Pentecostal independent and para-church movements, many of which operate within non-Pentecostal denominations. The phrase “charismatic” itself derives from St. Paul’s reference to *charismata pneumatika*, “Gifts of the Spirit,” in 1 Corinthians 12-14. As a result St. Paul uses the term to refer to those “extraordinary divine graces” that believers manifest on account of their experience of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecostalism as a matter of fact is not a colossal movement and what I refer to as “African Pentecostalism” are the particular African initiatives, appropriations and contributions to the growth, significance and impact of Pentecostalism as a global phenomenon. In Africa the precursors of Pentecostalism were home-grown prophet figures, lots of who were ill-treated out of historic mission denominations for chasing spiritualities occasionally outrageously perceived by church authority as belonging to the occult. They comprise prophets William Wadé Harris of the Gold Coast (Ghana), Garrick Sokari Braide of the Niger Delta, Simon Kimbangu of the Congo, Isaiah Shembe of South Africa and others. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century these prophets challenged Africans to throw away their traditional resources of supernatural succor and turn toward the living God of the Bible. Many of these revivalist prophetic campaigns simply resulted in independent churches when the prophets had deserted the scene. In our contemporary Africa, we not only have foremost Western mission-related Pentecostal denominations but also African-initiated ones.

The prophetic movements were therefore followed by the appearance of the accepted Spiritual, Aladura or Zionist churches known cooperatively as “African independent” or “African initiated” churches (AICs). Healing became the single most imperative action in the AICs, but many of them drifted into therapeutic techniques that were not Christian. Afterward, it has been converted into contentious to consider these older AICs as Pentecostal devoid of qualification. Since then African Pentecostalism has flourished in many directions.



Classical Pentecostal denominations have gained much prominence on the continent. In South Africa for example, the Assemblies of God, Apostolic Faith Mission and the Full Gospel Church of God are the essential part of this practice. Some have their roots in North America but the vastnesses of classical Pentecostal churches operating in Africa were started locally; foreign support time and again came later. Other Pentecostal groups found in Africa comprise: New Pentecostal Churches (NPCs), trans-denominational Pentecostal fellowships like the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International (FGBMFI), Women Aglow and Intercessors for Africa; and charismatic renewal groups of the mainline churches. In conjunction with nomadic international Pentecostal preachers and prophets, these have taken over the religious scenery as the new faces of African Christianity.

Accordingly in Africa nowadays, there are not only chief Western mission-related Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God originating from the United States, but also African-initiated ones like William F. Kumuyi's Deeper Christian Life Ministry, which began in Nigeria in 1973. Besides, there are the innumerable "mega" independent NPCs like Mensa Otabil's International Central Gospel Church in Ghana, David O. Oyedepo's Word of Faith Mission International or Winner's Chapel of Nigeria and Andrew Wutawanashe's Family of God in Zimbabwe, which were moreover born out of local initiatives. Furthermore, African Pentecostal churches have turned into a prevailing force in Western Europe and North America. The fact that African religions have come into view in Europe not as original forms but in terms of Christianity is itself confirmation of the growing strength of the Christian faith in modern Africa. By so doing, the biggest single Christian congregation in Western Europe since Christianity began is Nigerian Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo's Kingsway International Christian Center (KICC) in London.

Rudolf Otto grieves over the incapability of orthodox Christianity to be acquainted with the worth of the non-rational phase of religion, therefore giving the "idea of the holy" what he expresses as an unfairly intellectualistic approach. Pentecostalism is a reaction to such rational Christianity and anywhere it has emerged the group has defined itself in terms of the revival of the empirical aspects of the faith by indicating the power of the Spirit to instill life, and the capability of the living presence of Jesus Christ to save from sin and evil. This is however more so in Africa where religion is an endurance strategy and where spirit-possession, with its weight on undeviating divine contact, intercession in crises and religious conciliation, are central to religious incidents. The ministries of healing and deliverance have accordingly turned out to be some of the most significant expressions of Christianity in African Pentecostalism. Much of the worldviews underlying the act of healing and deliverance, particularly the belief in mystical causality, resonates with African philosophical thoughts. In Africa these days Pentecostal and charismatic churches may be instituted all over major cities. In the political ground, the independent Pentecostal and charismatic churches specifically have played both functional and dysfunctional roles.

It is learnt that, Uganda does not merely has the new Pentecostal experience overshadowed that country's version of older AICs, but the new Pentecostal communities are mushrooming in flourishing style. The NPCs specifically have an exceptional desirability for Africa's upwardly movable youth, a lay-oriented leadership, ecclesiastical office anchored in a person's charismatic gifting, inventive use of modern media technologies, specific unease with congregational enlargements and a stress-free and fashion-conscious dress code for members. In the prosperity dialogue, there is stability between coming to Christ and experiencing a redemptive boost that is evidenced partially through the ownership of material goods.

The participation of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity in Africa has been experienced at all levels of African civil life together with economics, education and politics. In the political field, the independent Pentecostal and charismatic churches specially have played both functional and dysfunctional roles. Pastors of Pentecostal churches have served as men of God who offer supernatural security for politicians on the lookout to strengthen power by ingraining themselves in office. Several politicians were seen as crooked people who trusted on medicines from shrines to remain in office, so by providing "Christian alternatives" of such shrine services, the status of such Christian "prophets" has gone through torture enormously. In African countries like Ghana and Zambia, politicians have maintained the companionship of famous charismatic leaders in order to manipulate a movement with a colossal youthful following to get political dividends. In Ghana, Bishop Duncan-Williams almost served as the chaplain to the Rawlings' government. The previous president of Zambia, Frederick Chiluba, not only acknowledged Zambia as a Christian nation when he assumed office in 1991, but he as well participates at Pentecostal crusades and conventions.

Pentecostalism in African Christianity demonstrates what people regard as imperative in theology are the things that attend to their religious needs. Encounters with the spiritual world either as malicious powers seeking to obliterate people, marine spirits negating efforts at public morality or as the performance of ritual in order to seek for assistance from the powers of beneficence are fundamental rudiments in African religiosity. In continuity with the African religious model, Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity has verified flourishing in Africa because of its openness to the supernatural and through its interfering and oral theological forms that reverberate with traditional African holiness. The goal of the practitioners, despite the fact that has constantly seen to be biblical, and this theology is expressed in three ways:

- 1. A devoted emphasis on transformation in African Pentecostal theology;** the forming part of the Pentecostal group is the bid of an undeviating and mainly deep encounter with God that introduces insightful changes in the life and state of affairs of the person who goes through it. The Holy Spirit is the one who assists the express character of the encounter. Transformation takes place at the private and mutual levels as well as a new drive in worship stirred by the Holy Spirit.

- 2. Theology of empowerment in African Pentecostal theology;** there is a prominence on the empowering outcome of the gospel of Jesus Christ; there is a relationship between transformation and empowerment. The African Pentecostal perseverance that it is likely to be a Christian and be conquered by desires of the flesh and demonic powers. This can lead to the stipulation of ritual contexts in which people could forsake such stumbling blocks through healing and deliverance in order that they may be empowered to success in life.

African religion is projected to contend with the effects of evil attributable to demonic spirits and witchcraft. Evil powers characterized by those with evil eyes, demons, witchcraft and curses, in the African milieu, upshot in all kinds of misfortunes, sickness, failure, childlessness and other setbacks in life. The worldview supporting the practice of healing and deliverance in African Pentecostalism is based primarily on Jesus' encounters with the powers of affliction and Pauline notions of the struggle with principalities and powers (Ephesians 6). African Pentecostal churches and movements together with the classical Pentecostal churches offer the ritual contexts for prayer and exorcism to deliver the afflicted.

- 3. A thriving discharge of a healing and deliverance ministry is believed to bring good health, success and prosperity and grasp of God-given abilities;** it is doable to consider deliverance theology as a response to or the transformation in the face of the deficit of faith preaching. While things are wrong it is attributed to the work of demons and witches. African Pentecostal prosperity theology may have some position to recuperate regarding its weak theology of suffering. Nevertheless, the cross of Christ is not just an emblem of weakness, but also one of triumph over sin, the world and death. Pentecostals highlight the fact that the gospel is about restoration, so it is anticipated that the conversion of the character would be apparent in individual health, well-being and care, to sum up salvation is holistic and includes spiritual as well as physical wealth. The procedure of restoration is not personal as people are motivated to break up from generational curses and through fasting, prayer and personal ministration liberate family members from whichever oppression. Salvation at this juncture is seen as a sense of well-being confirmed in liberty from sickness, poverty and misfortune as well as in deliverance from sin and evil.

#### **4. 1 Conclusion**

It is learnt that Pentecostal and charismatic movements are gaining more ascendance in African continent due to the fact they address the problems people more often than not face in Africa on daily basis. These problems are more of spiritual and their charismatic leaders demonstrate to be capable of handling them. Emphasis is placed on healing, exorcism, prosperity gospel, speaking in tongues, prophesying and vision. Healing is the

solitary most fundamental action in the AICs, but many of them turned into curative measures that were not Christian. It is proven that men of God has solution to all kinds of misfortunes like sickness, failure, demons, witchcraft, curses childlessness and other setbacks in life. Fasting, prayer and personal ministration can release family members from all oppressions.

## **4.2 Summary**

Pentecostal and charismatic movements are the branch of Christianity which emphasizes healing, exorcism, prosperity gospel, speaking in tongues, prophesying and vision. The prophetic movements were consequently followed by the Aladura or Zionist churches acknowledged cooperatively as “African independent” or “African initiated” churches (AICs). Healing is the solitary most essential action in the AICs, but many of them turned into curative techniques that were not Christian. Afterward, some of these older AICs were seeing as Pentecostal devoid of qualification. Since then African Pentecostalism has grown in many ways. Pastors of Pentecostal churches have served as men of God who offer supernatural security for politicians on the guard to reinforce power by ingraining themselves in office.

Classical Pentecostal denominations have gained a great deal of fame in Africa. In South Africa for instance, the Assemblies of God, Apostolic Faith Mission and the Full Gospel Church of God are the indispensable part of this practice. There are more so Western mission-related Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God emanating from the United States, but also African-initiated ones like William F. Kumuyi’s Deeper Christian Life Ministry, which started in Nigeria in 1973.

## **4.3 Tutor Marked Assignment**

1. What are most outstanding teaching in Pentecostal and charismatic movements?
2. Distinguish between classical Pentecostal and African Pentecostal churches
3. Spell out clearly the main theology of the charismatic and Pentecostalism

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## **Unit 2**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This unit is designed to look at the challenges neo-Pentecostal churches are facing these days. The issue of prosperity or wealth gospel is one of the foremost teachings that bring controversy among scholars. Moreover what we may learn is that these churches distinguish themselves as the 'born again' people of God, with a sturdy logic of belonging to the society of God's people, those chosen from out of the humanity to examine to the new life they live out in the influence of the Spirit. The grounding of their message is this 'born again' adaptation familiarity through repentance of sin and surrender to Christ, and therefore this singular act distinguishes them, even to outsiders. The prophet figure is very famous as the one giving out God's gifts to his or her members. The new churches customarily call attention to the convenience and convince the practice of gifts of the Holy Spirit by all of their members.

### **2.2 Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

1. State the challenges that are facing Pentecostal churches in African context these days.
2. Explain the main elements that are involved in the practice of charismatic and Pentecostal worship
3. What is the position of Pentecostal churches concerning traditional customs that distinguishes them from AICs?

## 2.3 Main Content

### THE CHALLENGES OF THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES

One of the foremost criticisms leveled against the new Pentecostal churches is that they propagate a 'prosperity gospel', the 'Faith' or 'Word' movement starting in North American independent Charismatic movements, predominantly found in the preaching and writings of Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland. This 'health and wealth' gospel appears to replicate some of the most awful forms of capitalism in Christian guise. Paul Gifford has turned out to be a leading advocate on this subject. He recommends that the prevalent single factor in the surfacing of these new churches is the fall down of African economies by the 1980s and the subsequent increasing reliance of the new churches on the USA. He puts forward that it is 'Americanization' rather than any 'African quality' that is responsible for the development of these churches. He observes this new observable fact as a type of neo-colonialism promulgated by American 'prosperity preachers', a sort of 'conspiracy theory'. However there is another side to this state of affairs. Gifford's scrutiny, which he has customized to some extent more newly, has been acknowledged in several churches and academic spheres. Nevertheless, it seems to disregard some essential features of Pentecostalism, now principally a Third World phenomenon, where know-how and practice are more imperative than formal ideology or even theology.

Ogbu Kalu opines that, the connection between the African Pentecostal pastor and his or her 'western patron' is exclusively eclectic, and the 'dependency' in fact has been reciprocated. The western supporter time and again needs the African pastor to strengthen his own international figure and enlarge his own economic resources. Kalu examines that in the 1990s, since the public discrediting of American 'televangelists', the frame of mind in Africa has tainted, and the Pentecostal churches are now 'portrayed by independence and an emphasis on the Africanist roots of the ministries'. Daneel pinpoints that in traditional Africa, 'wealth and success are obviously signs of the blessing of God', so it is no wonder that such a message should be uncritically acknowledged there and this is as accurate for the newer AICs as it is for the older ones. There *are* relations between some of the new churches and the American 'health and wealth' movement, and it is also true that some of the new African churches replicate and encourage 'health and wealth' teaching and writing. Nevertheless categorizing these churches with the American 'prosperity gospel' is a sweeping statement which predominantly fails to be pleased about the reconstructions and modernizations made by the new African movements in adapting to a fundamentally dissimilar milieu, at the same time as the adult AICs did some years before.

These churches form a new challenge to the Christian church in Africa. To the European mission-established churches, they are manifestations of a structure of Christianity that appeals to a new generation of Africans, and from which older churches can gain

knowledge of. There are indications that the new churches swell up at the expense of all types of older churches, as well as the prophet-healing AICs. To these older AICs, with whom they essentially have much in general, they are as a result frequently a basis of nervousness. The new churches preach against 'tribalism' and provincial denominationalism. They are repeatedly penetratingly critical of the older AICs, predominantly in what they recognize as the African traditional religious component of AIC practices, which are sometimes seen as appearances of demons needing 'deliverance'. Accordingly, older AICs feel upset and susceptible by them. Additionally, the newer churches have to some extent gripped and externalized western ideas of a 'nuclear family' and individualized, urban way of life. This brings them into additional pressure with African traditional culture and ethnic ties, in so doing allowing members to break away from the burdensome commitments to the extended family and to accomplish victory and gather possessions autonomously. The new churches as well sometimes criticize 'mainline' churches for their dead formalism and traditionalism, so the 'mainline' churches moreover feel endangered by them. Commenting on this, Ogbu Kalu makes the outstanding point that the established churches more often than not respond in three stages: hostility, apologetics and adaptation. Institutionalization breeds late adoption of innovations. We witnessed this pattern in the response to the Aladura challenge. It is being repeated without any lessons learnt from history.

Gifford is conscious of the problems inbuilt in a basic explanation of the newer African Pentecostalism. After discussing Christian fundamentalism in the USA and the 'rapidly growing sector of African Christianity' intimately associated to it, he observes that the American groups working in Africa 'find themselves functioning in a context noticeably dissimilar from that in the United States'. Although conceivably Gifford has not taken this 'considerably different' context critically sufficient in his considerable analyses of the newer Pentecostals in Africa. The thought that 'prosperity' churches in Africa are led by unprincipled manipulators gluttonous for wealth and power does not give an explanation for the increasing fame of these new churches with educated and conscientious people, who persist to give financial support and feel their needs are met there. Repeatedly, those who are 'anti-charismatic' and dislike or are threatened by the growth and influence of the newer churches are the basis of these criticisms. Kalu says that in the decade after 1985, the new churches 'blossomed into complex varieties' and that in their expansion, 'European persuasion turned out to be more outstanding'. However he explains that that regardless of this, 'the originators continued to be African, imitating foreigners, eclectically producing foreign theologies but transforming these for immediate contextual purposes'.

It is observed that this movement's 'own overriding prosperity teachings have arisen from principally southern African sources and are shaped by Zimbabwean concerns'. The 'prosperity gospel' is best explained 'not in terms of false perception or right wing plot but as a means to facilitate pentecostals to make the best of speedy social change'. Nigerian new Pentecostal churches are increasingly responding to the needs and

aspirations of Nigerians amid the ambiguity of their political life and the pain of their continuous and unrelenting economic adjustments'. It is clear, then, that New churches are far from being simply an 'Americanization' of African Christianity.

Reminiscent of the older, the new churches have a sense of identity as an alienated and unrestricted community with democratic admittance to spiritual power, whose most important reason is to encourage their cause to those outside. These churches perceive themselves as the 'born again' people of God, with a strong sense of belonging to the community of God's people, those selected from out of the world to observe to the new life they practice in the power of the Spirit. The keystone of their message is this 'born again' alteration experience through repentance of sin and surrender to Christ, and this is what distinguishes them, even to outsiders. Contrasting to the older AICs, where there tends to be a prominence on the prophet figure or key leader as the one dispensing God's gifts to his or her followers, the new churches more often than not call attention to the accessibility and persuade the practice of gifts of the Holy Spirit by all of their members. The appearance of these churches at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century shows that there are unsettled questions facing the church in Africa, such as the role of 'success' and 'prosperity' in God's economy, enjoying God and his gifts, as well as healing and material provision, and the holistic dimension of 'salvation' which is at all times significant in an African context. Asamoah-Gyadu considers that the 'greatest virtue' of the 'health and wealth' gospel of the new churches lies in 'the unconquerable spirit that believers develop in the face of life's odds.... In essence, bad luck becomes only temporary'. The contemporary problems being tackled by new churches in modern Africa are not different from those confronted by the older AICs decades before, and these problems still challenge the church as a whole today. They remind the church of the age-old conviction of Africa that for any faith to be applicable and lasting, it must also be experienced. These are some of the lessons for the universal church from African Pentecostalism, of which the new churches are their most recent exponents.

Pentecostals in Africa state publicly a pragmatic gospel that seeks to tackle practical needs like sickness, poverty, unemployment, loneliness, evil spirits and sorcery. In changeable degrees and in their numerous and varied forms, and specifically because of their inherent flexibility, these Pentecostals reach a genuinely indigenous character which enables them to proffer answers to some of the basic questions asked in their own context. A sympathetic approach to local culture and the preservation of certain cultural practices are indisputably most important reasons for their magnetism, particularly for those millions overwhelmed by urbanization with its transition from a personal rural society to an impersonal urban one. Simultaneously, Pentecostals confront old views by proclaiming what they are convinced is a more authoritative fortification against sorcery and a more effective healing from sickness than either the existing churches or the traditional rituals had offered. Healing, guidance, security from evil, and success and prosperity are some of the practical benefits offered to authentic members of Pentecostal churches. Though Pentecostals do not have all the right answers or are to be imitated in



all respects, the huge and unequalled contribution made by Pentecostals to change the face of African Christianity must be recognized.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

African Pentecostalism copied from the West and criticisms heaped upon the new Pentecostal churches is that they promulgate 'prosperity gospel', the 'Faith' or 'Word' group beginning in North American independent Charismatic movements, principally found in the preaching and writings of Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland. Pentecostalism in Africa seeks to solve realistic problems like sickness, poverty, unemployment, loneliness, bad luck, evil spirits and sorcery. Spirituality is highly encouraged in terms of fasting and praying all the times. As a matter of fact those members who practice this are said to be born again irregardless of their lifestyle. By so doing, hypocrisy characterized their Christendom.

## **2.5 Summary**

Pentecostalism in Africa utter overtly a pragmatic gospel that seeks to tackle practical needs like sickness, poverty, unemployment, loneliness, evil spirits and sorcery. In changeable degrees and in their numerous and varied forms, and specifically because of their inherent flexibility, these Pentecostals reach a genuinely indigenous character which enables them to proffer answers to some of the basic questions asked in their own context. A sympathetic approach to local culture and the preservation of certain cultural practices are indisputably most important reasons for their magnetism, particularly for those millions overwhelmed by urbanization with its transition from a personal rural society to an impersonal urban one. Healing, guidance, security from evil, and success and prosperity are some of the practical benefits offered to dependable members of Pentecostal churches. Bad luck is no more a hindrance to one's success. The new churches usually call attention to the availability and influence the practice of gifts of the Holy Spirit by all of their members.

## **2.6 Tutor Marked Assignment**

1. What are the challenges that are being faced by Pentecostal churches today?
2. Explain the reasons why people prefer going to Pentecostal churches than mainline churches
3. State the effects obtainable in Pentecostal churches

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### **UNIT 3: The Rise and Development of African Pentecostalism(s)**

Introduction

Objectives

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Rise and Development of African Pentecostalism(s)

Classical Pentecostalism

Indigenous/Independent Pentecostalism

Newer Pentecostal Churches

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment

7.0 References for further Reading

## **1.0 Introduction**

This section is aimed at introducing another dimension of Christianity in Africa which is gaining ascendance and popularity across the continent due to ineffectiveness of western Christianity to meet the needs of Africans as regards spirituality. Pentecostalism represents the speedy expanding sector of Christianity in Africa. This is unarguably the most multifaceted and socially perceptible strand of religion in Africa, not only because it is still evolving and changing hurriedly, but the proliferation of division and innovation is dizzying. Pentecostalism in Africa emerged through many pathways, and perhaps, it may be proper once more to use the plural, Pentecostalisms, to denote the many, sometimes reciprocally exclusive, strands. Three distinct strands may be identified although some of these extend beyond at significant points: i) Classical/Mission Pentecostal Churches; ii) Indigenous/Independent Pentecostal Churches and, iii) New Pentecostals/Charismatic churches/Ministries

## **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

- i. Explain the set up of African Pentecostalism
- ii. Describe the mode or manner in which Pentecostalism is being operated in Africa

- iii. State clearly the distinct categories of Pentecostalism
- iv. Elucidate on the reasons for the rapid expansion and development of African Pentecostalism

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 The Rise and Development of African Pentecostalism(s)**

##### **Classical Pentecostalism**

In Nigeria, for example, the activity of Garrick Braide which started within the Anglican Church had all the hallmarks of Pentecostalism such as faith healing, prophecy, exorcism, speaking in tongues, spur-of-the-moment prayer, exuberant liturgical expression, stress on dreams, visions but was not so called at this early stage in 1915. After Braide died in 1916 soon after his release from prison, his followers formed themselves into a church, Christ Army Church. Some scholars date the activities of Braide starting in 1914 as the commencement of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. Furthermore, the Aladura movement emphasized fundamentally those elements that mark out Pentecostalism as a movement. Because of the troubles which the Aladura groups were having with the colonial administration in Nigeria, a group invited a British Pentecostal church. According J.D.Y Peel, "Pentecostalism first made its manifestation in Nigeria in 1930-1931, when the leaders of the Aladura revival ... made contact with the Apostolic Church, a British Pentecostal body" to provide guidance. This was the first external counter between indigenous religious groups and foreign Pentecostal churches. Other foreign Pentecostal missions that soon came to Nigeria consist of the Assemblies of God which came in 1939 at the instance of an indigenous church in eastern Nigeria; the Four Square Church was established in 1941, followed shortly after by the Apostolic Faith Church. In South Africa, Pentecostalism made its first appearance in 1908, soon after the 1906 Azusa Street incident. Three of the large Classical Pentecostal churches are the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) established through the express missionary activities of Azusa Street missionaries; the South African Assemblies of God and, the Full Gospel Church of God. While classical Pentecostal churches in Africa are not North American impositions on Africans, they evidently are products of North American experiences and missionary impulse.

##### **Indigenous/Independent Pentecostalism**

There are a number of Pentecostal churches established by Africans between 1920s and 1960s devoid of any relationship with mission Pentecostal churches. While these churches did not achieve remarkable social visibility, they were important in

appropriating the Christian message in a typical approach that attempted to supply locally significant answers to local questions and problems based principally according to the perspective of the bible as they understood it then. The Christ Apostolic Church was established in 1940 as a fusion between a section of the Aladura revival of the 1930s and the British Apostolic Church. The Apostolic Faith Mission (Nigeria) was established by Timothy Gbadebo Oshokoya, an Evangelist from the CAC, in 1944. The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), a Nigerian church founded in 1952 as an Aladura movement, soon became pentecostalized through appropriating the prevailing Pentecostal spirit of the time. It went into affiliation with the South African Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) in 1956 through to 1960. At the moment, this church is at the front position of Pentecostal expansion in Africa.

### **Newer Pentecostal Churches**

There are several reasons to categorize in a different way a group of new churches which emerged since the 1970s in Africa. In most sub-Saharan Africa, this period was marked by increased incorporation into liberal market ideology as well as globalization processes characterized by hasty travels and mass communication. In accordance with Allan Anderson, this newer form of Christianity “is fast becoming one of the most significant expressions of Christianity on the [African] continent, especially in Africa’s cities”. In Nigeria, for example, this was a period characterized by post-civil war deprivations and increased spiritual pursuit for salvation and solutions to social and personal problems. The expansion of education also provided an essential infrastructure which facilitated the appearance of knowledgeable elite enthusiastic to appropriate what it considered as “the goods of modernity”. The economic crisis of the mid-1980s which resulted in the adoption of World Bank/IMF planned structural adjustment resulted in the retrenchment of workers, high graduate joblessness, social disorganization and near economic meltdown. This state of affairs fuelled the search for spiritual resolution to people’s many problems, but in addition the ready approval of religious answers to social and material questions. Steadily, a new class of religious elite with university education and strong eagerness for foreign ideas and taste emerged bearing a new religious message.

The new Pentecostals advocate explicit doctrines that mark them out among other groups of Christians. They believe they stand for a unique people of God who alone are saved and the rest of humanity is doom to perdition. Theologically, a person is saved who is “born again” and is regenerated or sanctified by an inward feeling of holiness. Sanctification purifies a believer from sin and all forms of contamination. Of special importance is the teaching on the baptism of the Holy Spirit and external appearance of

speaking in tongues. This is both a spiritual and social marker, setting members apart as God's elected people.

This new message promised individuals a widespread resolution to all their worries on provision that they turn out to be born again and offer generously to the religious leader in exchange for material and spiritual blessings in the form of healing, wealth, abundant life, success and material promotion. This new gospel is known by a diversity of names: i) Prosperity Christianity, ii) Health and Wealth Gospel; iii) The Faith Movement; iv) Name-it- and Claim-it, etc. New churches were founded by individuals in the late 1970s and 1980s; they strengthened in the disordered 1990s and are now witnessing a run off expansion as they are opening branches in many different countries of the world. The Nigerian pioneers in this brand of gospel influenced analogous developments in other African countries through direct training of pastors from these countries, exporting their books, videos, CDs, DVDs, as well as opening branches in such places as Ghana, Benin Republic, Cameroon, Kenya, South Africa, etc. In Johannesburg single-handedly, there are well over 100 Nigerian founded new Pentecostal churches presented in March 2007.

In these and other African countries, a new form of Christianity has flowered, hurriedly changing the social, religious, economic and political background. There are definite significant social characteristics of the new churches espousing the theology of prosperity and abundance. There is a perceptible American influence in both theology and organizational structure and practice in these churches. The theology of prosperity itself has been extensively regarded by scholars as an "American export". While many of the founders of these churches claim divine endorsement for establishing what now seems more like an economic empire than a religious organization. They unabashedly look to foremost prosperity preachers and televangelist in North America as their mentors, often undoubtedly copying what they consider to be responsible for the "successes" of these American godfathers. Trying to comprehend the new religious background of Africa without gravely assessing the influence of American preachers and the roots of the message they disseminate to Africa is unfeasible. Gifford is indisputable concerning the American roots of prosperity message in Africa even as Ojo insists the prosperity gospel has an African roots. Ojo is evidently not right in this respect because many African proponents of prosperity gospel such as Idahosa, E. A. Adeboye of the RCCG, Oyedepo of Winners' Chapel obviously utter their indebtedness to their American mentors.

Although indigenous religions in Africa are intrinsically materialistic, that is, their followers search for material benefits from the worship of the gods, the prosperity gospel as preached and practiced by its most important African exponents does not coil from this feature of indigenous African cosmology. Part of what accounts for the plea of the

prosperity doctrine is the cultural quality which indigenous religious ideas recommend. This unquestionably does not account for its starting point. There are countless examples illustrating the cultural and religious gratitude of Nigerian, Ghanaian, Tanzanian or even South African prosperity church founders to American televangelists such as Kenneth E. Hagin and his Rhema Bible Training Centre, Kenneth Copeland, Fredrick K. C. Price, T. L. Osborn, John L. Meares, T. D Jakes, etc.

African preachers are graduates of some of the American Bible schools; their American mentors are also recurrent visitors to Africa where they have megastar statuses among both the African new Pentecostal leader and their followership. Books, audiovisuals of these American preachers are obtainable on sale within the premises of these African churches. Through their educational and media products, these American global Pentecostal personalities sustain considerable influence in Africa. One significant feature of these churches is their unambiguous “American Heritage” of the prosperity message.

A second significant feature of these churches is the prominence on faith healing. In African cultural worldview, religion and healing are inextricably connected. An important task of religion is to bring refurbishment in the face of brokenness or harm to man’s body, relationships and social and spiritual networks. Deliverance is the second component of prosperity gospel, hence is called “Wealth and Health Gospel”. Healing is envisaged as a comprehensive restoration of a believer to superabundant health or category accruing to him/her as a result of what Jesus Christ has produced on the Cross. Healing is not constrained to diseases unaided but to other situations of morbidity or disability – physical, material, mental, financial or spiritual. The pastors of these new churches accept as true that they have been endowed by God to bring physical healing to their followers as an attestation of the legitimacy of their preaching. According to Chris Oyakhilome, one of Nigeria’s foremost Pentecostal faith healers, ‘I have a message that certainly heals people. You cannot hear that message and remain sick, poor or dejected. It would bring you hope and life... of a necessity; there will be healing and miracles’. Miracles of healing are like your credentials. If you preach Jesus Christ and he sent you, he will back up your claims. While some of these churches claim to heal all diseases devoid of exclusion, others make a claim to a particular set of diseases. Christ Embassy, for example, claims to heal all diseases including economic and financial failures which are interpreted as forms of “barrenness”. It has opened a large “Healing School” at Randburg, near Johannesburg, where people from all over the world experiencing ill-health throng for healing. The Liberty Gospel Church, another Nigerian new church founded by Helen Ukpabio, a confessed former witch, specializes in setting free people who are under the possession of witchcraft spirit. The Laughter Foundation, a church in



Lagos, claims only to offer barren women with what it calls “fruits of the womb”. T.B. Joshua’s Synagogue of All Nations Church heals only those suffering from HIV/AIDS. Mountain of Fire and Miracles specializes in casting out demons of all specifications. For the reason that of the proliferation of new churches, competition among them is widespread and each therefore makes attempt to carve out a niche that it will service through a definite or streamlined set of products. Specialization enables these churches to develop and sustain their particular niches. Healing and deliverance churches constitute an exceptional strand of Pentecostalism that has endeared itself to a large fragment of the African population. Anderson claims, and precisely so, that this characteristic of Pentecostalism which makes it an alternative of the mission churches, partially accounts for “widespread conversion to Pentecostalism”. A third important social characteristic of the new churches is their firm-like structural organization. In order to contend efficiently with other churches, and as a carryover of the American persuasion, these churches are organized as firms or commercial enterprises engaged in the production, distribution and pricing of religious and non-religious commodities with primary motives of making reasonable revenue and retaining a market share. Their courses of actions are geared toward the accomplishment of these objectives. They are founded and owned by one person who claims a special divine authorization with a specific mandate with global outcome. Although there is a Board of Trustees (BoTs) chosen by the founder and registered with the suitable government agency, the position of control of the organization is the chairman of the BoTs, who doubles as President/Chief Executive Officer (CEO). He is a “bank of grace”, a repository of charismata, and a special bridge between his followers and God. He controls both charisma and cash; his word is law. He is an oracular instrument and inventor of doctrines and point of reference. He unaccompanied holds a particular license of interpreting the will of God to his followers. While resources such as money, time, and expertise are mobilized aggressively from followers and the general public (believers and non-believers alike), the control of these is wrested from the contributors and rested exclusively on the founder/owner of the church and his/her spouse. In Nigeria the three wealthiest religious organizations are Pentecostal mega-churches: the Christ Embassy owned by Chris Oyakhilome, Winners’ Chapel of Oyedepo and the RCCG of Enoch Adeboye, in that order.

A fourth feature is that: The role of women in the new churches is both fascinating and stimulating; it is nothing close to what obtains in the mission churches though it is closer to how women functioned in the AICs. In the new churches, women obtain a great deal of visibility; they are incorporated in the decision making processes and exercise a definite degree of power and authority. Some church founders are women and there are cases that wives of deceased church founder/owners have succeeded their late husbands. The

spouses of church founders are more often than not the second-in-command in the hierarchy of power and authority. It has turned out that wives of pastors furthermore serve another rationale in the spouses' ministries: they guard the family's estate and be in command of most financial dealings in the church. Some churches deliberately produce products that supply to the interests and needs of women in order to convert definite segments of the population. Knowing the power of women to be a magnet for men into religious organizations, some churches intentionally exploit this in giving women pastoral duties so that men would be drawn into the fold. There are now churches with "Department of family affairs" which cater to the needs of family members chiefly women. Related to the firm structure of churches is a new feature which reveals their economic character. Their leaders are media know-how individuals who, with the university education setting, have introduced commercial practices into their organization and in the production of religion and other goods. It is now a widespread characteristic predominantly among the mega-churches, but also medium-sized Pentecostal groups, that they produce a huge array of videos, magazines, CDs, DVDs, books, booklets and pamphlets, stickers, key-holders and other religious memorabilia or ritual paraphernalia (handkerchief, olive oil). The RCCG produces and markets all over the world well over half a million copies of its leader's sermons on DVDs, VCDs, VHS and audio tapes. The church has a media empire called Dove Media which is involved in satellite and Internet television and radio broadcasting as well as the production and sales of home videos. Helen Ukpabio, founder/owner of Liberty Gospel Church, is as well the CEO of Liberty Films and Music Plaza, which has produced virtually home videos many of which achieved record sales of nearly 1.2 million copies. In Tanzania, there are five Pentecostal radio stations. In addition to the production of media materials, many of the new churches are proud owners of banks, insurance companies, business schools, bookshops, and other profit-oriented enterprises. A sixth social feature of the new churches is the increasing use of marketing strategies for the most part advertising. Religious advertising, which constitutes a particular form of religious communication, has increased since the appearance of the new churches in the late 1970s.

Different methods of advertisement are used at the same time, the most admired of which is the poster and handbills, billboards, branded vest, caps, pens, etc. Some mega-churches own television and radio broadcasting stations; others place advertisements on these electronic media as well as in print media of newspapers and magazines. Pentecostal advertisement serves manifold functions of creating and managing positive social visibility and image for church owners in addition to creating public alertness for church events; they moreover form product separation and shorten the searching time for religious seekers. A seventh feature of African new Pentecostalism in common is the

propensity to restructure religious geography through the building of religious camps. Predominantly in Nigeria and Ghana, these churches buy up large expanses of land, sometimes measuring well over ten square kilometers, and construct a range of facilities such as auditoriums, schools, guesthouses, dormitories, presidential villas (for VIP guests such as politicians), banks, gas stations and hospitals. These camps, which often constitute an “alternative city”, function to display case a Pentecostal leader’s charismata, validate the claim to divine authorization, and fabricate his brand of Pentecostalism through a series of weekly or monthly and yearly ritual activities when confident events are held on usual basis. The camps supply the physical venues for commercial companies to patronize the churches by sponsoring some of the religious programmers in substitute for marketing their products and services during the events. In the same way, regional and national politicians pay regular visits to the camps to display their religiosity, consult the pastors and ask for votes or public consideration. These camps are a genuine structure of Pentecostal sub politics: efforts by Pentecostal pastors and their followers to influence the dynamics of national politicking and to attain jointly valuable ends for both pastors and politicians.

## **Conclusion**

The rise, growth and influence of Pentecostalism are gigantic in most parts of the globe, and its impact is also felt amongst evangelical reformed churches. As to how best one can minister successfully in the context of Pentecostalism in Africa, a solution may be to create nervousness that is paradoxically placed, namely: (1) the temptation to embrace Pentecostalism because of all the positive elements that it brings to church revitalization; and (2) the call to assess this movement and point out all its pitfalls in the light of the scriptures. The latter is more significant if we want to remain true to the reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*.

## **Summary**

Pentecostalism has an answer to most of the problems being faced by Africans like witchcraft, ancestral curse, sicknesses attached to attack by spirits and many more therefore several people opt to attend a church where such issues are addressed properly. On the other hand, the manner in which their liturgy is being conducted impress the youth who feel not to be restricted in any way but to be allowed to operate freely. It is generally known that the former Independent churches are losing out against these new charismatic churches, principally because their nostalgic message of returning to firmly knit, village-inspired communities and value systems no longer works in municipal settings and settings where the worldwide commitment of modernity makes its presence felt. It is only in this sense that the independent churches are conservative and nostalgic; in political

terms this does not leave out the leeway that critical, 'progressive' views towards governments can at least in theory still evolve in them. At present, nevertheless, the new charismatic churches in countries such as Ghana and Malawi have ironically developed into agents of change, progress and development; and basically, this 'paradox' lies in the eyes of the Western beholder.

### **Tutor Marked Assignment**

1. What is African Pentecostalism?
2. State the reasons for rapid expansion of African Pentecostalism
3. Expatiate on the challenges the mainline churches are facing in Africa because of Pentecostal movement
4. Who are the prime movers of Pentecostal movements in Africa

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## **UNIT 4:**

### **THE PRACTICE OF PENTECOSTALISM IN AFRICA**

#### **Introduction**

Across Africa, Christianity is thriving in all shapes and sizes. But one meticulous strain of Christianity prospers more than most-Pentecostalism. Pentecostals believe that everyone can individually receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as prophecy or the ability to speak in tongues. In Africa, this kind of faith, in which the supernatural is a daily presence, is sweeping the continent. There is astonishing diversity of the faith, which flourishes in many different forms in diverse local contexts. While most people believe that Pentecostalism was brought to Africa and imposed on its people by missionaries, but this is not the case. African Pentecostalism is distinctly African in character, not imported from the West.

#### **Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

- i. give an overview of the growth and efficacy of Pentecostalism in Africa
- ii. state the challenges being faced by Pentecostal movements in Africa

#### **3.0 Main Content**

### 3.1 Effectiveness of Pentecostalism in African context: A reformed missional reflection

Conclusion

Summary

Tutor Marked Assignment

References for further reading

#### **Effectiveness of Pentecostalism in African context: A reformed missional reflection**

The current status of Christianity in Africa has been accompanied by the stunning growth and spread of one particular subtype of what in general terms can be called Christian fundamentalism. This particular type of Christianity considerably draws its appeal from the ways in which it mediates, negotiates and mitigates modernity. This type, is called charismatic Pentecostalism, and which can in a very actual sense be measured a religion of modernity itself, has been growing at an unparalleled pace in Sub-Saharan Africa (there is now an extensive literature documenting the spread of Pentecostalism in Africa and even beyond its boundaries- Gifford 1993, 1994, 1998; Hackett 1998; Marshall 1991, 1993, 1998; Maxwell 1998; Meyer 1992, 1995, 1998; Ojo 1988; Ter Haar 1994, 1995; Van Dijk 1992, 1993 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999). In English speaking Africa specially, there is no country that has not been affected by its rise; in some cases it has even started to influence state policies in a very undeviating sense, as in Zambia, which was affirmed a Christian nation in 1992 by President Chiluba, who professed to be a confirmed Born-Again Pentecostal believer (for Ghana, Toulabor 1994).

This piece address the growth and spread of charismatic Pentecostal churches as a fundamentalist turn in African Christianity, explain its basic features and analyze some of its essential ideological parameters. Of particular attention is the Pentecostalism attraction with the modern, with modern styles of and appetites for consumption, with new technologies and with achieving a prevailing location in the modern sectors of everyday life. Its ideology appears to be overwhelmingly inspired by a reflective paradigm. These churches as new agents of political and perhaps even of economic development and modernization as seen in the wider framework, and the social setting for the rise to prominence of Pentecostalism.

The growth of African religious movements to what it described as new sects of the religious right in Africa, indeed some of the contributions talked about the links with certain conservative groups in America and elsewhere that seemed to give material and spiritual support to the growth of such movements in Africa. Their religious inspiration

appeared to be found in the messages, books and videotapes of the well known American Bible Belt preachers of the day such as Billy Graham, Jimmy Swaggart, Oral Roberts, Benny Hinn, Reinhard Bonnke and many others. Also, they pointed out, some of these preachers were predominantly targeting Africa for their missionary operations, and this would indisputably lead to a fundamentalization of Christianity in the areas where they made inroads. A year later, Reinhrd Bonnke did really launch his Pan-African crusade from South Africa into the neighbouring countries (Gifford 1987, 1993), and was welcomed by the dictatorial regime of Banda with a state banquet at one of Malawi's finest hotels. He also launched his crusade in Nigeria.

Christian fundamentalist and pietistic groups have been there in Sub-Saharan Africa virtually since the start of missionary activity by the whites. By fundamentalist in this case, it is referring to groups that foster a literal interpretation of the Bible, advocate pietist and puritan attitudes and moral orientations and seek to isolate their members from worldly enticements by creating communities where other-worldly orientation can be lived out and experienced to its full potential. Alongside the established and mainline Christian churches (R.C. Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican), churches of a comparatively fundamentalist orientation also started entering Africa around the turn of the century. That is Seventh Day Adventist churches, certain Baptist churches, Latter Day Saints, and last but not least the Watchtower societies and Jehovah's Witness groups, which in Africa came to be looked on with suspicion by some colonial and post-colonial regimes alike. In a country such as Malawi, Jehovah's Witnesses were ruthlessly prosecuted up to the mid-1970s by the Post-Independence regime of the dictator Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda and the paramilitary groups of the Malawi Young Pioneers, which were under his direct personal command. In the 1920s and 1930s these churches were followed by missionary Pentecostal churches arriving in Africa, primarily from America and England.

It is imperative to emphasize that some of the fundamentalist churches played a key role in the appropriation of Christianity during the first decades of this century. A superfluity of African independent churches developed out of the white missionary effort to Christianize Sub-Saharan Africa, an appropriation which on the one hand was led by Africans who had been trained by the white missionaries themselves, but who now felt a call to start their own churches, totally under African leadership. On the other hand, the African appropriation of Christianity also took the form of large-scale Christian revivals that swept through parts of the colonial territories; religious revivals that usually exhibited a great deal of religious ecstasy and emotionalism and in which itinerant preachers played a vital role (Fields 1985 for Zambia, Van Dijk 1992 for Malawi, Comaroff & Comaroff 1997 for Botswana/South Africa). Very frequently these itinerant revival leaders did not shoot from one of the missionary churches, but were linked to one of the fundamentalist churches, especially the Watchtower and parallel groups, which provided scope for such independent displays of divine inspiration and the authority to arrange large-scale revival meetings. The importance of these revivals has been described in great detail in the work *Revival and Rebellion* (1985) by Karen Fields, who makes a

point of differentiating between an 'institutional' line in the development of independent Christianity (that is, with the establishment of formal church bodies under African leadership, displaying a level of syncretism), and a line based on the personal charisma of itinerant revival preachers with a more diffuse attention in institution-building.

Both paths and channels did in fact pave the way for a type of Independent African Christianity that could supply for needs that the established missionary churches chose to take no notice of. A whole area of argument had emerged after the introduction of missionary Christianity, concerned with elements of the African cosmological system that the missionaries decided to ignore as 'mere superstition'. The sway of spirits, the appearance of spirits in possession rituals, the influence of witches and other evil powers and the ritual fortification and purification that were considered so indispensable in the life of an African individual were for the white missionaries areas of contention and dispute, elements of heathen worship and heathen anxieties that should rather be done away with than promoted. Missionary Christianity could not have room for ancestors, witches and analogous powers in its own religious ideology and practice; nor did it recommend any significant form of worship, protection and purification that could subdue with their effects. It therefore declared an entire area of experience to be superstition, to be unreal and unworthy of serious, 'rational' attention. As a number of authors have shown, the procedure of conversion was in this sense a conversion to modernity, in that it bracketed and then demonized so-called 'traditional beliefs'. While beforehand spiritual powers in society had typically been considered morally ambivalent - that is, depending on the intent and condition, they could work either for or against the common good - the conversion to modernity meant that 'witchcraft', 'spirit possession' and 'amulets' became rigidly classified as traditional beliefs'.

Many of the new Independent churches that arose at some stage in the first decades of this century afforded a syncretism, ideological and ritual field in which important elements of the indigenous African cosmological system were united with definite elements of worship and ritual from Christianity. The single most significant portion of some of these churches is healing and protection. They combined healing, protection and purification practices that existed in society with elements of Christianity and Christian worship. In an imperative sense they represented cultural continuity by combining traditional forms of healing, protection and purification - their rituals, symbols, objects, vestments, medicines, herbs etc. - with elements like reading from the Bible, the singing of Christian hymns or the use of Christian names for the spirits they intended to worship or to exorcise. For many authors in the field of the anthropology of religion this entire syncretic movement and the surplus of churches in which it resulted was surprising and perplexing. The renowned historian of these movements in Southern Africa, Bengt Sundkler, unfolding the puzzling similarities between the ways in which the prophet-leaders of these healing churches and local traditional diviners would conduct purification rituals, spoke of new wine in old skins (Sundkler 1961). He and other authors stressed the strong element of cultural continuity, which to them seemed to show a form



of religious nostalgia (for a discussion of the nostalgic paradigm in religious anthropological writing see Van Dijk 1998). In any case, many of these syncretic prophetic healing churches moved during the 1930s and 1940s into the newly emerging cities; such as those of the copper belt in Southern Africa or the new ports in West Africa like Accra in Ghana. There they speedily found large groups of rural-to-urban migrants who were keen to join their churches. All the ritual, symbolic styles, objects, colours and vestments of these churches seemed to create a virtual version of the village, to refer back to the rural society they had left behind, to the cosmological structure of the village and the means of ritual protection and purification that were considerable in that context of warm social relations.

Authors consequently stressed the community-building capacity of these Independent churches, which in their eyes was so exceedingly valued in a city environment. After all, in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s the city was considered an aggressive and alienating environment, not the 'natural habitat' of the village-based African, who therefore needed something that would reconstruct his sense of the village-based tightly-knit community. Therefore, the rapid growth of the Independent churches could be explained by their capability to make available for a symbolic and ritual homecoming, a safe belonging, not very different from what diviners and traditional healers offer in the context of the village and its tightly-knit social relations. There is an all-embracing literature based on this homesick paradigm in the interpretation of the rise of Independent churches in the emerging African cities. In southern Africa with its large mining areas, the explosive growth of all sorts of urban healing movements and churches has similarly been interpreted as something connected with the increased rate of urbanization over the last few decades (Sundkler 1961: 80-85; Daneel 1974: 55; West 1975: 4; Kiernan 1981: 142; Comaroff 1985: 185, 186).

Intrinsically the healing churches/movements offer in this view for cheering rural to urban transmission of a stock of religious symbols and conceptualizations and authority structures, and of course of ways of coping with illness and misfortune. It is in this sense that DeVisch presents an interpretation of this growth as a 'villagization of the city'. Daneel, writing about the rise of urban prophetic-healing movements in Zimbabwe, similarly noted;

*"It would be a valid conclusion that the urban Zionist and Apostle Churches are in the first place extensions of the rural congregations and act as a spiritual harbour for those members who occasionally live in town sermons deal with rural problems or with urban problems from a rural point of view"* (Daneel 1974: 23, 24).

Pentecostalism is a worldwide phenomenon with a large following in North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa and other parts of the globe. The rise, growth and influence of Pentecostalism in Africa are gargantuan and have, without fear of incongruity, turn out to be one of the overriding expressions of Christianity on the continent. A contextual

analysis of Christianity in Africa demonstrated that the African soil is more productive for this movement. Its materialization ranges from classical Pentecostalism (first wave), to the charismatic movement (second wave) and the charismatic renewal movements (third wave). Its growth in Africa came with a fair number of missiological challenges to evangelical reformed churches, and thus this work sought to sketch this movement by providing a historical viewpoint on Pentecostalism, a contextual analysis of Pentecostalism in Africa, issues and challenges in Pentecostalism, in so doing providing some nuances as to how best one can minister successfully in the context of Pentecostalism.

African Christianity is multifarious in history, structure, doctrines and practices. Denominations on the continent range from mission churches (mainline churches planted by Western missionaries), Pentecostals (including a whole range of charismatic churches and ministries) to African Independent or Initiated Churches (AICs), which are either more traditional in outlook, or Pentecostal, or both. The fastest growing amongst all are churches of Pentecostal descent (Asamoah-Gyadu 2007:128). Pentecostalism is a universal phenomenon with a large following in North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa and other parts of the world. Reasons for the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa include amongst others (1) emphasis on the 'flexibility of the spirit', which enables it to resettle itself easily onto any cultural context; (2) emphasis on the working of the Holy Spirit, particularly the power to afford deliverance not only from sin, but also demonic attacks, demon possession, and poverty through healing and prosperity promises; and (3) impulsiveness and communal participation in worship.

The growth of Pentecostalism in Africa poses foremost missiological challenges for mainline churches (Kalu 2007:5), evangelical reformed denominations incorporated. In terms of church growth, new Pentecostal churches are planted and growing in numbers on a daily basis in the same context. They have in some instances managed to pull sizeable numbers from mainline churches, at the same time as other believers prefer to embrace charismatic practices without leaving their churches. In South Africa for case in point, such churches have managed to magnetize many young people from mainline churches through impulsiveness and dynamism in worship, which includes contemporary music and dance. Apart from those that join churches of Pentecostal descent, it should also be well-known that there are those who leave churches of Pentecostal descent, citing lack of depth in terms of true biblical teachings in the movement. Critics of this movement differ from absolute refusal to mixed acceptance of all manifestations of the Spirit within the movement.

Challenges facing this movement are enormous: Baptism with the Holy Spirit: some hold that it is inappropriate, biblically and theologically, to refer to this as an experience probably consequent to conversion; others claim that whereas Spirit baptism may be a second experience, the main purpose is not empowering, but sanctification; Speaking in tongues: some do not identify *glossolalia* as having any longer a relationship with Spirit

baptism (the book of Acts being viewed as transitional) but regard it as only a lesser gift of the Holy Spirit obtainable to some, or no longer accessible at all; and Spiritual gifts: some divide the spiritual gifts into 'temporary' and 'permanent', claiming that the former have been reserved, while the latter persist; tongues and prophecy in particular are said to have ceased with the completion of the canon of Scripture.

Warfield (1972:5) undoubtedly designated that it was the characterizing peculiarity, particularly of the Apostolic Church, and it belonged thus to the apostolic age. With the preceding discussion in mind, a somber missiological question for mainline churches, as well as evangelical reformed churches on the continent and elsewhere in the world arises: 'How can one minister successfully in the context of Pentecostalism?' This missiological question is a call for the church of every age to exercise shrewdness as outlined in 1 John 4:1. In answering our main question, the following will be attended to: (1) a historical perspective on Pentecostalism; (2) a contextual analysis of Pentecostalism in Africa; (3) issues and challenges in Pentecostalism; and in conclusion (4) a reformed missional reflection on Pentecostal challenges. This will provide some nuances as to how best one can minister effectively in the context of Pentecostalism.

The term 'Pentecostalism' is not for all time satisfactory to Pentecostals, who usually be inclined to refer to the movement as 'Pentecost' (Clark & Lederle 1989:7). It refers to an experience of the Spirit in which at least two successive and different crisis experiences in the life of the believer are accentuated. The first is conversion, while the second experience is repeatedly referred to as Spirit baptism. The two experiences are only explained in terms of the response of the Holy Spirit as pointed out in the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline teaching on the charismata (McNamee 1974:xi). In concise, Pentecostalism should be known as experiential Christianity. This experience culminates in the baptism of the believer in the Holy Spirit, which is evidenced as at Pentecost by speaking in tongues. The experience should then go on with in the exercise of the spiritual gifts behind closed doors and also openly at the Pentecostal gatherings where the gifts have their most noteworthy sphere of operation (Bruner 1970:21). Therefore, at the heart of Pentecostal passion there is the fact that the New Testament record is a design of what should happen in every generation of the Christian's life until the end of times. This means that Christians nowadays should go on to experience the extraordinary spiritual manifestations recorded in the New Testament, such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, healing, nature miracles and visions. The emphasis in Pentecostalism is thus, on the conversion experience and the exceptional physical phenomena associated with this experience (McNamee 1974:18; cf. Van Wyk 1986:4).

Pentecostalism as a 19th and 20th century phenomenon can be traced back to the commencement of Christianity. From a historical perspective, traces can be found in all chief trends in the history of the Christian church, that is, in the Early church, Middle Ages, Reformation and post-Reformation. Methodism was in authentic fact the modern soil on which Pentecostalism flourished (Bruner 1970:46). This is confirmed by the

historical theologian Donald Dayton (1987), who traces the historical roots of Pentecostalism to Wesleyanism and American revival movements of the 19th century.

Montanism is the manifestation of a recurring phenomenon in the church that, for want of a better term, is called '*illuminism*' or '*enthusiasm*', and is characterized by a conviction on the part of its devotees that (1) they are a spiritual elite called to restore the church to its primitive simplicity, (2) they are under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, and (3) in their circle the charismatic gifts common during the period of the church's first fervour have been renewed. It was a sectarian group of the 2nd century in the history of the Christian church, and was subsequently named after its founder and first prophet, Montanus (c. 170). Montanus and his followers became ecstatic and uttered strange things, prophesied and some of them also claimed to have had conversations with angels and with God. Montanus began ecstatic prophesying in the spirit in the village of Ardabav in southern Phrygia and was joined shortly thereafter by two prophetesses, Maximilla and Priscilla (Groh 1990:622). One of its converts, who is known in the history of the church by the name Tertullian, acknowledged that the Montanists had merited in one way or the other from prophetic gifts (Budgen 1989:117; cf. Gromacki 1973:14). The adherents of this movement believed in the continued existence of the charismata. They were concerned with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which they saw in the transports of their prophets. According to Aland (1992:570) the most characteristic traits of this movement were *glossolalia* and a spiritual language tending to ecstasy and enthusiasm. Montanus and some of his followers, notably the women Priscilla and Maximilla, were seized by religious raptures and, in the course of ecstasy, spoke in strange tongues and uttered prophecies that the sectarians regarded as oracles of the Holy Spirit (Richardson 1983:382; cf. Walker 1992:69).

### **Anabaptism**

Anabaptism is a phenomenon which came from the Reformation of the 16th century; its adherents are known to be of the radical wing of the Reformation because of their impatience with the Reformation that Luther and Zwingli were trying to bring about in the traditional Roman Catholic Church. They demanded a much more radical break with old beliefs and practices. These radical religious reformers received the collective name of 'Anabaptists' because they were totally against infant baptism. It drew attention to the fact that most of them practiced adult baptism – 'baptism again' – as opposed to the infant baptism of the Catholics, the Lutherans and the Zwinglians (Randell 1989:74).

One of the distinguishing features of Anabaptism was that its adherents did not regard the Bible as paramount. They were not content with the Reformation's emphasis on Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*), but maintained that the inward voice of the Holy Spirit takes precedence over the external word of scripture (Culpepper 1977:41; cf. Heath 1895:2; Randell 1989:75). They were equally prepared to recognize the validity of visions and inner voices. Culpepper (1977:41) is of the opinion that Thomas Müntzer was one of the earliest Anabaptists, who cherished such experiences and gifts as visions, dreams, ecstatic utterance, and inspired exegesis. The disconnection between Word and Spirit as

propagated by the Anabaptists prompted Calvin to take a clear stance on the question of prophecy. The divergent Anabaptist view on the prophetic office was that a prophet should predict the future and bring about new revelation. Calvin responded by pointing out that prophecy is a particular gift for interpreting scriptures and applying them to the present context. According to Calvin therefore, prophecy is not what the Anabaptists thought it was. It is rather a charisma, knowledge of exegesis closely related to application in the contemporary situation. The prophet remains subject to the authority of the Holy Scriptures and nothing else (Balke 1973:245).

The methodological use of the word Pentecostalism began in the 20th century. Pentecostals may differ as to whether the Pentecostal revival started in North Carolina in 1896; in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901; or in Azusa Street, Los Angeles in 1906. According to Möller (1998:179–180) the commencement of Pentecostalism can be dated back to 1901 when Agnes Ozman was baptized in the Spirit and spoke in tongues. This happened in Topeka, Kansas, United States of America (USA), in the Bethel Bible School where Charles F. Parham was the principal. It is furthermore documented that the manifestations of the Spirit transpired in an old building in 312 Azusa Street in 1906–1909, that is: salvation, healings, baptism in the Spirit and the accompanying tongues. The most striking aspect of Pentecostalism, nevertheless, is that all Pentecostals consent that the Pentecostal experience is not a religious originality, and that in one form or another it has for all time manifested within the history of the Christian church (Clark & Lederle 1989:7; cf. McNamee 1974:16).

### **Conclusion**

African Christianity is diverse in history, structure, doctrines and practices. Denominations on the continent range from mission churches, Pentecostals to African Independent or Initiated Churches (AICs), which are either more traditional in outlook, or Pentecostal, or both. The fastest growing amongst all are churches of Pentecostal descent. Pentecostalism is a widespread phenomenon with a large following in North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa and other parts of the world. Some reasons for the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa include emphasis on the ‘flexibility of the spirit’, which enables it to relocate itself without difficulty onto any cultural context, emphasis on the working of the Holy Spirit, particularly the power to afford deliverance not only from sin, but also demonic attacks, demon possession, and poverty through healing and prosperity promises.

### **Summary**

The present position of Christianity in Africa has been accompanied by the surprising growth and spread of one particular subtype of what in general terms can be called Christian fundamentalism. This is charismatic Pentecostalism. The growth of African religious is noticed in their religious inspiration appeared to be found in the messages, books and videotapes of the well known American Bible Belt preachers of the day such

as Billy Graham, Jimmy Swaggart, Oral Roberts, Benny Hinn, Reinhard Bonnke and many others. The most significant feature of these churches is healing and protection. They combined healing, protection and purification practices that existed in society with elements of Christianity and Christian worship.

Pentecostalism is a universal phenomenon with a large following in North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa and other parts of the globe. The rise, growth and influence of Pentecostalism in Africa are enormous. Africa demonstrated that the African soil is more fruitful for this movement. African Christianity is multifarious in history, structure, doctrines and practices. Denominations on the continent range from mission churches (mainline churches planted by Western missionaries), Pentecostals to African Independent or Initiated Churches (AICs), which are either more traditional in outlook, or Pentecostal, or both. The fastest growing amongst all are churches of Pentecostal descent. Reasons for the growth of Pentecostalism in Africa include emphasis on the 'flexibility of the spirit', emphasis on the working of the Holy Spirit, particularly the power to afford deliverance not only from sin, but also demonic attacks, demon possession, and poverty through healing and prosperity promises; and impulsiveness and communal participation in worship.

The growth of Pentecostalism in Africa poses foremost missiological challenges for mainline churches. In terms of church growth, new Pentecostal churches are planted and growing in numbers on a daily basis. Challenges facing this movement are enormous: Baptism with the Holy Spirit: some hold that it is inappropriate, biblically and theologically, to refer to this as an experience probably consequent to conversion; others claim that whereas Spirit baptism may be a second experience, the main purpose is not empowering, but sanctification and Speaking in tongues.

### **Tutor marked assignment**

1. discuss the growth and effectiveness of Pentecostalism in Africa
2. What are the challenges facing Pentecostalism in Africa?
3. Explain your understanding on Montanism and Anabaptism

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## **UNIT 5 PENTECOSTALISM AND THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Pentecostalism represents the fast expanding segment of Christianity in Africa. This is unarguably the most multifaceted and socially visible strand of religion in Africa, not only because it is still growing and changing rapidly, but the proliferation of division and modernization. Church had all the hallmarks of Pentecostalism such as faith healing, prophecy, exorcism, and vision. More so there is overemphasis on speaking in tongues, spontaneous prayer, exuberant liturgical expression, and stress on dreams. Deliverance is the second element of prosperity gospel, hence is called "Wealth and Health Gospel". Healing is envisaged as a full restoration of a believer to superabundant health or status accruing to him or her as a result of what Jesus Christ has produced on the Cross. Healing is not constrained to diseases alone but to other conditions of morbidity or disability – physical, material, mental, financial or spiritual.

### **2.0 Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

- i. explain and discern from the term Pentecostalism and charismatic
- ii. the main outstanding features of Pentecostalism in Africa
- iii. discuss the missionary character of Pentecostalism

### **Main content**

3.4 Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement (second wave)

3.5 Pentecostalism and the Charismatic renewal movements today (third wave)

Conclusion

Summary

Tutor marked assignment

References for further reading

### **3.1 Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement (second wave)**

The phrase charismatic is derivative from the Greek word *charismata*, which refers to spiritual gifts. It is used to refer to the movement in Christendom that emphasizes the renewal of *charisms*: the charismatic renewal. The conception ‘charismatic movement’, for that reason, is an expression used to refer to a movement within historic churches and it manifests itself predominantly in the practice of praying for the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and in the exercise of the charisms – such as prophecy, praying for healing, tongues and other miraculous gifts (Faricy 1983:91).

According to Culpepper (1977:51) the contemporary charismatic movement is the progeny of Pentecostalism. He reckons that had there been no Pentecostalism, almost certainly there would have been no charismatic movement. That is why it is said to be the second wave of spiritual revival after Pentecostalism, which took the globe by storm during the first half of the 20th century. The equivalent sentiments are echoed by Buys (1986:19, 26) when he asserts that anybody who seeks to comprehend the charismatic movement should have a painstaking familiarity of Pentecostalism. There is a strong attachment that exists between the two movements. That is fundamentally why this movement is also referred to as neo-Pentecostalism. The two movements also share the similar history. The charismatic movement gained momentum in the 1950s and 1960s. On the American panorama, for example, it is said to have started to draw extensive attention in 1960, with the national exposure given to the ministry of the Reverend Dennis Bennet, an Episcopalian in Van Nuys, California. From then onwards it made inroads into traditional or historic mainline churches across denominational divides (Williams 2005a:1).

The link that exists between Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement does not entail that the two are one and the same thing. There are general traits between the two, but at the same time there are dissimilarities also. One of the essential differences concerns the outlook of the two. It is normal practice amongst the Pentecostals to establish new churches, while this is not the case with neo-Pentecostalism. According to Van Wyk (1986:5) the charismatic movement is not schismatic in nature, it seeks to linger and manage from within traditional churches in order to bring about spiritual renewal. As a result, Williams (2005b:4) notes that one of the most striking features of the charismatic movement is the reappearance of a profound unity of spirit across traditional and denominational barriers. Therefore, it is a ‘spiritual ecumenism,’ not organizational or ecclesiastical ecumenism. It operates from within the historic churches, as Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and the Greek Orthodox. As for its profile within the historic churches, Williams (2005a:1) notes the following: (1) The revival of liveliness and freshness in Christian faith; (2) a remarkable renewal of the community of believers as a fellowship (*koinonia*) of the Holy Spirit; (3) the materialization of a wide range of ‘spiritual gifts,’ with parallels drawn from 1 Corinthians 12–14; (4) the experience of ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit,’ often accompanied by ‘tongues’ as a radical spiritual renewal; (5) the recurrence of a spiritual unity that fundamentally transcends denominational barriers; (6) the rediscovery of a vibrant for

bearing comprehensive witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ; and (7) the revitalization of the eschatological perspective.

### **3.2 Pentecostalism and the Charismatic renewal movements today (third wave)**

The third wave of Pentecostalism is entitled the ‘Signs and Wonders Movement’ and the ‘Vineyard Movement’. According to Peter Wagner (in Lee 2001:172), this is the flourish that emerged in the eighties of the 20th century. It builds on the mystical work of the Holy Spirit being experienced in the life of the church (amongst evangelicals and other Christians) devoid of church members becoming either Pentecostal or charismatic. This is a movement that has experienced massive growth. The prominence in this movement is on ‘power evangelism’, which entails that the gospel is explained and demonstrated by way of supernatural signs and wonders. The gifts of prophecy and healing are decisively emphasized. Some of its elevated profile leaders consist of John Wimber, Peter Wagner and Paul Cain, to name a few. These charismatic renewal movements took the globe by storm through tele-evangelism and mass crusades during which they continued to shower people with messages of divine healing and prosperity. They discover a productive soil in the African context because cultural worldview, religion and healing are inextricably allied. An imperative role of religion is said to bring restoration in the face of brokenness or harm to man’s body, relationships and social and spiritual networks (Ukah 2007:14). One of the most well-liked ministries of this nature in South Africa, the Christ Embassy, has opened a large healing school in Randburg (Gauteng) where people from all over the world experiencing ill health throng for healing. Whilst some of these churches claim to heal all diseases without exception, others make a claim to a specific set of diseases. Prophets like T.B. Joshua of Nigeria claim to heal terrible diseases such as HIV and AIDS, which is very rampant in the sub-Saharan Africa. Access to the testimonies section on SCOAN blog of Prophet T.B. Joshua provides pictures and records of such claims. One such witness recorded is of a woman, Mrs Motunrayo Sowemimo, who appeared with medical reports detailing her circumstance before and after prayer. The medical report from the Federal Ministry of Health in Lagos showed her condition on 15 June 2010 to be HIV positive, and then following prayer at The SCOAN, the same hospital confirmed her to be negative to HIV three months afterward on 22 September 2010 (Scoan Blog 2011).

### **4.1 Conclusion**

To sum up, Pentecostal churches constitute the fastest growing group of churches in Christianity today, representing already a quarter of all Christians worldwide. The phrase Pentecostal is fitting for describing globally all churches and movements that emphasize the workings of the Spirit, both on phenomenological and on theological grounds. The conception ‘charismatic movement’, for that reason, is an expression used to refer to a movement within historic churches and it manifests itself primarily in the practice of praying for the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and in the exercise of the charisms like prophecy, praying for healing, tongues and other miraculous gifts.

## 5.1 Summary

The expression charismatic is derivative from the Greek word *charismata*, which refers to spiritual gifts. It refers to the group in Christendom that emphasizes the renewal of *charisms*: the charismatic renewal. The tie that exists between Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement does not demand that the two are one and the same thing. One of the critical differences is that it is a normal practice amongst the Pentecostals to establish new churches, while this is not the case with neo-Pentecostalism. The third wave of Pentecostalism is entitled the ‘Signs and Wonders Movement’ and the ‘Vineyard Movement.’ This is a movement that has experienced enormous growth. The eminence in this movement is on ‘power evangelism’, which necessitates that the gospel is explained and demonstrated by way of supernatural signs and wonders. The gifts of prophecy and healing are decisively accentuated. These charismatic renewal movements took the world by storm through tele-evangelism and mass crusades during which they continued to freshen up people with messages of divine healing and prosperity. They discover a productive soil in the African.

### Tutor Marked Assignment

1. pinpoint the difference between Pentecostalism and charismatic movement
2. What are the main features of Pentecostalism in Africa?
3. Explain the degree at which the influence of American tele-evangelists have on African Pentecostal preachers

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## **Unit 6: PENTECOSTALISM IN AFRICAN CONTEXT**

### **Introduction**

In this unit the main focus of the work is to hit on Pentecostalism in African context. The charismatic elements in Pentecostalism have brought a widespread growth in Africa because it was all-embracing due to its attraction of solving people's problems instantaneously.

### **Objectives**

At the end of this unit students should be able to:

- i. explain Pentecostalism in African context
- ii. the main outstanding features of Pentecostalism in Africa
- iii. discuss the missionary character of Pentecostalism

### **Main content**

3.1 Pentecostalism in Africa: Contextual analysis

3.2 The missionary character of Pentecostalism in Africa

Conclusion

Summary

Tutor marked assignment

References for further reading

### **Main content**

#### **Pentecostalism in Africa: Contextual analysis**

Pentecostalism is a worldwide phenomenon that thrives on African soil. According to the Pew Forum (2006), Pentecostalism's striking growth has left more or less no part of sub-Saharan Africa untouched. It is growing rapidly in such countries as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Congo. The impact of Pentecostalism in Africa is gigantic, and therefore it is very complicated to pay no attention to this phenomenon. A contextual analysis of this movement on African soil points to the following:

The starting point of Pentecostalism in Africa can be traced back to the early part of the 20th century. This is well captured in the following words by Cédric Mayrargue (2008):

The first Western missionaries landed on the continent in the 1910s. Missionaries from the (American) Assemblies Church of God first arrived in Liberia in 1914 and in Burkina Faso in 1921. British missionaries arrived in Nigeria and Ghana in the 1930s. Another very early incidence is to be found in South Africa starting from 1908. The first

Pentecostal communities date from these times, be it local groups connected to western Churches, those which became independent Churches or indigenous Churches influenced by Pentecostal missionaries (p. 3).

African Pentecostalism is in a straight line associated to the classical form of Pentecostalism of the 20th century. It is an expression of evangelical Christianity that seeks to lay emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in all its operations. Contrasting classical Pentecostalism, which is generally defined in terms of the doctrine of the 'initial evidence' – of speaking in tongues – African Pentecostalism must be seen as a much wider movement that operates in a much broader context, and one that exhibits all three waves sketched above. Individual and personal experience in conversion as followed by baptism with the Holy Spirit (which is sometimes accompanied by speaking in tongues) and embodied in the performance of extraordinary miracles is very much innermost to their teachings. Stress is on the working of the Holy Spirit in the being and all the operations of the believers.

The spirituality of Pentecostalism in Africa has its roots in the spirituality of 19th century African American slave religion. According to Walter Hollenweger (1972), the most important features of this type of spirituality consist of an oral liturgy and a narrative theology and witness, utmost input of the whole community in worship and service, visions and dreams in public worship, and an understanding of the relationship between body and mind as shown by healing through prayer. The main desirability of Pentecostalism in Africa is its ability to transform and become accustomed to the cultural context of the indigenous people. This is fundamentally because 'freedom in spirit' often allows them space to be more bendable in developing their own culturally appropriate forms of expression (Shorter 1975:24). Distinctions can be made between the different categories of African Pentecostal churches, for example: (1) Pentecostal mission churches such as the Assemblies of God and the Apostolic Faith Mission. These churches were commenced by non-African missionaries, and are part of larger Pentecostal denominations with express links to classical Pentecostals; (2) the new Pentecostal churches with no link with classical Pentecostals. These are churches that are more recent in origin like the Grace Bible Church and Praise Tabernacle Church in South Africa; and (3) the African Initiated Churches, which for various reasons are defined as 'Spirit-type churches' and 'Zionist', 'Zion-type' or 'Apostolic' churches, like the Zion Christian Church in South Africa (Shorter 1975:37).

All these churches can be classified under the umbrella of the Pentecostal movement in Africa because they all highlight the working of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, it should be well-known at this point that they differ from one another in terms of their method. Classical Pentecostals are unyielding on 'speaking in tongues' as initial evidence of baptism with the Holy Spirit. The new Pentecostal churches on the other hand lay emphasis on the power and the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church, and their leaders imitate more of what American tele-evangelists do. The last group, more

often than not the African Initiated Churches, which are known to be Pentecostals with some level of qualification, generally use objects like holy water, ropes and articles in their healing practices. This element is not widespread in the first two categories of the Pentecostal movement mentioned above.

### **The missionary character of Pentecostalism in Africa**

Pentecostalism, with its theology of the renaissance of the charismata in the life of the church nowadays, has given birth to the renewal dynamism in worship, renewed interest in realizing spiritual gifts in church life, and new inspiration for evangelism and missions. Pentecostals in Africa are thus very mission-minded and use very forceful forms of evangelism and proselytism, as noted by Allan Anderson (2004). In Pentecostal approach, evangelism takes the highest precedence. In Pentecostal theology, evangelism means to go out and reach the 'lost' for Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. This approach to mission includes personal witnessing, crusades and large tent campaigns in which healing is promised. Many thousands of African preachers from the Pentecostal circle stress the expression of divine power through healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues and other Pentecostal phenomena. Exorcism and protection from evil are amongst the most outstanding features of the Pentecostal gospel and are the most significant of their evangelism and church enrollment tactics. This is the mainly pertinent message for a poverty-stricken continent, which at the same time faces malnutrition, malaria, tuberculosis and the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

### **Conclusion**

The contemporary charismatic movement is the progeny of Pentecostalism. The charismatic movement is not schismatic in nature, it seeks to hang on and administer from within traditional churches in order to bring about spiritual renewal. The fame in this movement is on 'power evangelism', which necessitates that the gospel is explained and demonstrated by way of supernatural signs and wonders. The gifts of prophecy and healing are determinedly accentuated.

### **Summary**

Pentecostalism's remarkable growth has left more or less no part of sub-Saharan Africa untouched. It is growing speedily in such countries as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Congo. African Pentecostalism is in a straight line connected to the classical form of Pentecostalism of the 20th century. The spirituality of Pentecostalism in Africa has its roots in the spirituality of 19th century African American slave religion. Pentecostals in Africa are thus very mission-minded and use very forceful forms of evangelism and proselytism, as noted by.

### **Tutor marked Assignment**

1. discuss the categories of Pentecostalism in Africa



2. explain in accordance with African Pentecostalism the impact of:
  - a. evangelism
  - b. healing and exorcism
  - c. speaking in tongues and
  - d. prophecy

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## **UNIT 7 FEATURES OF PENTECOSTALISM IN AFRICA**

### **Introduction**

Pentecostalism has become an increasingly prominent feature of Africa's religious and political landscape. Pentecostals are the Christian group in Africa to have experienced significant growth in recent decades. Pentecostalism or Classical Pentecostalism as a renewal movement within Christianity places special emphasis on a direct personal experience of God through the baptism with the Holy Spirit. It is renowned by faith in the baptism with the Holy Spirit as an occurrence separate from conversion that enables a Christian to live a Holy Spirit-filled and empowered life. This empowerment includes the use of spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues and divine healing, these are the two defining features of Pentecostalism. Due to their dedication to biblical authority, spiritual gifts, and the miraculous signs, Pentecostals tend to see their movement as portraying the same kind of spiritual power and teachings that were found in the Apostolic Age of the early church. Therefore, some Pentecostals moreover use the term *Apostolic* or *full gospel* to depict their movement.

### **Objectives**

At the end of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Explain challenges and problems that Pentecostalism in Africa is facing
2. Discuss the unique role of the Holy Spirit and the practice of spiritual gifts in Pentecostalism
3. Throw more light on the teaching of prosperity gospel if it is really in line with the Bible

#### **4.1 Issues and challenges in Pentecostalism**

#### **4.2 A reformed missional reflection**

#### **4.3 Pentecostalism and a different path in urban Africa.**

#### **4.4 The Pentecostal politics of time**

#### **4.1 Issues and challenges in Pentecostalism**

The teachings and practices of Pentecostalism enclose certain features, promises and problems that differentiate it from other forms of expression of Christianity, and the following can be pointed out:

### **Salvation**

One of the fundamental tenets with regard to the teachings of the Pentecostals is salvation that is earned by faith in Christ. Belief in Christ is indispensable for one to obtain salvation and inherit eternal life. The stress is on being born again or regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit. The call to repent, believe and accept Christ as personal Saviour and Lord is significant in their preaching. All their major evangelistic crusades in Africa

and in another place in the world are characterized by public calls for sinners to come and receive Christ as they give in their lives to him.

### **Baptism with the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and other spiritual gifts**

Pentecostal beliefs and practices centre on their teaching concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Williams (1983:205) asserted that there is general acknowledgment of baptism with the Holy Spirit as a typical Christian experience. The Spirit baptism is the incident or experience that is said to happen either at the time of conversion as a 'second crisis experience' or a 'second blessing'. Classical Pentecostalism teaches that the preliminary evidence of Spirit baptism is speaking in tongues. It continues to say that a person who has been baptized by the Holy Spirit is in addition endowed with spiritual gifts (charismata). There is common consensus amongst Pentecostal figures such as David du Plessis, Harold Horton and Donald Gee that the gifts of the Spirit are the result of baptism of the Holy Spirit in a believer.

As for the reason of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, a South African Pentecostal theologian, Francois Möller, avers that they are given (1) to make Christ known and for his glory (Möller 1983:65). In this regard he follows Oral Roberts (as quoted in Möller 1997:142), who writes that the definitive purpose of every gift of the Spirit is to let slip Jesus Christ, to bear witness of Him and to allow believers to be more comprehensive in Him. In this regard, the emphasis laid amongst Pentecostals is that the charismata are not projected to pay tribute to an individual as some kind of miracle worker, but to exalt Jesus as Lord and King; (2) the equipment of the believer to be of service by becoming a witness of Christ (Möller 1983:65); (3) to validate the preached Word (Möller 1983:65). To emphasize this point, Möller (1983) quoted Donald Gee who writes that:

The vital and full intention of spiritual gifts therefore stands revealed. They are to bring men face to face with the authenticity of the Invisible God ... to make the unbeliever uniformly aware that God cannot be forgotten and that sin dare not be trifled with Charismata are, therefore a sign to the unbelievers; (4) the edification of the entire church and moreover individual believers in their confidential spheres, with an eye to true worship (Möller 1983:65); and (5) to provide for men's needs.

J. Rodman Williams (1983:206–207), who represents more the second wave of Pentecostalism, expresses on the aforesaid by pointing out the following reasons as to why the charismata were given to the church, i.e.: (1) they function as the undeviating expression and action of the Holy Spirit. The spiritual gifts consequently, make for a vibrant, vital community life; (2) they are given for the instruction of the Christian community. Each member functioning appropriately is important to the full life of the body; (3) when all members of the Church community work out their charismata, it makes for full ministry. It is not just the few (e.g. pastors, elders, deacons) who should be channels for the Spirit's appearance, but each person in the community; (4) they are given for the sake of impulsiveness in worship, enthusiasm in ministry, and rich

fellowship with one another. The charismata, thus, should be exercised in the body of Christ, where the above can be achieved by a particular Christian community; and (5) to bring the church to 'high voltage' Christianity. It is through the exercise of these spiritual gifts that the church comes alive to 'high voltage' Christianity: an extraordinary sense of the exalted Lord's presence in the Spirit moving impressively amongst his people. All the gifts of the Spirit are viewed as astonishing, supernatural and enduring. The implication is that all charismata are equivalent and thus, all the gifts of the Spirit should seriously be desired. Williams (1983:208) avers that the spiritual gifts will not die away until we see him 'face to face'; then they will be no longer needed for the edification of the community.

### **Healing and prosperity**

To the degree that divine healing is stated publicly and administered within classical Pentecostalism (first wave) and the charismatic movement (second wave), it is in the third wave of Pentecostalism where healing and prosperity is exceedingly popularized. This wave is widespread in Africa as reflected in the following words:

Healing has turned out to be a budding church industry, with healing pastors criss-crossing the African continent in mega-events sometimes called 'crusades' of healing. New satellite television channels beam recorded and live healing services and healing stories from both local and international sources (Maluleke & Nadar 2007:1).

Any outward appearance of illness is attached to issues of demonic attacks and faith, with prevailing prayers and faith as vehicles to bring about deliverance. Exorcism is exercised to set free those who are under demonic attacks and are possessed by the demons. Those who are not cured as they are prayed for are accused of a lack of faith. The third wave face of Pentecostalism on African soil is able to entice the poor masses by promising people absolute health and wealth. God's will and his blessings for all is that everybody must be healthy and rich and for that reason believers are pressurized to exercise their faith without unwillingness: 'Name-it-Claim-it'. Though, it is ill-fated that in most cases the poor masses in Africa are naming it while evangelists, apostles, prophets and preachers, as they are generally known, are claiming – with the poor masses getting poorer and the prophets getting richer and going about boasting about their wealth as a living witness of the power of faith. In the blog post by Isaac Phiri and Joe Maxwell, 'Africa's rapid grip of prosperity Pentecostalism provokes concern and hope', an example of Pastor Michael Okonkwo of Nigeria is recorded (Phiri & Maxwell 2007).

### **A Reformed missional reflection**

The rise and growth of Pentecostalism in the worldwide context, particularly on African soil, should present any evangelical reformed missional church with the chance to do introspection and tactically map out how best she can minister efficiently in the context of this experience. This is a missiological challenge that is inescapable, particularly in the

context where Pentecostal churches experience marvelous growth while reformed churches are either inert or experience a nosedive in terms of numbers. This is applicable in the context in which Pentecostal churches are thrilled to do mission work, while the majority of evangelical reformed churches have lost the flash and zeal for missions.

A Reformed church in such a context can do the following:

- *Acknowledge the existence, rise and growth of Pentecostalism* in the African or any other context where it serves. The existence of Pentecostalism in any context should not be viewed as a threat, but a challenge that presents any reformed church with the opportunity to minister faithfully and effectively to its context.

- *Exercise the spirit of discernment.* Reformed churches everywhere in the world are called to exercise discernment or test the spirits as outlined in 1 John 4:1. The power of reformed discernment lies in the primacy of the Word ministry that cannot be divorced from the ministry of the Spirit. Maris (1992:274) was therefore correct to note that the Word of God is the co-ordinate of faith as well as of experience. Main tenets of Pentecostal beliefs and practices must therefore be tested by scripture. The Word of God must shed light with regard to their teachings regarding salvation (regeneration), baptism of the Spirit, speaking in tongues and other spiritual gifts (including their teachings on healing and prosperity). In this regard it is clear that reformed theology teaches that (1) salvation is the gift of God that comes through faith as worked by Holy Spirit when the Word of God is communicated (Mashau 2009:98).

In Calvinism, the Spirit is the first gift that brings about conversion, repentance, adoption and new birth in all believers. Christ is the author of salvation and the centre of the gospel, but as He received the fullness of the Spirit and shares the gifts of the Spirit with those who accept the gospel, it might be said that the Holy Spirit is the means of the gospel (Baird 1960:128); (2) the entire Christian church is a charismatic church endowed with spiritual gifts and that it is the Triune God who is the source and distributor of these gifts. When speaking of the gifts of the Spirit, Calvin ([1583]1867:464) points out that there is no inconsistency in ascribing the glory of those gifts to the Father, inasmuch as He is the author of them, and at the same time ascribing them to Christ, to whom they have been entrusted, that he may bestow them on his people; (3) God distributes to each one of the believers a certain limited portion of the spiritual gifts. Each receives a certain measure to serve the entire body of Christ, the church. Being thus dependant on each other, people find it necessary to throw their individual gifts into the common stock, and thus render mutual aid (Calvin [1849]1854:271). True faith therefore calls every individual member to service. The rediscovery of the office of believers and their active participation in the life of the church must receive serious attention (Mashau 2008:95). Believers must be allowed space to use their spiritual gifts to benefit the entire body of Christ, but we must guard against the misuse of such gifts. Ministries such as small groups, children, youth, women, marriage, music, prayer and many more should be introduced in churches to allow space for members to unleash their potentials.

- Appreciate the kind of missionary zeal within Pentecostalism and *call for renewal and new commitment to the biblical calling of reaching out* and witnessing to the power of the resurrected Christ to the world and to the very end. The Lord's will is to save humanity, and therefore we must never be happy when our churches are stagnant and not growing. Spiritual and numerical growth are very much part of God's salvation plan. We must make a conscious decision to participate in the mission of God in the world. We must, as we participate in mission, recommit to hold seriously the truth of God's Word regarding issues of salvation, baptism of the Spirit and other spiritual gifts. The preaching of the Word and education ministry amongst church members, adherents of Pentecostalism and those who are yet to be evangelized will prove to be critical in our context, the 21st century, where the anti-Christ seems to be on a rampage to deceive many through false teachings.

- The *rediscovery of the role of the Holy Spirit in mission* as something that is forced on the reformed agenda by Pentecostals should be appreciated. We must not shy away from acknowledging the third person in the Trinity of God and his role in mission because of the pitfalls of Pentecostalism. The Holy Spirit is the one who calls, equips and empowers believers for Christian mission. The Holy Spirit ministers in and through us as instruments in the hands of the missionary God, who has the heart for the gospel and the heart for the world. Through the preaching of the gospel, the Holy Spirit continues to gather God's church from eternity to eternity. As the church participates in the harvesting process, she must do so prayerfully so that the Lord of the harvest will bring life wherever he deems fit. It must be clear that conversion is not a human project. It belongs to God, who, through the preaching of the Word through words and deeds continues to awaken his elect to life through the working of the Holy Spirit.

- On the question of *the continuity of the charismata*, reformed theology maintains that the times of the extraordinary gifts have passed. Reference is made in particular to those gifts that were given to authenticate Christ's ministry and the Word. Mashau (2000:102) concludes that the 'Charismata which were given to authenticate the ministry of Christ on earth (Jn 20:30–31) and the apostolic ministry (2 Cor 12:12) served their foundational purpose (Eph 2:20).' There is logic in such a position, but it should also be noted that reformed theology leaves room for the Spirit of God to operate as he wills (1 Cor 12:11). The manifestation of the Spirit of God cannot be restricted to a particular epoch in history; in mission fields and in extraordinary circumstances the Spirit of God can still bring forth such charismata. In such a case, the call to discern the Spirit should be exercised with scripture as a measure as already noted above. This call applies to all extraordinary gifts claimed by tele-evangelists, apostles and prophets of our time. It is our responsibility to point out all the pitfalls of Pentecostalism.

- It should be pointed out at this stage that the spirituality of the charismatic reflects a 'low view' of God and his sovereignty and therefore easily becomes manipulative. The

most important antidote for the Armenian heresies in the Pentecostal and charismatic type churches is to preach and teach the doctrines of the sovereign grace of God (the Supremacy of God) and maintain a biblical spirituality of the *fear of God* (Ec 5:7; 8:12; 12:13; Gn 22:12; Dt 6:2; 10:12; Ps 111:10; 112:1; 145:11; 1 Pt 2:17; Rv 19:5 ff.).

- An open door for reformed churches to be instrumental in facilitating a corrective to the Pentecostal and charismatic type churches may be to accelerate and multiply a wide variety of non-formal models of in-service theological training to millions of untrained Pentecostal and charismatic type churches leaders in Africa. This aspect of theological training should be seen as completing the great commission of Matthew 28:19 (teaching them to obey all things). This can help Pentecostal and charismatic type churches to obtain a more holistic biblical approach in their ministry of the gospel.

### **3. Pentecostalism and a different path in urban Africa.**

Some of the Independent churches took a rather unusual course of progress. In a general sense, these are churches that have developed originally not from white missionary but from black missionary hard work. This is meaning the missionary Pentecostal churches that arrived around the turn of the century in diverse parts of Africa (for studies of the history of the introduction of Pentecostalism see among others, for Ghana Larbi 1995, Meyer 1995, Wyllie 1974, 1980; for Malawi Schoffeleers 1985, Van Dijk 1992; for Zimbabwe Maxwell 1998; and for Zaire Jules Rosette 1979). Some of these Pentecostal churches come from black American churches that had sprung up in the first Pentecostal wave in Illinois, USA, at the end of the last century. Other Pentecostal churches, such as Apostolic and Full Gospel type, arrived in Africa under white missionary leadership from England, but started turning to African leadership as early as the late 1940s and 1950s (for Ghana, Larbi 1995).

The fundamental difference between these Pentecostal churches and the white established churches on the one hand and the African Independent churches on the other has been that the Pentecostals tend to take gravely the powers, spirits and occult forces that the missionary churches decide to ignore; in contrast they have refused to go after a path of syncretism in which much of the traditional ritual and symbolic styles and repertoires would be approved. As an alternative, most of the Pentecostal churches have developed their ideology and practice in a way that to a great extent demonizes such powers and spirits. By taking such forces and powers critically the Pentecostal churches have moved near to the experience of many Africans, nearer than the white missionary churches ever could with their absolute refutation of the existence of such powers.

Simultaneously however, the Pentecostal churches also created a kind of spontaneous remoteness from the other Independent churches, declaring their departure from syncretism by rejecting a whole display of traditional practices, purification and



protection rituals and symbolic repertoires. So while many Pentecostal churches speedily came under African leadership and were inspired by African anxiety about life, fortune, and misfortune, healing and protection, they resisted a type of haziness that would perplex traditional practices with those of the church. The Pentecostal churches and their many offshoots and offshoots surely should be classified under the wider group of the African appropriation of Christianity; but having said this, we would be making a serious mistake if we thought that the basis of all the African Independent churches is the same. Most of the Pentecostal churches in Sub-Saharan Africa, as they developed in the 1960s, emphasized their difference from the established mission type of church and at the same time more and more tried to detach themselves from the other African Independent churches which they came to gaze at increasingly as involved with diabolical and demonic powers and rituals. The Pentecostals' stern abstinence from alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, their emphasis on stringent morality and their contempt for all sorts of traditional elements of culture, such as traditional funeral ceremonies, weddings, birthing and initiation rituals became extensively known and perceived (Van Dijk 1992, 1993, 1995). At times the unbending pronouncements against traditional practices would lead to social turbulence and conflicts, and reasonably could distress entire families as they drove relatives apart. As a result, the Pentecostal churches became tough for scholars to infer as communities which in a nostalgic sense wished to reemphasize village life and village rituals.

After all, for the Pentecostal churches many elements of that village life were and are exceedingly suspect, since they may engross links with traditional culture, ancestor worship, the use of alcohol, the pouring of libations etc., which in the Pentecostal ideology are regarded as demonic and diabolical (Van Dijk 1995). Out of what we can call this 'third movement' there developed a brand new Pentecostal wave, which has been thinning out throughout Sub-Saharan Africa during the last two decades. The motivating feature of this new wave is that it combines a lot of the features of the older Pentecostal churches with youthful enthusiasm and appeal, with personally charismatic leaders, with an unequivocal setting in the modern sectors of life and with an precise use of the modern means of communication: the media, video, radio and magazines (Van Dijk 1997, Meyer 1998, Hackett 1998, Marshall 1998). Though spiritual elements of expression such as speaking in tongues, prayer healing, religious ecstasy and prophesying were before now part of the older Pentecostal churches, in these new charismatic groups and churches they became overt elements of greatly individualized and personalized expression. Besides, the appeal is largely based on being 'born again' – not into an age-old world but into a modern world which is open to modern African man who has been able to elude all these cultural traditions (Van Dijk 1997, 1998, Meyer 1998). Charismatic groups did not merely develop into self-styled churches; they also began to emerge within the ranks of the mainline established churches where, much to the regret of the leadership, they began to call for a transformation of the authority structures and the social potential of these churches.

In general terms this type of Pentecostalism manifested itself very powerfully among the younger generations of society, the younger groups in the established churches and the student populations of universities and colleges. The transformation of social morality, for instance, in the declarations of the young street-preachers of Malawi (Van Dijk 1992, 1995), was united at a primary level with hopes and aspirations for social and economic development that was independent of the positions of the elderly generation. The next section will explore this social message of charismatic Pentecostalism in more detail, since it involves a definite 'politics of time'.

#### **4. The Pentecostal politics of time.**

The focal point on the development of charismatic churches in two countries, Ghana and Malawi educate us much about the present-day importance of this type of Christianity in Africa. In Malawi, but even more so in Ghana, it is safe and sound to say that Pentecostalism has turned out to be the single most significant religious factor. In Ghana for case in point, the older Church of Pentecost has grown to be the largest denomination in the country; also the fresh charismatic churches have also been able to expand within a comparatively short period into mega-congregations. As has been explained in great detail, distinguished examples of such mega-churches in Accra have been Mensa Otabil's International Central Gospel Church and Nicolas Duncan- Williams Action Faith Ministries (Gifford 1994, 1998, Larbi 1995, Van Dijk 1997).

Above all urban-based, with a focus on the influential middle classes of bourgeois society, these churches are able to put forth an unequalled socio-political and moral influence on society. More often than not these charismatic churches are built around one charismatic, inspiring leader who rules over the mega-churches with a strong element of personalism. The charismatic powers that spring from him (usually these leaders are males) are considered to achieve much in terms of personal healing, spiritual protection, prosperity and social change.

In Ghana these churches merge an ideology of prosperity, sometimes scornfully called the prosperity gospel, with an ideological programme of development and progress. Put in straightforward terms, God is with those who make progress in life, and Christianity is about prosperity and not about poverty. The charismatic leaders unease themselves with the question of development and often portray tradition and culture as barriers to that development and progress. "Make a complete break with the past" is an often-heard cry from the pulpit of these churches (Meyer 1998, Van Dijk 1998), and this total break definitely entails a break with the tradition and culture that they perceive as "pulling the person down". Many churches in Accra and Ghana's other cities sort out so-called "deliverance hours" in which prayer is used in displays of ecstasy and emotionalism to 'break' the power of the members' personal pasts (Van Dijk 1997). At first view the problems with which these members advance their deliverance healers typically take the form of 'I bought a new car, and since I have, accidents have started to happen. I suspect some evil demon to be behind it'. All through the deliverance session, nevertheless, the personal past, the location of that person in his kinship relations, will be explored and the

workings of certain curses troubling his or her family will be investigated. It is the breaking of these ties that will in due course permit the free and undisturbed use of such items of modern utilization, which is the decisive goal of the whole breaking ceremony. Meyer writes:

*“By symbolically cutting people’s family ties, the deliverance procedure subverts the bonds created and protected by the collective worship of particular gods as well as the bonds between relatives. This is a distinctive feature of Pentecostalism. Whereas traditionally the fight against evil is to a large extent focused on the restoration of the bonds between people...., Christian deliverance basically unties them. The aim of the deliverance sessions is to turn people into individuals who are independent of and unaffected by family relations. Unlike the traditional gods, the Spirit of God does not bind families together but, rather, turns their members into separate individuals who are freed from the past and able to progress” (Meyer 1998: 201).*

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

African Christianity is multifarious in its times gone by, structures, doctrines and practices. Against social science expectations of the sneering of religion in modern societies, religion progressively more aver itself in the manifold ways in which Africans engage with the world and with the management of change. There is a hopeful view that the vivacity and miscellany of Christianities in Africa hold great promise for universal Christianity as a whole as already some Africans have engaged in what is now portrayed as “reversed mission”: the sending of missionaries from Africa to proselytize the frontiers of western societies.

#### **5.0 Summary**

One of the fundamental tenets with regard to the teachings of the Pentecostals is salvation that is earned by faith in Christ. Belief in Christ is necessary for one to gain salvation and inherit eternal life. Pentecostal beliefs and practices centre on their teaching concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit. There is general acknowledgment of baptism with the Holy Spirit as a typical Christian experience. Classical Pentecostalism teaches that the preliminary evidence of Spirit baptism is speaking in tongues. Divine healing is stated publicly and administered within classical Pentecostalism (first wave) and the charismatic movement (second wave), it is in the third wave of Pentecostalism where healing and prosperity is exceedingly popularized. Any outward appearance of illness is attached to issues of demonic attacks and faith, with prevailing prayers and faith as vehicles to bring about deliverance. Exorcism is exercised to set free those who are under demonic attacks

and are possessed by the demons. Those who are not cured as they are prayed for are accused of a lack of faith. The third wave face of Pentecostalism on African soil is able to entice the poor masses by promising people absolute health and wealth.

In Calvinism, the Spirit is the first gift that brings about conversion, repentance, adoption and new birth in all believers. Christ is the author of salvation and the centre of the gospel, but as He received the fullness of the Spirit and shares the gifts of the Spirit with those who accept the gospel, it might be said that the Holy Spirit is the means of the gospel the entire Christian church is a charismatic church endowed with spiritual gifts and that it is God who is the source and distributor of these gifts. The fundamental difference between these Pentecostal churches and the white established churches on the one hand and the African Independent churches on the other has been that the Pentecostals tend to take gravely the powers, spirits and occult forces that the missionary churches decide to take no notice of; in contrast they have refused to go after a path of syncretism in which much of the traditional ritual and symbolic styles and repertoires would be approved.

## **6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment**

1. What are the distinct features of Pentecostalism in Africa?
2. State the difference between Pentecostalism and mainline churches as well as Pentecostalism and African Initiated Churches
3. Analyze the teaching of prosperity gospel, Healing and exorcism, speaking in tongues and emphasis on the Holy Spirit in Pentecostalism if it is in line with the teaching of the Bible.

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