
Origin And Spread Of Christianity

Long before Christianity came to our communities, people used to worship, sing praise songs to gods. Somehow they had faith in the acceptance of their sacrifices and prayers by gods. Christianity then came taking over and condemned most of the traditional worshipping. The main difference was that conventional way of worship based on superstitions and gods. Christian faith on the hand revolved around the bible and worshipping only one God. Over time Christianity has almost eradicated all the African traditional beliefs. The reason is that Christians believe that God's son named Jesus came to abolish the old ways by replacing with the new ideas. It has approximately 2 billion followers around the world whose faith centres on the belief regarding the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this paper we shall be discussing the origin of Christianity.

Jesus being the centre of Christian faith of worship, understanding who he was is essential. In the bible, He said to be born to a virgin named Mary and his father was a carpenter. He was conceived through the power of the holy spirit with God's intention for him being the world's saviour. His birth was prophesied way back before he was born and then he was later baptised by a man named John the Baptist. He preached across Nazareth performing miracles like raising the dead and healing people with different diseases. He also condemned most of the practises and hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who were the leaders of the Jews. He condemned every evil that took place, and this put him in a wrong position with some people and leaders of the Jews. He was then crucified and died on the cross after he was accused of blasphemy which was only punishable through death. He was buried in the tomb, and on the third day, witnesses from the tomb reported on Jesus resurrection.

Jesus Christ resurrection resulted in the formation of the first church. It happened when the Holy Spirit was sent to Jesus disciples. The first converts were Jews who became Christians, and the first church became centred in Jerusalem. Not long after the church came alive, then the non-Jews who were gentiles embraced Christianity. These early Christians saw it be their responsibility to share the gospel. They travelled to the world preaching and teaching people about Jesus, and his teachings. The most renowned missionary from the bible is Paul who was Christians persecutor. He later encountered with supernatural power with Christ as stated in Acts of Apostles and he became a Christian. Paul starts churches in Africa, Europe and on Roman empire. Thanks to his work, Christianity became widespread as seen today and he is thought to have written 13 out of 27 books in the new testament of the bible.

The story and meaning behind Jesus teachings brought Christianity into the Roman cities. Roman empire is a polytheistic religion and the Jews being the monotheistic religion created so much difference between them. The Jewish leaders clashed with the Roman leaders which lead to the persecution of many believers of Christ. Romans citizens converted from worshipping their gods to Christianity, and this angered the Emperor at that time. Many Christians were burned and the missionaries Paul and Peter are believed to have been killed through the same fire. As Christianity continued to spread more church leaders and bishops were appointed. Significant development occurred in early century when Emperor Constantine I began to support Christianity. He then legalised Christianity for the first time, and this encouraged the spread of the religion. He formed a relationship between Jesus and God the father and then decided on

the date of the easter. The support is given by Constantine I and the leaders that followed him made Christianity the religion of the Roman state. It facilitated the spreading of the gospel to the edges of the roman empire.

Christianity also found its way to Africa. People from diaspora believe that Christianity came to be known to Africa through colonialism and oppression. It first arrives in north Africa, and the communities of northern Africa were among the earliest people to encounter Christianity. Legend has it that an evangelist named mark brought Christianity from Jerusalem to the coast of Alexandria in Egypt. This was almost the same time that Christianity spread around Northern Europe. Gospel then spread from Alexandria through the east of Ethiopia. The king of roman empire wanted to expand his territory to north Africa. They were accepting Christianity as their religion was a way of protecting their land because at that time the Romans worshipped many gods. The Ethiopian king then made Christianity the official religion in the kingdom.

When the Portuguese came to the sub-Saharan, they brought with them Christianity. The dutch then started the Dutch Reform Church in the south of the continent. The people continued with their religion in the interior continent undisturbed. Driven by antislavery crusade, missions to Africa increased in the 19th century. By the time the missionaries reached the people were practising, Islam and Christianity had a little success. Christianity brought change to Africa. It is because with Christianity came education, opportunities and hope for the disadvantaged. However since Christianity began with the Europeans, it did not embrace much of the Africa culture and ceremonies.

The main agenda of the first missionaries was ensuring that the word of God travelled around the world. During the process, some divisions and disagreements on how the church should operate emerged. This led to formation of the many denominations on the Christian sector worshipping one God and using the same Bible. Saying that Christianity is a severely divide faith is an understatement because United States alone has 1000 Christian branches and above. Statistics states that there are approximately 35000 Christian denominations around the world. Christianity is divided between eastern and western theology, and it has got six branches. These are Catholicism, Protestantism, eastern orthodoxy, Anglicanism, oriental orthodoxy and Assyrians.

The first major division in Christian history was of the roman catholic and the eastern orthodox that happened in 1054 AD. It has remained consistent and effective to date. The day of division remains an essential day in Christians calendars referred to as the Great East-West schism. The next major division happened with the protestant reformation that was led by Martin Luther. In 1529, Protestation was published by the Germans who wanted the freedom to choose the faith of the territory. They then interpreted the scriptures by themselves and their religious freedom. The reformation later became a starter for the different denominations that are there today. The change in the Roman catholicism did not happen much because the followers and the leaders saw it best that they did not disrupt the rules. They wanted to prevent division of the church and the corruption of the beliefs. Protestants on the hand gave freedom to their followers to read the Bible for themselves, and by then it was in Latin only. This is how large volume of Christian denomination came about.

When gospel spread through the world, then came the false Christianity. They lure people into believing their doctrines and beliefs. Even the Bible itself says that many will come in Christ name but do not teach what He taught. The origin of Christianity is understood from the old

testament of the Bible which happened before the ministry of Jesus Christ. Due to false Christianity ancient Israel was divided into northern Israel and southern Israel. Northern Israel followed Jeroboam's wrong teachings, and for years God sent prophets to warn them but did not heed them. The Samaritans were removed from their land and taken to captivity. They were then taken to Babylon as slaves. Around 718 B.C., many Babylonians followed the practices and teachings of the mystery religion of Nimrod. The king of Assyria then sends one of the priests from Northern Israel who was taken to captivity to teach the Babylonians on the true Christianity. The Babylonians did not obey God and continued worshipping their gods.

In about 750 years later, Philip, one of Jesus' apostles went to Samaria to preach the gospel of Christ. He performed miracles, and the people of Samaria accepted the good news, terming Philip as the great power of God. Simon Magus, a man from Samaria, was a sorcerer who bewitched the Samaritans. Herbert W. Armstrong says, Simon knew that whoever headed a religion headed the government and he saw an opportunity to head a universal religion. When he saw the servants of God coming and turning people to Christians, Simon had to act fast or else he would lose his followers. In the book *The True History and the True Church*, it states that Samaria was the beginning of the false church. It says that Satan uses Simon to build a counterfeit of Christianity. When the people of Samaria followed Christ's teaching and became baptised, Simon Magus also decided to get baptised because he recognised that the power of the Holy Spirit was greater than his power. He did not receive the Holy Spirit because his heart was not right with God.

The New Lexicon Webster's dictionary says that after Peter rebuked him, Simon Magus begged him to intercede with God on his behalf. Later he reappeared in Rome during the time of Claudius. However, Magus had a movement of his own in which he combined the Christian and the pagan movements. Fulfilling the prophecy made by Peter that he will be an adversary, poisoning the word of God. Ernest Martin states in the *Good News* magazine that Simon's idea was to blend the Babylonian teaching with Christ's teachings. Taking the name Christ, he created a church with Babylonianism as the foundation. It is how false Christianity came into being, corrupting the good news of Christ brought to us by the early missionaries.

The origin of Christianity came after Jesus' teachings to his disciples. The disciples later saw it best for them to share the good news all around the world. The lessons found their way into Africa through Egypt and Ethiopia, making Christianity the most practised religion in Africa. In the process of sharing the good news, some of the leaders of the church did not agree on how to govern and decided to split up, in which the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church were the pioneers. The splitting up of the first churches made room for the formation of different denominations in the world. Although they are all monotheistic, they still showed a lack of unity among the Christians. The division has made some of the unbelievers wonder whether Christianity is the true religion. Unlike Muslims and other faiths, we have different names for our churches though we claim to worship the same God. Simon Magus introducing false Christianity has led people to go astray, especially today where a lot of churches with wrong teachings have been set up. The above history is how Christianity came into the world.

Work cited

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