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IS CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA A FRUIT OF COLONIALISM?

Abstract. There has been a belief in traditional and conservative African circles that Christianity is a religion that was brought by the white man. However Christianity on the African continent precedes colonialism. The history of Christianity in Africa can be divided into three phases: Antiquity, the Portuguese period and the 19th-century missionary efforts. The first phase, where Church in North Africa and the Horn of Africa ended with the rise of Islam. Efforts to evangelise Africa south of the Sahara in the second period 15th to the 18th centuries were apparently a complete failure because Christianity did not take roots. The last period is marked by the blossoming of the Church in Africa, where the Christian population in Africa grew to some 335 million in 2000 (45%), marking a shift in the “center of gravity of Christianity” from the West to Latin America, parts of Asia and Africa.

Key words: Christianity in Africa; colonialism; mission.

It is not uncommon to here phrases like: the white man’s religion in reference to Christianity. There has been a conviction among African nationalists and traditionalists that Christianity is a religion that was brought by the white man. The tendency to associate Christianity with European imperialism and colonialism was quite manifest during the struggle for independence of many African countries south the Sahara. This conviction is portrayed by some African novelists at the eve of independence.

“When the missionaries came to Africa they had the bible and we had the land. They said let us pray, we closed our eyes, when we opened them we had the bible and they had the land,” is a phrase that was continually on the lips of many African nationalists who were fighting for the independence of African countries. It was sometimes said there was no difference between the white man of the cloth and the white man of the gun. This was to indicate that there was no difference between the colonialist and the missionary because they all propagated interests of their countries.

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However, it is important to note that this was completely a false impression that was created to evoke emotions among the indigenous. It is completely false to associate Christianity on the African continent with colonialism because even before the advent of colonialism on the African continent Christianity had already existed for quite a number of centuries.

This is why it is important in this article to make a historical excursus to trace the origins of Christianity on the African continent and also to prove that Christianity preceded colonialism

Christianity is not new on the African continent. The continent of Africa has been in touch with Christianity right from the time of the apostles. The gospels already speak of the refugee which the Holy family (Jesus, Mary and Joseph) took to Egypt in fear of King Herod. For this reason we can say the Lord was in contact with Africa when he was still a child (Mt 2:13–15). In the Old Testament, there is already contact with Judaism when Joseph was sold to Egypt by his brothers.

In fact modern Egyptian Christians are proud to trace back the origin of their faith to the very origins of Christianity itself. In Cairo they venerate a Church built over the place where the Holy family supposedly dwelt during their stay in Egypt.¹ A popular tradition goes to the extent of pointing out the palm tree which Mary is said to have embraced during the pangs of child birth. Some even think the Holy family spent some time in Ethiopia. Much as these traditions sound naive, they point to the conviction that Christianity existed early in Africa.

The pertinent question that strikes us is: if Christianity in Africa is as old as Christianity itself how come at the beginning of the twentieth century only 3% of the population in Africa was classified as being Christian? This will lead us to explore the evangelisation of Africa which can be divided into three phases.

- ♦ During antiquity when Christianity was concentrated in the Northern hemisphere—Roman North Africa. During this period Christianity received a heavy blow from the invasion of Islam before it could spread south of the Sahara.
- ♦ The Portuguese period that extends from the 15th century to the 18th century. Missionaries followed in the footsteps of explorers. However, when there was a decline in the Portuguese power, even missionary activity was affected too. The methods of evangelisation were responsible for the decline of Christianity.

¹ John BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 1994), 21.

- ♦ The third phase was in the 19th century when we have what was called Christian religious revival coming from Europe which brought with it missionary revival both in the Catholic and Protestant Churches.

THE BEGINNINGS

The Church flourished in North Africa for six centuries before the advent of Islam. In those days, present day Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia were home to vibrant Christian communities with great Theologians like Augustine, Athanasius, Cyprian, Origen to mention but a few. At that time the North African Church was a pillar to the Universal Church. The first urban centre of Christianity in Africa was Alexandria in Egypt. It is presumed that already in the 1st century there were Christian communities in Alexandria which in fact was the second largest city in the Roman Empire. This could already have been in 60 AD when there was a large community here. From the Acts of the Apostles we learn that at Pentecost there were Jews from Alexandria who went to Jerusalem for the Jewish Pentecost (Acts 2). We can assume that converts were made from these people and must have carried Christian message back to Alexandria or Egypt in general.² The first historically known Christian from Alexandria is the Jew Apollos, the famous preacher in Corinth, whose Hellenistic eloquence was a great challenge to Paul. It is presumably in Alexandria that he had been “instructed in the way of the Lord” (Acts 18:24; 1 Cor 3:4-7).

The clearest proof of the existence of a Christian community in Egypt around the year 100 is found in the many papyri discovered in the various sites. The earliest of them are fragments of the Gospel of John and have been dated 120 AD.

The importance of the early Egyptian Church in early Christianity cannot be overemphasized. Apart from Alexandria which could claim being the first centre of theological learning and catechetical schools and without rival in its time, the Egyptian Church can also lay claim to a most influential role in the development of Christian monasticism. A monk named Anthony was alleged to have been the father of monasticism in Egypt.³

² Jonathan HILDEBRANDT, *History of the Church in Africa* (Achimota: Christian press, 1981), 5.

³ J.G. [John Gordon] DAVIES, *The Early Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), 184.

Africa occupies an important place in the history of monasticism, since Egypt was an early site in which monastic life flourished. The Christian anchoritic life can be dated to the end of the third century. Saint Antony of Egypt (ca 251–356), often referred to as the “Father of Egyptian Monasticism,” became the father of a community of anchorites. But it is Pachomius of Egypt who must be regarded as the founder of Christian cenobitism, strictly speaking, as opposed to anchoritism. This he did by founding a community in which the members accepted a rule composed by Pachomius, and bound themselves to an ascetical manner of life, in common and the same for all, under the direction of a superior.

The history of the first fifteen hundred years of Christianity in Africa is limited to the countries north of the Sahara and the horn of Africa: North Africa, Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia. During the first six centuries Egypt and North Africa were part of the ancient Roman Empire. For a long time the two regions held a leading position in the universal Church. Egypt played a leading role in the Greek speaking Eastern part and North Africa played a leading role in the Latin speaking west. Nubia and Ethiopia, a little bit inland, received missionaries through Egypt and were dependent on the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria.

At this early age, Christianity in Africa developed with much rapidity in North Africa. After the death of Tertullian in 220 AD the Church had seventy to ninety bishoprics. In Cyprian’s day (250 AD) this number had virtually doubled with the total rising to around one hundred and fifty. By the beginning of the fourth century (fifty years later) this number had risen yet again to over two hundred and fifty bishoprics.⁴ By the end of the fourth century, the Church in North Africa thus became vigorous, full of intellectual and spiritual life, well organized and well disciplined. It was a major centre of the Christian faith during those years and played home to the widely recognized ‘Trio of African Saints’ who each in their own way made a number of significant contributions to the history and dogma of subsequent Christianity.⁵

Besides Alexandria and Carthage, the third major centre in early Christian North Africa was Ethiopia (Abyssinia). The Church apparently spread through this region when, in the fourth century, two Christians named Frumentius and Edesius arrived there from Tyre. The local Church traces its

⁴ J. HILDEBRANDT, *History of the Church in Africa*, 10.

⁵ G. Egemba IGWE, *Christianity comes to Africa* (Umuahia: Ark Publishers, 2000), 5.

origin to the time when these two Disciples of Christ preached the gospel in the Kingdom of Axum.

It is often heard said that we have not yet had an African Pope but it is important to note that in the early centuries of the Church, Africa produced three Popes who are usually referred to by historians as the three African popes: Pope St Victor I (ca 186–198), Pope St Miltiades (311–14), and Pope St Gelasius (492–496) were Africans.

From the above exposition, we can see that the Church in the Northern part of Africa was very vibrant in the early centuries, however, on a sad note, the once vibrant Church is apparently no more. The turning point in the development of the ancient Church in Africa was the advent of Islam. The decline and total disappearance of this flourishing Church is a sad fact of history. The Arab Muslim invasion of North Africa, which began around 643, was completed by the capture of Carthage (698) and Ceuta (709). The Moslems gradually brought about the extinction of Christianity, reducing the number of bishoprics to three for all Africa by the time of Pope Gregory VII (1073–1085). Even these three bishoprics disappeared entirely by the 13th century.

THE PORTUGUESE PERIOD

Between ancient and modern Christianity in Africa, there can be traced another Christian movement which pioneered evangelisation south of the Sahara. This was Christianity brought under the patronage of the Portuguese which was referred to as the “padroado system.”

This system tended to keep out missionaries who were not Portuguese. This would lead to safe guarding of Portuguese interests even by the missionaries rather than the religious ones. The national interests overwhelmed them. In fact these missions depended a lot on the Portuguese government for finance. Due to this dependence, it led Africans to accepting Christianity for other dubious motives for example many local chiefs accepted Christianity in return for Portuguese protection so as to be politically and militarily powerful. For this reason, Christianity was not accepted for its own sake.

The exploration of the African coast by the Portuguese in the 15th century was soon accompanied by evangelization. As early as 1462, Pope Pius II entrusted the evangelization of the Guinea Coast to the Franciscans led by

Alfonso de Bolano. By 1486, Dominicans and others were active in West Africa, notably among the Wolof in Senegambia. The Guinea mission depended upon that of Cape Verde where a bishopric was eventually created in 1553.

At the request of the King of Benin, who had come into contact with the Portuguese in 1485, the Church was planted in that kingdom. However, no great results were achieved. The mission in Benin, served only intermittently from Sao Tome which was made a bishopric in 1534 by Pope Paul II, simply vegetated. In the Congo (present-day Zaire), systematic evangelization began in 1490, conducted by Franciscans, Canons Secular of St. John the Evangelist, and secular priests. From the start, its success was remarkable. Nzinga was baptized under the name Dom Jodo (1491).⁶ A church was built in his capital, which was named Sao Salvador. A truly Christian kingdom, closely modelled on that of Portugal, arose on the left bank of the river. During the reign of King Alfonso (1506–1543) Christianity spread widely. Missionaries arrived regularly from Portugal; and young Congolese were sent to Portugal for instruction. Dom Hernique, son of the King, was elected (1518) and consecrated (1521) bishop of Utica. He soon returned to the Congo, but died in 1530. Dominicans, Discalced Carmelites, and Jesuits sent missionaries. Sao Salvador became an episcopal see in 1597.

In Angola evangelization began in the second half of the 16th century. Francis Borgia had undertaken to establish a mission there for the Society of Jesus. The Angolan mission was not initially as successful as that in the Congo. It was only established when the bishops of Sao Salvador took up residence at Loanda in 1626.⁷ It is to the credit of the early Portuguese missionaries in Zaire and Angola that they displayed remarkable missionary farsightedness by setting up a seminary for the formation of indigenous priests.

On the East African Coast, particularly in Mozambique, evangelization began during the first half of the 16th century. Saint Francis Xavier stopped over in Mozambique on his way to the East. In 1561 the king of Mwenemutapa was baptized, thereby arousing a strong movement towards the Catholic Church. These hopes were to be destroyed by Muslim intrigue and influence. By 1591 the mission in Mozambique counted 20,000 Catholics. During the 17th century new evangelizing efforts were again undertaken in Mwenemutapa by the Dominicans. A college and a seminary were erected.

⁶ Elizabeth ISICHEI, *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the present* (London: SPCK, 1995), 45.

⁷ J. BAUR, *2000 years of Christianity in Africa*, 62.

However, in the course of the 18th century, decline and decadence set in among the Christian communities and among the missionaries, and by the middle of the 19th century, the Portuguese mission in Eastern Africa was practically extinct. A very crucial and decisive achievement of Portuguese Catholic missions in East Africa was the rolling back and weakening of Islam beyond Mombasa. They succeeded in holding down Islam in the south.

Early missionary work in Madagascar by Portuguese Franciscans and Dominicans during the 16th century did not enjoy much success. Jesuits started a mission there in 1613.⁸ They were followed by the Discalced Carmelites (1647), and the Vincentians; (1648), all without significant impact. Small scale attempts were undertaken intermittently, but the French Revolution brought an end to all missionary work on the Island.

FAILURE

Efforts to evangelise Africa south of the Sahara in the 15th to the 18th centuries were apparently a complete failure because Christianity did not take root and we can enumerate a number of reasons why this Mission that had been taken up by the Portuguese did not bare abundant fruit. In spite of the heroic evangelizing efforts of the 15th and 16th centuries, Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa had completely disappeared by the beginning of the 19th century. Among the many reasons for that extinction, we can enumerate the following:

- ♦ Inadequate number of personnel: Many a time there were not enough missionaries to cover the vast areas. Missionaries were few and could not cope up with evangelisation of vast territories because non-Portuguese were completely excluded from Portuguese territory since according to the PADROADO system the Portuguese government was entrusted with the duty to evangelise the areas under Portuguese patronage, build churches, pay the missionaries and appoint them and because of this there was no follow up of missionary activity due to lack of personnel.
- ♦ Sometimes there was inadequate financing since the missionaries depended on the Portuguese government and at the end of 17th century the government had financial constraints to the extent that missionaries ended up engaging in the scandalous slave trade where as some used money acquired from slave trade. Slavery and slave trade did a lot of detriment to Christianity.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

- ♦ The motives of embracing Christianity by Africans were inadequate. Many embraced Christianity for political, military and economical advantages. It was a package deal for prestige and also to assist them militarily when attacked.
- ♦ While insisting on its exclusive right to direct evangelization in Africa, the Portuguese government tended to prefer its commercial interests to the spread of the Faith. There was no effort made to penetrate beyond a coastal strip to the interior.
- ♦ The Portuguese missions thrived only in areas which were effectively under Portuguese power, and consequently they acquired the character of ecclesiastical colonies. With the exception of the Italian Capuchins in the Congo and in Angola the early Portuguese missions did not face up to the need for inculturation. A deep and accurate knowledge of the African languages and of the customs and mentality of the people was lacking.
- ♦ The tropical climate often killed the missionaries within a short time after their arrival. This is one reason why the mission in the Kingdoms of Loango and Kakongo (1766–1776) had to be abandoned.
- ♦ Moreover, the Priests had not been adequately trained for African conditions and worse still the behaviour of the Portuguese settlers was very scandalous that many African resented them. We find many voices at this time demanding that bad Portuguese missionaries be deported and bring good convinced Portuguese to replace them.

MISSIONARY ETHUSIASM OF THE 19TH CENTURY: THE BIRTH OF LOCAL CHURCHES

Christianity that thrives in Africa owes its origin to efforts by missionaries in the 19th century. We have seen above that earlier efforts to evangelise Africa did not bare much fruit. It is only in the 19th century that we would have the missionary revival that would boost the evangelisation of Africa. The foundation of most of the African Churches took place during the colonial period: 1880-1960.⁹ This age brought to Africa much of the modern infrastructure which greatly facilitated the work of evangelisation.

Contemporary Christianity in Africa goes back to the beginning of the 19th century and is centred on the conversions that took place south of the

⁹ Bengt SUNDKLER, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 74.

Sahara. The conversion took place within an astonishingly short time, resulting in over two hundred million Christians.¹⁰ It is considered the greatest epoch of conversion in the entire history of the Church. The rapidity of Africa's twentieth-century baptism was stunning. One can say it was an explosive conversion on the African Continent. We have earlier seen that earlier efforts to evangelize Africa did not bare much lasting fruit but we note with great satisfaction that the evangelization in the 19th and 20th centuries bore a lot of fruit and from the number of baptized on the continent, one can say it was a great success.

The whole epoch can be divided into three periods:

- ◆ The first Missionaries during the time of exploration (1800–1880).
- ◆ The Establishment of the Church during the time of Colonization (1880–1960).
- ◆ The Indigenization of the Church during the time of independence (1960 onwards).

It is important to note that the pioneers of this missionary revival were mainly Protestant societies. For half a century (1792–1842), Protestant missionaries were practically alone in the field, and until the great 19th century ended with World War I, Protestant evangelists were far more numerous than Catholic ones. The major reason for this is that in the previous century the Protestant Church in Europe had experienced a great revival movement, while the Catholic Church had suffered a serious decline from which she started recovering but quite slowly. In the Portuguese explorations, the Protestant missionaries did not carry out missionary activities probably because the Protestant Churches were new and also because the world powers at the time being Portugal and Spain, these were predominantly Catholic.

The more important Protestant missionary societies founded earlier and, working in Africa were the following:

- ◆ Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), founded in 1792 at the initiative of William Carey.
- ◆ London Missionary Society (LMS), founded in 1795; interdenominational but practically congregational—the society to which Livingstone belonged.
- ◆ The Scottish Missionary Societies founded in 1796: the Edinburg society, the later Church of Scotland Mission (CSM); and the Glasgow society, the later Free Church of Scotland Mission (FCSM); both founders of the African Presbyterian churches.

¹⁰ J. BAUR, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 103.

- ♦ Church Missionary Society (CMS), in 1799 founded by the Evangelical wing of the Church of England—the most influential society in the British colonies.
- ♦ Universities mission to central Africa (UMCA), in 1858 founded following Livingstone’s appeal, became Anglo-Catholic in outlook.

CATHOLIC MISSIONS

Catholic missions were revived years after the Protestants because Catholic missions had received great blows due to a number of reasons:

- ♦ The suppression of the Jesuits drew back many missionaries from the field (1750–1773)—Jesuits were only restored after 1814 (after the fall of Napoleon and re-establishment of the old order).
- ♦ The French Revolution also led to many missionaries withdrawing.
- ♦ Napoleon closed Propaganda Fide and confiscated its goods.
- ♦ By 1815 no more than 270 missionaries were in the field

More so at the beginning of European exploration, the propagation of the faith had been entrusted to the kings of Spain and Portugal who by then had divided the world among themselves. However, in the later centuries this power withered away. Their decline was also a major reason for the decline of the Catholic missions. However, it had one positive effect that it liberated the mission work from royal patronage. For this reason, modern Catholic missions beginning in the 19th Century became the responsibility of the whole Church. The work was supported by the faithful, directed by the pope, and carried out by a host of missionary societies.

Important to note is that the movement started at the base, with a new popular enthusiasm for missions. In 1822 Pauline Jaricot founded in Lyons, the first and most extensive of some 270 support organisations, which provided financial contributions and ensured daily prayers for the salvation of the pagans.¹¹ The papal reorganisation took place under Gregory XVI (1831–1846) and was effected through the Propaganda Fide (the congregation for the propagation of faith) which grew into the most important Roman curial department.

In 1845, Propaganda Fide issued the instruction *Neminem Profecto* which outlined the missionary policy of Gregory XVI.¹² This was to be an impor-

¹¹ <http://www.christianity.com/historybycentury> (retrived on 5th June 2012).

¹² For the text of *Neminem Profecto*, see Josef METZLER (ed.), *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide memoria rerum, 1622–1722* (Rome: Herder, ca 1971-), 736–741. See also Josef

tant document in the missionary enterprise for it stated that mission territories had to be transformed to ordinary Dioceses as soon as possible. More so, Indigenous clergy had to be trained and for that purpose seminaries had to be put up. It recommended that native priests be treated equally. Missionaries were exhorted to abstain from politics, indigenous cultures, customs and arts had to be respected and integrated in the Christian message. It also recommended that synods be held at regular intervals.

Due to his zeal for the missions, it is not surprising that during the pontificate of Gregory XVI more than seventy new missionary ecclesiastical provinces were created and specific mission territories to be evangelised were entrusted to particular missionary societies. This arrangement would remain in practice until Vatican II.

During the reign of Pope Pius IX (1846–1878) an able and competent Cardinal Barnabo became Prefect of Propaganda Fide for twenty years (1854–1874).

The successor of Pius IX, Leo XIII (1878-1903), was also very missionary minded. At the beginning of his pontificate he issued the mission encyclical *Sancta Dei Civitas* (1880) in which he outlined and stressed the duty of all the faithful to have the missions very close at their heart. Leo chose capable and qualified men to lead Propaganda Fide: cardinal Simeoni (1878-1892) and then Cardinal Ledóchowski (1892-1902). The Instruction *Neminem Profecto* of 1845 guided them in their missionary policy: the training of indigenous clergy and the creation of new Churches with Dioceses and bishops was of utmost importance.

The outdated privileges of states with regard to missions had to be abolished. Propaganda Fide instructed Prefects and Vicars apostolic to send in their Quinquennial reports without delay which had to follow the outlines of a questionnaire of 1877.

THE MODERN CHURCH

The 19th and 20th century was a period of abundant harvest for the Church in Africa. It was marked by the blossoming of the Church in Africa. In fact the rapidity of Africa's twentieth-century baptism was stunning. Today, the Church is present everywhere in Africa, the result of barely one century of apostolic activity.

Metzler, 'Die Missionen der Kongregation in Indien mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Patronatsfrage', Vol. 3, part I (Rome: Herder, 1975).

A PERIOD OF EXPLOSION

The 20th century was a period of explosion and massive conversions to Christianity on the African continent. With a few exceptions, such as Buganda and the Creole community in Sierraleone, only a handful of people became Christians in the 19th century. The numbers expanded vastly in the 20th century, largely through the impact of mission schools and the economic benefits of education. The figures are indicative of this.

In 1900, there were 8 to 10 million Christians in Africa, which amounted to 8 to 10 percent of the total population.

Meanwhile on 31 December 1986 the total population of Africa was estimated to be 571,946,000. At that date the number of Catholics in Africa was 74,988,000, representing 13.11% of the total population of the continent. Indeed, the sacrifice of countless missionaries has been richly rewarded. According to the Year Book of the Catholic Church, the area of the Church's fastest growth, at present, is Africa where the increase has been 50% in the last 10 years.¹³

The Hierarchy too is greatly Africanised. During the colonial period, the agents of the evangelization of Africa were exclusively missionaries from abroad, members of the various missionary institutes. Today that situation has changed. Indigenous and expatriate clergy and religious work hand in hand in the task of evangelizing Africa. On 31 December 1986 there were a total of 481 bishops in Africa of whom 348 were natives of the continent. The first indigenous African bishop of modern times, Bishop Joseph Kiwanuka of Masaka, Uganda, was ordained bishop in 1939.

On 31 December 1986 there were a total of 18,353 priests in Africa. Of these 8,591 were incardinated diocesan priests. At that time a total of 38,579 women religious (temporarily and finally professed) were serving the Church in Africa.¹⁴

By 31st December 2001, the population of Africa was estimated at 809,105,000 and of these 135,600,000 were Catholics which accounted for 16.7%. There were 380 dioceses, 474 native bishops, 142 non-African Bishops, 27,988 priests and 20,994 major seminarians.

The following table can give an overview of statistical evidence of the general picture of Christianity in Africa.

¹³ *Annuario Pontificio 2006*. Paxbook.com (retrieved April 11, 2014).

¹⁴ <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org> (retrieved on 14th June 2012).

CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA

REGION	TOTAL POPULATION	CHRISTIAN	%CHRISTIAN	%OF CHRISTIAN TOTAL
Central Africa	125,165,000	100,161,000	80.02%	4.66%
Eastern Africa	325,803,000	208,168,000	63.89%	9.68%
North Africa	206,208,000	10,629,000	5.15%	0.49%
Southern Africa	56,540,000	46,120,000	81.57%	2.14%
Western Africa	299,240,000	117,162,000	39.15%	5.45%
TOTAL	1,012,956,000	482,240,000	47.60%	22.43%

Indeed the future of the Church in Africa is very promising looking at the figures one can confidently say the Church in Africa has drastically grown. In fact while everyday in the west, roughly 7500 people in effect stop being Christians, everyday in Africa double that number become Christians. Little wonder therefore that Pope Benedict XVI, the reigning pontiff while flying over the Sahara said: “The African Continent is the lung of the Church”.

In the twentieth century, the Christian population in Africa exploded from an estimated eight or nine million in 1900 (8 to 9%) to some 335 million in 2000 (45%), marking a shift in the “center of gravity of Christianity” from the West to Latin America, parts of Asia and Africa.

At the turn of the 20th century, Christianity was virtually nonexistent in many parts of Africa but is now the faith of the majority, as the following figures demonstrate:

PANAROMIC VIEW

Country	% Christians in 1900	% Christians in 2000
Congo-Zaire	1.4%	95.4%
Angola	0.6%	94.1%
Swaziland	1.0%	86.9%
Zambia	0.3%	82.4%
Kenya	0.2%	79.3%
Malawi	1.8%	76.8%

CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AFRICA

ITEM	YEAR ENDING 31 ST DECEMBER 2001
Total Population	809,105,000
Total Catholics	135,600,000
Percentage of Catholics	16.7%
Archdioceses	83
Dioceses	380
Cardinals	16

CONCLUSION

The question: is Christianity in Africa a fruit of colonialism gets a blunt no as the answer. Christianity on the African continent precedes colonialism. Interesting to note however, when we look at the figures of conversions, there was a massive explosion of conversions after the onset of colonialism. This could be the reason why some scholars would force a connection between Christianity and colonialism. All said, we can safely say Christianity in Africa is as old as Christianity itself. It precedes colonialism on the African continent.

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CZY CHREZEŚCIJAŃSTWO W AFRYCE
JEST OWOCEM KOLONIALIZMU?

Streszczenie

W tradycyjnych i konserwatywnych kręgach popularny jest pogląd, że chrześcijaństwo jako religia zostało wprowadzone przez kolonialistów. Tymczasem historia chrześcijaństwa w Afryce jest o wiele starsza i zaczyna się w czasach Apostołów. Pierwszy okres chrześcijaństwa w północnej Afryce oraz w rogu Afryki zakończył się wraz z inwazją islamu. Następną próbą zaszczerpienia chrześcijaństwa był okres kolonizacji portugalskiej od XV do XVIII wieku, zakończony niepowodzeniem. Dopiero wysiłek misyjny wieku XIX doprowadził do trwałego i znacznego wzrostu Kościołów afrykańskich. W 2000 r. populacja chrześcijan w Afryce wyniosła 335 milionów i wykazuje tendencje wzrostowe.

Słowa kluczowe: chrześcijaństwo w Afryce; kolonializm; misje.