

The History of Christianity: Brief Survey 5. The Rise of Christianity in the Developing World

Topics

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1. Introduction

- **16th century:** Christianity largely a European religion
- **Second half of 16th century:** Catholic church established Commission for the Spreading of the Faith
- **Next 2 centuries:**
 - the Catholic church dominated missionary work outside Europe, led by the Jesuits
 - An evangelical revival in England led to evangelical missionaries in territories of the British empire
- **Early 1800's:** most Christians lived in Northern Hemisphere, predominately Europe
- **Today:**
 - most Christians live in the Southern Hemisphere
 - the numerical center has shifted to South America, southern Africa, parts of Asia

2. Latin America

2.1. Summary of Christianity's Spread

- The colonial powers in South America were Spain and Portugal
- They developed missions. The Jesuits were particularly active.
- By **1800**, South America was extensively Christianized
- In **1970's** 92% of the people nominally Catholic

2.2. Latin America and Liberation Theology

2.2.1. CELAM II

1968: Catholic bishops of Latin America gathered at Medellin, Columbia. CELAM II

- Bishops acknowledged that church had often sided with oppressive governments in the region; in the future it would be on the side of the poor

2.2.2. *Basic themes of Liberation Theology*

- 1. emphasis on the poor and oppressed
 - Christian theology must begin with the “view from below”
 - “the poor are the authentic theological source for understanding Christian truth and practice” (Juan Luis Segundo)
 - “God is clearly and unequivocally on the side of the poor” (Jose Miguel Bonion)
- 2. theology cannot be detached from social involvement or political action
 - “Theology has to stop explaining the world, and start transforming it” (Bonion)
 - true knowledge of God comes in and through commitment to the poor

2.2.3. *Criticism of Liberation Theology*

Criticism of Liberation Theology has included:

- Marxism used as tool of social analysis
- Scripture read as a narrative of liberation
- Often equates salvation with liberation
 - emphasis is on “structural sin” of society rather than individual redemption

2.3. Rise of the Evangelical and Charismatic Movements

There has been a recent explosion of evangelical and pentecostal groups in Latin America. Reasons:

- Salvation in these groups does not require membership in a specific church
- Involves a “free enterprise, leveling form of ministry:” -- evangelicals fed up with their pastors simply go out and establish their own church
- Pentecostalism often in tune with elements of popular culture: belief in spirits, exorcism of demons, conversion experience

3. South-East Asia

Except for the Philippines, Christianity in South-East Asia is best described as a growing minority presence.

3.1. The Philippines

- **1521**: group of 3,141 islands “discovered” by Ferdinand Magellan
- Under Spanish rule, missionary work undertaken by the Franciscans and Dominicans
- **1898**: came under American rule
 - Today, the Philippines is the only predominately Christian country in south-east Asia
 - Catholicism is the dominant form for Christianity; Protestant missionary societies were established after end of Spanish rule in 1898

3.2. Japan

3.2.1. Summary of Christian Evangelization Through 19th Century

- **1549**: Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier landed at Kagoshima, Japan, began Christian evangelization
- A long period of isolation began under the **Tokugawa shogunate**
- **1865**: Japan again opened its doors to the west. 60,000 believers were still present
 - the greatest pocket of believers (20,000) was found in **Nagasaki**. They had survived despite intermittent persecution
 - Roman Catholic missionaries initially focused on bringing them back to orthodoxy
- During the Meiji period **1868-1912** Christianity had a growing following

3.2.2. The Non-Church Movement

Uchimura Kanzo: founded the **Non-Church Movement**

- He felt the traditional church structure was a Western accretion
- The Non-church movement favored loosely organized Bible-study groups based on Asian teacher-pupil relationship

3.2.3. Growing Militarism of the 1930's

The **1930's** saw an increasing militarism

- **Shintoism** and its rites declared patriotic rather than religious

3.2.4. Religious Bodies Law of 1939

- **1939**: Religious Bodies Law
 - required formal government recognition of churches; all foreign ties had to be cut
 - Protestants joined forces, formed **Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan** (Today it is still the largest Protestant body in Japan)
 - Roman Catholic Church also recognized

3.2.5. Atomic Bomb on Nagasaki Destroys the Oldest Center of Christianity

- **1945**: atomic bomb on Nagasaki destroyed the oldest center of Christianity in Japan

3.2.6. Christianity Today

- Presently, about 1.5 to 4% population Christian.

- Christianity like "butter:" a western import.
 - The colloquial Japanese term for Christianity: "it tastes of butter"

3.3. China

3.3.1. *Summary of Evangelism Through the Early 20th Century:*

- **635:** Nestorian missionary from the Eastern church may have arrived. They never achieved any success in conversions
- **1294:** Franciscan missionaries first reached China
- Opium wars of **1840's**: opened up the Middle Kingdom to some western attitudes
- Western attempts to evangelize of limited success.
 - Christianity was western, un-Chinese
 - foreigners blamed for defeat of China by Japan in war of **1894-95**
 - I Ho Ch'uan crusade of **1899-1900**: fanatical opposition to foreign investment and religious activity
- **1911:** republic of China. Christianity officially tolerated

3.3.2. *People's Republic of China*

- **1949:** People's Republic of China
 - all western missionaries ejected
 - "cultural revolution" 1960's: Christianity suppressed by force
- **1979:** cultural revolution ended; some Christians had survived

3.3.3. *Three Strands in Modern Chinese Christianity*

There are three strands in modern Chinese Christianity:

- 1. The Self Patriotic Movement (Protestant)
 - founded **1951**
 - is the "official" church; state has considerable control
 - self-supporting, self-administrating, self-propagating
- 2. Catholic Church. There are two "Catholic Churches" in China:
 - the government sanctioned Catholic Church which is independent of the pope ("Catholic Patriotic Association")
 - a Catholic Church that remains loyal to pope (a problem; government requires churches be independent of foreign agencies)
- 3. House Church Movement
 - strongly charismatic

3.4. Korea

- **1883:** ended a long period of international isolation with Korean-American treaty
- **1884:** American Presbyterian missions established
- **1910:** Japan annexed Korea as colony, imposed Shintoism
- **After WWII:** massive growth Christianity
- 30-40% Koreans now Christians, predominately Presbyterians
- Western culture is seen as liberating, not oppressive

4. Africa

4.1. First Century

- **1st century:** North Africa (now Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt) was part of Roman Empire
 - The city of Alexandria (Egypt) was a major centers of Christian thought

4.2. Seventh Century

- **7th century:** Islamic invasions
 - Coptic church survived in Egypt as minority religion
 - Small nation of Ethiopia remained Christian

4.3. Sixteenth Century

- In the **16th century:**
 - Islam dominant religion in North.
 - In the South, native religions dominated
 - Portugal began occupying uninhabited island off west coast

4.4. Late Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

4.4.1 Missionary Societies and Groups Begin Evangelization

- **Late 18th century / Early 19th century:** British missionary societies actively evangelized Africa
 - Baptist Missionary Society (BMS): Congo basin
 - London Missionary Society (LMS): southern Africa including Madagascar
 - Church Missionary Society (CMS): west and east Africa
- In the **middle 19th century:** Catholic missionary groups arrived

4.4.2. Colonialism

The dominant feature of missionary work in the late 19th century was colonialism

- Belgium
- Britain
- France
- Germany

Several forms of Christianity therefore were established:

- Anglicanism
- Catholicism
- Lutheranism

4.4.3. Two Type of Christians

Two Types of African Christians in the late 19th century:

- Expatriate Europeans. They maintained Christian life of homeland
- Indigenous Africans. They tended to be those on the margins of traditional African society: slaves, women, the poor

4.4.4. Problems

Problems faced by Christianity in the 19th Century:

- It was difficult to communicate the distinctive ideas of Christianity
- Christianity created tensions with traditional African society
 - for example, the issue of monogamy vs. polygamy. Lead to the establishment of the United African Methodist Church, which allowed polygamy
- was a threat to the traditional tribal power structures and loyalties
 - **1886** massacre of Christians by Baganda king Mwanga (region of modern Uganda)

4.5. Christian Church in Africa Today

4.5.1. Christian Population

Overall, about 48% of Africans are Christian

Countries in which the population is more than 70% Christian:

- Central African Republic
- Kenya
- Congo
- Lesotho

4.5.2. Christians and Muslims

Christian-Muslim "interface" 48% nominally Christian; 42.5% nominally Muslim

4.5.3. End of Colonialism

20th Century brought an end to colonialism and independence for many African states.

4.5.4. African Independent Churches

Rise of "African Independent Churches"

- emphasis on retaining traditional African heritage within context of Christian faith
- reaction against racism of some white European churches
- often charismatic (healing, exorcisms, interpretation dreams)
- emphasis on experience, symbolism rather than word
- strict discipline over members
- delight in hierarchical titles
- conservative in bible interpretation
- most are small and local; the largest churches however have branches in Western capitals:
 - **The Church of The Lord** (Aladura)
 - **Kimbanguists**. Founded by Simon Kimbangu, a young Baptist

5. India

5.1. Summary of Christianity's Spread Through the 19th Century

- Tradition: apostle Thomas founded Indian **Mar Thoma church** in 1st century
- There is good evidence Christianity was present by the 4th century, spread via overland trading routes
- **1481**: papal bull gave Portuguese king spiritual authority of Indies. Bishopric of Goa established
- **May 6, 1542**: Francis Xavier arrives, starting Jesuit missionary work, translations of Christian works
- **Early 18th century**: Protestant missions established
- **Late 18th century**: growing political British power and Pope Clement XIV's suppression of Jesuits favored British missionaries
- The East India Company opposed missionary work (it might create ill will; threatening trade)
- Charter Act **1813**: gave British missionaries protected status, established Anglican bishopric at Calcutta
 - as a result, missionary work expanded markedly (but was restricted to Anglicans)
- The Uprising of **1857** (called the "Indian Mutiny" by contemporary English writers): engendered a growing resentment of westernization

5.2. The Problem of Caste

How to deal with Caste was an enduring problem for both Catholic and Protestant.

- **1830's**: Anglican bishop Wilson opposed its persistence by converts; policy followed by other Protestants (except Lutherans)
- Roman Catholics missionaries were divided: Irish opposed caste; French respected caste; Italians mixed
 - **1744**: Pope Benedict XIV ruled Catholics of high and low birth should go to Mass at same church
 - Jesuits made 2 entrances and erected little walls in their churches

5.3. Christianity and Hinduism

5.3.1 Ram Mohun Roy 1772-1833

- Concluded orthodox Hinduism corrupted
- **1815**: founded *Atmiya Sabha*
- Advocated abolition of *sati* (often misspelled as *suttee*)
- **1820**: wrote *Precepts of Jesus*: Christianity embodies a moral code acceptable to Hindus
- His was a Non-orthodox Christianity:
 - Trinitarian concept impossible for Hindus to accept; unitarian concept okay
 - Sins can be forgiven without the atonement of Christ (Brahmo theism rejects ideas of revelation and atonement)

5.3.2 Keshub Chunder Sen (1838-84)

- Christ brought to fulfillment all that was best in Indian religion (cf Thomas Aquinas & John Calvin: Christianity brings to fulfillment the aspirations of classic Greece and Rome)
- embraced doctrine of Trinity: Brahman indivisible and indescribable. Inner relationships trinitarian:
 - *Sat* (being) -- God the Father as "Being"
 - *Cit* (reason) -- God the Son as "Word"
 - *Amanda* (bliss) -- God the Spirit as "comforter", "bringer of joy and love"

5.3.3. Raimundo Panikkar

- A Roman Catholic
- He wrote *Unknown Christ of Hinduism*
- Argued for a hidden presence of Christ in Hindu practice, esp. justice and compassion
- Believed many aspects of Hindu thought compatible with Christian understanding of Christ
- Christian theologians should draw from Hindu thought rather than attacking it

5.3.4 Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya (1861-1907)

Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya was a Roman Catholic; wore robes of a Hindu holy man; thought it possible to be both a Hindu and a Christian. He argued

- Christianity in the past has used non-Christian philosophical systems to explain itself:
 - Thomas Aquinas used the philosophy of Aristotle
- In the same way, Indian Christian theologians should draw upon Indian philosophical systems:
 - *Vedanta* was an expression of Christian theology
 - The *Vedas* was the Indian "Old Testament"

The Roman Catholic Apostolic Delegate forbade Catholics to read his work

5.4. Independence and the Church of South India

- Sep. 27, 1947: India granted independence
- Anglicans, Methodists, and several smaller Christian denominations then joined to form the "**Church of South India**"
- Today, about 5% of the population is Christian

6. The South Pacific

6.1. Oceania

Oceania: the approximately 1500 islands of the Pacific ocean. Includes:

- Polynesia (Hawaii to New Zealand, including Tahiti)
- Micronesia (Hawaii to Philippines, including Marshall Islands)
- Melanesia (south of Micronesia, north of Australia, including Fiji, and Solomon Islands)

The voyages of Captain Cook first awakened interest

- **1795:** London Missionary Society founded; its primary mission: "the islands of the South Sea"
- The establishment of mission stations impractical; instead they used missionary ships

6.2. Australia

- **1788:** a fleet from New South Wales arrived with convicts. Before the ship had sailed William Wilberforce (MP from Yorkshire; known for his campaign against British slave trade) had convinced British Navy at the last minute to allow a chaplain
- **19th century:** large numbers immigrants from Britain
- **1897:** "Bush Brotherhood" founded for the evangelization of the interior of the continent

6.3. New Zealand

1814: first missionaries arrived

1841: Bishop George Selwyn (1809-78) missionary bishop of New Zealand

6.4. Relationship of Christianity with Native People

The relationship of Christianity with native peoples has been an issue in both Australia and New Zealand:

- Australia: Kuri (“Aborigines”)
- New Zealand: Maori