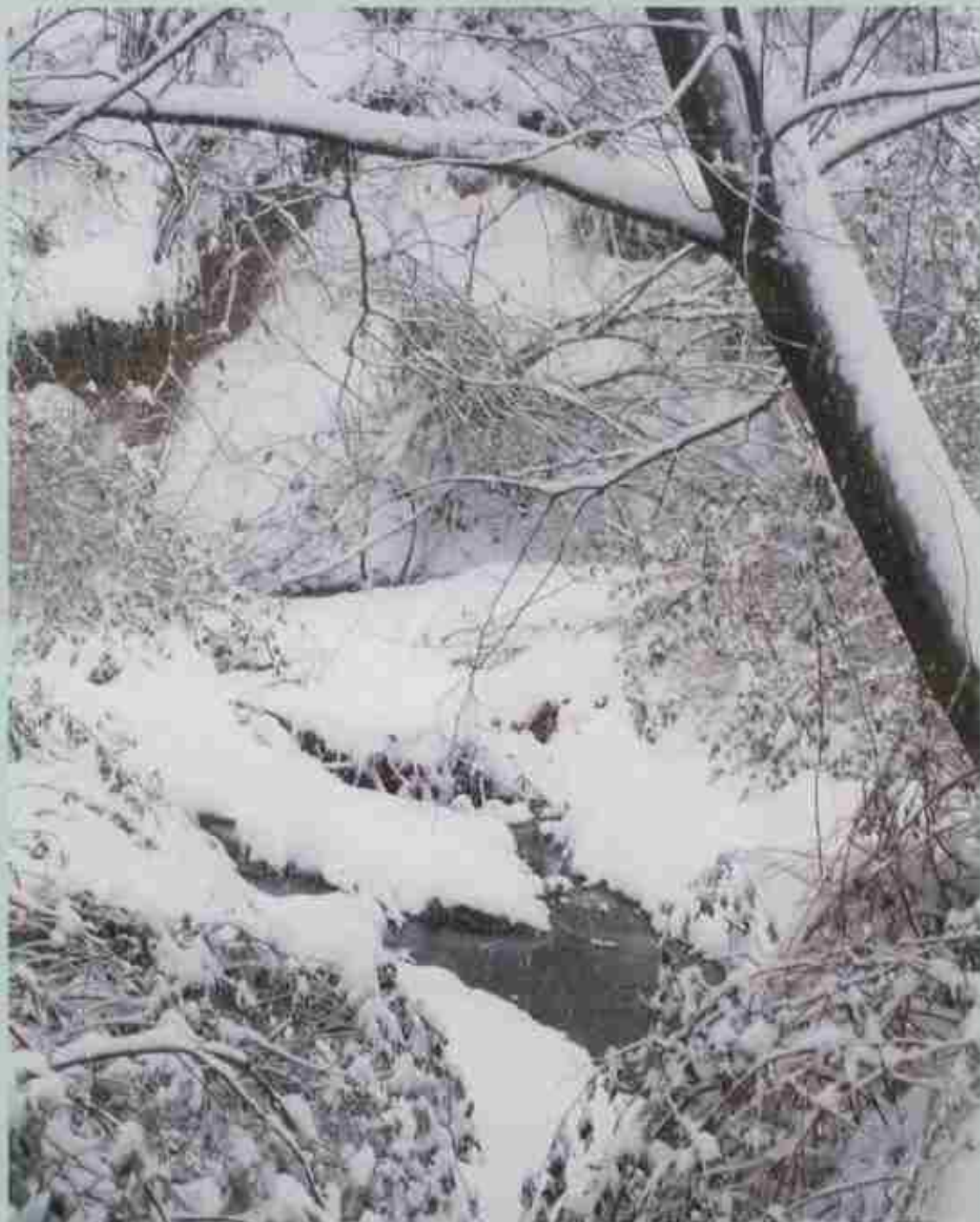


THE PENTECOST

ISSUE #30 January 2009



THE PENTECOST



We have crossed over into 2009, and Happy New Year to you! In this issue of The Pentecost we will look at the Christian Church in northern Nigeria. This article will be followed by other articles, in subsequent issues, on God's work in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. We will also discuss the house of God and God's names. God bless you!
Shawn Stevens

Welcome back. We hope that you are rested up from the Christmas holidays and ready to journey with us across the world, where we can learn from our Christian brothers and sisters in Nigeria and see God at work there.
Ramona Stevens



Zion
CHRISTIAN MINISTRY
Shawn Stevens
Ramona Stevens

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 932,
Lynden, WA 98264 USA

Phone: 804.854.8141
Email: info@zionchristianministry.com
ZionChristianMinistry.com

IN THIS ISSUE

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN NORTHERN NIGERIA	3-4
THE HOUSE OF GOD	5-6
THE NAMES OF GOD	8-7

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

When most people who have some knowledge of Africa think of northern Nigeria, they think of a territory which is solely Muslim. The media runs articles on Islamic fundamentalism in northern Nigeria and reinforces this perception. However, northern Nigeria is not the solid Islamic block that it is often depicted to be. For at least a hundred years Christian missionary activity has been at work there and now a strong Church has emerged. It began as a mustard seed and has grown into a mighty tree. In this article, we will examine the spreading and the establishing of the Christian Church in northern Nigeria.

To understand the story of the Church in northern Nigeria, it is useful to know a little bit about the history of this area. Before the presence of the British, large groups of tribal people lived here. Some archaeologists believe that these tribal people originated in the Middle East and migrated across the desert to, what is now, northern Nigeria. The two largest people groups in this area are the Hausa and the Fulani. It is believed that the Hausa settled in the north about a thousand years ago. It is also believed that Islam came to the north in the 13th century. Islam spread among these two people groups and was especially strengthened under the Fulani who conquered the Hausa for a time.

The great river, Niger, served as somewhat of a natural boundary to the spread of Islam in what we today call Nigeria. South of the Niger River there were also tribal people, especially the Yoruba and the Igbo. These people followed animism. British and European Christian missionaries came into these parts and largely evangelized the people. Under British rule, the Nigerian protectorate was comprised of a Muslim north and a Christian and animistic south. A new military government, (non-British), in 1967 divided the north into six states and, in 1976, an additional four states were formed.

A dark chapter in the story of European and African relations was the slave trade which depopulated large portions of the Nigerian protectorate. However, strong Christian movements in England pressured the government until, finally, in 1807, British subjects were forbidden to participate in the slave trade. Further, in 1833, slavery was formally abolished in the British Empire. Efforts were made to curtail the American extraction of slaves from Africa as well. Once the slave trade ended, the chaotic conditions in the Nigerian protectorate began to normalize. At this point, many from England became involved in traveling to the Nigerian protectorate and establishing infrastructure in the region. Some of these also labored at spreading Christian faith. However, formal missionary work that was not connected with commerce and government did not really appear, in significant strength, until the late 19th century.

Pioneer missionaries, such as Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a Yoruban Christian, did much work in the protectorate. Crowther was ordained by the Anglican Church in 1843 and was consecrated the Bishop of Western Equatorial Africa beyond the Queen's Dominions. In the latter half of the 19th century, floods of missionaries poured into the Nigerian protectorate, engaging in evangelistic work. Some of these even penetrated into the North. Mr. Simpson, a diplomatic agent, in 1871 conducted a survey of the northern town of Lokoja. According to his estimates, most of the 500 tribesmen living in Lokoja were Muslim, however, around forty were Christian. They made up the first known Christian community in the North. Other groups, such as the Sudan Party missionaries, also labored in these regions. They were associated with the British Keswick Convention and emphasized Holiness doctrine in their preaching. Sometimes groups, like the Sudan Party missionaries, conflicted with other missionary groups which were less challenging and less

confrontational. Those following the less challenging and less confrontational approach aimed for what they considered to be a wider infusion of Christian faith that they hoped would later grow into a deeper and more mature experience of Christianity. Others, like the Sudan Party, disdained compromise and were more concerned with being faithful to the Gospel rather than being concerned with the numbers of people whom they were influencing. Also, Methodist missionaries set up bases in the South and, by means of railways, began penetrating the North. Christian missionaries from a diverse background continued coming into the region.

Many times Christian missionaries were warmly welcomed by the tribes-people in the North. Other times they were mistrusted and resisted, especially by Islamic religious leaders. Although the British officially had government and military rule in northern Nigeria, their hold on the region was not very strong. There was a lack of funding from the British government and a lack of manpower to sufficiently govern this region. British officials were aware of this and, consequently, made many compromises with northern Islamic leaders in order to gain their trust and support. Unfortunately, this meant that the British government outlawed Christian evangelistic work in the North. British officials were concerned, not only over the religious implications of missionary work amongst northerners but, also, over the social implications of such work. Christian missionaries were teaching that all men were equal, and it was feared that this idea might undermine the existing social structure which was built on a strict hierarchy.

By the late 1920s and early 1930s, Christian missionaries had pressured the government sufficiently to begin considering changes to the existing ban on northern missionary work. In May of 1931, amendments were made to government policy and mission stations were permitted in the far North, but

still with certain stiff restrictions.

One area through which Christian missionaries had great success in the spread of the faith was in education. Before the missionaries came to the Nigerian protectorate, there was no organized system of written education and the vast majority of the population was illiterate. The only education existing in the North was in primitive Quranic schools. In the South, where missionaries enjoyed the greatest freedom to carry out their work, very many missionary schools were founded and education flourished. The government did not have the resources to provide secular education on a large scale but did make at least some effort and started some schools. Especially after the Second World War, strong feelings were emerging in the North, feelings that they were not keeping pace with the modern world and the benefits of modernity. There was a great demand and outcry for medicine, political structure and education. Again, the government did not have the resources to provide for this need, but the need could be met to some degree by the government giving grants to already existing Christian missionary schools and letting them expand their work. Not only were Christian missionaries willing to set up schools, they were also willing to work on missionary salaries. Christian missionary educational work in the North flourished until, by 1960, they were playing a major role in the educational system of northern Nigeria. Even in government-established schools, Christian religious instruction could be found alongside Islamic education.

Another area in which Christian missionaries gained access to the North was through medical work. Missionary organizations came in and established hospitals, dispensaries and leprosy settlements. The impact that these have had upon the needy communities of the North cannot be

overstated. Even before the coming of Christian missionaries, in the minds of the tribesmen there was a strong association between physical healing and spirituality. When tribesmen were helped by the missionary's medicine, very often they were open to hearing of the missionary's message. Once again, as in the case of education, the secular government did not have the resources to sufficiently establish hospitals where they were needed throughout Nigeria. So, once again, the government worked hand-in-hand with the missionary societies, sometimes providing aid to missionary hospitals and, at other times, founding secular hospitals with staff recruited by missionaries. Through medical work, Christianity saw much growth in the North.

Another area in which Christian presence in the North was strengthened was through the settlement of non-indigenous Christians. In the North there could be found many Christians who were of African origin, yet from outside of northern Nigeria. There were even large numbers of Lebanese who settled in the North. It has been estimated that at the beginning of the 1920s, forty percent of educated Africans in the northern townships were from other parts of Africa. Around eighty-three percent of these were Christians. Although Christian faith did spread in the North from missionaries to natives, it spread in a greater way in the North from natives to natives. Indigenous Nigerian Christian groups from the South felt the need to reach their fellow Nigerians and began penetrating the North and sharing their faith. It has been said that, between the two world wars, the majority of Christian believers in the North came from the southern parts of Nigeria.

As native Christian Nigerians began sharing their faith with other Nigerians, both in the North and elsewhere, the Christian Church grew. Because much of the growth of the Christian Church in Nigeria has been indigenous, the converts

in many cases have been outside of the operation of established organizations and denominations. The Nigerian Church is known for its various prophetic movements in which independent Christian leaders have risen up and founded their own organizations. From the 1970s onward, it is also known for the "Pentecostal wave" which has swept through the nation. Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement have grown immensely in Nigeria.

Many of the Hausa and Fulani have turned to Christ and know Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Christianity in the North could not be stopped by neither Muslim religious leaders nor the British government. Through pioneer missionary ministers, missionary teachers, missionary doctors, and indigenous Nigerians themselves, Christianity has spread in northern Nigeria and a strong Church has emerged to the glory of Jesus Christ, its founder.

Shawn Stevens

References:

- Crompton, E.P.T. *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*. Bukuru Nigeria: Africa Christian Textbooks, 2004.
- Hanicies, Jehu J. "Conversion and Social Change: A Review of the Unfinished Task in West Africa" Donald M. Lewis. *The Global Expansion Of Evangelicalism In The Twentieth Century*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2004.

THE NAMES OF GOD

There is much that can be learned about God by studying His names. Names were very important to the ancient Hebrew people. A person's name was believed to provide insights into their basic nature. While this may or may not be true of a human person, it certainly is true of God. The Scriptures put a good deal of emphasis on God's name, for example: "I will freely sacrifice to You; I will praise Your name, O Lord, for it is good." (Psalm 54:6) and; "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, The righteous run to it and are safe." (Proverbs 18:10). By learning God's names, we will have a better understanding of His character and may gain a greater trust in Him. The Bible tells us; "And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; For You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You." (Psalm 9:10).

The first name used for God in the Bible is ELOHIM. It occurs about 2,570 times in the Old Testament, and its meaning relates to revealing God as a God of power. It tells of His power in creating, ruling and judging the moral universe. El is used as God's name about 200 times in the Old Testament, and some believe that it is the oldest Semitic name for God. It is believed to be an equivalent for ELOHIM and stresses God's power, immensity, strength, greatness, authority, and majesty. Another name for God is ELOAH. This appears in the Old Testament 56 times and the suggested meaning for this name is "Adorable One." The Hebrew text of the Old Testament also contains many compound names for God combined with El. El Shaddai is one compound name and it is generally accepted to mean "God Almighty." Another compound name using El is El Olam. This is generally accepted to mean "Everlasting God." Another example of a compound name is El Elyon which means "most high God."¹

The most common reference for God in the Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts is YHWH. We call this the "Tetragrammaton." It occurs more than 6,000 times. It is derivative of the verb "to be." Its suggested meaning would be; God is the self-existing one, the One Who was, Who is, and Who

will be. This would fit in well with God's statement to Moses in Exodus 3:14; "And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' ". In the original Hebrew YHWH is written in consonants without any vowels. It has been translated as "Jehovah", but many scholars feel that "Yahweh" is a more accurate pronunciation than "Jehovah" for this name. However, YHWH is usually translated as LORD in English-language Bibles.

Just as there are compound names for God with "El" as their root, so too there are compound names for God with "Jehovah" as their root. We learn that Jehovah Sabaoth is "Lord of Hosts", which depicts God in charge of the great armies of heaven. The name Jehovah Jireh stands for "the Lord will provide". Jehovah Nissi stands for "The Lord our banner" or "The Lord our personal leader." God, the sanctifier, is Jehovah Qadesh. We are reminded of the LORD's care for us by Jehovah Rauh, "the Lord is my shepherd." We learn that God heals, for He is referred to as Jehovah Rapha. Another name is Jehovah Shammah, meaning "The Lord is personally present" and Jehovah Shalom means "the Lord is peace."² These are some of the compound uses of the name "Jehovah", but there are others, also.

God's nature can be partly understood by understanding His names. They testify of His strength, His grandeur, His greatness, His holiness and His loving care. By meditating on His names, our faith in Him can grow and we can come to trust Him in greater and greater ways.

God bless you

Shawn Stevens

1. Holdcroft, Thomas L. *The Doctrine of God*. Oakland Western Book Co., 1978.

2. *Ibid.*, 13-14.