

ACTIVITIES OF AFRICAN INDIGENOUS WORSHIP CENTRES AND THEIR
CHALLENGES TO CHRISTIANITY IN OYO, OYO STATE

AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES
THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, OGBOMOSO

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
MASTER OF DIVINITY IN THEOLOGY

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MATRIC NO: 12/0130

JUNE, 2015

ABSTRACT

Christianity is still very “young” in Oyo despite its long age of existence in the town. The level of spiritual and numerical growth of churches in Oyo cannot be compared with her long age of existence. Many who claim to be Christians are still traditionalist who fail to completely disassociate or fully coming out of their old religion. It becomes sometimes difficult to separate traditionalists from ‘Christians’. People of the land are so engulfed in traditionalism that Christian faith and practices becomes difficult for people. All these problems can be traced to the challenges posed by the activities of African Indigenous worship centres to Christianity in Oyo. The challenges are as a result of recent revival in African Indigenous religion which is a product of many factors such as the influx of educated figures who sells out information about the religion and make the religion to be on the same level as Christianity and Islam. This brings civilization and modernization in form of use of modern worship centres, modern equipments for worship service, structured or organized worship service into the religion. African Indigenous religion is a background religion of Africans; notably the Yorubas and especially the Oyos. The religion dictates almost all aspect of life of the people. This essay explored the activities of the African Indigenous religion and their challenges to Christianity in Oyo, Oyo State. The study discovered that the challenges are many. It includes spiritual changes, social challenges, ethical challenges, educational and evangelism challenges. These challenges are inimical to the growth and development of Christian faith in the land. Notably among these problem is the problem of syncretism which has eaten deep into the life of Christianity in the land. However, Christians in Oyo must develop a Christ-like love towards the adherents of African Indigenous religion and have basic understanding about the religion if adherents will be won for Christ. Pragmatic steps in ministering among the adherents of African Indigenous religion as a stated in this essay must be properly followed. Therefore, Christians in Oyo land must rise up in aggressive evangelism and agonizing intercessory prayers to face challenges from traditionalists and sustain Christianity in the land.

5.2. Conclusion

It has been submitted that AIR is as old as the people of Oyo. The religion is part of the people of Oyo and that it pre – dates Christianity in Oyo. The recent revival in AIR in terms of modernization, restructuring of liturgical order, education etc. is posing serious challenges to Christianity in the town. The spiritual, social, ethical, evangelical and educational challenges of AIR on Christianity in Oyo are enormous and obvious. The church in Oyo need and should rise up to these challenges in order to curb the spread of AIR and their activities which are inimical to growth and development of Christian faith in the town. If Christianity in Oyo will be sustained and regain spiritual strength and flavor and fulfill the new Testament mandate of spreading the gospel of Christ, the church in Oyo should wake – up and should not over look at take with levity the challenges posed by AIR on Christian faith in Oyo.

5.3 Recommendations

The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary is commended and appreciated for their commitment to training ministers of the gospel to meet the challenges of this end time through the inclusion of Islam, ATR and other world religions in their course curriculum which give basic knowledge of their religions to pastors. She should also emphasis on how the gospel can be witnessed among the adherents of these religions and they can be won for Christ.

The church in Oyo can be re-oriented through their pastors; especially through the bodies such as Christian council of Nigeria, (CCN), Christian Association of Nigeria Oyo Chapter (CAN); Pastor Fellowships etc. on the activities of AIR and their challenges to Christianity in Oyo Town. Also there should be re-awakening and re-orientation of how to witness among the AIR adherents in Oyo.

The Christian bodies and denominations in Oyo should re-unite and revived in embarking on aggressive evangelism that target the youths and children so as to win these youth and children for Christ at their early stage.

The Christians bodies such as Christian Council of Nigeria, Christian Association of Nigeria, Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) etc. should be able to confront and address some challenges of AIR on Christianity especially the problem of syncretism in the church and encourage sound Christian living and teaching for salvation of the people.

Pastors in Oyo should learn to trust God and make Him the only source of their strength and power, they should be ready to teach the undiluted word of God

especially when it comes to issue of Christianity and traditional beliefs such as belief in Ancestor, worship of family gods, use of magic and medicine, etc. churches should be taught very seriously that while Christianity may not be totally divorced from African culture and belief, then those beliefs and cultures which are anti-Christian, or which can result in syncretism or brings Christianity to the level of idol worship should be discouraged and should not be allowed and practiced as Christians.