

AN EVALUATION OF THE PRACTICE OF EVANGELISM IN CHRISTIANITY

AND DA'WAH IN ISLAM

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By

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ABSTRACT

It is disheartening to note that more than two-third of the total world population is yet to be evangelized (Douglas J. D. 6). A large portion of this ratio is those faithful to Islam. And to get these ones to receive the Gospel message it will require the commitment to the practice of Evangelism by all serious Christians. Islam and Christianity are basically not the same religion. There are real differences between the practice of Evangelism and Da'wah. Muslims and Christians must not minimize or ignore these differences when we encounter each other. The differences are painful because humanly, we always want those whom we live with and care about to think and act the same way as ourselves. For religious believers, the fact that others do not follow our path to God is especially painful, because we all consider our faith as "a treasure to be shared," the greatest gift which we can offer to our immediate neighbours or even to the whole world. Studying together the differences between our two faiths can have positive results. We come to a renewed appreciation for what is unique in our own religion path, and we return to God grateful for the faith with which he has blessed us. We also grow in respect for the sincere convictions of others, even though they may be different from our own. We understand better why they act the way they do, how they view life and its problems, and we realize better something of our common humanity before God. When Christians and Muslims engage in a study of each other's religion, they often experience a great sense of discovery of how much they have in common. This study has revealed that some of the current Evangelism fad in Christianity involves "seeker friendly" services. This service is very comfortable and familiar for the twenty-first century people, but would it be familiar to God. That the assembly of the New Testament Christian is never described as the vehicle of conversion but designed for members who had believed Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and savior and for their maturation and growth. (Hebrews 5:12-14). The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed an onslaught of Christian Evangelism missions to the Muslim lands, though there had been previous organized attempts by Christians to baptize Muslims, the European colonies in most Muslim Asia and Africa countries made these Christian missionary activities possible. In fact some converted to Christianity, while others, and still nominally Muslim, embraced European lifestyles. This study also revealed that, the newly emerged Muslim missionary movements, propagating Da'wah, have no structural or methodological traditions of their own, in many cases turned to and borrowed from Christian missionary groups in Muslim lands. Muslim missionary society would appear to have been formed in conscious imitation of similar organizations in the Christian world, and are not in themselves the most characteristic expressions of the missionary spirit of Islam. It is my earnest prayer that this study will bring about closer and peaceful relationship between the Christians and Muslims in Nigeria.

5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study observed that some of the current evangelism fad involves “seeker friendly” services. This service is very comfortable and familiar for the twenty-first century people, but would it be familiar to God? Assemblies of Christians in

the New Testament were not designed to be “seeker friendly” or “seeker resistant” but they were designed to encourage and edify the members of the Church (Hebrew 10:24-25, I Corinthians 14:26). That the assembly of the New Testament Christian is never described as the vehicle of conversion but designed for members who had believed Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and savior and for their maturation and growth (Hebrews 5:12-14). That 18th and especially 19th Centuries witnessed an onslaught of Christian missions to the Muslim lands, though there had been previous organized attempts by Christians to baptize Muslims, the European colonies in most Muslim Asia and Africa countries made these Christian missionary activities possible. Muslims had occasioned contacts with Christian through, educational, medical and other social humanitarian contacts. These contacts had several consequences for Muslims. In fact some converted to Christianity, while others, still remaining as nominal Muslim, embraced European lifestyles.

This study also concludes that, the newly emerged Muslim missionary movements, propagating Da’wah, have no structural or methodological traditions of their own, but have in many cases turned to and borrowed from Christian missionary groups in Muslim lands. Arnold submitted that “Muslim missionary societies would appear to have been formed in conscious imitation of similar organizations in the Christian World, and are not in themselves the most characteristic expressions of the missionary spirit of Islam” (Arnold 443).

5.3 Recommendations

Christianity and Islam are two missionary religions in Nigeria. However, experience has shown that the Christians and the Muslims in Nigeria do not see each other as brother, and this hatred has caused clashes, particularly in the Northern part of the country. Here lies the burden of the researcher. He believes that these fracas are due to ignorance; intolerance; impatience and the unwillingness of both religions to study each other. The researcher further believes that the relationship between these two prominent missionary-religions could be better than it is now, hence the researcher made the following recommendations:-

1. The Christians have been seen to be tolerant, loving and matured in Spirit in their practice of Evangelism. The Muslims should learn this in order to sustain the peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.
2. The Christians have a peaceful approach to witnessing that is, practice of Evangelism. They gently present their message and allow the unbeliever to respond on his own accord. They do not apply force issue threats or kill their prospective converts. The Muslims should also learn this and be weary in taking arms (Jihad) against the other faiths, while doing Da'wah.
3. The Bible says that "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God," (Matt 5:9). The Christians preach peace and practice it. On the other hand the Muslim also preached peace but practice war (Jihad). This is not too good for a relationship of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.
4. Some Christians like the Baptists, have a strong heritage of the fight for religious liberty for the practice and spread of any and all religious beliefs, and they cannot

give up on this. It is a distinctive doctrine which every religious group should desire to have and be free from religious slavery or cast system. The sooner the Muslims learn and imbibe this, the better for our continued peaceful co-existence.

5. Leaders and adherents of both religions should desist from provocative sermons and unfavourable comments about each other's religion.