



MOYA CHRONICLES

A PUBLICATION OF MISSIO AFRICANUS



AFRICAN DIASPORA CHRISTIANS AS AGENTS OF THE NEXT REFORMATION AND REVIVAL IN THE WEST

Damilola Abraham

When one reads about past Christian reformations and the great revivals in the church's history, one wonders how and when the next spiritual reinvigoration will occur in the West. Between the 15th century and the early twentieth century, Christianity in the West experienced landmark reforms and revivals such as the 15th-century Christian reformation, the 1730s Great Awakening, the 1870s Urban revivals, the Welsh revival in 1904, the Azusa Street revival in 1906, and many other epochal spiritual events of that era. The spiritual reignitions cut across denominational lines and touched people from all walks of life. The western nations saw souls saved in thousands, an outpouring of God's spirit on myriads of people, a significant increase in church membership, and moral reforms in many lives. However, Christianity has been conspicuously declining in the West since the early twentieth century. C. S. Lewis (1898–1963), the foremost 20th-century English writer and theologian, lamented the decline in chapel attendance at his Oxford colleges as early as 1946. Lewis wrote, "The 'decline of religion' so often lamented is held to be shown by empty chapels. Now it is quite true that chapels which were full in 1900 are empty in 1946" (culled from his treatise, *The Decline of Religion*).

Recent statistics have further confirmed the precipitous decline of Christianity in Europe and North America. In the United States, Pew Research Center surveys from 2018 and 2019 show that "65% of American adults describe themselves as Christians when asked about their religion, down 12 percentage points over the past decade. Meanwhile, the religiously unaffiliated share of the population, consisting of people who describe their

religious identity as atheist, agnostic, or 'nothing in particular,' now stands at 26%, up from 17% in 2009." In Canada, a survey predicts that by 2040, the Anglican Church in the country could run out of members. The situation appears more severe in Europe, particularly in the UK. According to a UK Christian research group, *Church Statistics*, "UK membership has declined from 10.6 million in 1930 to 5.5 million in 2010 ... By 2013, this had declined further to 5.4 million (10.3%)." While the Church of England now attracts less than 2% of the national population to regular worship, in November 2021, *Evangelical Focus*, a news website with a Christian perspective on current issues in Europe, reported the closure, demolition, and selling of about 2000 church buildings in the last ten years in the UK. Indeed, many gigantic cathedrals that once dotted the Christian West have now become cinemas, school hostels, residential apartments, or worship centres for other religions. The above statistics are very concerning for the spiritual atmosphere of the West.

At the same time, Christianity has witnessed exponential growth in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Today there are more Christians in the global South than in Europe, North America, and other Western nations. The spread of Christianity, particularly in Africa, has been phenomenal. Africa is, without a doubt, the most Christian continent on the planet today. The implication is that as globalisation and other factors continue to fuel migration, many Africans now relocating to the West are Christians. Missiologists and church historians have interpreted the proliferation of Christians from the Third World in the

West as the realisation of a 1790s Protestant missionary movement hope that Christians from the Third World would revitalise Christianity in the West. This prophecy is finding fulfilment, and African Christians are settling in large numbers all over the West.

Certainly, the significant presence of African Christians in the West has strong implications for the spiritual atmosphere of the West. The West is due for another great move of God that will bring Europe and America back to God and their Christian root—and African Christians in these countries are more than likely God's agents of these revivals. While many African Christians in the diaspora may think of themselves as economic migrants, the overall purpose of God in sending them to Europe and America should not be lost. God is strategic and can send his people ahead to carry out his plans as he did with Joseph. Just as Joseph was in Egypt, African Christians are now in the West to preserve their hosts' spiritual lives. With this realisation comes the responsibility for African diaspora Christians to be deliberate and strategic in positioning themselves as God's instruments of revival in the West. I have suggested a few ways the African diaspora Christians can demonstrate intentionality and be strategic below.

First, African diaspora Christians must come together as a strong faith community. African congregations may be growing in leaps and bounds on the African continent, but there seems to be a lack of unity among them in the diaspora. African diaspora Christians must harness and replicate the ethos of *ubuntu*, *umuntu*, and the sense of communality that characterise the African people to be revival agents in their new domain. From observation, many African Christian Churches are operating and mushrooming independently in different corners of Western societies without meaningful impact on their environment. African diaspora Christian churches can also draw inspiration from the vibrant community of believers in Acts 2:41-47. The coming together of believers in prayer, apostles' teachings, breaking of bread, and ministry of the word led to an explosion in the growth of the church: "...And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" Acts 2:47.

Second, African diaspora Christians can birth the revival and reformation of western nations in prayers. Africa is famous as a praying continent, and prayer has always been a major catalyst of Christian revivals and Great Awakenings. "*Give me Scotland, or I die*" was the fiery prayer point of the Scottish revivalist John Knox.

In his book, *Why Revival Tarries*, English author and Christian evangelist Leonard Ravenhill says, "No man is greater than his prayer life ... Poverty-stricken as the Church is today in many things, she is most stricken here, in the place of prayer. We have many organisers, but few agonisers; many players and payers, few prayers." The importance of prayer that brings the intervention of the divine is laid out during the dedication of Solomon's temple in 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." African Christians in the diaspora must be more intentional in their prayer for the revival of Christianity in the West.

Lastly, African diaspora Christians must seek ways to contextualise their Christian mission in their new environments. The purpose of contextualisation is the need to communicate a message that connects with the audience effectively. Jesus Christ stands as the model of excellence in contextualisation. He left his glory in heaven and incarnated with humanity to carry out the work of salvation. He became one of us; he felt what we felt, ate with us, and shared our pains and concerns, all in a bid to reach us where we are. African diaspora Christians must emulate Christ. While they have brought their values, perceptions, and ways of serving God from their contexts, they must be sensitive to the needs of their new environment. They cannot continue to serve God and do church the same way they have known. They must cultivate an open-ended capacity to adapt and learn fresh ways of reaching out to people in their new locations. Indeed, they cannot be agents of revival in the West without breaking cultural barriers impeding them from reaching their hosts.



Damilola Abraham is an ordained Baptist Minister and currently undertakes his doctoral research at Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool, UK.

SUBSCRIBING IS EASY

**WhatsApp 'SUBSCRIBE'
to +44 7566 826690**

and we will add you to our lists. You can also access previous episodes on our website:

<https://missioafricanus.com/category/moya-a-chronicles/>

African Diaspora Christians as Agents of the Next Reformation and Revival in the West