

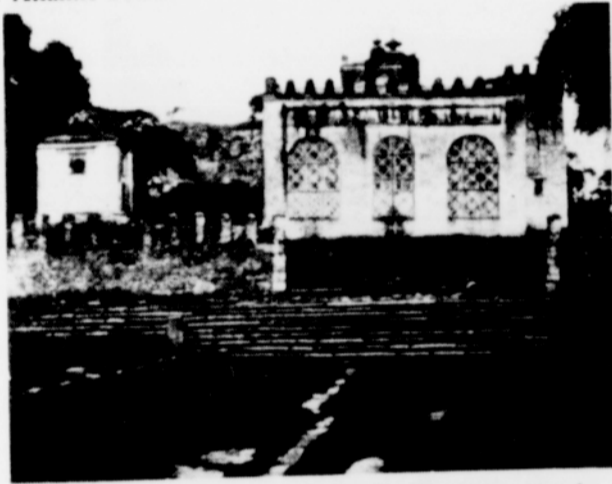
A chronology of Blacks and Christianity

by Clarence L. Holfe

Christianity originating in Bethlehem with the birth of Christ, is one of the three religions of the world which holds that God is Divine, an Infinite Being and supremely good; that HE created the world, is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. The other two faiths: Judaism, the religion of the Jew, which took shape in Palestine several thousands of years ago; and Islam, the religion of the Muslims, which was founded in Mecca c. 570 A.D. by Mohammed, the prophet.

Before the advent of these three monotheistic religions, Menes, c. 3100 B.C., and Ikhnaton, c. 1357 B.C., two Ethiopian kings who reunified Egypt and became pharaohs, were the first recorded proponents of the One God concept.

The following log will chronologically trace Black Christianity from its pre-history in North Africa down through the continent to the New World across the Atlantic Ocean.



Coronation place of the Ethiopian emperors in the outer court of the Cathedral of St. Mary of Zion at Aksum, holiest shrine in Ethiopia. It was destroyed in the 16th century and rebuilt in the 17th. Stumpy pillars at left date from pre-Christian times.

c. 1000 B.C. —Makeda (Sheba) Queen of Ethiopia, gave birth to King Solomon's son, Menelik, thus creating a link between the royal family and sons of the nobles of Israel.



Near Atzera, Tigre, about 30 miles east of Adua. On the horizon, to the left, rises a steep sided plateau, an amba, at the top of which is the old monastic village of Debra Damo, founded in the early days of the Church in Ethiopia. (Photo: J. Doresse)

1st-4th Century A.D. —Christianity is introduced in North Africa.

3rd Century A.D. —St. Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, wrote *On the Unity of the Catholic Church*. He died a martyr.

307 A.D. —Constantine became the first Christian emperor and declared it the state religion in 325. Until this

time, missionaries in North Africa practiced with the constant spectre of persecution and great personal danger.

325 A.D. —King Ezana is converted to Christianity and the Ethiopian Orthodox (Ceptic) Church is established.

543 A.D.-354 A.D. —Nubia (Sudan) becomes the birthplace of the Christian Church among Blacks by the arrival of an emissary from the royal court of Egypt, which, at that time, practiced the religion. Many churches were built and mass conversions made.

354-430 A.D. —St. Augustine, regarded by theologians as the founder of theology, is Bishop of Hippo. His writings continue to influence Catholics.

6th-15th Century —Little activity relevant to the Black Christian Church was recorded. Spain and Portugal were powerful colonizers. Recognizing this, and attempting to minimize conflict between the two powers, Pope Alexander VI reserved Africa (west of the Cape Verde Desert) and Brazil for exploration by Portugal; to Spain, he gave America and the Phillipines. Hence, the early Catholic missionaries in Africa were Portugese.

1520 —Prince Dom Henrique is the first Kongolese ordained a Catholic bishop. Schools, churches and other reforms were ineffective in the expansion of Christianity after his death.

1523 —The Reformation (or revolt) created Protestantism (protesters) from the Catholic faith, and opened the continent of Aftica to an "invasion" of missionaries from almost all of Europe's many sects. Deep inroads into the indigenous religions were not significant until the 18th century.



Portrait of Malik Ambar (Mughul, ca. 1620-30) Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

The dominant force during the 17th and 18th centuries in Africa and the American colonies was the slave trade. There were, however, some notable efforts in Christianizing Blacks on both continents:



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