

Christianity And Slavery (Personally)

I grew up as a churchgoer within the Protestant tradition but in my early teens, I became aware of another side to the Christian story. Biblical references to Ethiopia e.g. in the books of the Old Testament and the Psalms where it is written, "Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God!" offered a new meaning to the story. The New Testament account of the Ethiopian Eunuch that was baptised by Phillip also shed new light on the early role of Africans in the Gospel story.

I soon embraced the Rastafarian Tradition as a teenager never outrightly rejecting Christ but rather the European distorted image of Christ. I now saw Christ through the personality of the King of Abyssinia, HIM Haile Selassie I and viewed the Bible through the eyes of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Even though I never really became a member of that church but had an affinity to Orthodoxy through it.

My attitude back then could be summed up in a statement made many years before by Jamaican national hero, black activist and Pan Africanist, Marcus Mosiah Garvey (17 August 1887 – 10 June 1940):

"I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. I endorse the Nicene Creed. I believe that Jesus died for me. I believe that God lives for me as for all men, and no condition you can impose upon me by deceiving me about Christianity will cause me to doubt Jesus Christ and to doubt God. I shall never hold Christ responsible for the commercialization of Christianity by the heartless men who adopt it as the easiest means of fooling and robbing other people out of their land and country."

Through mass slavery of our people, Eurocentric Christianity proved herself unworthy of the Creed which she espoused but for people like Wilberforce and a few others who managed to prick the British conscience and start a movement towards the Abolition of slavery, notwithstanding the resistance and numerous rebellions of Africans all over the colonies.

My later discovery of the Eastern Orthodox Church and that she never took part in the European Slave Trade and the misuse of Christianity to subdue peoples confirmed my belief in the goodness of the Gospel and in that there are true and faithful people that walk the walk with the talk.

Most importantly, I now view the brutality and suffering meted out to my people enmasse in the context of the sufferings of Christ Himself along with that of the myriads of Christian martyrs and confessors throughout the centuries that I've come to learn about since embracing Orthodoxy. We suffer for our defencelessness, poverty and most of all for the colour of our skin; they for Christ and for the Orthodox Faith, but brutal sufferings nonetheless.

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