

My impression of christianity in the non-western world essay examples

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After extensive reading of Christianity and its cultural implications and interpretations in the Eastern and Western world, I feel there is a definite schism of understanding. I believe that currently Christianity is in the post-Christendom phase and Traditional Christianity is undergoing a steady decline, owing to the influence of Western Christian theology. In this context, I find a contradictory and ironic situation developing – in the Western countries like the US, New Zealand, Australia and Europe, Christianity is on the decline while the Non-Western world is experiencing a heavy surge conversions, which means the religion is spreading at a faster rate.

The Christian religion is divided into three worlds – the Traditional world, the Post-Christendom world and the Non-Western world. Even though I am not a religious person per se, I can see a evolving pattern here – the Traditional Christian world has led to a Post-Christendom era where the Christian culture is seeing a steady decline and Traditional churches are facing a difficult time in reintroducing Christianity in the secular world. However, on the Non-Western front, the Pentecostal Christianity and the Evangelical Christianity is spreading and experiencing explosive growth. Since the presence of faith, belief in the supernatural and miracles are more in the non-Western world, these Christians know a lot about the Bible but might have less knowledge on Christian history or its association with the Western dominations. In Non-Western Christian worlds like India and other South-East Asian countries, there is a greater respect for the Biblical scriptures and they show willingness to learn various Biblical interpretations concerning the Post-Christendom world and the Traditional Christianity, along with their own understanding of Christianity in the non-Western world.

According to me, the writings and depiction of the shifting bases of the Christian religion is best represented through Andrew F. Walls. M. Noll assesses that “ no one has written with greater wisdom about what it means for the Western Christianity religion to become the global Christian religion than A. F Walls. Wall’s interpretation and understanding of this religion cuts across various disciplines like biblical exegesis, mission studies, Christian theology and Christian history. The gravitational shift of Christianity from the western to the non-western world is explained by Walls through three key ideas, namely, development, conversion and translation (Walls 3).

His first key idea was that the development of Christianity had not been progressive in nature but rather serial in nature, the movements were scattered backward and forward, which restricted the advancement of the religion in a progressive way. His second key idea is conversion and how it impacts the inhabitants. A text in example will be Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) which depicts the arrival of a new religion in an indigenous population. While some are entranced by its concepts of God and moral code, other’s like the protagonist, Okonkwo, thinks a new religion will destroy their tradition and culture. However, this conversion of people from other religions to Christianity and adopting or lending a newer meaning to the western tradition gives the non-western world the strength or belief and builds fascination. Lastly, the third idea is of translation. From leaving behind traditional cultures and religion for adapting an entirely new religious way of living, it calls for drastically changing the concept of ‘ God’. In theological reading, the image of God is equated with a translator and in linguistic and

cultural code of understanding, translation is a continuous process. In short, the non-western world is able to adapt an alien religion because of its presence in linguistic and cultural contexts whose influence is irrefutable.

My scholarly research leads me to believe that the interpretation of Christianity for the western and the non-western world operates on various levels at paradoxical context. Walls tell us that adopting Christianity is like a “ twofold affirmation of the utter Jewishness of Jesus and the boundless universality of the Divine Son’ (Walls 5). Christianity at once captivates a culture and liberates the others. Discussion of any culture and religion is not complete without its critique. The transmission from one religion to another religion is undoubtedly a very complicated process that undermines theological integrity. In the post-Christendom world, the western Christian followers are perhaps saturated with Jesus and his teachings which is why we see a decline in traditional church-goers. Perhaps the western world believe that the teachings of Christ is no more relevant in the changing modern world so there is a feeling of cultural isolation and the desire to disassociate themselves with Christianity. However, on the other side, the non-western world has begun to see ‘ light’ in Christ’s teachings. Earlier the exposure to Christianity came through imperialist missionaries in the developing and under-developed world, and now they are eager to embrace a new religion wholeheartedly as they think Christianity will give their living a new way of existence.

Works Cited:

Walls, Andrew. The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996. Print.

Suggested Readings:

Costas, Orlando. Christ outside the Gate. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984. Print.

Jenkins, Philip. The New Face of Christianity. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. Print.