

Name:

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Topic:

"An African Half of the Story: African Christianity, the Black Atlantic, and the Egalitarian Tradition, 1600-1847"

Abstract:

Our knowledge of historical period of 1600 to 1884 is often told in the West from a Eurocentric perspective. What happens when we tell the story with African Christians as key historical actors? Embracing this perspective, this lecture will explore the African half of the story where African Christians construct Black Atlantic informed by an egalitarian tradition that was crafted by African Christianity. According to José Lingna Nafafé, it was during the 1600s that a transatlantic network of African Catholic confraternities emerged and Lourenço da Silva Mendonça, a "Kongolese" prince, mobilized this network to mount the first abolitionist campaign against the transatlantic slave trade. In this century, early African returnees emigrate from Brazil back to the larger Kongo region, too. During the 1700s, this egalitarian tradition finds expression in the Stono Rebellion in colonial Carolina and its African Catholic freedom fighters' emigration to Spanish Florida along with the emancipation petition of enslaved Africans in colonial Massachusetts and other colonies. In the 1700s, the Afro-Nova Scotian immigration to West Africa and the successful campaign that elected two people of African descent to the French parliament in 1793 are also informed by this egalitarian tradition. During the 1800s, this egalitarian tradition reignites the African Christian abolitionist campaign of the previous two centuries and mounts emigration campaigns to Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and West Africa. There exists a transatlantic commerce between agents of African descent in the Americas and Africa as well as mission activities led by African Christians throughout the Black Atlantic during the 19th century, too. Finally, this egalitarian movement, potentially, explains the involvement of Christians of African descent in the founding of "Liberia" as a colony in 1822 and a republic in 1847, connecting these historic events to the egalitarian currents of the 1600s and 1700s. This lecture contends that the egalitarian tradition of African Christians in the Black Atlantic offers a narrative about Christianity, civilization, and commerce in Africa that parallels yet differs from the story of European Christian missions, imperialism, and commerce of this era.

Bio:

Dr. David D. Daniels III is the Henry Winters Luce Professor of World Christianity at McCormick Theological Seminary where he joined the faculty in 1987. His Ph.D. degree is from Union Theological Seminary-NYC. He publishes on topics related to the history of the Black Church, Global Pentecostalism, and African Christians in 16th century Europe. He serves on the various boards, including the editorial board of the Journal of World Christianity.