The Demise of the Early Church in North Africa: Teaching Lessons for the Contemporary Nigerian Church

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Abstract

This article explores the decline of the early Christian church in North Africa and its implications for the contemporary Nigerian church. By examining historical, sociopolitical, and theological factors that contributed to the disintegration of a once-thriving ecclesiastical community in 2nd – 7th Century, the study aims to draw meaningful lessons for present-day Nigerian Christians facing similar challenges. The research employs a historical-analytical methodology, utilizing primary texts from early church writings, contemporary scholarly work, and secondary sources to trace the transformations that led to the church's demise. The main argument posits that internal divisions, external pressures from rising imperial powers, and cultural assimilation played pivotal roles in the decline of early North African Christianity. However, key findings from the study reveal that, Christianity spread from Jerusalem to Africa especially North Africa before it later went to the Western countries. This dispels the false concept among Africans that "Christianity is a white man's religion." Secondly, while the early church in North Africa was confronted with internal challenges ranging from theological differences, cultural clashes to power tussles on the other hand, a combination of external factors, which includes the rise of Islam, political instability, invasions, economic hardship and state persecutions ultimately stroked the church and led to its demise. Finally, the demise of the early church in North Africa had profound implications. The loss of theological institutions, cultural richness, political power, religious freedom, economic prosperity, and social cohesion has left a lasting impact on the church in Africa. In light of these findings, the article recommends proactive strategies for the Nigerian church, including fostering unity in diversity among denominations, strengthening theological education, and emphasizing contextual faith practices. Ultimately, this study serves as both a cautionary tale and a source of hope for a vibrant Christian future in Nigeria.

Keywords: Church History, Religious Decline, North Africa, Teaching Lessons, Contemporary Nigerian Church.

Introduction

The period of second century witnessed the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to Africa and the planting of the church in North Africa. According to Oden (2007), the history of

Christianity in Africa is a rich and complex heritage because Africa played a significant role in shaping the Christian mind, but this contribution has been largely forgotten or neglected by history. He further asserts that, "The Christian mind of which I speak is not contemporary Christian teaching alone but the deepest layers of the earliest history of the Christian teaching. The African Christianity of which I speak is more than a thousand years ago. What Africa give to world Christianity and especially to its intellectual formation" (2007, p. 43). One of the most significant regions in the early history of African Christianity Oden is referring to in this context is North Africa, which was once a thriving center of Christian activity. The Church in North Africa had its origins in the early days of Christianity, with the region being home to some of the most influential Christian thinkers and theologians of the early Church, such as Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine (Oden 2007). At its peak, the Church in North Africa was a vibrant and dynamic community, with numerous churches, monasteries, and theological schools spread throughout the region. However, over the centuries, the Church in North Africa experienced a gradual decline in 7th century and eventual demise of the Church in the region. This historical phenomenon propels this study which aims to uncover teaching lessons for contemporary Nigerian Church, enhancing their resilience, relevance and effectiveness.

Statement of the Problem

The early Christian church which started in 2nd century in North Africa was once a thriving and influential community, known for its vibrant faith and intellectual contributions to the wider Christian world. However, by 7th century, this once flourishing church suddenly experienced a decline and eventually disappeared from the region. This development poses significant concern for the contemporary Nigerian church, which faces similar challenges threatening its vitality and longevity. To avoid repeated history, this historical phenomenon motivated the undertaking of this research study to explore the causes and implications of the demise of the early church in North Africa as a cautionary tale for the contemporary Nigerian church. By learning from the mistakes and missteps of the past, the Nigerian church can strengthen its foundations and ensure its longevity in an ever-changing world.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research paper is to analyze the factors that contributed to the demise of the early church in North Africa and to identify lessons that can be learned for the contemporary Nigerian church with the following objectives in mind: 1. To examine the historical context of the early church in North Africa. 2. To identify the internal and external factors that led to the decline of the early church. 3. To explore the implications of the demise of the early church for the contemporary Nigerian church. 4. To propose strategies for addressing

challenges faced by the Nigerian church based on lessons learned from the history of the early church in North Africa.

Significance of the Study

This research paper is significant for several reasons. First, it sheds light on a little-known aspect of church history that has implications for contemporary church practices. Second, it provides valuable insights for church leaders and members in Nigeria who are grappling with issues of growth, sustainability, and relevance. By drawing parallels between the early church in North Africa and the contemporary Nigerian church, this study offers practical lessons that can inform decision-making and strategic planning.

Research Questions

The study seeks to address three important research questions: First, what factors contributed to the demise of the early North African church? Secondly, how do these factors relate to the contemporary Nigerian church's challenges? Thirdly, what lessons can be derived from the North African church's decline to strengthen the Nigerian church? Finding answers to these important research questions will not only provide deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding church decline but also provide actionable recommendations for strengthening the Nigerian church.

Research Methodology and Approach

This research paper employs an analytical approach to examine the factors that led to the demise of the early church in North Africa. Primary and secondary sources, including historical texts, scholarly articles, and theological writings, will be consulted to gather data and information. The analysis will be guided by the research questions and objectives outlined above, with a focus on drawing practical lessons for the contemporary Nigerian church.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Major Theories of Religious Decline

This study employs a multidisciplinary approach, integrating Rodney Stark's theory of religious movement, Max Weber's theory of institutionalization, and the Decline of Religious Instructions Model (DRIM) to understand the decline of the early church in North Africa. To start with, Stark (2020) posits that religious movements grow when they offer "other worldly rewards" and provide a sense of community. Conversely, decline occurs when these rewards are no longer perceived as valuable or when the community disintegrates He argues that the early Christian church in North Africa was able to attract and retain members by offering a sense of community, support, and purpose in a time of social and political

upheaval. However, as the political and social landscape of North Africa changed, the church was unable to adapt and ultimately declined. (Stark, 2020). Another theory of religious institutionalization by Weber argues that as religious organizations become more institutionalized, they lose their original vitality and ability to adapt to changing circumstances (2022). In the case of the early church in North Africa, the process of institutionalization may have contributed to its decline as it became more rigid and less able to respond to the changing needs of its members. Finally, the "Decline of Religious Institutions Model" (DRIM) advocates that "the decline of religious institutions often happens as a result of internal (theological disputes, leadership conflicts and doctrinal divisions) and external (Persecution, cultural and sociopolitical changes and economic pressures) factors" (Hiebert, 1994, p. 123). This suggests that lack of effective management of internal and external challenges in the early church in North Africa may have contributed to its decline.

Historical Context of the Early Church in North Africa

The rise of Christianity in North Africa was motivated by some key factors beginning from the time Abraham visit to Egypt around 2090 BC (Aling 1997). Additionally, biblical history has shown that prior to the birth of Christian Church in Jerusalem, Africa especially North Africa hosted prominent figures of the genealogy of Jesus. Oden (2007, p. 14) opines that, "Cut Africa out of the Bible and Christian memory, and you have misplaced many pivotal scenes of salvation history." He emphasis further that, "It is the story of the children of Abraham in Africa; Joseph in Africa; Moses in Africa; Mary, Joseph and Jesus in Africa; and shortly thereafter Mark and Perpetua and Athanasius and Augustine in Africa" (2007, p. 14). Such encountered was a landmark factor and environment that help Africa to influence the entire Christianity.

Secondly, the event of "Pentecost day" leading to the birth of the Church in Jerusalem was another important factor. Daniel D. Isgrigg (20th May, 2024) in a statement credited to Thomas C. Oden says, "Oden argues that the first Pentecost took place in the home of an African Jewish woman, Mary, the mother of John Mark, who was born in Cyrene, North Africa." This assertion highlights the significant role of Africa in early Christianity and challenges the dominant Eurocentric narrative. In a related submission, Boddy-Evans (2020) rightly observes that, "Christianity Reaches North Africa After the crucifixion, the disciples spread out across the known world to take the word of God and the story of Jesus to the people. Mark arrived in Egypt around 42 C.E., Philip traveled all the way to Carthage before heading east into Asia Minor, Matthew visited Ethiopia (by way of Persia), as did Bartholomew."

The growth of the early church in North Africa was influenced by a variety of factors that contributed to its expansion and establishment in the region. One of the main factors that contributed to the growth of the early church in North Africa according to Justo L. Gonzalez (2007), was the presence of strong Christian communities in major cities such as Alexandria, Carthage, and Hippo. These communities provided a foundation for the spread of Christianity in the region, as they served as centers for worship, education, and outreach. Additionally, the presence of influential Christian leaders such as Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine helped to promote the faith and attract new converts.

Another factor that led to the growth of the early church in North Africa was the persecution of Christians by the Roman Empire. "The martyrdom of prominent Christian figures such as Perpetua and Felicity in Carthage, as well as the widespread persecution of Christians under emperors such as Decius and Diocletian, served to strengthen the resolve of the Christian community and attract new converts who were inspired by the faith and courage of those who suffered for their beliefs" (LaTourette, 1975, p. 78).

Furthermore, the translation of the Bible into Latin by figures such as Jerome and the establishment of Christian schools and libraries in North Africa helped to spread the teachings of Christianity and attract new followers. The development of Christian literature and theological works also played a significant role in the growth of the early church in North Africa, as they provided a foundation for the intellectual and spiritual development of the Christian community (LaTourette, 1975). The growth of the early church in North Africa was influenced by a combination of factors including the presence of strong Christian communities, the persecution of Christians by the Roman Empire, and the translation of the Bible into Latin. These factors helped to establish Christianity as a prominent and influential religion in the region, and laid the foundation for its continued growth and expansion in the centuries to come.

The Demise of the Church in North Africa

The Christian Church in North Africa, once a thriving hub of Christian scholarship and evangelism, however, by the 7th century the Church had begun to decline. This section examines factors that contributed to the demise of the Church in North Africa and its implication on the contemporary African Christianity. The purpose of this section is to provide response to the first two research questions proposed for the study in respect to: What factors contributed to the demise of the early North African church? and, how do these factors relate to the contemporary Nigerian church's challenges?

Causes for the Demise

There were internal and external causes for the demise of the early church in North Africa. Internal factors include theological disagreements, cultural differences, and power

struggles among church leaders. This division ultimately led to the fragmentation of the church in North Africa into various sects and factions. One of the key theological disagreements that contributed to the division among the early church in North Africa was the debate over the nature of Christ. For example, The Arian controversy, which centered on the question of whether Christ was fully divine or a created being, divided the church in North Africa along theological lines. "This controversy led to the formation of the Donatist sect, which rejected the authority of the Catholic Church and established its own separate church in North Africa" (Burns 2006, p. 345). According to Tertulian (1867) in "De praescriptione haereticorum," unity and agreement on essential doctrines are crucial for church's survival. Oden examines further that, the divisions that emerged within African Christianity due to cultural, linguistic, and theological differences created tensions between Alexandria, a key center of African Christianity, and Carthage, revealing how these differences eventually led to a fragmentation of African Christianity (2007).

Cultural differences also played a role in the division among the early church in North Africa. The region was home to a diverse population with different ethnic backgrounds and religious traditions. Maigadi (2006, p. XV) Laments that, "Unfortunately, this beautiful gift of ethnic diversity which comes from God to humankind is increasingly being exploited by people of the world to discriminate against one another even (in the church of God) to the point of committing genocide against humanity." He advocated that, the church which is supposed to be an alternative community where people of diverse ethnic backgrounds would come and feel at home is now increasingly becoming ethnically divided. This is not a healthy development for the church in Africa, especially in Nigeria (Maigadi, 2006). Lamenting further on the phenomenon, Sarah (2016, p. 112) opines that, "These cultural differences often leads to tensions within the church as different groups sought to assert their own identity and beliefs." Similarly, Cyprian in "Epistulae" (2017) suggested that Cultural sensitivity and contextualization are essential for effective ministry. However, this cultural ethnic diversity contributed to the formation of separate church communities in North Africa, each with its own distinct practices and beliefs.

Power struggles among church leaders also contributed to the division among the early church in North Africa. Gaddis (2017) asserts on the atmosphere of power tussle among the early church Christians in North Africa that, as the church grew in influence and wealth, church leaders vied for control and authority within the church. In a related development, Sanneh (2018, p. 47) argues that "one of the main reasons for the decline of the early church in North Africa was its failure to adapt to the social and political changing landscape of the region." He suggests that the church became too closely aligned with the ruling powers and lost touch with the needs and concerns of the people (2018). This competition for power often led to conflicts and schisms within the church as different factions sought to assert

their own dominance. The division among the early church in North Africa was the result of a complex interplay of theological disagreements, cultural differences, and power struggles among church leaders. "Humility and servant leadership are vital for church leaders to avoid conflicts and division" (Augustine, 2003, p. 456). These internal factors ultimately led to the fragmentation of the church in North Africa into various sects and factions, each with its own distinct beliefs and practices.

While the early church in North Africa was struggling with internal issues, it became vulnerable to external attacks subsequently. One of the primary external factors that led to the demise of the early church in North Africa was the rise of Islam in the region. "The spread of Islam in the 7th century posed a significant challenge to the Christian communities in North Africa, leading to the conversion of many Christians to Islam and the persecution of those who remained faithful to their Christian beliefs" (Swain 2015, p. 78). Commenting on this development, Mbiti argues that "the spread of Islam in the region posed a significant threat to the existence of the Christian church, leading to a decline in the number of Christian communities and the suppression of Christian practices" (1992, p.15). His statement serves as a reminder of the importance of studying the interactions between different religious groups in order to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of religious history.

Another external factor that contributed to the decline of the early church in North Africa was the political instability and invasions that plagued the region during the 5th and 6th centuries. "The frequent invasions by various barbarian tribes, such as the Vandals and the Visigoths, disrupted the social and religious life of the Christian communities in North Africa, leading to a decline in church attendance and influence" (Johnson 2012, p. 45). Furthermore, the economic decline of North Africa during the late Roman Empire also played a role in the demise of the early church in the region. "The economic hardships faced by the Christian communities in North Africa, such as poverty and famine, weakened the church's ability to support its members and maintain its institutions, ultimately leading to a decline in church membership and influence" (Smith 2020, p. 102).

From all indication, this section has attempted response to the first research question tracing the demise of the early church in North Africa remoted by the internal challenges and influenced by a combination of external factors, including the rise of Islam, political instability, invasions, and economic decline. The demise of the early church in North Africa had profound implications for the contemporary church in Africa, particularly in Nigeria. The loss of theological diversity, cultural richness, political power, religious freedom, economic prosperity, and social cohesion has left a lasting impact on the church in Africa

Implications for the Contemporary Nigerian Church

From the study of the causes of the demise of the early church in North Africa, it has been clearly established that the church was remotely weaken by internally unresolved issues ranging from theological controversies to leadership tussle and externally vulnerable to Islamic attack and persecution. The aim of this sub-section is to provide answer to the second research question for the study; how do these factors responsible for the demise of the early church in North Africa related to the contemporary Nigerian church's challenges? This comparative analysis will delve into both internal challenges—such as theological disputes, political influences, and socio-ethnic divisions—as well as external pressures including Islamist activities, state politics, and insecurity.

Internally, the early Church in North Africa was confronted with theological debates. The rise of various heresies, most notably Arianism and Donatism, led to significant fragmentation within the Christian community. According to O'Connor (2021), these disputes not only challenged doctrinal purity but also caused divisions within the community, detracting from the Church's unity and mission. Similarly, in contemporary Nigeria, theological debates—such as those surrounding prosperity gospel versus traditional Christian teachings—also result in schisms within congregations, impacting the Church's collective identity and mission. For instance, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and the Deeper Christian Life Ministry (DCLM) have differing views on prosperity theology (Ojo, 2020, p. 187).

Politically, the relationship between the Church and state in early North Africa was complex, navigating periods of persecution and favor. Political maneuvering plagued the early North African church, as evident in the career of Augustine of Hippo (Brown, 2022, p. 187). In Nigeria, church leaders often navigate complex political relationships, sometimes compromising their moral authority (Ihejirika, 2020, p. 102). The political environment often dictated the Church's operations and survival. As Smith notes (2022), the Christian community had to constantly negotiate its position within a largely pagan societal structure, which led to both compromises and forms of resistance. In Nigeria, the relationship between the Church and government is similarly fraught, as political corruption and manipulation frequently undermine the Church's influence and ability to address social issues. For example, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) has been criticized for its perceived compromise and closeness to the government (Afolabi, 2022, p. 145).

In North Africa, socio-ethnic differences cause tensions among various Christian groups, including Berbers and Romans, posed challenges to ecclesiastical unity. Johnson (2023) highlights that these divisions sometimes led to rivalries that weakened the Church's collective mission. Today, similar ethnic and cultural factors play a crucial role in Nigerian Christianity, where ethnic loyalties often supersede religious affiliations, leading to

interdenominational conflict and a fragmented witness (Enwerem, 2022, p. 78). For instance, the Igbo and Yoruba ethnic groups have different worship styles and traditions, sometimes causing tensions (Ojo, 2020, p. 201).

Apart from internal challenges, the early Church in North Africa suffered significant external pressures from Islam, particularly during the Arab conquests in the 7th century, which led to a rapid decline in Christian populations and prompted many to adapt or abandon their faith under oppressive regimes (Anderson, 2020). He further opines the Nigerian Church grapples with the threat posed by extremist Islamist groups, such as Boko Haram, which seek not only to undermine Christianity but also to impose a violent interpretation of Islam on the entire nation. This radical threat has resulted in killings, abductions, and widespread fear within Christian communities (Anderson, 2020). The 2021 attack on the Baptist High School in Kaduna, Nigeria, resulted in the abduction of over 100 students is just one out of several incidences to mention (Afolabi, 2022, p. 167).

In the early Church, the political landscape significantly affected the Church's ability to thrive. Collins (2022), illustrates how state-sponsored persecutions forced Christians to either conform to state pagan practices or face dire consequences. He asserts that in contemporary Nigeria, state policies often seem biased against Christians, particularly in the northern regions dominated by Islamist sentiments, where the enforcement of Sharia law poses significant risks to the safety and rights of Christian citizens (Collins, 2022). Another example was the Nigerian government's 2020 decision to regulate church finances sparked controversy (Ihejirika, 2020, p. 110).

Finally, the threat to physical safety was as much a concern for early North African Christians as it is for Nigerian Christians today. The pervasive insecurity present in Nigeria, characterized by kidnappings, communal violence, and faith-based attacks, recalls the fears faced by early Christians amidst Roman hostility (Peterson, 2023). He observes that the atmosphere of fear can lead to a retreat from public expressions of faith and a diminishing of the Church's prophetic voice in society (Peterson, 2023). Nigerian churches face similar insecurity challenges, including terrorist attacks and kidnappings (Afolabi, 2022, p. 173). For example, the 2022 attack on the St. Francis Catholic Church in Owo, Nigeria, resulted in the deaths of over 40 worshippers (Onapajo, 2022, p. 137).

From all indications, the Church in both early North Africa and contemporary Nigeria encounters significant internal and external challenges that threaten its existence and mission. By examining these challenges—ranging from theological discord and political machinations to Islamist threats and insecurity—parallels in the experiences of faith communities across time and geography become evident. Understanding these comparisons enable the study provide valuable insights for addressing current issues facing the Nigerian Church while drawing lessons from the resilience and faith of its early North African counterparts.

Teaching Lessons for the Contemporary Nigerian Church

In this section, attempt is made to answer the last research question; what are the lessons the contemporary church in Nigeria need to learn from this historical event? The study identified six significant lessons. They include; Unity in diversity, adherence to biblical requirements for installing church leadership, contextualizing theological education and mission to resonate with local cultures, promoting religious coexistence through dialogue with other faiths, active participation in the national politics and adapting to change and innovation to stay relevant in a rapidly changing society.

1. Fostering Church Unity in Diversity: The Church in Africa especially Nigeria must prioritize unity and cooperation of the church to address common challenges and opportunities focusing on common areas of our faith and practice binding us together as body of Christ. In Ephesians 4: 1-7, Apostle Paul identified Christian areas of unity while he also appreciated areas of uniqueness. Denominations are mere platforms to accomplish the mission of the universal Church because there will be no denomination in heaven and that is why there is no perfect denomination here on earth. According to Peter Mutua Maurice (2022, p. 37), "While unity is not a bad idea; nevertheless, unity at the expense of the truth can be detrimental." In a similar observation, Byang H. Kato cautioned the evangelical theologians to guide against what he called a new form of liberalism coming up in the name of ecumenism (1987). In his further assertion,

He identified three possible options that evangelical theologians have to choose between; unity in the dark, unity in diversity or no unity needed. Realizing that Jesus Christ did pray passionately for the unity of the Church, Kato submitted that evangelicals should keep the bond of church unity as long as it is for the unity of the people committed to Christ word but should pull out in situation were human culture, philosophy and ideology is prioritized over the scripture (1987).

Paul in Galatians chapter five provided guidance and direction to a loosely bounded group of early Christians who were culturally different with diverse social structures. Paul was aware of these differences and sought to strengthen the church through the concept of "unity in diversity." (Keebler 2021, p. 52). Therefore, the importance of fostering unity in diversity for the body of Christ cannot be overemphasized because it helps to keep the Church alert to counter the distractions of internal heresies and external invasion.

2. Adherence to Biblical Requirements for Installing Church Leadership: As noted earlier, one of the internal issues that weakened the church in North Africa was power tussle. According to Onah (2021, p. 4), "Leadership tussle or disagreement between church leaders is tearing and breaking churches apart." Africa must not only insist on biblical requirements for installing church leaders but also leave no stone unturned to teach and disciple the

church members to shun power tussle because it is biblically unhealthy for the church of Christ.

3. Contextualization of Gospel is Fundamental: The Church must engage with African cultures and contexts with the bible in order to remain relevant and effective in its mission. Kato (1987, pp. 172-181) notes that Christians in Africa are faced with three conflicting worldviews: the world of Christian faith, the world of African culture and the world of modern culture. He suggested that Christianity should truly be expressed in African context allowing it to judge the African culture and never allow the culture to take precedence over Christianity (1987, pp. 181-184). The gospel needs to be made relevant to African through the lens of contextualization, else the Church will not be valued and appreciated in the continent of Africa.

4. Engagement with other Religions: Engaging with other religions and cultures requires understanding, respect, and a clear witness to the Gospel. Kato opines that in spite of Christians' commitment to live by biblical teaching, there is tendency to become involved with their environment including people of other faith with a conflicting worldview which often leads to contentions and crises if not manage (1987). The Church must develop strategies for constructive dialogue with Islam, recognizing both the challenges and opportunities presented by this dominant religion in many African countries especially in Nigeria in order to coexist peacefully.

5. Active Participation in the National Politics: The church must not only be preaching and praying for good leadership and governance to happen in Nigeria. In this connection, Baba (2023, p. 141) advocates that "God is looking for people like Daniel to occupy the political space of the Nigerian system of Governance and our democracy will strive." He further notes that like Daniel found himself in the Lions' den, Christian politician often faces inevitable political pressures too. However, when they learn to trust and obey God like Daniel in their political ministry, they will surely make a landmark impact (2023, p. 142). Therefore, the Church should encourage Christians to actively join national politics as the Holy Spirit leads to provide a Christ-centered political culture and environment that is expected to positively change the political narrative in Nigeria.

6. The Church Should Objectively Adapt to Global Changes: The Church, as an institution deeply rooted in tradition and history, often faces challenges when it comes to adapting to the rapidly changing global landscape. However, it is imperative for the Church to objectively adapt to these changes in order to remain relevant and effective in fulfilling its mission. Smith (2020, pp. 123-135) emphasis on the importance reality for the Church is briefly summarized as follows: First and foremost, adapting to global change allows the Church to effectively engage with the modern world and address the pressing issues of our time. As society evolves and new challenges emerge, the Church must be able to respond in a timely and relevant manner. By adapting to global change, the Church can better

understand and address the needs of its members and the broader community. Secondly, adapting to global change enables the Church to reach a wider audience and attract new followers. In today's interconnected world, where information is readily available at the click of a button, the Church must be able to effectively communicate its message to a diverse and ever-changing audience. By adapting to global change, it will be easier for the Church to utilize new technologies and communication strategies to reach people in different parts of the world and from various backgrounds. Finally, adapting to global change allows the Church to remain true to its core values and teachings while also being open to new ideas and perspectives. The Church has a rich tradition of theological and moral teachings that provide a solid foundation for its beliefs and practices. However, in order to remain relevant and responsive to the needs of its members, the Church must be willing to engage with new ideas and adapt its approach to changing circumstances. It is clear that the Church should objectively adapt to global change in order to remain relevant, effective, and true to its mission.

Conclusion

This study has illuminated the historical context, internal and external causes, implications, and teaching lessons from the demise of the early church in North Africa. The historical context of the early church in North Africa revealed a thriving and influential Christian community that once flourished over a period of five hundred years but eventually faced a decline and eventual demise in 7th century. The study also disclosed that; internal causes such as theological disputes, leadership conflicts, and moral decadence, as well as external factors like persecution, invasion, and Islamic conquest, played significant roles in the demise of the early church in North Africa. The research further shows that the demise of the early church in North Africa had significant theological, cultural, political, religious, economic, and social implications on the modern African church till date. In view of this historical development, it is imperative for the contemporary church in Nigeria to take caution to avoid a repeated history. The Nigerian church can learn from the mistakes of the past and strive for unity, doctrinal purity, and cultural relevance in order to withstand external pressures and internal conflicts. Finally, the demise of the Church in North Africa serves as a cautionary tale for the contemporary Church in Africa. It is hoped that these recommendations if taken into consideration, the contemporary Church in Africa will learn from the experience of the early church in North Africa and navigate its current challenges and opportunities, fulfilling its mission to spread the Gospel and promote the Kingdom of God.

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