

Part Three

New Dimensions of African Christian Initiatives

Chapter Thirteen

African Christianity: From the World Wars to Decolonization

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INTRODUCTION

An exciting event occurred in 1969 when the Pope visited Uganda. He told his hosts:⁴⁸⁷

“You must have an African Christianity. Indeed, you possess human values and characteristic forms of culture which can rise up to be capable of a richness of expression of its own, and genuinely African.”

The audience was stunned as if he reversed the story of centuries of European relationship with Africa; as if he proclaimed release from a relationship that suffocated in favor of one which recognized the pluralistic context of mission. It was as if Europeans finally acknowledged, that after many years of missionary presence, that an African expression of Christianity had emerged. That speech turned attention from patterns of insertion to modes of appropriation and their consequences, especially as the numbers of Christians in Africa had grown enormously. Perhaps being a musical people, African responses to the pope's declaration could be traced in various liturgical initiatives and musical symbols. It meant that the story of African encounter with the gospel should privilege African initiatives and yet told in an ecumenical and irenic manner.

⁴⁸⁷ *Gaba Pastoral Letter*, 7 (1969), 50-51.

But this growth pattern was not so obvious in 1914 when the drums of war summoned Europeans to far-flung trenches. No African was invited to the Edinburgh Conference of 1910. Western missionary interest was in India, Japan and China. Within Africa, missionary presence was characterized by enclavement strategy, social distance and vocational dominance; and racial relationship was quite strained. Many Africans assumed that the war was a white man's war and wondered why they could not forgive themselves. They soon realized that the Anglo-French attacks on German colonies in Africa would implicate over half-million Africans as soldiers and many millions more as hapless porters and foddors. The First World War drastically reshaped the interior of African Christianity. But before the drums of war, the religious landscape was suffused with the din of Ethiopians who gave voice to African discontent and dared to exit from the white man's church to initiate gospel expressions that would be authentically African. By 1914 their relevance was increasingly ebbing, albeit with regional differences; indeed, the period 1914-1939 heard the swan song of Ethiopianism. A number of reasons have been adduced in the chapter dealing with Ethiopianism: among Africans in the diaspora, a broader Pan-African ideology gained prominence. In central Africa, Chilembwe's failed rebellion in 1915 yielded the premier place to Roman Catholics and scandalized the murderous and chiliastic turn of Ethiopian spirituality. In South Africa, the politics of the interwar years, characterized by an intense Afrikaans nationalism, land grabbing and political engineering, elicited an overtly political response from Africans beyond the ken of religious entrepreneurs. A similar shift from cultural to political nationalism occurred in West Africa as political parties emerged. In eastern Africa, the space may have widened for African agency in the church but white settlers garnered much economic and political dividends in the aftermath. The settlers benefited from the weakness at the home bases of missions. Untoward geopolitical forces such as rumors of war, wars, economic collapse, political instability and the rise of anti-Christian communist and totalitarian ideologies, were followed by another seven-year war. All these affected missionary presence and structures by 1945. Some contemplated massive restructuring and down-sizing in recognition of the new-fangled self confidence of the "younger churches".

Ironically, missionary structures showed a high degree of resilience in the inter-war years as "internationalism" became a new war cry that spurred young university students into the mission fields. Indeed, a process of domesticating the Christian values and hymns intensified between 1919 and 1950. The process was aided by two other factors, namely, an outbreak of an ecumenical spirit detectable in various assemblies of the International

Missionary Council and in the formation of national councils of churches. But it was education and its mass appeal that rescued the missionary enterprise and ensured its recovery after the First World War.

Beyond the pursuit of “white power” or literacy, African Christian initiative could be traced through the choruses of spiritual churches, whether they were called *Zionists*, *Aladura* or *Roho*. As Ethiopianism lost its glow, Africans showed a stronger charismatic initiative from urban areas into rural enclaves. The literature has burgeoned as interpretations pile: that these constitute African Christian initiative and contribution to World Christianity; with immense creativity on the gospel-culture interface; a poignant reaction to colonial Christianity; a religion of the oppressed resembling cargo cults; the quest for belonging; safe havens amidst white racism; an emergent syncretistic spirituality; exploitation of the schismatic character of Protestantism; the religious stroke in nascent political nationalism and succor to displaced peoples amidst increased urbanization. A few have profiled an indigenous brand of Pentecostalism and a theological response to missionary gospel, albeit one that privileged *Christus Victor*.

As a pneumatic response to the gospel, various forms of spiritual flares proliferated intensely in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. Was there a connection with the post-war environment? Obviously, the surge was aided by the translation of the message into indigenous languages to renew interest in those elements that missionary message ignored or muted. They mined the biblical resonance with indigenous worldviews. Their astounding popularity engendered persecution. It has been repeatedly emphasized that there were three different types of charismatic responses to the gospel message in these times. Individual prophets burst onto the scene and left; these were different from the spiritual churches that mushroomed as competitors to mission churches and early Pentecostalism could be traced with growing significance between 1906 and 1945. Admittedly, the spiritual wind in the 1970s gave it more prominence, but unknown tongues featured prominently in African Christian spirituality before the decolonization blues of the 1960s.

By the mid-1950s, a tired Europe was compelled by many negative forces to trim sails. Debates abound over the causes and nature of decolonization: whether it was a disheveled process, a creative enterprise or a passive revolution. Does the transfer of power or the change of rulers constitute *uhuru*? Missionary attitudes gyrated because the protagonists were products of mission schools: some opposed, arguing that the “children” had not sufficiently matured to govern themselves; others supported; still others devised a new strategy of ministerial formation to

train indigenous priests, liaise with prominent laity and waltz with nationalists in the hope of securing the influence cultivated over the years. The music would later turn staccato as one-party states jettisoned colonial constitutions and disengaged from Christian roots. No prophecy in the heady politics of decolonization could have revealed the trend, because missionary bodies pretended to be different from colonial governments; thus, decolonization in the churches took much longer as indigenization cry turned into strident calls for moratorium. When the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches met in Nairobi in 1975, the choice of venue was as significant as the speech of the Pope in Kampala in 1969.

The burden of this chapter is to explore some of these themes that shaped the emergence of an African Christianity during the turbulent years of 1914-1975, with an eye on periodisation and regional coverage. It may perforce touch on matters that are dealt with in greater details in other parts of this book, but its goal is to provide a composite profile of African Christianity between 1914 and 1975. It is argued that from the drums of war in 1914, the swan songs of the Ethiopians gave place to the early morning calls of prophets, the gusty choruses of spiritual churches and the unknown tongues of early Pentecostals. Still, millions of Africans sang Western hymns and psalms of unity. The Second World War finally reconfigured the colonial landscape. Indigenisers boldly insisted on beating African drums in churches. Missionaries adjusted to the changing circumstances, ordained indigenous priests and waltzed with political nationalists before the tune turned staccato. A massive growth of Christianity in Africa ensued in this period that would escalate thereafter driven by a charismatic wind.

The explosion of Christianity in contemporary Africa occurred after the missionary period, but it is rooted in the charismatic agency that started in the inter-war years. Africans did not build a nationalist Christianity, because while the number of missionaries from some mainline churches declined in the decade between 1963 and 1973, the overall numbers of missionaries in Africa increased because new religious groups bathed in the overflowing rivers. This raises the crucial question: what might the breakthrough of African initiative in the religious sphere mean for the broader project of African realization? Some simply contend that the so-called African initiative is essentially a case of “extraversion”. This borrows the concept from a political scientist who refers to an orientation of African states and rulers to rely on external sources of wealth and power, through cultivating relations with patrons, trading partners and multinational establishments outside their domains. This dependence by the ruling elites on external support stultifies authenticity and causes failure.

The problem is whether this concept could be transposed from one domain of life to another; from the political sphere to the Christian—especially given its combined indigenous and universal principles. Christianity has inbuilt universal and local characteristics. Its expression in any place must benefit from the forms of expression in other places without losing an indigenous quality. For instance, its evangelistic strategy must perforce borrow from the sophisticated media technology developed outside Africa and utilized in other spheres of living in the continent. What is essential is the ways that external forms are appropriated and utilized. Moreover, the organic nature of culture-contact compels deep contacts with other cultures as a means of growth. A dynamic culture must borrow from others to enhance its viability. Indeed, African Christian creativity may include the ability to borrow and integrate external cultural ingredients to create something better than they inherited from missionary groups. Their mission is to practice a Christianity that enables them to modify their environment and change themselves by acquiring spiritual power and cultivating holiness. After all, argues A.F. Walls, “the effectiveness of the Christian faith or any manifestation of it, is accordingly open to the test whether it gives access to power or prosperity, for protection against natural or spiritual enemies, purposes to which much traditional practice was directed and satisfactorily enforced familial and social unity.”

I. DRUMS OF WAR:

SWAN SONG OF ETHIOPIANISM, 1914-1939

To begin the reflection with the First World War, one dimension of the war environment was the role of rumors and the conflation of rumors with reality to heat the polity. When the war broke out, it was rumored among Africans that the rule of the whites was about to end. Colonial officials became quite apprehensive about security, control and the threat of rebellion. Provincial Commissioners urged the District Officers to keep files on intelligence reports about potential flash points and individuals. This increased the tension between the colonial governments and the communities. On the religious front, its exacerbated relationship with Ethiopianism was perceived as a form of black nationalism in a religious stroke. Its connections with African American missionary enterprise to Africa made it doubly suspicious, spurred by some confusion with Watch Tower’s anti-authoritarian posture. As James Campbell argued for South Africa, “the concept of Black America retained an imaginative potency among Africans ... Moreover, the African Methodist Episcopal Church remained enmeshed within a system of racial domination in which the very

essence of a black-run church could assume profound political significance.”⁴⁸⁸ In Malawi, it was rumored that an invading army of Black Americans had arrived at Karonga as messiahs who would make Africans be rich, educated and respected.⁴⁸⁹ When one of Simon Kimbangu’s songs referred to the change of baton and encouraged devotees to “*Be brave the kingdom is ours .We have it! They, the whites no longer have it. None of us shall be discouraged,*” the Belgians perceived treason rather than a theological affirmation.⁴⁹⁰ In the interpretation of the connection between religious radicalism and the nationalist protest against colonialism, the Kimbangu movement provides an interesting case study for several reasons: first, Kimbangu himself made little political statement but posed as an undeclared opponent. Typical is a scene from his trial:

“Questioned as to why he thought he was a prophet, Kimbangu quoted a verse to the effect that ‘thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes;’ When the President of the court asked what ‘these things’ were, Kimbangu replied by repeating the ten commandments. When he started to repeat the seventh he was ordered to stop by the captain, whose native concubine was present in the court room.”

Apparently he was an uncomfortable moral force that exposed the mighty. Second, a large dose of millennialism suffused the songs and ideology of his followers. They believed that the world was coming to an end and that the present order was bound to be destroyed; that some African Americans would come to relieve the Congolese from oppression. At other times they sang that Jesus had given them power and freedom: *Nous serons les vainqueurs envoyes par Toi/ Le Royaume est a nous/ Nous l'avons./Eux, les Blancs, ne l'ont plus.*” Third, Kimbangu catalyzed a tradition that inspired and generated a host of minor prophetic figures in the region.

⁴⁸⁸ James CAMPBELL, “African American Missionaries and the Colonial State: the AME Church in South Africa”, in H.B. HANSEN & M. TWADDLE (eds), *Christian Missionaries and the State in the Third World* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), 234.

⁴⁸⁹ Ian LINDEN, *Catholics, Peasants, and Chewa Resistance in Nyasaland, 1889-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 95.

⁴⁹⁰ Marie LOUISE, *Kimbangu* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957). See, Thomas HODGKIN, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa* (New York University Press, 1957), ch. 3. The trial is cited on p. 98.

In Zimbabwe, The African Orthodox Church, which had roots in Marcus Garvey's ideology, elicited negative responses as a subversive organization precisely because of its African American connection.⁴⁹¹ Beyond the pales of Christianity and millennial-driven anti-structure, some dug into primal religion for the empowerment to protest. A certain Onyango Dunde, a Luo from Alego founded a militant cult, named after the big snake, *mumbo*, which inhabits the depth of Lake Victoria. *Mumboism* proclaimed the demise of the whites, *wazungu*. An enthusiastic audience among the Gusii believed him. Some District Officers warned about a renaissance of secret societies as an anti-white bonding. Colonial governments dreaded the competition to rational administrative structures by religious power nodes as secret societies, cults and oracles. The political tendencies were clearer in southern and central Africa than in the western sector.

Beyond rumors, the war further heightened tension within African communities, because it required the services of recruits and porters and gave the local chiefs extraordinary powers to mobilize able-bodied men. In Kenya, some men escaped into the bush to avoid recruitment; others devised the subterfuge of conversion and moved into missionary enclaves/stations in large numbers and to the initial delight of missionaries. Soon all devices collapsed as missionaries themselves were compelled to engage in the affray.⁴⁹² The First World War severely disrupted the structure and moral economy of the missionary enterprise in Africa.

The location of the four centers of German colonies implicated all of Africa, and determined the size of recruits demanded from various regions: Kenya, Uganda and South Africa supplied over 40,000 soldiers for the Tanzanian front; Zambia, Malawi, Zaire yielded 18,000 for the Namibian, Rwanda and Burundi fronts; and West African countries provided several thousands to serve in Togo and Cameroon. Madagascar mobilized 45,000 men euphemistically termed "volunteers" to serve in Europe.⁴⁹³ But it was the demand for millions of porters (*tenga-tenga*) that disrupted African communities and missionary work and caused so much suffering. The irony is that it betrayed a gap between missionary message and ethics, especially as it appeared to compromise missionaries who organized the cruel system

⁴⁹¹ Michael O. WEST, "Ethiopianism and Colonialism: The African Orthodox Church in Zimbabwe, 1924-34", H.B. HANSEN & M. TWADDLE (eds), *Christian Missionaries and the State in the Third World* (Oxford: Currey, 2002), 237-254.

⁴⁹² A.J. TEMU, *British Protestant Missions* (London: Longmans, 1972), 117.

⁴⁹³ Bengt SUNDKLER & Christopher STEED, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 610-615.

and press-ganged potential converts, sometimes employing trickery. As Ian Linden put the matter:⁴⁹⁴

“As in England, recruiting officers passed through the villages with drums banging and trumpets blaring. If interest in joining the band failed to bring unsuspecting Africans from their huts, promises of huge financial rewards were made. Chiefs welcomed the opportunity to get rid of awkward villagers and would direct army officers to their huts. Africans were tricked and press-ganged into joining a war in which they had no stake or interest.”

The Bishop of Zanzibar, Frank Weston, organized thousands in Tanzania; J.W. Arthur of the Church of Scotland Mission recruited 1750 Kikuyu members of the Mission Carrier Corps, who served nine months in southern Tanganyika.⁴⁹⁵ Many died from poor feeding, arduous trekking and poor medical care. It was a war where more porters died than soldiers. Most troops on either side of the war in tropical Africa were in fact Africans recruited or pressed into service by colonial rulers. The Germans in eastern Africa gloried in their *askaris*, the Swahili word for “native soldiers”. Since hundreds of thousands died, large sectors of the continent lost an average of three to seven percent of their populations.

Missionaries (priests and nuns) became soldiers in the transport, supplies and medical units and performed a number of mundane tasks for the governments leaving parishes without pastoral care. Indigenous people had the enviable opportunity to carry on the task. The lice they searched for in their hair just dropped on their feet. Meanwhile, Germans expelled priests from Allied countries and German missionaries were deported or incarcerated in many British and French colonies. The war disrupted supplies, mail, and funds of missions. At the end, the ecclesiastical map of Africa was re-drawn as German missionary societies lost their stations and had to face a harsh inter-war period that left them at the mercy of other European countries. Missionaries learnt to source locally for sustainability relying on indigenous resources for mission work more than before.

As has been argued, Ethiopians, as cultural and religious nationalists, were muzzled to express African discontent. Equally significant is the mood of the world war years, fraught as they were with physical conflict, insecurity, economic deprivation, epidemics, famine, labor and taxation burdens and unsettled psychological temper. The colonial government

⁴⁹⁴ LINDEN, *Catholics*, p. 109.

⁴⁹⁵ TEMU, *British Protestant Missions*, p. 118.

officials betrayed deep anxieties by repressive social policies that included religious matters. In southern Africa, George Shepphard computed seven cases of the dreaded African rebellions between 1906—when the last Zulu Bambata Rebellion occurred—and 1927.⁴⁹⁶ But other Ethiopians pursued a different route and grew. Regional conditions mattered. In West Africa, Ethiopianism still grew in the midst of the strong racial antipathy that followed the war. More poignant, missionaries revamped their structures, the number of missionaries increased, and they employed education as a tool; Africans responded massively. Ethiopians had to intensify their educational programs in competition. But neither the Young Kikuyu nor the Harrists, Christ Army Church / Garrick Braidists and the Native African churches could mobilize enough resources for the cost intensive enterprise amidst the Great Depression whose effects reverberated into the colonies. Western missions defeated the Ethiopians on this front. But Africans initiated new spiritualities that took a charismatic character and challenged missionary Christianity. A number of these and the recurring cycles of revivals have been discussed in previous chapters.

II. CATECHISMS AND HYMNS:

DOMESTICATION OF MISSIONARY CHRISTIANITY, 1919-1945

The end of the war was fraught with ambiguities: Africans tasted a dose of responsibility in the churches and in the survival of the colonial states. But in southern and eastern Africa, the British government felt more grateful to white settlers and rewarded them with enlarged political clout, land and labor. The Ex-Soldiers' Settlement Scheme settled many veterans in Kenya with huge acreages of land; everywhere in the eastern, central and southern regions, white settlement expanded during the interwar years. Plantations, farms and mines needed large supplies of labor because African agriculture became crucial during the war, cash crops and peasant production sustained metropolitan industries and exploitation of mines intensified. The owners of the means of production demanded that taxation should be used to pry Africans into the labor force, while low wages would keep them vulnerable. Only a few missionary voices, such as J.H. Oldham's, protested against forced labor and heavy taxation. The *kipande* or identity card system was imposed on the indigenous people in 1919 as a reward for being such helpful *tenga-tenga*. Missions turned attention to

⁴⁹⁶ George SHEPPERSON, "Ethiopianism: Past and Present", in C.G. BAETA (ed.), *Christianity in Tropical Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 253.

education so as to supply settlers “with trained boys, clerks, artisans and hospital dressers” as an honest Scot admitted.⁴⁹⁷

Soon after the war, missions re-organized, brought back some German-speaking priests and exploited the unsettled circumstances to steal bases and expand. Throughout this period, the “bush school” became the mascot of missionary presence. Schools were used as a means of evangelization, rivalry, civilizing project, legitimization of colonial industrial policy, vertical expansion into rural areas and domestication of Christian values. One had to be literate to read the catechism and sing the salvation hymns. School and church shared space and significance. Those who did not attend Sunday school were caned in the school on Mondays. Debates ranged on the curricula, level of education, use of indigenous personnel, governments’ roles and the relationship between education and evangelism. Does an emphasis on education detract from the primary goal of leading the people to Christ? Some missionaries resisted the expansion of school apostolate while others saw it as the means to capture the future generation. Many perceived education as an good investment and objected to the notion of a consumer good concept, whereby Africans would study the classics and such like; they hated the pretensions of educated Africans; curricula should be confined to assisting them to cope within their cultural milieu, acculturate the values of the change agents, serve as intermediaries between western and traditional societies and mediate colonial civilizing policies and instruments. Industrial missions held much promise. The debate was fierce in the interwar years as the governments employed grants-in-aid to control the quality through an inspectorate unit. Mission churches colluded with government against the schools founded by Ethiopians who were denied accreditation and funding.

Ironies piled up as missions concentrated on teacher training and primary schools. There were only a few secondary and grammar schools until the 1940s. Africans instigated much of the expansion: those returning from the war or from mines and plantations urged the presence of schools as a sign of development, acquisition of white power, solving the riddle of the paper that talked, and coping mechanism for the new times. Communities would build the school and house for a teacher, carry the luggage, and even put a deposit towards the salary. Missionaries wrote home requesting for more personnel because of village delegations demand for schools. Either the war’s experiences opened people’s eyes to the power of white technology or the onslaught of the years on traditional mores

⁴⁹⁷ See TEMU, *British Protestant missions*, pp. 117-139.

finally took its toll or the new patterns of exploitation weakened primary resistance, but a mass movement to Christianity occurred. The presence of a school and church became an instrument of communal rivalry. Instead of sending their children to a school in a neighboring village, proud elders would contribute money for their own school. Competing missions exploited inter-communal rivalry while the District Officers delimited areas of operation. Rapid expansion compelled the use of half-baked teachers.

By the 1940s some indigenous entrepreneurs funded secondary education; sometimes, communities would provide the infrastructure while missions supplied the personnel. For the foundation of Dennis Memorial Grammar School, Onitsha in eastern Nigeria, the indigenous people raised most of the funds for the Anglicans in 1925. Government policy changed after the Phelps-Stokes Commission Report that showed off the capability of the brilliant Ghanaian, Dr J.K. Aggrey. But its reliance on Booker T. Washington's approach would meet with African criticism that it limited the ranges of African access to education. One effect of the First World War opened the space for some young Africans to go overseas for the "golden fleece". These would become the agitators of the post 1945 era. Already their strident tone could be heard in Nnamdi Azikiwe's brand of journalism in the Gold Coast from 1937. Agitation for university education after the Second World War induced government concern for secondary education.

Other crucial dimensions to the story of the interwar years include the increasing concern among missions about the employment goals for their pupils, many of whom deserted into government employ; urbanization grew with many moral implications; and education for girls became a key concern. The appeal of the gospel must be nuanced, because when the gospel spread to the villages and, like the roots of the mustard seed, changed the soil of the communities by contesting its cultures, the encounter of gospel and culture created disquiet. Thus, in spite of mass movement, a spectrum of responses appeared as the guardians of the ancestral calabash struck back in persecutions. Indeed, some of the patrons of church and school did not convert because it was education that they sought for their progenies. Novelists have captured this mood more accurately.

It has been surmised that the propaganda machinery for the Second World War was more sophisticated because it tried to show Africans the reasons for the war and their stake. Perhaps, Italian colonial attacks on Ethiopia, Libya and Egypt played into the Allied hands as many Africans volunteered to serve in North Africa. Still others were conscripted. But the aftermath was equally crucial as African eyes opened to possibilities for

self-assertion. The French recognized the role of Africa in the cause of Free France. As Africans suffered in the trenches with whites, the aura that had clothed whites dimmed; they were mere mortals. In most countries, a corps of educated indigenes who were politically alert came to the fore, and African political agency reshaped itself. The interwar years were characterized by nascent trade unions, ad hoc industrial activities, mutual self aid associations and a host of primary forms of resistance. The post-1945 period witnessed planned debates, political agitation, the popularity of Garvey's rhetoric—though he never visited Africa, industrial strikes and a shift from cultural to political nationalism. The career of Abdul Nasser of Egypt typifies the new activism that would later lead to political independence. The question is whether Christianity contributed to the temper of the political and social stirrings of these days. Did Christianity provide the impetus for African nationalism?

III. THE POLITICS OF THE NATIVE CHORUSES OF CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANS, 1914-1945

African Christianity in the public space has become an important means of examining the other side of history. The dominant voice in the story has been about the collusion and dialogues between colonial officers and missionaries. Perhaps, much of the African appropriation of the gospel message concentrated on the good news for individuals and communities without confronting the political presence of Europeans or even asking the missionaries to go home. In some places, the fact that nationalists were products of mission schools gave the impression that one of Christianity's unintended consequences was to tool nationalism. In other places, the disengagement from white churches could be regarded as a form of resistance. But there are examples where the politicization of religion was overt as influenza ravaged Africa from 1918 to add salt to the injury of coping with rapacious European presence. Some surmise that the epidemic triggered a radical reshaping of the Christian landscape.

The story of Zionists in Swaziland characterizes the new trends in the continent for the period. Many missionary bodies operated here from the arrival of the Methodists in 1845, followed by the Anglicans, 1880, and Lutherans in 1887. The country enjoyed a whiff of African American radical presence when the AMEC came in 1904, and by 1920 the number of organizations grew to fourteen. With a comity arrangement, the evangelicals shared the land as from 1911. Within three years, a new phenomenon appeared on the religious landscape when Joanna Nxumalo returned from South Africa where she had been working as a teacher and

became converted as a Zionist. Others followed and founded their own versions as this fervent variety of evangelicalism grew rapidly. The League of African Churches bound them together. Apparently one of these healed the Queen Mother and Regent Labotibeni, of some eye ailment in 1914 and from this miracle, Zionism allied with the throne. The theology was gradually adjusted to make the monarch a type of “King Solomon” and the land, Zion. In this invented history, King Sobhuza II was imaged as the instrument for reclaiming the rights to the land from colonial settlers. By the 1930s the religious landscape was completely re-imagined; missionaries in Swaziland were perceived as the agents of settlers and colonial powers while the Independent churches posed as the instruments with which the Swazi people first expressed their desire for religious and political change. Independency combined religious innovation with protest and search for social justice and political freedom in evangelical language. The monarchy sealed this view by turning the Easter service into a program for celebrating the national heritage. The lion and the lamb lay together to produce a new version of African Zionist evangelicalism.

It needs to be underscored that the movement was not always at the center of the political system. Its varied colorations and increasing numbers have been traced in another chapter. For instance, Allan Anderson has argued, from official census data (fraught with bias in the Apartheid era), that the number of African Independent Church groups in South Africa proliferated from 30 at the turn of the century to 6,000 by the end of the millennium.⁴⁹⁸

Just as in Swaziland, some interpreters of this religious form have focused on the element of protest and schism. Surely, the issues of alienation of land, culture, political disenfranchisement under settler rule and colonialism, racial discrimination, economic deprivation bred psychological pressure that only a certain religious formation could help to assuage. Zion became a dream for recovery of alienated land, a place where there would be no more tears. The founder’s home became a mecca, a powerful ritual Zion, a place of belonging. Some of the Ethiopian themes could be replayed but with a different type of exit. But the dominant character of this religion was in the prominence given to experience (revelation, dreams, visions, prophecy), orality, use of indigenous knowledge, symbols and ritual resources. The liturgical revolution was achieved by bringing traditional worship style into the church through song, dance, choruses and indigenous instruments. There was an intentional

⁴⁹⁸ For an attempt to construct a coherent discourse on this form of spirituality, see, Allan ANDERSON, *African Reformation* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2002).

quest for resonance in biblical symbols and themes.⁴⁹⁹ All over the continent, the nature, direction and pace of Christianity changed from the burst of the prophetic and spiritual revivals that succored people during the harsh days and the days during the period between 1919 and 1921 were harsh as South Africa witnessed about 66 strikes against those “getting them to work as hard as possible for the lowest possible wage, and keeping them from having any hand in the shaping of their own so far dolorous destiny.”⁵⁰⁰

Equally intriguing in the story of radical Christianity in Africa is the emergence of Pentecostal spirituality from external sources in the period between 1906 and 1947. This excludes Keswick-type of evangelicalism. Most of the Pentecostal missions came from the United States, because evangelization was the heartbeat of the Pentecostal outpouring of the 1906/1907 period. People were so filled that they desired to take the experience abroad as quickly as possible. There were four types: first, the solo entrepreneur who imbibed speaking in tongues and forayed into Africa hoping to speak the indigenous language by the power of the Holy Spirit. They were disappointed. This type could be illustrated with the story of Clyde Miller who left Des Moines, Iowa, from a group that had much to do with Charles Parham’s charismatic ministry in Topeka Kansas. Clyde founded the Nyang’ori mission in western Kenya, 1906-1920. Second, there were sponsored missionaries from Pentecostal groups such as Seymour’s Azusa Street ministry, California, or the Swedish group who in 1904 sent Mary Johnson and Ida Andersson to Durban in South Africa. The Azusa Street group delegated Lucy Farrow and Henry M. Turney in 1908. Seven years later, they sent William F.P. Burton and James Salter to open the Congo Evangelistic Mission and Angel and Etta Post to Egypt. The case of J.G. Lake and Thomas Hezmalhalch connected with Zion City, Illinois has been mentioned.

Third, was an effort to co-ordinate Pentecostal groups to act in united missionary enterprises between 1909 and 1910, and Africa was one of the targeted mission fields. Indeed, in 1909, an effort was made to found the Pentecostal Missionary Union. It failed in the United States but motivated a missionary enterprise in Britain. The following year, the Bethel Pentecostal Assembly, Newark, New Jersey, organized the Pentecostal Mission in

⁴⁹⁹ Harold W. TURNER, “Pagan Features in West African Independent Churches”, in *Practical Anthropology*, 12, 4 (1965), 145-151; H.W. TURNER, “A Typology for African Religious Movements”, in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 1, 1 (1967), 1-32.

⁵⁰⁰ See, James COCHRANE, *Servants of Power: The Role of English-Speaking Churches in South Africa: 1903-1930* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), 127.

southern and central Africa and sent missionaries to Liberia, Swaziland, Mozambique and South Africa. In 1910, they sent George Bowie, a Scot who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in America, to South Africa. He founded the Pretoria Pentecostal Mission. He was later joined by a Welsh, Eleazar Jenkins, and an English, Archibald Haig Cooper, who would take over the leadership in 1913. In 1921, it was renamed Full Gospel Church and in 1951, they merged with the Church of God (Cleveland Tennessee) to form the Full Gospel Church of God. Fourth, denominational brands of Pentecostalism established in various parts of Africa especially western Kenya, Burkina Faso, Republic of Benin and South Africa. These included the Assemblies of God, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, Church of God in Christ, Pentecostal Assemblies of the World and International Pentecostal Holiness Church. Foursquare Gospel Church came later in the 1960s. Thus, classical Pentecostals as well as indigenous ones emerged early in the religious landscape. The crucial point is that none of these became important in the religious landscape until they benefited from the spiritual renewal of the 1970s. Many missionaries did not stay long in the field or cultivated any missions that outlasted them. As the force of the "faith movement" weakened, so did the activities of intrepid solo entrepreneurs. The world wars disrupted their enterprises. The denominational genre succeeded more than the others and, in many places individual missionaries sought the patronage of denominational bodies. From the outset, the white Pentecostals accepted racial segregation. Cumulatively, they added to the charismatic temper of the environment and certainly counter the impression that new crusaders recently forayed into Africa bearing the insignia of fundamentalism.

IV. AFRICAN DRUMS AND DECOLONIZATION BLUES, 1945-1960

The end of the Second World War was a momentous point in the story of African Christianity. It touched off the decolonization process that had a domino effect on the religious landscape. Besides the character of missionary presence in the colonial enterprise, the nature, process and consequences of decolonization also need to be considered. Was it planned or compelled and pursued hastily? Was it a transposition, passive revolution or a transformation? How did the missionaries respond? One impression is that they were uneasy about the prospects. For instance, in 1967, T.A. Beetham, Secretary of Conference of Missionaries Societies in Great Britain and Ireland, reflected on the anxieties of member churches in the face of decolonization. Uppermost were the resilience of primal religion in the midst of cultural revival and resurgent nationalism and the side-

effects of years of missionary control. White control, he argued, bequeathed weak churches characterized by disunity, dependency syndrome and poor manpower development.⁵⁰¹ Commentators have pointed to the un-prophetic silence and passivity of post-Independence churches. As the Holy Ghost inspectors worried in 1939, the concentration on education apostolate diminished the imperative to preach the Word.⁵⁰²

Beetham's disquiet was partially because decolonization exposed the differing agendas of the colonial government and missionaries. Colonial rule, while it manifestly produced significant changes, both intended and unintended, was in many respects deeply suspicious and hostile towards anything other than highly instrumental and very tightly-controlled modernization. Its centralized, authoritarian administration and great concern for order were all designed to achieve this singular goal. Were missionaries bedfellows? Noll has pointed to the Evangelical roots of Enlightenment and modernity, but has also drawn attention to significant shifts.⁵⁰³ A debate has ensued whether missions used education to plug into modernity. Beidelman and Strayer would argue that the missionaries met modernity halfway, opposing the full agenda to the chagrin of Africans and frustration of the colonial officers who threatened to withdraw their grants-in-aid. As Beidelman observes, the CMS missionaries at Kaguru bitterly regretted changes which secular education brought, "*replacing the bad old things with all the bad new things.*" Adds Strayer, "the goal was not to create a highly educated elite."⁵⁰⁴ This explains the virulent disdain for the "black Englishman" caricatured in Joyce Carey's *Mister Johnson* and Wole Soyinka's *Interpreters*. It explains the colonial French policy that cordoned off North Africa from missionary incursion and, as A.E. Barnes shows, the

⁵⁰¹ T.A. BEETHAM, *Christianity and the New Africa* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967).

⁵⁰² J.W. DE GRUCHY, *Christianity and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 183; A. HASTINGS, *A History of African Christianity, 1950-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 187ff; O.U. KALU, "Peter Pan Syndrome: Church Aid and Selfhood in Africa" in *Missiology*, 3, 1 (January, 1975), 15-29; D. FORRISTAL, *The Second Burial of Bishop Shanahan* (Dublin: Veritas Publishers, 1990).

⁵⁰³ M. NOLL, "Evangelical Identity, Power and Culture in the Great Nineteenth Century" (Currents in World Christianity Seminar, Oxford, 1997), 7; B. STANLEY, *The Bible and the Flag* (Leicester: Apollo-Varsity Press, 1990), 16.

⁵⁰⁴ R.W. STRAYER, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1978); T.O. BEIDELMAN, *Colonial Evangelism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).

constraint on missionary presence and protection of Islam in northern Nigeria.⁵⁰⁵

Differences on the goals and curricula of education and cultural policies betrayed the ideological cleavages and competing visions between missions and colonial government. Meanwhile, as the missionaries pursued their goals with consummate passion, Africans became increasingly resistant and critical of the “intimate enemies”: against the colonial enterprise for racism and for shutting the door to the decision-making echelon of white power. Similarly, they were reluctant to accept a mission demand for cultural transformation and demonstrated a desire for free access to a wider range of modern, cultural, educated and economic opportunities than missionaries were prepared to grant. Africans were sensitive to missionary unwillingness to afford them higher training, ordain an adequate number of indigenous priests, devolve power or overtly support nationalism. Among the Roman Catholics, priestly formation was riddled with humiliation, racism, abuse of privacy, rejection of African values and other forms of intolerance. For long, Irish seminaries refused to admit African candidates.⁵⁰⁶ Meanwhile, virulent rivalry suffused the missionary enterprise as each denomination sought to imprint its own version of the shared agenda and thereby engendered immense social and political divides which would hinder the mobilization of the community in the modernity project. These factors fuelled the anti-missionary sentiments that underpinned African understanding of decolonization. Obviously, black Christians and white missionaries perceived the process differently.

Many signs warned that missionary power could not be exercised in the same way for much longer. For instance, at the heels of the anti-foreign movements in the Orient, the Jerusalem Conference of 1928 pressed the case for an indigenous church and a reappraisal of attitude towards other faiths. On the home front, attacks appeared from fundamentalists and academic circles in the next decade. Other alerts sapped missionary confidence as geopolitical events such as the Great Depression and the toll of rapid expansion combined as an onslaught on manpower and financial capabilities of the enterprise. Using a case study of British missionary responses to African colonial issues, 1945-1953, John Stuart has shown the

⁵⁰⁵ A.E. BARNES, “Evangelization Where It Is not Wanted: Colonial Administrators and Missionaries in Northern Nigeria During the First Third of the Twentieth Century”, in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 25, 4 (1995), 412-441.

⁵⁰⁶ I.R.A. OZIGBOH, *Igbo Catholicism* (Onitsha: Africana-FEP, 1985); A.N. EKWUNIFE, “Integration of African Values in Priestly Formation” in *AFER*, 39, 4 (1997), 194-213.

increasing strain in the relationship, policies and power arrangements between missionaries and British government on the one hand, and Africans on the other. The latter tended to jettison the middleman role of the missionaries so as to deal directly with the secular authorities.⁵⁰⁷ By the end of the Second World War, the Anglicans considered massive restructuring. But many missionaries were heedless; others talked about the situation, wrote wise memos on salient political ethics and reorganization of social services, but approached matters cautiously. Then, the nationalist challenge gradually picked up steam inspired by events in India and Ceylon and experiences in the Second World War. Stephen Neill, who participated in the first meeting of the International Missionary Council after the war in Whitby, Ontario, Canada, in 1947, pointed to the obvious change as many of the members of the younger churches spoke with great confidence and sure-footedness:

“And now, at Whitby, unmistakably they came as equals ... They showed in consequence a fuller understanding of the world-wide problems of the Church, a greater depth of Christian experience, a wider sympathy for the needs and cares of others.”

He remained nonetheless skeptical about their readiness to assume leadership.

The missions were rudely awakened by the speed of decolonization. As Basil Davidson concluded, “it could accordingly be said that the colonial powers stumbled out of Africa as best they could, keeping their own interest always in view and at no time applying initiatives that were not, in one way or another imposed or provoked by African pressures for anti-colonial challenge.”⁵⁰⁸ The joke is that the British stumbled out of the colonies, the French and Belgians abandoned theirs, while the Portuguese had theirs snatched violently from them. Between 1952 and 1956, most of the Maghrib became politically independent, West Africa followed from 1957 through 1960, and the rest joined after protracted struggles. Four

⁵⁰⁷ J. STUART, “British Missionary Responses to African Colonial Issues, 1945-53” (XIXth Int. Congress of the Historical Sciences, Oslo, August 2000); C. WEBER, “Christianity and West African Decolonisation” (Cambridge, NAMP Position Paper, 80, 1997); Stephen NEILL, *Christian Partnership* (London, SCM Press, 1952), 14.

⁵⁰⁸ In P. GIFFORD & R.W LOUIS (eds), *Decolonisation and African Independence: The Transfer of Powers, 1960-1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 509; see, J.D. HARGREAVES, *The End of Colonial Rule in West Africa* (London: McMillan, 1979).

reasons have been adduced for decolonization: while some may query the concept of nationalism in the African context, many hold that the nationalism of the elite who chafed about their exclusion from power was core to igniting the process. Here, cultural nationalism was replaced by political nationalism. The geo-political scenario after the Second World War has been mentioned. The rise of the United States and its foreign policy goals loomed large. David Birmingham concludes that “African decolonization can be interpreted as a European retreat determined by weakness following a debilitating Second World War and the emergence of the two new tentacular empires of the United States and the Soviet Union.” Along with this was the economic factor as Europe sought to rebuild. The role of the “official mind” leaves the impression of a deliberate calculation of British interests to be protected with constitutions and a conscious initiative to liquidate the empire. This perception has been vigorously challenged by the argument that in the politics of containment, decolonization was an opportunistic response in crisis management. In the course of it, the colonial governments abandoned their intimate enemy: “it is no longer Christianity, Civilization and Commerce but social engineering, technical assistance and capital investment which are expected to harmonize the interests of Africa and Europe.”⁵⁰⁹

The inescapable conclusion is that decolonization did not imply a radical change of socio-economic structure. Gramsci explains the gap with the concept of *passive revolution*, describing the way that a dominant socio-political group may have to change its way of wielding power if it wants to maintain it.⁵¹⁰ The goal of decolonization was to return to informal empire where former rulers would retain sufficient economic and technological resources to exercise powerful influence upon future development, a limited transfer of power which bequeathed ossified state apparatus, institutions and extensions of colonial policies, which burdened the nations with artificial boundaries, incomprehensible constitutions and parasitic elites. Passive revolution has fuelled the modernization and

⁵⁰⁹ HARGREAVES, *The End of Colonial Rule*, p. xii; T.O. RANGER, “Connection between primary resistance and modern mass nationalism” *Journal of African History*, 9, 3 (1968); T.O. RANGER, “Religious Movements and politics in Sub-Saharan Africa”, in *African Studies Review*, 29, 2 (1986), 1-69; R. PEARCE, “The Colonial Office and Planned Decolonisation in Africa”, in *African Affairs*, 83 (1984), 77-93; J.E. FLINT, “The Failure of Planned Decolonisation in British Africa”, in *African Affairs*, 82 (1983), 389-411; David BIRMINGHAM, *The Decolonisation of Africa* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1995), 89; see, AJAYI & EKOKO in GIFFORD & LOUIS, *Decolonisation and African Independence*, 245-270.

⁵¹⁰ See, J. HAYNES, *Religion and Politics in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 1996).

dependency theories in political analysis of contemporary African pathology. It is the root of the divinity of the market and co-operation between a predatory elite and multi-national companies.

The perspective here is that missionaries shared a similar tactical response to decolonization, however, at a great cost, resilience and change of tack. For instance, they abandoned their opposition to modernity, embraced it, sought to channel it towards the hallmarks of liberal theology, reflecting the shift in European culture in the economic boom years, 1960-1970, and under the shivers of the cold war. However, the responses of the missionaries to nationalist insurgence at the twilight of colonialism, 1945-1959, differed in quality from the re-tooling strategies in the immediate aftermath, 1960-1975. Vast changes in the political climate of the decade 1966-1975 forced enormous changes in the religious landscape.

The story goes back to the late 1940s, when African nationalist activities rose in crescendo as political parties sprouted from country to country. One explanation is that a younger breed with sharper focus came to the fore sidelining both traditional rulers and moderates to bask in the fiery sun of mass adulation. Some appeasers such as Albert Luthuli abandoned the ideal of racial co-operation, disillusioned by the racism in the church. Undoubtedly, missionary responses to nationalism varied during the first decade, 1945-1954, according to individual whims, official or denominational/institutional policies and regional contexts. A certain shift followed as missionaries felt powerless to halt the process and betrayed by both government and protégés. Some, in the field, tried to use available facilities to stem the tide by posturing a dichotomy between Christianity and politics. Drama, public debates and lectures were pressed into the effort to warn Christians to eschew politics and seek first the kingdom of God; that colonialism, when properly reined, was for the good of Africans. The Moral Re-armament group networked through West Africa to inculcate salient political ethics. Some missionaries were indiscreetly hostile, such as William Carey, formerly Archbishop of Bloemfontein, while others such as the irrepressible Michael Scott, the voice of the Herero, represented those sympathetic to the African cause. Generally, institutional attitude varied: those at the home base espoused ideal positions which showed some sympathy for Africans, but were so cautious that these amounted to little.

In the field, some were alarmed at the prospects of Marxism or resurgence of paganism, angry about the ingratitude of the African elite and resolved to contain the damage. Nationalism was imaged as irreligious and the nationalists were portrayed as too immature to lead nations to a democratic vision. N.M. Bowman, writing in a Church of Scotland journal

in 1947, put it succinctly. Entitled, “Democracy Without Religion”, he argues:⁵¹¹

“A nation does not learn overnight to think of power as servant and not the master of justice. People do not acquire in a single generation that sense of responsibility, that sense of stewardship, that integrity without which corruption and greed will speedily threaten all attempts to run their own affairs.”

The period of tutelage had been too short to produce the right moral environment for independence. The cautious mood could be traced in ecumenical political thought from the concern on the place of the state in God’s design at Oxford in 1937 through Amsterdam’s interest on “The Responsible Society” in 1948 to Willingen in 1952 when, for once, a strong social concern provided a shift.

Regional differences abound. West Africa had plenty of mosquitoes and no white settler community; therefore, indigenization policy predominated in the mid-1950s. It had three prongs: to waltz with nationalists, utilize the services of indigenous personnel and to seek to adapt Christianity to African culture in the belief that African need was to “baptize” ingredients of their culture. Many of the priests trained in the early 1950s were the vanguard. This limited perception of African Christian initiative in religion would be exposed later. Meanwhile, it formed a part of the arsenal for a passive revolution. The Belgians in central Africa sought to legitimize their rule with Catholicism. Salazar’s Concordat of 1940 recognized and funded the Catholic Church as the official instrument to promote national colonial aims of the state in Angola and Mozambique. In the Congo, the career of Bishop Jean de Hemptinne, Vicar Apostolic of Katanga, buttressed the loyalist support. Similarly, the church’s manipulation of religion in Rwanda has become the subject of indictment.⁵¹² In Ethiopia, the Emperor, Haile Selassie, used a revised constitution to rope the Orthodox Church into state structures as the *Abuna* sat in the Council of Regency and Crown Council. In eastern Africa, waltzing with nationalists in Uganda forced the church into the public space and, in the first elections, a Catholic Kiwanuka jostled with a Protestant Obote, celebrating the fruits of years of virulent rivalry and thereby dividing the society. Liberia offered an unenviable model where

⁵¹¹ *Life and Work* (October 1947), 111.

⁵¹² Tim LONGMAN, “Empowering the Weak and Protecting the Powerful” in *African Studies Review*, 41 (April, 1998), 49-72.

the state stood on the tripod of Christianity, Masonic Lodge and True Whig Party as the rulers bowed to the three power nodes.⁵¹³

The impact of decolonization on church groups varied, based on certain indices: the size and ecclesiastical organization; the vertical spread and social quality of adherents; the inherited pattern of colonial relationship; and the theological emphasis and international relations. It also depended upon the manner of disengagement, the weave of neo-colonial fabric and the dosage of Marxism in the political mix. Any of these could aid weal or woe depending on the context. For instance, in the Congo, Mobutu perceived the Roman Catholics as a danger to be demolished as gods do not brook competition.

The core of godly passive revolution depended on the rear-guard actions to re-tool so as to maintain influence using indigenous personnel and resources. This was the main thrust of the missionary policy of indigenization. There were at least a dozen measures: manpower development; internal restructuring through church unity and ecumenism; balancing aid and selfhood in funding so as to cure dependency and nurture stewardship; revisiting cultural policy through adaptation and thereby catalyzing a controlled initiative in art and liturgy; re-aligning the church-state relationship by involving more Christians in politics; encouraging theological reflection; installing a new model of relationship which uses the idiom of partnership to camouflage paternalism and thus essaying to maintain social services along the old lines. These cumulatively would remedy the after-effects of the past excessive control, preserve the core of missionary structures, while broadening African participation to respond to the challenges created by the insurgent nationalism of the new African states. This counter-insurgence was aided by a paradigm shift in the ecumenical movement that occurred in Uppsala in 1968. Konrad Raiser terms it “*the expansion of the ecumenical perspective universally to all humanity*.”⁵¹⁴ They raised a new understanding of mission, science and technology, the challenges of modernity, dialogue with other faiths and justice and race. The support for freedom fighters stirred an internal debate

⁵¹³ O.U. KALU, “Tools of Hope: Stagnation and Political Theology in Africa, 1960-95”, in M. HUTCHINSON & O.U. KALU, *A Global Faith: Essays in Evangelicalism and Globalization* (Sydney: CSAC, 1998), 181-213.

⁵¹⁴ Konrad RAISER, *Ecumenism in Transition: A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publication, 1991), 54; Lesslie NEWBIGIN, “Ecumenical Amnesia”, in *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, 18, 1 (January, 1994), 1-5; Charles WEST, *The Power To Be Human* (New York: McMillan, 1971).

that only began to subside at the WCC General Assembly, Nairobi, in 1975.

Similarly, Vatican II, which had only 61 Africans out of 2,500 bishops, was a watershed in re-designing the church's policy in mission and social service. It released African energy in the church as a number of Papal pronouncements appeared to speak to Africans in a new voice.⁵¹⁵ Pope John Paul II's call for inculturation and enrichment released much hope before people realized that Curial control and liturgy within Roman rites shortened the ropes. Nonetheless, the renaissance of Christian art left an enduring mark as Father Kevin Carroll in Nigeria, Ethelbert Mveng in Cameroon, and John Groeber in southern Africa mentored a number of young artists.⁵¹⁶ Equally impressive was the depth of liturgical renewal in music, dance, use of native languages, radicalization of block rosary and formation of associations around new liturgical practices as vigils retreat centers and such like sprung up to the consternation of missionaries. Luis Luzbetak argued that the Roman Catholic Church witnessed major changes within the period of the world wars and that these seven forces determined the path for the future: the rise of social action, ecumenical initiatives, the biblical and liturgical movements, theological renewal, promotion of lay apostolate and missionary movement.⁵¹⁷

The details of these strategies will not bear repetition. Suffice it to say that the level of ministerial formation galloped from the 1960s. Theological education had an enormous boost with the formation of regional and continental associations that encouraged theological reflection and revision of curricula in Bible Schools. Many experimented with Theological Education by Extension, while the genesis of Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), brought together many from those regions of the world where the pressing question would be, "eat what"? In the rainy season of 1973, the WCC met at Ibadan to explore how to readjust the funding of African churches so as to encourage them to learn the art of giving. When the Board of Faith and Order of the WCC met at Accra in August 1974, there were more Union talks going on in Africa than in other continents. The leaders of the Church of South India and those

⁵¹⁵ *Gaba Pastoral Letter*, 50-51; J. MULLEN, *The Catholic Church in Modern Africa* (Dublin, 1965); E.E. UZOUKWU, *Liturgy: Truly Christian, Truly African* (Eldoret: Gaba Publications, 1982); F.K. LUMBALA, *Celebrating Jesus in Africa: Liturgy and Inculturation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998).

⁵¹⁶ K. CARROLL, *Yoruba Religious Art* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967); R.I.J. HACKETT, *Art and Religion in Africa* (London: Cassell, 1996).

⁵¹⁷ Luis LUZBETAK, *The Church and Cultures* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993), 103.

from Ceylon toured Africa to provide advice. Except in the case of Zambia, all others collapsed.

To use the case of Nigeria as an example, theological and non-theological reasons colluded to thwart the dream. The scions of the faith churches dismissed the Constitution of the Union as lacking adequate spirituality. Other minor doctrinal matters caused concern but the real weighty issues were personality clashes and rivalries, denominational hostilities that had not healed, competition for the bishoprics and ethnicity. Finally, some Methodist congregations took the Union Committee to court while the Civil War (1967-1970) scattered the litigants.⁵¹⁸ Studies from eastern Africa have confirmed how the same factors that destabilized African nation states wrecked havoc in Christian circles.⁵¹⁹ Admittedly, many of these could occur in any other context beyond Africa but the key difference was that it was felt that church unity was imposed from the outside.

Could the re-tooling strategies be interpreted as passive revolution? Stephen Neill's insider analysis of the various meetings on partnership from 1947 has been alluded to. Two other insiders who served the home base of missionary organizations testify so. T.A. Beetham queries the motives of the salvage operations:⁵²⁰

“Are the thinking and experiment and action ... merely a fumbling *attempt to retain influence*, to gain some new position of authority to compensate for privileges now being rapidly lost? Or has it a significant future?”

In a similar vein, J.V. Taylor, who served as the General Secretary of the CMS in those heady 1960s gave a hardly garnished evaluation of the indigenization process. He observes that it has become fashionable for white men of his generation to join “*in the chorus of disparagement against the Gothic churches and pietistic hymn tunes that have everywhere stamped the church as a foreign import*” in Africa. Worse, indigenization

⁵¹⁸ O.U. KALU, *Divided People of God: Church Union Movement in Nigeria, 1867-1967* (New York: NOK Publishers, 1978); O.U. KALU, “Church Unity and Religious Change in Africa”, in Edward FAKSHOLE-LUKE, Richard GRAY, Adrian HASTINGS, & Godwin TASIE (eds), *Christianity in Independent Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 164-175.

⁵¹⁹ J. MUGAMBI, J. MUTISO-MBINDA & J. VOLLBRECHT (eds), *Ecumenical Initiatives in Eastern Africa* (Nairobi: AACC/AMCEA Joint Research Project, 1992).

⁵²⁰ BEETHAM, *Christianity and the New Africa*, p. 151.

has failed because the indigenous people believe that “*we are playing at it*” while holding to orthodoxy, fearing the dangers of syncretism, acting with “mixed motives” and unduly moralistic ethics:⁵²¹

“Instead of waiting humbly to discover what kind of leadership the Lord is raising up for His church in Africa or Asia, missionaries have been busily engaged in grooming successors to themselves ... reproducing their stereotyped kind of leadership.”

In a way, this was a truism having been the goal of missionary education and elite formation. The strategy was sharpened for new ends. But Taylor reveals that decolonization caused much soul-searching about the meaning and goal of mission. Attention turned briefly from the abilities of Africans to keep away from the warm embrace of witchdoctors. Lars Thurnberg calls it “the redemption for the wrongs of history”, Lesslie Newbigin images a context where sending churches would become “bridge-builders” serving at “mission points”. The Lutheran World Federation experimented with “reverse flow” in which African ministers were posted to German congregations where everybody treated them with cold civility.

V. WALTZING WITH THE NATIONALISTS, 1955-1975

The African story in the two decades between 1955 and 1975 worked out more clearly the issues raised in the period from the end of the Second World War in 1945. People increasingly found the missionary version of indigenization to be unsatisfactory and restrictive. Yet Christianity was attractive and grew tremendously as the charismatic spirituality, unleashed by the African Indigenous Churches and Pentecostal movements, was absorbed into the mission churches. Liturgical experimentation caused disquiet in many places as “traditionalism” impeded progress. Power conflicts followed the intensified process of laicization of the church. Many reasons are adduced: first, from the inside, the bible movement increased use of the Bible in the vernacular; the energy released by Vatican II and Uppsala released people from the restriction of yesteryears enabling the

⁵²¹ J.V. TAYLOR, “Selfhood: Presence or Personae?” in Bengt SUNDKLER, Peter BEYERHAUS & Carl F. HALLENCREUTZ (eds), *The Church Crossing Frontiers: Essays on the Nature of Mission. In Honour of Bengt Sundkler* (Studia Missionalia Uppsaliensia, XI, 1969), 171-176. See contributions by THURNBERG, pp. 209-225, and Lesslie NEWBIGIN, pp. 245-265.

Africanization of the liturgy. Second, from the outside, government take-over of schools and hospitals jolted the ascendancy of the churches and compelled them to turn to their true calling. Third, from the fringes of the Christian body, the growing competition from the Christian left-wing or charismatic movements of various hues challenged polity, liturgy, ethics and in certain cases, doctrine. Fourth, the deliberate policy to encapsulate the elite combined with the impact of a new crop of trained clergy to create a ferment and a sense of being at the threshold of new beginnings and new theological reflections. The laicization of the church was particularly significant, because the churches wanted their people to use their powers and good offices to act as “*defensores fidei*” (*defenders of the faith*). Knighthood Orders were designed to attract the elite. These, in turn, found the church members as assured voters. Soon, their social and financial influence became more important in church affairs and decision-making than anticipated. From a different angle, African theology was loudly canvassed by the academics and the “nationalism” of the new theologians harped on the vestiges of missionary structures and the predicaments of an un-indigenized church. New terminologies were canvassed, such as *contextualization*, *traditionalization*, *incarnation* and *inculturation*, as Africans wanted a new type of church or renewed body of Christ and a new relationship with the West. While Roman Catholic priests challenged celibacy, their protestant counterparts wanted to celebrate the commensality of the Eucharist with palm wine and kola-nut. The Bible supplied precedents proffering the possibility that the spirituality of primal religion resonated and did not always conflict with the canon. There was much ferment in the churches and efforts to sabotage the limited indigenization project from the inside.

Outside the church, the growth of the state in Africa in this period was significant by causing political instability, human right abuse, environmental degradation and economic collapse. New states imaged their goals in Christian garbs in obvious attempt to bowdlerize: *national redemption*, *economic salvation*, *political justification*, *national regeneration*, *sanctity of the state*. Many became one-party states, others praetorian, while some took to Marxism. The churches became alarmed. The Catholics assigned the Jesuit veteran missionary, J.C. McKenna, to understudy the problem. Out of forty-four sub-Saharan nations fifteen leaned in this direction soon after Independence. On a closer look, none were Marxist purist, as the Cold War attracted a variety of leftist ideologies from USSR, China, Cuba, America and Europe. Africans responded with home-grown breeds as Conscientism, African Socialism, Humanism, and Centralized Democracy. In spite of Ratsiraka’s Red Book in Madagascar,

the churches thrived. The hostility in former Iberian enclaves soon diminished. Renamo flirted with the Pentecostals, FNLA with Baptists—even as peace in the Civil War was brokered by lay Catholics of the *Communita di Sant-Egidio* in Italy. In Angola and Zambia political rhetoric did not hurt the churches as much as the bad economic policies and disease.⁵²² On the whole, the power adventurism of the states forced major changes on the pattern of Christian presence in Africa.

All these chickens came to roost in the moratorium debate, 1971-1975. Moratorium was a more strident and different form of indigenization project. It reflected African impatience with the nature, pace and results of mission-initiated indigenization. Africans suspected a hidden agenda to embroil them in cosmetics while the same people retained real power. John Gatutu, the Secretary-General of Presbyterian Church in Kenya, initiated the call during a visit to the USA in 1971. He embarrassed his hosts by declaring that he had not come to beg for money or personnel, but to request that missionary aid in money and personnel should cease for at least five years so that the short man could learn how to hang his knapsack within reach. Earlier, he led his church to produce a document stating what they believed. This raised the issue of doctrine. Burgess Carr, the Secretary of the AACC, Nairobi, was equally enamored to the idea, proposed it at Lusaka and invited African churches symbolically to Alexandria to draft an African Confession of Faith. By 1974, E.B. Idowu, the new leader of the Methodist Church in Nigeria, who for the last decade had spoken about the predicaments of an un-indigenized African church, moved the boundaries to matters of polity by proposing a patriarchal polity in consonance with the early church in North Africa. Were these romantic moves or sabotage?

Many Western mission bodies saw red and responded in a number of telling ways as a debate ensued in seminars, conferences and pages of journals. It was argued that *theologically*, moratorium was unacceptable because of the Pauline imagery of *soma*, that we are one body and one part cannot prevent the other from performing a mandatory task. Mission was the *raison d'être* of the church, a command from the Lord. *Ecclesiastically*, it was dangerous to become a national church. This threatened catholicity; the pilgrim and the indigenous principles must be held in tension. *Logistically*, it would be impossible to dismantle the mission structures which had been built on for over a century. Then, there was the *gut* reaction of those who presumed that the Africans have proved ungrateful after years of sacrifices by missionaries. Eliot Kendall, who served the same

⁵²² J.C. MCKENNA, *Finding a Social Voice: The Church and Marxism in Africa* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997).

constituency as Beetham, has documented the overt and subtle pressures mounted on African church leaders.⁵²³ Dissent was punished with denial and low intensity operation to foment local rebellion as moratorium was perceived as sabotage. It did not take long for ranks to break: some leaders preferred aid rather than suffer as freedom fighters. Burgess Carr lost his job, while Idowu became embroiled in schism; the AACC languished until everyone forgot the spelling of moratorium.

Avoiding the cardinal sin of monocausality, there was more to the fates of these men, but the debate was crucial. Moratorium exposed the character of African relationship with the West: extraversion was in-built in the pattern of African relationship with the West as an essential ingredient to maintain “eternal juniority”. Even the support among white liberals proved ambiguous as some Protestant missions took the opportunity to abandon missionary engagement. However, they have found that the collapse of their missionary involvement diminished both the volume of local funds and relevance in the public space; so, they are now forced to create new network patterns. Moratorium and African liberation struggles influenced the shifts in the strategy for decolonizing the African churches. When the WCC General Assembly met in Nairobi in 1975, the themes indicated a new mood that accepted African Christian maturity in ways hardly planned by the missionaries. The concept of the “Christendom” collapsed in this period as a new dispensation opened into the future in which African Christianity would be very important.

⁵²³ O.U. KALU, “Church, Mission and Moratorium” in O.U. KALU, *The History of Christianity in West Africa* (London: Longman, 1980), 365-374; O.U. KALU, “Not Just New Relationship But a Renewed Body”, in *International Review of Missions*, 64 (April, 1975); Eliot KENDALL, *The End of An Era* (London, 1978), 85.