

World War Effects on African Christianity in Contemporary Africa

Pamela Charm Amadi
St. Paul's University

Abstract

Many African instituted Churches were initiated during the second phase of the African Colonial history, at the start of World War I to World War II (1914-1945). Most of these churches broke away from the mission churches for a variety of reasons ranging from biblicism to paternalism, attitudes that laid blame on the missionaries. Rarely are the ripple effects of the World Wars examined. This paper examined the consequences of the closely spaced World Wars on African Spirituality and their effect on later characteristics of the churches formed. The evangelical awakening in the Americas came with the revivalist gospel to East Africa, which became known as the East African Revival. Arthur Chilson encouraged the possession of the Holy Spirit and the Second Coming of Christ, leading to the breakaway faction from the Friends African Mission situated at Kaimosi. This new church was known as The Lyahuka Church of East Africa with African vernacular imputations of separatism and millenarism. Though a strong force in the early 1930s, the church today exists as a shell of its former glory; thus, the research question: What particular conditions spurred its popularity then, and the larger objective: What is the relevance of the concept of revivalism in peacetime conditions? The mixed method research used: qualitative (60%) and quantitative (40%), and a mixed sampling method from ordinary members and theologians, unveils the reality that in peacetime conditions, emotionalism will often be second place to social-economic welfare. The research findings manifest the need for a peaceful-existence within and across national borders, continental and global, for a larger fulfillment of the Lord's Prayer that His peaceful kingdom be replicated here on earth, rather than the escapist route of pure millennialism about the Second coming of Christ.

Keywords: Evangelical Revivalism, East African Revival, Millennialism

Introduction

Effects of global political crisis such as the World Wars are particularly resounding in the Christian circles unsettling many far-flung religions. One such region affected was Africa, which was largely colonized during the period between 1885-1960.

The colonialist-missionary era can be divided into three phases in relation to African Christianity.

- The Scramble for Africa to World War I (1885-1914)
- The start of World War I to World War II (1914-1945)
- End of World War II to 1960 (1948-1960).¹

According to Roland Oliver² World War I(1914-1918) ‘shattered the faith of Europe in the moral values which it had inherited from the 19th century and gravely injured the churches which seemed to be so closely connected with those values. Consequently, in Africa, ‘imperialism in general and missions in particular, fell sharply in the esteem of a public opinion which no longer felt that western civilization had incalculable benefits to confer upon inferior races.

It is at this point that the breakaway from African mission churches started taking root, along with other reasons such as land issues, paternalism, etc. Whilst the European domination grew nervous, the African who had fought as soldiers and their charismatic church leaders had enjoyed a surge of new confidence, multiplying in African initiated churches.

As African- led churches strengthened, the missionaries began to doubt the wisdom of colonial partnership, and by the end of World War II (1939-1945) more breakaways resulted in a bid to cure various diseases and influenza pandemics hitherto unknown on the African continent.

Thus, World War I and World War II have had profound impact on African Spirituality. Like the Decian and Diocletian persecutions of the Early Church in North Africa by the Roman Empire in the second to fourth centuries when Christianity was struggling for survival. The world wars caused shifts in theology that trickled down World Christianity to the African Christianity strand of African Instituted churches (AICs).

Similarities between the World Wars and the Early Church persecutions are significant. For starters. They involved persecution of a particular race: The Jews, the custodians of The Word. The Jews were particularly targeted by the Hitler regime due to their exclusivity, which separated them from other races. They did that to preserve their Holiness- A guarded imperative.

Holiness was a characteristic the Lord demanded of every believer: ‘You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God, am holy’ (Lev.19:2; 20:7,26; 21:8). This was a high standard to achieve, but one that gave meaning to life. It raised aspirations and called for perfection before the Lord and among themselves.

Background

Most humans are proud to be achievers, and through the centuries, in every culture, the desire to excel at goodness, holiness has been supreme. This also applied to the Donatist movement of Early

Christianity in Carthage (North Africa). How could their spiritual leaders be in complicity with the despised, cruel Roman regime and still lead them in partaking of sacraments in church services? Donatus Magus, with his followers, broke away from the nascent Church: You cannot inspire Holiness when you evidently have faulted on the Holiness³.

The Donatists existed strongly during the lifetime of Augustine of Hippo (354-430). Though a fellow Berber, living in the same region (though he ministered at Hippo), the distinguished Church Father could not countenance the puritanism being portrayed,⁴

Augustine counter-attacked that the validity of sacraments was a property of the clergy, who represented the Church, independent of their individual character. In the ensuing debate, he blessed the Roman imperial troops when they exterminated the Donatists for their manifest rigid puritanism and divisive separatism. This became the basis of the Diocletian persecutions, one of the bloodiest persecutions in Early Christianity.

The debate was on Holiness. According to Augustine, the Church was not only holy because of its works, but because of the work in the Church. A sacrament was from God and therefore *ex opere operato* (L: 'Holy by virtue of its source').

According to the Donatists, the clergy became unholy when they sided with the ruling Roman regime. God, being holy, demanded holiness of his priests. If they were stained, then they could not offer what they did not have, and consequently, the sacraments they administered could not be holy or acceptable.

Despite the argumentation held before the council of Chalcedon and the denunciation of Donatism as heretic (against the teachings of the universal Church) their popularity held. Not even Emperor Constantine who later legalized the Christian faith could mediate on this. Their church property was seized, but the Holiness group strode on. Later emperors who were sympathetic to the Donatists, such as Julian, reversed the ban and re-vitalized the group, restoring their properties and offering them imperial protection⁵. Over the centuries, the movement spread as a liberation movement all over Europe, the Americas, and the rest of the world.

As the movement spread further west, it grew through further divisions, among them the Rogatists, Ticonius, followers of Maximian, and other pacifist groups. The Catholic Encyclopedia claims that the splinter groups were so numerous, they could not name them all.⁶

Some Christian historians believe that Donatism caused a prolonged unrest that contributed to the conquest of North Africa by the Arabs. However, Afrocentrist historiography is missing in such details of early church history.

No records exist of the spread of the faith on the African soil, after the Islamization period, though naturally the Donatist influences remained here and merged into African indigenous beliefs over the centuries. All that has been recorded is that during the Islamization period, *Kharijites* were influenced by Donatism.

In the West, Donatism existed into the Reformation period, the term Donatist being leveled against Church-reform movements which criticized clerical immorality on theological grounds. Early Catholic Church reformers such as John Wycliff and Jan Huss were labeled as Donatists, growing the Donatism influence into the reform religious beliefs, under many puritan groups of the sixteenth century, including George Fox's Religious Society of Friends, otherwise known as Quakers for their fervent spirit engagements.

In Africa, the birthplace of Donatism, the beliefs lain unrecorded, though prevailing in different indigenous religious beliefs. These beliefs, the researcher strongly believes, awoke when the western beliefs carried by the missionaries conflicted with the African beliefs during the World Wars period.

Translation of the Bible into the vernacular has been fronted for the awakening of the African Spirituality, but the researcher believes that it is during this period that the Africans were forced back to their indigenous beliefs, only to realize that their beliefs and practices were hinged on the Holiness code, similar to that of the Donatists.

Thus, it is during the wartime period that African spirituality found open expression in the African Initiated Churches, which are defined as Churches founded by Africans, for Africans, led by Africans. Countries with the largest memberships in the African Initiated churches include South Africa, followed by Nigeria and Kenya. These leading churches are essentially Healing-Spirit Churches ⁷

Objectives

The main objective was to assess the place of millenarian revivalism in African Spirituality during the World War I-World War II period. Related specific objectives include analysis of the contest

between Holiness and Salvation and evaluation of the level of Christian and theological understanding among adherents of the Lyahuka Church of the Holy Spirit.

Literature Review

The Concept of Revivalism is derived from biblical narratives of national decline and restoration of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the most outstanding taking place during the reign of King Josiah (641-609BC), the 16th king of Judah.

King Josiah re-instituted the Passover celebrations and centralized the worship in Jerusalem. These reformist trends back to the past (nativist reform), were in place right into the New Testament era that Jesus Christ lived in. Thus, revival reforms can have a long-lasting effect, as do the Donatist teachings.

Modern Revivalism can be traced to the American 'Awakenings' around 1727, 1792, 1830, 1857, and 1882 of the 18th and 19th centuries. The global missions in West Africa established after the abolition of the Slave trade in 1833-1839 were part of the Second Great Awakening in America, led by Protestant evangelical missionary societies.

In West Africa, the world wars revivals had their genesis in Wade Harris of Liberia in 1910 and Garrick Braide of Nigeria in the aftermath of Samwel Crowther's disgrace and death in 1914. Both died after prison sentences. They were succeeded by Joseph Babalola of Yorubaland in 1928.

In Central Africa, Simon Kimbangu started a revival in 1921, was arrested after nine months and spent the next 31 years behind bars. The longer he was imprisoned, the stronger his movement grew into a formidable church, under the leadership of his sons, right into the twentieth century.

In East Africa the *Balokole* (Luganda: saved ones) Revival led by Dr Joe Church of Rwanda arose within the Anglican church in the 1930s' and grew steadily into the twentieth century, spreading from Rwanda, through Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya, and into Amadi in Southern Sudan lasting through five decades. It became so powerful that it posed a veritable threat to the Ugandan government, which ordered open persecution against its members.

While the West African missions were spreading along the Niger Delta, a group of Anglican clergymen led by John Henry Newman and John Keble began the Oxford movement at Oxford

University in England. The missionaries of this group, under CMS, would eventually reach East Africa (Rwanda) through Dr. Joseph Church.

There are 2 types of revivals: Decorous revivals that affirm the universal truths of Christianity and the Millennial Revivals. Millenarian revivals develop alongside mainstream decorous revivals, displaying signs like: vivid displays of emotion, exercise of charismatic gifts, opening up most private secrets to public inspection, narrations of sexual deviance, name-naming, and assassination of characters.

The East African Revival (*Abalokole: Saved Ones*), comprising Tanganyika Lutherans, Kenyan Quakers and Presbyterians, Ugandan Anglicans, all had these characteristics, which also tended to manifest in the Millenarism wing of the Lyahuka Church of East Africa forty years later. The title ‘Saved ones’, as the classical Donatist ‘soldiers of Christ’, was derived from John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, a Puritan writing.

After the Bible, *Pilgrim’s Progress 10* was the next most published book in African vernacular languages. The first translation of *Pilgrim’s Progress* was in Swahili, published just five years after the Swahili New Testament (*Msafiri: Kitabu hiki kimefasirika katika Kitabu cha Kiingereza kiiitwacho ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’*)¹¹

The Luganda edition was published in 1900 by *Omutambuze*.¹² Kinya-Rwanda translation was published in 1933- just before the East African Revival spread. It was published by Harold Guilleband and Samsoni Nyarubuya. *Pilgrim’s Progress* has also been rendered in Dhuluo, Luny Ankole, Kinyarwanda by a cadre of earnest translators¹³ Overtime, three revival movements have produced large membership and today have churches beyond their national boundaries. These are: The Aladura Churches in West Africa; the Zionist churches of South Africa, and the *Abaroho* (spirit) churches that still survive the East African Revival movement.

The East African Revival started on 2nd July 1931, as documented by Dora Skipper, an Anglican CMS missionary at Gahini, in Northern Rwanda. (Dora Skipper’s diary entry for 30th August, 1931. *CMS Oxford archives*, Skipper Papers, folio 1/3).

In *The Pilgrim’s Progress* – the protagonist, Christian, is guided by the character Evangelist to ‘fly from the Wrath to come’. Christian does so & sets off to the Celestial City - the place of

deliverance, strapping off the burdens on his shoulder, as he progresses nearer to the city, till finally he's free.

The literature -*John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress from This world to That Which is to Come*, was a useful manual in self –self-management of Christians in East Africa. It demanded that converts edit their lives, renounce dispositions & possessions of the past sinful life, as the loads that had fallen off Christian's back, leading to a new life.

Thus, the revival was not seen as a movement with a leadership, but as a technique for the production of new forms of selfhood. The reading & translation of *The Pilgrim's Progress* had been conducted by Harold Guilleband & Samsoni Nyarubuga, who delivered the sermons at Gahini Church. (H. Guilleband, 'The crowning joy of Six Years' work', *Ruanda Notes*. 39 (Jan 1932).

At one church center, about 1000 people were beside themselves with grief; the floor below their feet was wet from convulsed grieving for their past sins. This led to dramatic acts of disavowal (Joe Church, Circular letter, 13 March 1939, HMC JEC).

The villagers in Amadi (Southern Sudan) stopped cultivating their fields. They met for 4 or 5 services every day, more like the biblical Thessalonica Church, waiting for the actual descending of their Savior.

These scenes were replicated in Gahini (Northern Rwanda) & Kigezi (Southern Uganda). (Arthur Casson Chilson, Circular letter 29th November, 1938; Joe Church, circular letter, 28 March, 1939, in HMC JEC 1/4; Andrew Wheeler, in 'Richard Jones and the Sudan Revival of 1938', *Anglican and Episcopal History* 71 (2002), pp 168 -86.

Revivalists persistently convinced them that their contemporary world was coming to an end. Joe Church, is said to be the most influential missionary advocate of the Revival who preached that 'Armageddon is very near'. (Joe Church to Miss Hall, 29 Dec. 1938, HMC JEC 3/4).

The Second World War in Europe was just beginning: 'These are the last days (wrote Church). 'The Lord Jesus is calling us to a total war in this last battle before he returns. (Joe Church, Circular letter, 9 March 1942, Mid-Africa Ministry archives, University of Birmingham. A3).

World War II heralded the Lord's second coming, and those unprepared for his meeting were doomed. Many converts had prophetic dreams that attenuated time, trimmed life's span & brought dreamers face to face with a judgmental God.

For the late revivalists of the 1930s, Rev. 20 12-13 about God's judgment was as real as lived experience. Converts made an inventory of their misdeeds & their goods. Their assuredness about the imminent end of the world drove converts to despair & others to act in radical ways where conversion entailed disclosure.

Confession- revivalists threw their respectability to the winds, hence offending other civilians who threw at them nefarious nicknames. They were deemed both callous and uncommitted. The revival had to be domesticated. Others confined themselves to a simple formula: 'Once I was blind, but now I see', as a way of controlling the social tension of 'testimonies.

Preaching sermons was made on 1 Corinthians. 12 describes fruits of the Holy Spirit as peace and self-control. Rules were instituted to control converts' enthusiasm, service at school chapels was limited to one hour, and lights were put out of the dorms by 9pm.

Nevertheless, revivalists now spent long hours preaching loudly on football fields, name-calling & insulting Bakewell, the local CMS missionary. The Bible was combed to justify verses on falling on the floor and making spectacles, irrespective of if it was angels or Satan.

Other condemned missionaries for 'daring to pass judgment on what was God's business alone'. Four months later Lionel Bakewell, the local missionary, was transferred.

The incoming missionary Charles Maling replaced night-time chapel service with more sedate bible study. He imposed an editorial authority over converts testimonies and promoted decorum and comportment by condemning converts' disclosures to separate private life from public affairs.

Chiefs imposed confinements on converts, and timetables were used to control the duration and location of revivalist enunciation. Noisy revivalists were barred from gathering in public, and singing revivalists on the streets were liable to a fine. Private revival meetings were to disband by 8:30 pm.

Singing at night was to cease by 9:30 p.m., and drum-beating in churches was banned. Religious services would only be conducted in the church. These rules are discussed in the KIG DA bundle 129 'Church Missionary Society file.

Methodology

This research is sourced quantitatively from library sources and qualitatively from members of Lyahuka Church of East Africa, headquarters at Mudete village in Sabatia sub-county of Vihiga County. Sampling was from double mixed sampling, cluster, and purposive methods of the church spiritual leaders, their members, and versed theologians. A sample population of 24 was used.

The Church is headed by an Archbishop, assisted by a national treasurer and national administrators. All confessed to be semi-trained, having reached the primary level of education. They had been low-tier workers in companies outside Mudete. Coupled to this, they had been lifelong members of the church. Upon job retirement, they were selected by a third-generation leaders (*wazee*) of the Church in 2017.

Findings

In Kenya, the *Abaroho* Holy Spirit Churches of East Africa broke away from the Friends African Mission in 1927, led by Jakobo Buluku. The *Abaroho* experienced many schisms since, but today, there is a different experience in the churches.

During the short introduction of the research team, Archbishop Peter Asava, a witness of the original *Abaroho* holy spirit church, and who insisted that he was awarded a doctorate in divinity at the Liverpool Bible College, an affiliate of Cambridge University, surprised the researcher: 'Do you know that Ann-Marie Rasmussen, the Swedish / Norwegian researcher had been our guest in this very home in the 70s?'

The researcher was tongue-tied, because Ann-Marie Bak Rasmussen author of '*Modern African Spirituality: The Independent Spirit Churches in East Africa 1902-1976*'¹⁴ has been her authority on African Instituted Churches, and especially the Western Kenya breakaway sects after the East African Revival.

Other writers on the East African Revival have been Ward, K. '*Tukutendereza Jesu: The Balokole Revival in Uganda*'¹⁵ Ward, W.R. '*Protestant Evangelical Awakening*'¹⁶, Warren, Max. '*Revival: An*

Enquiry. London¹⁷ and Church Joe. *Quest for the Highest: An Autobiographical Account of the East African Revival*¹⁸.

But none of these books had had the Kenyan setting as a specialty. Anne- Marie Bak Rasmussen stands out, and when Peter Asava intimated that she had actually been a researcher-in-residence at the very home the researcher was sitting in, the researcher was dumbfounded with wonder.

Next, Peter Asava led the research team to the grave-side of the pioneer Leader of the *Abaroho* Holy Spirit Churches, then known as *Dini ya Roho Mtakatifu* (African Church of the Holy Spirit) in 1927. In answer to questions on millenarism in African Christianity, Asava gave graphic details of how in those World War-ridden years, the very air in Vihiga was ridden with foul stench from carcasses of dead bodies from hunger, pestilence, and strife due to the fear that gripped the years.

Death was so imminent that villagers from miles away used to gather at Jakobo Buluku's home, which had been converted into a kind of Christian center. The Maragoli converts used to lie on the ground, faces upward, waiting for the coming of Jesus Christ through the sun. They would wait on end, some dying away, until another prophet came from Central Kenya, and told them that he had had a contrary revelation, that Christ was not coming then, and that the colonial officers were coming to arrest them.

This reveals that the concept of millenarism, especially during the war years, was very strong. The Aladura churches in West Africa were instituted due to the pandemics and epidemics of that era, which led to the Prayer-healing emphasis in their services. **From the interviews done, millenarism is not an attractive notion anymore, rather, ecumenical dialogue between people of living faiths is given prominence to mitigate against any hostilities that may arise due to too much spiritism.**

Ana Marie Bak Rasmussen (1946-1992) conducted her field work in Vihiga while based at Jakobo Buluku's home in Matagaro village between 1974-1976. The work concentrated on the Quakers in East Africa and the independent churches that emerged from the Quaker mission. The book '*Modern African Spirituality: The Independent Holy Spirit Churches in East Africa 1902-1976*'¹⁴ traces the origin, development and structure of four independent churches - The Holy Spirit Church of East Africa, the African Church of Holy Spirit, the Gospel Holy Spirit of East Africa and the Lyahuka Church of East Africa.

From the mission base of the pioneer leader Jakobo Buluku (as written by Peter Asava), Rasmussen was able to interview many of the original members of these *Dini ya Roho Mtakatifu* Churches and the recorded interviews were then compiled post-humorously by her husband and fellow researcher Joseph Wasike Mululu into the book and published in 1996. This book remains the only published work on these churches to date.

Of the four Holy Spirit churches written about by Rasmussen, the only present active one in Western Kenya - Vihiga is Lyahuka Church, which has about two thousand members nationwide. The three other churches are more popular in Tanzania and Uganda.

Lyahuka Church of East Africa, like most holy spirit Churches, does not have articles of faith, though it largely borrows from the Quakers Friends Church- its parent church, when need arises. Its appropriation of titles such as ‘archbishop, bishop, high priest’ is at odds of the Quaker faith, which generally has no spiritual titles. From the interviews, it was apparent that all members of Lyahuka believe in visions and revelations, as required of them by the Prophet bishops.

The prophecies of the leaders tend to align themselves to biblical prophecies of the Old Testament calling for moral imperatives lest there be famine and epidemic in the land, many more motor accidents, higher cases of armed robberies in their land. However, the research team did not come across any leader having taken on names such as Elijah, Moses or Messiah, as do some Holy Ghost AICs.

Some members confessed to asking for special revelations regarding their personal problems, particularly regarding their children. The researcher did not witness any spirit possession trances, though the worship was ecstatic, with strong traditional rhythms. No excursions are made to excluded places like hills or forest glades to ‘wrestle with God’ regarding their problems or the ending of the world.

Most prayer requests are made in church before the prophet / archbishop regarding healing, gift of children, examination success for their children. Water immersion is regarded as archaic; it having been practiced before the holy Spirit baptism of Jesus Christ (Mat.3;13; 16-17). It is believed that today, it is the Holy Spirit who convicts one of repentance.

Though Lyahuka does not partake of the Lord’s Super, other AICs do the ‘African Table’ with cake made of maize flour (Ugali), potato flour and dried bananas, with diluted honey as the blood. Infant

dedication and marriage certification is similar to the Quakers. Their songs are derived from conventional hymn books as the Quakers though they are sung with a lot of enthusiasm, dance jumping, clapping to traditional drums, gongs, handbells, etc. Their confessions and prayers are made to constant refrains of 'Halleluiah!' more than to 'Amen!'.

Lyahuka adherents believe in the efficacy of Western medicine. Rarely are illnesses subjected to divination healing. A visit to a diviner can cause excommunication from the church for lack of faith in the Almighty. No healing symbols are used, be it holy water, ash, candles, etc. Thus, their belief and practice are like the Quakers. Jesus Christ is the Great Physician,

The bible is the sacred book, and the sermon is central in the worship service. Seminars and conferences are held at least twice a year to serve the men, women, and youth groups. The latest had been the women's seminar held in mid-August in Kawangware, Nairobi.

Hymns on the blood of Jesus and the Cross are rife, even as seen in the videos, and public spirituality is moving away from puritanism / radical reformers to enlightened spirituality, in their instituted churches. They are more spiritual than emotional. They prefer simple and inspiring sermons, and forming small fellowship groups and bible study classes. They believe in conversion and salvation rather than absolute obedience to rigid rules of holiness. The spiritual leaders mingle freely with the laity, and interest in the less mentally and physically disabled has increased.

Morality is emphasized, and domestic violence is discouraged. Counselling is done by deacons and the church leaders. Church services are unprogrammed and comprise fervent praying in the Spirit, interrupted with prophecy. No administration of sacraments is conducted, and their initiation to the faith is through the Holy Spirit baptism. Otherwise, the Church's beliefs and practices are very similar to the Friends Church that it had broken from during the East African Revival in the early 1930s.

They take their sick to the modern hospitals, and take their children to county schools, aspiring the highest education possible for them. Several have their children in local universities with four members having their children in universities abroad. The church has a sprawling foundation, which seems not to have progressed in recent years. A county school exists on its grounds, and a special unit for the handicapped stands at a corner, almost in neglect. Money is scarce.

Analysis

The ethical imperative of Holiness, both charismatic and pneumatic, expressed in the church services, exhibits the same kind of great excitement and intensity as documented in Western literature on Donatism. The sometimes violent, remorseful convulsions are endemic in African indigenous religious practices. Few, if any, historians have related these expressions to the ‘ancestral Donatist practices of Early Christianity.

However, as historiography studies reveal, dominant movements outlast animist practices. The researcher ascribes African indigenous religious beliefs and practices to strong, rudimentary Donatist influences mooted in North Africa, the breeding grounds of Early Christianity. The cries and groans, unstudied as yet, may be more than just spiritual, but reflect traces of the wars, pain, and loss carried over the centuries.

The researcher has reason to believe that African spirituality is a rough gem of Early Christianity, which presently has been infused with the Christian imperatives of compassion, love, justice, and hope. Gabriel Ositelu II in his shared work with J.S. Pobee¹⁹, admits that many of the AICs grew out of the missions because the missionaries refused to accept/acknowledge the great similarities between most African cultures with that of the Jewish culture in the Old Testament and even the New Testament, such as birth, dedication, circumcision, marriage, healing and living experiences unto the burial rites.

The researcher attributes the Lyahuka Church beliefs and practices to African Evangelical Theology, a contemporary Christian thought that emphasizes the Bible and its ethical imperatives of Holiness and the Gospel, above public engagements such as Public Theology or Social Gospel.

Heremeneutical Exegesis of the Church in Wartime Situation, (with particular reference to the Book of Joel).

Concept of ‘The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord’ (Joel 2:30-31), Eschatology (Matthew 24:28-31) and Millenarism (Revelations 20:1-6) (NIt)

‘The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord’ is to be feared. Prophet Joel uncannily describes it as ‘wonders in the heavens and on the earth - blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun will become dark and the moon will turn blood red. In those very days, the Lord will have poured his

spirit upon those who accept him. those who will have rejected him will suffer the divine punishment.

Jesus Christ refers to this prophecy when expounding on his second coming (Matt. 24:29-31). 'There will be deep mourning among all people' as they witness his coming down with his angels, midst the mighty blast of the trumpet, to collect his chosen ones. The book of Revelation 20 prophesies of two resurrections, but is clearer about the one thousand years' reign (20:7).

Prophet Joel, son of Pethuel lived in the ancient Southern Kingdom of Judah, and though similar phrases had been used about nineteen times by eight different Old Testament prophets, including Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Zechariah and Malachi, Joel's prophecy is quoted in Acts 2:17-21 by Apostle Peter, by Jesus Christ in Mathew 24: 28-31 and Mark 13:24-25; marking it as more authoritative in context. Other refrains of 'The day of the Lord' appear in Joel's prophecy in verses 1:15; 2:1,11,31; 3:14.

In the book of Joel, impending war, pestilence and actual battle are foretold (Joel 1-2:11), Call to repentance is made (2:12-20) material restoration is prophesied through the divine healing of the land (2:21-27), spiritual restoration is prophesied through the divine outpouring of His spirit (2:28-32), national restoration is prophesied through divine judgement on the unrighteous (Joel 3:1-21).

The prophecy foretells the onslaught of war by Tyre, Sidon, and the cities of Philistia (3:1-9) against Judah and the allegorical locusts' destruction, which like World War 1, lasts four consecutive years. The prophecy (Joel 1-2:11) is reminiscent of narratives of the Decian and Diocletian persecutions in Early Christianity and the World Wars during Africa's colonial-missionary era that culminated with the East African Revival narratives and formation of the African Independent Churches.

Despite the calamities, the Almighty reverberates to all his creation: 'Don't be afraid, O land, be glad now and rejoice, for the Lord has done great things. Don't be afraid, you animals of the field, for the wilderness pastures will soon be green. The trees will again be filled with fruit; the spring and autumn rains will return; the barns will be full.

In essence, the lord will restore the natural creation and, in particular, the human survivors: sons and daughters will prophesy, old men dream dreams, young men see visions, and His spirit indwell the free and bond (2:21-29). The Lord promises to pour out his spirit on all people (2:28), save

everyone who calls upon his name (2:32), and ultimately, allow his presence to be established on earth (3:17-18, 20-21).

Significance and Justification

The book of Joel sets out the perennial fragility of political relations among God's people and the aftermath effects of war on ecology, wildlife, climate, social, and spiritual relations. New identities are formed, new spiritualities evolve, and different strategies are forged.

Another 'great and terrible day of the Lord' need not arise unless we humans conscientiously refuse to establish his kingdom on earth. Otherwise, if mankind is aware that the Lord is the refuge for his people (3:16) and that beyond doubt the Lord dwells here on earth as in heaven (3:17), then, 'the mountains will drip with sweet wine, hills flow with milk, waters will fill the streambeds...' (3:18) we shall suffer no more world wars.

We shall have reversed Joel's call to war to a state of peace: Weapons of war shall be transformed into tools for agriculture, symbolizing a world without war: 'Nations will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks' (Isa.. 2:4 and Mic. 4:3).

Priorities shall profoundly shift from destruction and conflict to creation and cooperation, symbolizing a world focused on sustenance, growth, and peaceful existence. The 'Swords to plough shares' is a concept in which military weapons or technologies are converted for peaceful civilian applications.

The United Nations building in New York City features a statue of a man beating a sword into a plowshare, further emphasizing the global aspiration for peace and disarmament. This statue had been a gift from the Soviet Union in 1959, serving as a powerful visual reminder of the desire for a World Without War.

Already in this peacetime, some Pentecostal AICs that started during the war period have grown into the largest churches in Africa, such as the Aladura and Harrist churches in West Africa, the Zion Christian Church in Southern Africa, and the African Apostolic Church in Central Africa, with branches extending into Europe.

These AICs are an active membership in the World Council of Churches organization and the All-Africa Conference of Churches based in Nairobi, Kenya, which cannot be said of Lyahuka Church

of East Africa, which has no accruing benefits from both bodies, since they are unable to pay the annual membership fee of local organizations like the National Council of Churches in Kenya for the last three years.

Place of Schism in African Christianity

The Old Testament prophecy of Joel took place in a theocratic-monarchic state of Judah, where the Lord was one and undivided. Schisms, however, come up later in the New Testament. In Luke 12:49-56, Jesus Christ declares that he had come to divide, 'set the world on fire, and I wish it were already burning! This, however, is not in the context of the physical, but the spiritual.

This marked the start of divisions/schisms in Judaism. Christianity is first mentioned in Acts 11:26, in reference to 'followers of Christ in Antioch, and thus Christianity mushroomed slowly but gradually, due to its superior ethics, into the State religion of Rome in 313AD

There have been three major schisms in Christian history, since the East-West schism of 1054, which separated the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches, and the European Reformation, which separated the Protestant wing from the Catholic mainstream Church in the 15th-17th Century. The three schisms would be the African Reformation that caused the breakaway of African Churches from European Protestant churches.

The European Reformation led to multitudinous protestant denominations, and words such as heresy and schism were gradually wiped from Protestant usage as being offensive to their faith. When the Protestant evangelicals came doing global missionary work in Africa, after the abolition of the Slave Trade in the 19th Century, they represented many divisions: Anglicans, evangelicals, Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, Quakers, Presbyterians, etc.

These divisions created confusion among the indigenous converts. Before long, World War 1, beginning in 1918, was closely followed by World War II in 1939, hardly leaving any respite for the new converts. Panic, pain, loss, death, pestilence, and disease then followed.

The signs of the Second coming of Christ seem obvious, and converts in large numbers broke away into eschatology-holy spirit sects related to the prophecy of millennialism. Many African groups separated from mission churches to form indigenous churches that adapted the positive in Christian

faith to their religion, which was largely a spiritual worship with roots in the early Christianity Holy Spirit movements, such as the Donatists.

The result was the formation of a new African Spirituality, which is referred to as **The African Reformation** of the 19th -20th Century. David B. Barrett, in *Schisms & Renewal in Africa*, notes that there is ‘a striking number of parallels’ between the history of AICs and that of the European Reformation, describing the AIC movement as one with a ‘radical mission of renewal and reformation’²⁰.

Just as in numerous earlier reformations and theological renewals in history, Africa has been spurred on by the vernacular translation of the Bible (ibid. 161-2; 173-4) narratives on the spread of the *Balokole* Revival in Uganda, where *The Pilgrim* by John Bunyan had been a pivotal influence.

Hans-Jurgen Becken in *The Story of Isaiah Shembe* also describes the African Reformation as ‘similar to that of the Protestant Reformation in Northern Europe’²¹. Allan Anderson, in his book *African Reformation: African Initiated Churches in the 20th Century* (2001:33)²¹ remarks that this reformation is ‘unprecedented in the world-wide church, because it has enriched the Church throughout the world and irrevocably challenged the earlier Western hegemony of Christianity in Africa’²².

Gap for Further Research

Schisms in African Christianity are undeniably linked to Early Christianity controversies beginning in the 3rd century. Unfortunately, as noted severally times in the report, a lot is missing in African religions and Christianity since the Islamization that replaced Christianity in North Africa. Very little research has been conducted from 600-1500 with regard to the sub-Saharan Africa Middle Ages era, and the remnants of early Christianity.

The lack of documentation and multi-disciplinary research is partially attributed to students running away from World Christianity courses. Emmanuel A. S. Egbunu in ‘Journal of African Christian Biography’, bewails the gap between African and Christian identities, insisting that the biographer should find a way of connecting the different eras and settings’²³.

There exists a large segment of missing historical memory, which ought to be addressed by bodies such as the African Christian Biographers caucus group to recover the 600-1500 African Church History. Biographical writing is intrinsically character-oriented; the character conflicts with nature, other men, and himself.

We had one Donatus Magnus in Africa. Who are other contributors to this brand of African Christianity? Donatism is found in Western spirituality, such as the 16th-century protestant radical-puritan movements of the Quakers, Seekers, Ranters, Presbyterians, who advocated for greater purity of worship and doctrine, as well as personal and corporate piety.

Recommendations

The inclination towards African Evangelical Theology explains the low socioeconomic standards of most grassroots AICs members, even as witnessed with the Lyahuka congregation at Mudete.

Nevertheless, as Barbara Bompani argues, religion and religious faith should not be antithetical to development and progress. Bompani (2013)²⁴; Bompani (2015)²⁵. Grassroot communities should be supported in legitimate development units so that they ultimately take charge of their lives during peacetime.

Self-help and self-development initiatives are recommended by the researcher, in a bottom-up development approach, whose strategies should include involving youth and women as target groups in social, economic and spiritual life. These groups immediate survival and welfare needs through feeding programs, pastoral counselling, HIV and AIDS care, rehabilitation from substance abuses, health services, youth empowerment and recreation. Their skills development should be enhanced even after formal education and entrepreneurship education, and social housing availed, where necessary.

Conclusion

A major consequence of Church divisions during wartime has been a measure of loss of Church unity, but as Apostle Paul had alluded to church divisions in Philippians 1:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 1:10-17, that, as long as long as the Gospel is spread and Christ is known beyond, nothing is lost. Nevertheless, this should not be at the expense of Peace. Peaceful co-existence between all human beings is the strongest imperative.

References

- Adogame, Afe, & Jafta, Lazio. 2007. "Zionists, Aladura and Roho in African Instituted Churches" in *African Christianity: An African Story*. Ed. Ogbu Kalu. Trenton: Africa World Press. pp. 271–290.
- Anderson, Allan. 2001. *African Reformation: African Initiated Churches in the 20th Century*. Eritrea: Africa World Press. p. 33.
- Barett, D. B. 1968. *Schisms & Renewal in Africa*. Nairobi. p. 186.
- Becken, Hans-Jurgen. In Irving Hexham & G.C (eds.). 1996. *The Story of Isaiah Shembe*. Lewiston. p. ix.
- Bompani, B. 2013. *Between the Private and the Public: Negotiating Sexuality and Morality in Ugandan Pentecostal Churches*. Available at SSRN 2253741.
- Bompani, B. 2015. "Religion and Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Overview." In *The Routledge Handbook of Religions and Global Development*, pp. 101–113.
- Browne, Peter. 1967. *Augustine of Hippo*. Faber & Faber.
- Bunyan, John. (n.d./1678). *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come*. Uhrichsville, Ohio.
- Chapman, John. 1909. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 5. New York: Robert Appleton Co.
- Church, Joseph. 1981. *Quest for the Highest: An Autobiographical Account of the East African Revival*. Exeter: Paternoster Press. Donatism. *Cyclopedia*.
- Egbunu, Emmanuel A. S. "Journal of African Christian Biography," vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 26–37. Dictionary of African Christian Biography, Boston University Center for Global Christianity and Mission.
- Hofmeyr, Isabel. 2004. *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of The Pilgrim's Progress*. Princeton. Chapter 5.
- Msafiri. *Kitabu hiki kimefasirika katika Kitabu cha Kiingereza kiitwacho 'Pilgrim's Progress'* (London, 1888).
- Oliver, Roland. 1965. *Missionary Factor in East Africa* (2nd ed.). London: Longman. p. 231.
- Omutambuze. 1900. London.

- Pobee, J. S., & Ositelu, G. 1998. "African Initiatives in Christianity" in *The Growth, Gifts and Diversities of Indigenous African Churches – A Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement*. World Council of Churches.
- Rasmussen, Ana Marie Bak. 1996. *Modern African Spirituality: The Independent Holy Spirit Churches in East Africa 1902–1976*. I.B. Tauris.
- Shaw, Mark. 2010. *Global Awakening: How 20th Century Revivals Triggered a Christian Revolution*. InterVarsity Press.
- Shaw, Mark, & Gitau. 2020. *The Kingdom of God in Africa: A History of African Christianity*. Cumbria: Langham Global Library. p. 243.
- Ward, K. "Tukutendereza Jesu: The Balokole Revival in Uganda" in *From Mission to Church*, edited by Zablon Nthamburi, pp. 113–124.
- Ward, W. R. 1992. *Protestant Evangelical Awakening*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Warren, Max. 1957. *Revival: An Enquiry*. London: SCM.