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(5) AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY IN COLONIAL TIMES

Obed Kealotswe

Introduction

A discussion of African Christianity in colonial times is a very tricky and complicated one. The complication lies in the fact that colonialism in its wide context started long before the Christian era. Christianity itself was born in a Roman colony. The argument of this chapter however is that for the purposes of a fruitful discussion, colonial Christianity should be used here to refer to the Christianity that developed after the partitioning of Africa in 1884. But this will be done after qualifying why Christianity had always been a colonial religion. Christianity first found its way into North Africa right from the time of the early church.[1] Most of the beliefs and teachings of Christianity were born in Africa through the works of Philo of Alexandria, Clement of Alexandria and Origen.[2] These great Christians of the time were Africans. This chapter argues that the Christianity which was in Africa by that time was born in a colonial situation but it was not colonial until AD 313 when Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. This chapter then argues that colonial Christianity started at that time and became more prominent after 1884. The argument is that before AD 313 the state was not concerned about Christianity except for persecuting the early church because of its revolutionary teachings which were challenging all the social structures, traditions, beliefs and customs of the time. It is interesting to learn that amongst the Christian martyrs, many were women because the early church had no discrimination based on sex or gender. It propagated for human love as derived, inspired and based on faith in Jesus Christ the only Son of God. Origen even taught that all human beings including the Devil or Satan would be saved.[3] This chapter argues that early colonial Christianity reached Africa in about AD 320. This was after Constantine had declared Christianity to be the religion of the Roman Empire. The church which had been engaged in doctrinal issues was drawn into political issues as well. This led to divisions in the church which were never resolved up to today. The major division was between the East and the West followed by the Reformation of the sixteenth century which led to the breaking of the western Roman Catholic Church into many denominations which were then used by the various colonial powers to partition Africa. This chapter makes an overview of this development and makes suggestions for some possible solutions to the problems. Its theoretical framework is that the core of the Christian faith as taught by Jesus Christ, expounded by Paul and lived by the early church to AD 313, had never been taught to the Africans. The Africans need to go to the crossroads to find the core teachings and beliefs of Christianity as a religion distinct from others.

Colonial Christianity: What is It?

This is a very complicated question to answer. To attempt to answer the question this discussion will refer to the first church Council of Jerusalem in AD 49. At this Council, Paul separated from Peter and James to proclaim a gospel free from Judaism. In his letter to the Romans Chapter 8, Paul discusses the law and its

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[1] Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity In Africa From Antiquity to the Present* (New Jersey: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995); Williston Walker*, A History of the Christian Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1968).

[2] Isichei, *A History of Christianity.*

[3] Isichei, *A History of Christianity.*

failure in saving people. He argues for faith as the core of the Christian faith. When pre-colonial and colonial Christianity came to Africa, it had lost this core because similar to the Jews or Israelites, the propagandists of the Christian faith did not appeal to faith but went into crusades to force not Christianity but their political interests. The conquest of Canaan by the Israelites was done through a religion which respected war as a way of forcing people to believe and have faith in Yahweh as the only God of the universe. There were no moves to convince the people about Yahweh so that they should believe in him but the people were forced to obey and recognize Yahweh as the only one God. This attitude was adopted by both the pre-colonial and post-colonial Christianity in Africa. This discussion dates back colonial Christianity to AD 313 when the Roman Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of his empire. Pre-Constantinian Christianity was persecuted for being revolutionary in challenging the traditional cultures and customs of both the Romans and the Israelites and for discriminating people of other ethnicities, traditions and customs. Pauline Christianity knew no boundaries that divided people by race, gender or ethnicity. The early church was the open platform for all those who believed in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. But once Christianity came under the support of the state, it became a political movement that was used by the Emperors to rule their subjects and expand their empires. The exemption of the clergy from taxation, the building of large churches and cathedrals by the Emperors diminished the preaching of the free gospel of Jesus Christ which liberated people from all forms of bias including gender. Women began to be side-lined in decision-making in the church; issues of ethnicity arose when it came to leadership in the church. The argument of this discussion is that what is believed to be colonialism has a very long history and Christianity had always been part of colonialism and discrimination since Constantine. The despising of other people of different cultures has been characteristic of Christianity since Constantine. Pre-colonial Christianity despised African cultures and customs in favour of the colonial western cultures. It failed to recognize the Africans as human beings. Colonial Christianity forced the Africans directly and indirectly to accept Christianity which was wrapped in European culture. It is a political Christianity used by those who hold political power to force to submission all other people who are not of their race or ethnicity. Many parts of Africa south of the Sahara which is generally referred to as black Africa came into contact with Christianity in the early fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The major aspects emerging from the contacts of Christianity with Africa, its people, customs, traditions and religious beliefs have contributed much to the manner in which Christianity was received, perceived, accepted and rejected by different African communities and societies. The years before the colonial period have showed that the major areas of concern were those of conflicts between the traditional African religious beliefs and practices and Christianity. In many parts of Africa, missionaries were either preceded by traders or they preceded traders themselves. In areas where trade came before Christianity e.g. many parts of Southern Africa, the coming of colonialism had much more serious repercussions than the areas where missionaries preceded traders. The reason was that the traders attracted their mother countries to engage in trade with Africa. By so doing they needed the protection of their mother countries. In this way, colonialism had much more serious results which were negative as opposed to those in areas where missionaries came before traders. Missionaries were more interested in developing the lives of their converts and making them to be like the Europeans from where many originated. Their establishment of educational institutions, clinics and hospitals helped very much in the social development of many African countries. In many cases, they differed from the traders who were more interested in business as opposed to developing the local people. Traders in ivory and gold had no time to develop the Africans but always wanted their countries to protect them against the rebelling Africans who did not want their resources to be diminished. In some areas, traders who had started companies helped missionaries during the colonial period when the mother-bodies of some missionaries could not afford to do so. This discussion reads and interprets African Christianity in the colonial period by looking at the present state of Christianity in Africa. The argument of this discussion is that if one studies or narrates the events of the colonial period on their own without

reference to their effects in the present, the discussion does not make good sense. Colonial Christianity could only be understood with reference to the present post-colonial Christianity in Africa. This is the angle from which this discussion is approached.

Colonial Christianity in Africa

The General African Situation of Colonial Christianity

The missionaries of the nineteenth century which ushered in colonialism have been blamed from many angles as agents of colonialism. This chapter views things differently. Many historians of Africa concur that the missionaries made some great contributions to the development of Africa.[4] If one takes the year 1884 as the year that marked the beginnings of colonialism in Africa, one will realise that before that year, missionaries were regarded with respect and honour in many African countries. But the partitioning of Africa from 1884 ushered in a new picture of the missionaries and their work in Africa. The colonialism that emerged after 1884 went to the extent of destroying the good deeds of the missionaries because the new colonial administration that came had no interest in the lives of the Africans but became more concerned about trade in Africa. It could be argued in many cases that colonialism put a stop to human slavery. In many cases, preventing slavery was the major excuse used by the colonial governments to colonize many African states and partition Africa.[5] Fighting slavery made many missionary bodies invite their governments to intervene in Africa by abolishing slavery and developing good trade. By so doing, many missionary bodies became victims of their own countries because their countries forced them to accept colonialism in the guise of fighting slavery. By using conversion, many Africans were made not to resist the new governments which were coming into Africa and replacing the traditional African governments and social structures. Missionaries were equally victims of colonialism because their evangelization was also controlled by the colonial powers whose major interest was not Christianity but trade. Traders were much more favoured by the colonial governments than missionaries. It is for this reason that many missionaries became victims of colonialism. When the mother bodies of the missionaries failed to support the work of the missionaries, many missionaries became tempted to support the colonial powers in order to get help for the work of the missions. In Southern Africa, with examples from Botswana, many missionaries of the London Missionary Society (LMS) became victims of this situation. When colonialism came in the guise of Protection in 1885, the LMS began to lose control of most of its institutions, educational and medical, because the chiefs who in many cases connived with the colonial protective government were supported by the government to start national schools which were independent from missionary control.[6] These secular schools posed some great challenges to the mission schools to the extent that by the time of independence in 1966, almost all the missionary-founded institutions, hospitals, clinics and schools were taken over by government – except for a few. This phenomenon is found in many areas where the chiefs connived with the colonial governments. In areas where there was some strong

[4] Assa Okoth, *A History of Africa 1855-1914* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1979).
[5] Okoth, *A History of Africa 1855-1914;* I. Tufuoh, "Relations between Christian Missions, European administration, and Traders in the Gold Coast, 1828-1874," in *Christianity in Tropical Africa: Studies Presented and Discussed at the Seventh International African Seminar, University of Ghana, April 1965 edited by* C.G. Baeta, 34-60 (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).
[6] Don Rempel Boschman, *The Conflict Between New Religious Movements and the State in the Bechuanaland Protectorate prior to 1949* (Gaborone: University of Botswana, 1994); Mutero J. Chirenje, A History of Northern Botswana 1850-1910 (London: Associated University Press, 1979); Jane M. Sales, *The Planting of the Churches in South Africa* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971).

resistance to the colonial government, many missionary institutions survived for a very long time because in many parts of Africa, missionaries did not agree nor support the colonial government.

It is not an easy task to dwell on many examples on the basis of the different African countries but it suffices to follow the regional categorisation which makes things easier even if there are similarities but not identical situations. The most familiar and the most interesting is the South African situation.

The South African Colonial Christianity Situation and the Responses

In South Africa, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) brought Christianity as early as 1652. But it had no intention to evangelise the indigenous peoples because to the Dutch, Christianity was their culture and way of life. But the eighteenth century ushered in a period for the need of the evangelization of the indigenous peoples by the Moravians, London Missionary Society (LMS) and some DRC ministers and evangelists. The tensions between the Dutch and the English at the Cape penetrated the churches in the Cape and also made them to be divided. The first division took place in the DRC family itself. Latourette and Charles Villa-Vicencio show that the major divisions resulted in three major denominations: Nederduits Geerformeerde Kerk; Nederduits Hervormde Kerk and Gereformeerde Kerk.[7] These churches differed mainly due to their attitudes towards the evangelization of the Africans and relationships with the governments of the time. This division in the DRC family posed some serious challenges to the other churches in South Africa – Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, Apostolic Faith and Congregationalists. These churches were mainly English speaking. Many, such as the Congregationalists under the umbrella of the London Missionary Society (LMS) had previous good relationships with the Africans. Some of their missionaries such as John Philip and David Livingstone had pioneered the struggle for the freedom of the Africans and made some wide explorations of Africa respectively. For a long time the LMS missionaries in South Africa had fought colonial Christianity from within rather than from outside. The creation of the three Protectorates, the Kingdom of Swaziland, Basutoland and Bechuanaland were due to the work of some prominent LMS missionaries who had realised that the DRC-supported governments were aiming at taking the whole of Southern Africa under their control.

The division moved from churches into the different societies and communities. The churches found themselves entangled in many racial conflicts which led to some serious political and religious conflicts. The religious conflicts automatically divided the churches to the extent that some churches in the Dutch Reformed family took a clear stand of supporting the colonial government whilst the English-speaking churches remained neutral and ambiguous.[8] The early missionaries who had worked and lived with the indigenous peoples found themselves being separated from their people by segregational laws which divided the people into racial classes. By the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, many Africans in South Africa had started some African Independent Churches (AICs) which mainly opposed the segregation laws posed by the colonial government.[9] The AICs also reacted by reverting to some of the good customs and traditions of the South African peoples by including them in their understanding of the Christian faith. In many cases they were assisted by similar cultures and traditions found in the Old Testament.[10] This discussion argues that the impact of racial segregation in

[7] Kenneth S. Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age Volume 5* (New YORK: The Paternoster Press, 1962), 455.
[8] John De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979).
[9] Bengt G.M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).
[10] Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa;* David B. Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968); James N. Amanze, *African Christianity in Botswana: The case of the African Independent Churches (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1998);* Obed N. Kealotswe, *"Acceptance and rejection: The traditional-healer prophet and his integration of healing methods," BOLESWA: Journal of Theology, Religion and Philosophy (BJTRP),*

South Africa was similar to the partitioning of Africa by the colonial powers. The result of this partitioning was the planting of the different denominations in Africa instead of the Christian gospel.[11] The partitioning of Africa into many regions and states controlled by western powers led to the automatic partitioning of church denominations into sects and cults. In every African state, some divisions occurred in the churches leading to many splits following the examples of colonialism. The mutual relationships which had characterized the pre-colonial church denominations deteriorated into misunderstandings and competition between church denominations fuelled by colonialism. The missionary bodies which supported colonialism found favour with the colonial powers whilst those which were not supportive felt victims of the colonial powers. This led to the birth of a fragmented church in Africa whose impacts are still felt by modern African Christianity. This discussion argues that one can only understand colonial Christianity by looking at its results as experienced in post-colonial Africa. The general African situation has been captured by Hastings[12] by approaching the subject thematically. From his observation and research he outlines African Christianity in three themes which are Church and state; the historic Churches and Independence. This categorization is supported by the present discussion because it also approaches the subject from the post-colonial stance. One can argue that steps towards independence in Africa started as early as 1950 and getting momentum in the 1960s. The twenty-five-year period studied by Hastings sheds a lot of light on colonial Christianity and post-colonial Christianity in Africa.

The Patterns of Partitioning in the Whole of Africa and the Responses

The purpose of this essay is not to go into any detailed studies of the responses to colonialism because these have been well discussed by Okoth[13] and Latourette[14] with examples from Western Africa, Central Africa, Eastern Africa and Southern Africa. The purpose of this discussion is to try to identify some common features which do characterise African Christianity in the colonial period. It must however be argued that there is no clear-cut demarcation between colonial Christianity and the Christianity of the pre-colonial period. In many African countries one identifies some developments with some continuity from pre-colonial to colonial Christianity. The general situation as discussed by Okoth and Latourette is that colonial Christianity could be understood by examining its impacts in the African continent as a whole. Latourette[15] has observed that colonial Christianity was divided into Roman Catholic and the Protestant denominations. This division was influenced by the ruling colonial authorities in the different partitions of Africa. The Protestant churches were more spread in the British colonies whilst the Roman Catholics were found in the Portuguese, French, Belgian and Spanish territories. In German colonies there was some balance between the Protestants and Roman Catholics. This paper argues that to understand the present situation of Christianity in Africa one has to be familiar with both the events of the pre-colonial and the colonial expressions of Christianity in Africa. The major thing which both pre-colonial and colonial Christianities did to Africa was the de-tribalization of many African peoples mainly through the creation of unnatural borders which separated related peoples from each other. This situation is well captured and discussed by Phiri[16] with examples from Malawi amongst the Chewa peoples. Although her focus is on

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[11] Gerald West, *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation Modes of Reading the Bible in the South African Context* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1991).

[12] Adrian Hastings, *A History of African Christianity 1950-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

[13] Okoth, *A History of Africa 1855-1914.*

[14] Latourette*, Christianity in a Revolutionary Age.*

[15] Latourette*, Christianity in a Revolutionary Age, 449.*

[16] Isabel A. Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi* (Blantyre: Kachere Series, 1997).

women, the study reveals what has happened in many African countries regionally as Eastern, Western, Central, and Southern Africa. The de-tribalization of people led to the birth of nationalism in the twentieth century. Latourette argues that nationalism began to be strong after the two world wars which took place at the peak of colonialism. Africans who had fought in wars which were not theirs began to agitate for their freedom. They had learned that the colonial powers which involved them in their wars were actually proud of their own integrities but not aware of the fact that Africans also needed their integrity. This agitation for freedom was supported by the educational institutions of the different missionary bodies working in the different regions and areas of Africa. The very missionary-educated elites were the ones who used that education to challenge colonialism. They even challenged the expressions of Christianity as brought by the different denominations to many parts of Africa. The reaction took many forms as shall be discussed below. It is not easy to discuss region by region how colonial Christianity functioned but one example represents them all as shown by Okoth and Latourette.

The Impacts of Colonialism on Post-Colonial Christianity in Africa

The post-colonial church in Africa inherited the divisions caused by colonialism. These divisions have been caused and fuelled by the fact that when many African states became independent, they opted to be secular states which tolerate religion rather than identifying themselves with any particular religion or faith. The other factor is that many African independent states and those wanting independence became very nationalistic in their struggles for independence. Nationalism made many African political leaders resist the natural boundaries created by the colonial powers and emphasized tribal and ethnic unity. To make this possible, many independent African states co-opted for secular states rather than sacred. They did this in order to rebuild the African identities and African consciousness but at the same time taking into consideration the modern times in which globalization is taking place. The fact that many African states have not put any control on religion nor identify themselves with any one religious faith has resulted in two things which have shaped post-colonial Christianity in Africa. These are:

African creativity; and

Rebellion by various denominations in Africa against established Christianity.

African Creativity

Colonial Christianity in Africa forced many African Christians to accept teachings and beliefs which did not have meaning to them. Many just accepted the formality of being a Christian in order to benefit from the services provided by Christianity at the time. But in many cases the traditional African still remained dormant in many Africans. The first reaction has been labelled African creativity by Barrett[17] referring to the creativity that is found in the AICs and other New Religious Movements (NRMs). Many AICs which emerged during the colonial period and immediately after reacted against the manner in which the western white missionaries treated them. Barrett called the attitude of the missionaries towards the Africans as *failure in love.* This simply means that the missionaries preached a gospel of love which they never practised. The AICs then became very creative in their theology, beliefs and practices and produced their own expressions of the Christian faith which are in line with the African world view and African life. Colonial Christianity produced African Christianity. Some movements which emerged in the colonial time took some Christian guise yet they were political movements. These resulted in what Sundkler called messianic movements with black messiahs. Some much more interesting were the uprisings in Malawi by Chilembwe's movement.[18] In the Congo Simon Kimbangu[19] posed some serious challenges to the Belgian

[17] Latourette*, Christianity in a Revolutionary Age.*
[18] Okoth, *A History of Africa 1855-1914.*

colonial government. The role of women finds a classic example in Alice Lenshina in Zambia.[20] Although her movement did not oppose the colonial government but the independent one, her activities are still a result of colonial Christianity. In West Africa, the major influences came through the revivals of Prophet Harris and the Aladura.[21] In East Africa a good and classic example is that of the Luo.[22] The movements which were independent and indigenous contributed a lot to African creativity and the birth of a post-colonial church in Africa.

Rebellion by Various Denominations in Africa against Established Christianity

The use of the word rebellion to refer to what happened in some African corners might be too strong. Perhaps the much more lenient word could be apologetic. But classical apologies as written by the Greek Apologists[23] were not necessarily nice works but very challenging. Colonial Christianity produced such challenges. The first of these came from many missionaries who had the opportunity to relate to the Africans and tried to understand their worldview and their traditional religious beliefs and practices.[24]

These sympathetic works to the Africans made the western world think seriously about the conditions of the Africans. These authors studied the religious beliefs and practices of the Africans in detail in order to find some similarities with Christianity. They wanted African thought and belief to be understood instead of it being despised from lack of knowledge. Amongst the western missionaries and anthropologists works such as Parrinder[25] and Taylor[26] opened up the minds of western peoples to the world of the Africans. This led to the works by the Africans themselves such as Mbiti,[27] Idowu[28] and Setiloane[29] to mention but a few. These apologetic works were by nature rebelling against the western expressions of the Christian faith. A much clearer illustration of this rebellion against colonial Christianity which was supported by western administration is that of Luo independence as discussed by Barrett. The rebellion of the Luo people against British administration is a clear indication of the fact that colonial Christianity even disturbed the good work that was done by the pre-colonial missionaries and their relationship to the Africans. Colonial administration with its discriminative attitudes towards the Africans created a very bad image of Christianity in almost all the areas of Africa, Western, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa. The major patterns and results of colonialism are similar with very little differences as discussed by Okoth[30] and also by Baeta.[31] From his study of the Luo, Barrett found many similarities all over Africa. Although

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[19] Martin Marie-Louise, *Kimbangu,-an African prophet and his church* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975); Marthinus L. Daneel, *Quest for Belonging: Introduction to a Study of African Independent Churches* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1987); Daneel, *Quest for Belonging*.
[20] Hastings, *A History of African Christianity; Barrett, Schism and Renewal in Africa.*
[21] Harold W Turner, *History of an African Independent Church: The Church of the Lord (Aladura)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).
[22] Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa.*
[23] John N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: A&C Black, 1977).
[24] Classical of these are the works of Edwin W. Smith, *Knowing the African* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1946); Henry Callaway, *The Religious System of the Amazulu* (Cape Town: Struik, 1970); William Charles Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bantu: A Study of the Sympathetic Magico-Religious Practices and Beliefs of the Bantu tribes of Africa* (London: SCM, 1928).
[25] Geoffrey E. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (London: S.P.C.K., 1968).
[26] John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence Amid African Religion* (London: SCM, 1963).
[27] John S. Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986).
[28] Bolaji Idowu, *Towards an Indigenous Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).
[29] Gabriel M. Setiloane, *The Image of God Among the Sotho-Tswana* (Netherlands: A.A. Balkema, 1976).
[30] Okoth, *A History of Africa 1855-1914.*
[31] Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa*.

disagreements were more on religious beliefs, culture, customs and traditions, rebellion was more pronounced in areas where colonial administration was very strong.

This essay has argued that to understand colonial Christianity, one has to take a closer look at the present state of Christianity in Africa. One cannot study and understand colonial Christianity without reflecting on the present situation and then going back to the colonial period.

Modern Christianity in Africa as an Expression of Colonial Christianity

There are two major factors which have emerged in present or modern Christianity in Africa as results of colonial Christianity. These are theological creativity and the place of gender in the Christian religion. Many works have emerged which show some African theological creativity in order to make Christianity acceptable to the African worldview and by so doing making it to become African Christianity.[32]

These works and many others are reactions to colonial Christianity. To cite some of these reactions, Phiri shows how pre-colonial Chewa religion recognized the roles played by women but these were limited because patriarchy still prevailed from many angles. Amanze has done some good studies showing the roles played by women by founding churches in Botswana but still patriarchy dominated the women-founded churches. The failure of the Christian religion to make women play prominent roles in decision making and the running of churches has a long history. Starting with the Old Testament women had always been in the background. Any woman who achieved anything was regarded by men as an exception and whatever she did could not last unless a man arose to replace the woman. In the New Testament, very few women are mentioned but most of them seem to remain subjected to men in spite of their achievements. Throughout church history a few women are ever mentioned unless they are appended to men. The spread of Christianity to Europe is championed by men who fought wars to spread the gospel. When Christianity was finally established in Europe, it took a patriarchal form where women were prevented from any leadership positions as priests or ministers. The only place where they could be put because of their large numbers over men was the nunneries. The attitude towards women by western Christianity was carried to Africa by the colonial churches. This time, the attitude was not towards women but towards African men who were regarded as children to be guided by missionaries in the running of the different church denominations. Women had no place at all since the struggle remained between the white men and the black men. The reactions to this situation are now visible in post-colonial Christianity in Africa. Theologians have embarked on some serious questioning and interpretations of the Bible to suit the African situation. The works of Kwesi Dickson and Paul Ellingworth have been stated above as such examples. The re-writing the Bible project in Zimbabwe is one such project. The Association of Theological Institutions in Southern and Central Africa (ATISCA) produced its *Theology Cooked in an African Pot* in 1998. Such associations as ATIEA and ASTHEOL have also engaged themselves with theological projects which deny the theological paradigms introduced to Africa by western theologians. The rise of women's organizations such as the Circle of Concerned African Women (the Circle) in Accra, Ghana, in 1989 is one

[32] Some of the works are: James N. Amanze, Fidelis Nkomazana, Obed N. Kealotswe eds. *Biblical Studies, Theology, Religion and Philosophy an Introduction for African Universities* (Eldoret: Zapf Chancery, 2010); Appiah-Kubi Kofi and Torres Sergio eds. *African Theology En Route: Papers from the Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians, December 17-23, 1977, Accra, Ghana* (New York: Orbis Books, 1979); C.G. Baeta, *Christianity in Tropical Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa A Political, Social & Cultural History* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1997); Kwesi A. Dickson and Paul Ellingworth *eds. Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs* (New York: Orbis Books, 1969); Mercy A. Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa* (New York: Orbis Books, 1986); Isabel A. Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi,* Blantyre: Kachere Series, 1997); Aylward Shorter, *African Christian Theology-Adaptation or Incarnation?* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975).

of the responses to colonial Christianity. The Circle is not a challenge to patriarchy as such but to the whole Bible, its set-up and its interpretation. This is not a work that is limited to women but it needs the participation of men as well. It draws the Christian faith to the crossroads where Jesus is seen all the time with his disciples composed of men and women. Jesus was compelled by the prevailing culture to have men as leaders instead of having a mixture of men and women. The core of the Christian faith has no gender, nor Jew or Greek as Paul maintained. It is a faith that should promote human, gender, sexual and racial equalities.

What then is the Future of Christianity in Africa?

The answer to this question might appear utopian to the reader. African Christianity should not be a reaction to colonial Christianity. It must go back to the crossroads, re-read the Bible, reinterpret the teachings of Jesus and establish a Christian church in Africa. The African Church must treat all its members just like Jesus who did not know racialism, tribalism or ethnicity, social status, sex or gender. Jesus mingled with all people: the despised prostitutes, the hated tax collectors, the rich and the poor – both men and women. He violated all the rules, laws, traditions and customs of his own people the Jews and those of the Greeks and Romans. His teachings were revolutionary in that they violated all the teachings of the then existing religions and even those of the other older faiths of the world. Christianity knows no walls or boundaries between people.[33] African theologians should take the Africans back to the crossroads and start building African Christianity from where Jesus and Paul left. It is not fruitful at this stage to keep on pointing out the mistakes made by the missionaries and the colonial powers in planting Christianity in Africa. The most fruitful thing is to reconstruct a theology of Christ who knew no limitations in the Christian faith. The post-colonial church should be a church for all human beings who believe in Jesus Christ regardless of their ethnicity, race or gender. It must be an African Christianity with a biblically based theology constructed by African theologians, not mimicking western theologians. The Bible does not need to be re-written but it needs to be understood from the point of Jesus Christ not from that of Moses, King David and his prophets but from Jesus Christ's point of view. All the cultures which dominated the OT and all our African cultures should be transformed by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. This discussion argues that it is only from this standpoint that the Christian faith can have meaning in the daily lives of Africans. The achievements made by African theologians, biblical scholars and church historians already show that the colonial type of Christianity could be transformed to become African and give meaning to the African people. This is the way forward for the church in Africa.

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