CHRISTIAN HISTORY
Issue 79: African Apostles: Black Evangelists in Africa

The African Apostles: Did You Know?

The rapidity of Africa's twentieth-century baptism was stunning. There's no better place to see the future of the global church.

As of 1880, the vast majority of Africa remained mysterious, elusive, and untouched by the West. But by the turn of the century, Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, and Italy had carved up nearly every one of Africa's 10 million square miles and divided a population of 110 million Africans, many of whom had no idea they were now "ruled" by ambassadors from another continent.

In 1900, there were 8 to 10 million Christians in Africa, which amounted to 8 to 10 percent of the total population. Today, there are 360 million—nearly 50 percent of the continent.

Philip Jenkins, in his book The Next Christendom, said that the heart of global Christianity will be Africa, not Europe or North America. What this means, says Jenkins, is that "in 50 or 100 years Christianity will be defined according to its relationship with that [African] culture."

There are between 40 and 50 million Anglicans in Africa. There are 25 million Anglicans in England, but only 800,000 frequent the pews. If current trends hold true, by 2025 the Anglican population in Nigeria alone will outnumber that in England by nearly 9 million.

Here are some of the countries most radically changed during the period 1900 to 2000. These statistics (derived from David Barrett) represent professing Christians:

	% Christians in 1900	% Christians in 2000
Congo-Zaire	1.4%	95.4%
Angola	0.6%	94.1%
Swaziland	1.0%	86.9%
Zambia	0.3%	83.4%
Kenya	0.2%	79.3%
Malawi	1.8%	76.8%

In the twentieth century, there have been some 1.8 million Christian martyrs in Africa.

Zionist churchgoers in southern Africa (p. 35), whose church bears no relationship to the Jewish movement of the same name, can be easily identified by their white clothing with blue or green sashes, wooden staffs, and worship that incorporates many different elements of charismatic expression. However, this large indigenous movement traces its origins to the Chicago suburb of Zion, Illinois. There, Australian preacher John Alexander Dowie led a theocratic commune that emphasized the spiritual gift of healing. While he never ventured to Africa himself, Dowie commissioned a number of his followers as missionaries to the southern region of the continent, where their evangelical message and emphasis on spiritual gifts found a receptive African audience. Soon many "Zion" churches sprang up across Africa that had no connection to the original Dowie-linked groups except for the name.

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Anatomy of an Explosion

It's an indelible image: the white missionary venturing into deepset Africa. But the real story is what happened when African converts relayed the gospel message in their own words.

Taking a close look at the explosion of Christianity in twentieth-century Africa, we meet a remarkable group of colonial-era (roughly 1890 to World War II) apostles who were born, grew up, and ministered in sub-Saharan Africa. We have been inspired and challenged by their stories. We hope you will be, too.

While the story of Christianity's spread in Africa is nothing less than awesome, it is also nothing more than the work of God, who always uses the foolish things of a sin-scarred world as the building material for his body.

Western missions in colonial Africa proceeded by slow, painful steps. The missionaries' best efforts were often hindered by cultural misunderstandings, economic abuses, political agendas, and racist presuppositions. While missionaries were picking their tortuous way through the colonial period, indigenous African evangelists and teachers exploded onto the scene like dynamite. Yes, they worked on the same confused, conflicted landscape as the missionaries. Nonetheless, something happened when the gospel was proclaimed under African sponsorship. It revolutionized the continent.

Within a few short decades, out of the seeds first sown by the missionaries came a profusion of indigenous roots and branches, laden with a lavish variety of flowers and fruit.

How Christianity became African

To help us understand the cultural and spiritual landscape of colonial Africa, we interviewed Dr. Ogbu Kalu, Henry Winters Luce Professor of World Christianity and Mission at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago. Kalu, an elder in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, came to McCormick in 2001 from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, where he had served as professor of Church history for 23 years.

What was the relationship between the African Christians who wanted to live a truly African faith and the colonial churches?

African Christians clearly worked from a position of reaction against colonialism. But there were several kinds of reaction, from those who largely worked within the mission churches; to those who stayed in but agitated for change, like the Ethiopianists (pp. 14 and 39); to those who struck out on their own, like the Aladura churches in the West (p. 35) and the Zionists in the South.

It is important to understand the chronology here. Colonialism was actually a very short-lived phenomenon in Africa—it lasted only the span of a single human lifetime. What we call the colonial enterprise did not gel until 1900. By 1914, when the continent was fully carved up, the European powers were on the verge of World War I, which distracted them and drained their resources. Between 1919 and 1939, you have the turbulence of the interwar years and the Great Depression. By 1945, the European countries were exhausted by World War II. That's why the French wanted to pull out of Algeria by 1957, followed by the British receding from Ghana, and so forth. Colonialism was effectively dead by 1960.

Certainly it was a very powerful phase in African history, which had physical, mental, psychological, economic, and religious import. But since the colonial governments at no point had enough European administrators to achieve effective rule in their African colonies, they left local cultures and leadership structures intact. In fact, they used a system of almost entirely indigenous rule to keep order.

The missionaries, however, operated in just the opposite way. Although most of them—especially the Roman Catholics—did train

indigenous helpers, they generally dragged their feet on ordaining Africans. The story of Crowther (p. 10) was highly unusual for its time, and Kiwanuka (p. 16) came later and in a different regional situation.

African Christians recognized early on that if they were to build the church with their own leaders, they would have to assert their distinctiveness from the mission-built denominational structures.

Many stopped short of full separation—the Ethiopianist church movement grew out of Africans willing to work within missionary structures, but critiquing those structures. Some Ethiopianists did think you should divest yourself of English names, start your own schools and your own churches, and reject all funding from white missionary groups. But others, like James Johnson (p. 14) saw something in Western civilization that Africans should capture and use in prosecuting their spiritual and political goals. Their goal was not to separate for the sake of separating, but to build an African church lifting up its hands to God.

What was it about the missionary way of doing Christianity that was so distressing to their African converts?

African Christians experienced at every turn the scientific racism that the mission churches had absorbed—this was simply the dominant theme in Western thought about other cultures.

This ideology presumed the inferiority of African intelligence, African cultural forms, the African way of life. And it translated into a strict distinction between African culture and Christian culture: African culture was ruled by demons in the form of native spirits. Christian culture, on the other hand, was Western culture, full stop.

When the Presbyterians translated the Bible into Efik in Southeastern Nigeria, for example, they did not want to use the local words for spirit to indicate the Holy Spirit. They were afraid the people might think this was the same as one of their tribal spirits. So they simply left the Third Person of the Trinity untranslated.

Missionaries rejected absolutely all the African ways of talking about and handling the spirit world. They did not study the indigenous worldview, but rather used dismissive terms like "fetish," "heathen," and "pagan." This has only begun to change recently, as missionary scholars like Andrew Walls, who are faithful Christians but believe you should know indigenous cultures from the inside, have used instead terms like "primary worldview" and "traditional religion."

Because African converts were not allowed to enter fully into a Christianity they could recognize as their own, they began to work towards indigenous churches.

When Africans did begin to make Christian faith their own, how was that indigenous African Christianity different from Western forms?

First, we have to acknowledge the success of the missions effort: the Africans did indeed absorb the missionaries' teachings! They picked up their biblicism—their high view of Scripture. They picked up their emphasis on conversion. They pursued social activism on the missionaries' evangelical model. And they followed them in strongly emphasizing the person of Christ and eschatology. They even heeded the proscriptions against "fetishes."

But they also drew out of Scripture different emphases than had their teachers.

The missionaries read the Bible through the lenses of the Protestant emphasis on Word over Spirit and the Enlightenment desacralization of the universe.

The Africans, on the other hand, read the Bible through their own traditionally "charismatic" worldview: they knew there were spirits in the sky, the water, the land, and the ancestral worlds. Only, now, they proclaimed the power of Jesus over these other powers.

For example, when confronted with illness, the Africans read their Bibles and came up with a straightforward belief in healing. They were used to seeing illness and health as spiritual matters. They had always accepted witchcraft as the source of illness.

Another example is the African Christian view of evil. For the African, evil not only dehumanizes people and separates them from God. It also causes sickness, poverty, untoward events. Therefore the traditional religions revolved around manipulating or dealing with the good and powerful forces to protect one from the evil forces.

This "precarious vision" of the world found its echo in the Christian language of a personal Devil. The Devil is very present in the theology and practice of even mainline African churches.

Closely related is the matter of the "prosperity gospel" now so widespread in Africa. Africans appropriated Christian teaching on prosperity and poverty not because they were gulled by televangelists, but because the televangelists were addressing a deep vein in the indigenous worldview.

Africans have always known poverty as a dire threat, and they have attempted to explain and deal with it from a religious rather than a secular economic perspective. When they read in their Bibles promises of spiritual power that can deal with issues of wealth and prosperity and protect people from the devastating effects of poverty, then these elements became dominant in their theology.

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Bishop Before His Time

Samuel Ajayi Crowther's consecration as the first African Anglican bishop looked like a great leap forward for the church. But the talented ex-slave collided with the roadblock of racism

Ted Olsen

"And he never saw his family again."

For the millions of Africans taken as slaves between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, this sad statement is their story. But not so with Ajayi. In 1821, the 13-year-old member of the Yoruba tribe, from what is now western Nigeria, was eating breakfast when word came that Muslim slave raiders from another tribe were attacking his town.

"The most sorrowful scene imaginable was to be witnessed," Ajayi would later recall. "Women, some with three, four, and six children clinging to their arms, with the infants on their backs, running as fast as they could through prickly shrubs. ... While trying to disentangle themselves from the ropy shrubs, they were overtaken and caught by the enemies, by a rope noose thrown over the neck of every individual, to be led in the manner of goats tied together."

Many families were separated this way, Ajayi wrote. But he, his mother, two sisters, and other family members ended up roped together. (He never again saw his father, who survived the raid but later died in a similar battle.)

But as Ajayi was bought and sold six separate times, he did become separated from his family. Despondent and suicidal, he was placed (with about 190 other captives) on a Portuguese slave ship near Lagos, bound for the transatlantic market.

The slavers, however, did not control the seas. Great Britain, which had abolished the slave trade the year Ajayi was born, was now feverishly atoning for its national sin through international abolitionist activities, including steaming its navy along the African coast. The Portuguese slave ship, the ***Esperanza Felix***, hadn't even traveled a day when the ***Myrmidon*** and ***Iphigenia*** began their attack.

More than half of the slaves died in the attack, but Ajayi survived, even encountering his Portuguese owner bound in fetters aboard the British ship. "[I] had the boldness to strike him on the head while he was standing by his son," Ajayi later wrote. "An act, however, very wicked and unkind in its nature."

British policy sent Ajayi not back to Nigeria, but to Sierra Leone (the capital, Freetown, is pictured at left), where abolitionists and missionaries had set up an evangelistic community—a light for the "dark continent."

Eventually, Ajayi would not only return to Nigeria, but he would find his mother and other family members there. "We could not say much, but sat still, casting many an affectionate look towards each other, an affection which 25 years had not extinguished," he said.

In the intervening time, Ajayi had been ordained as an Anglican priest and missionary to his native land. His mother was one of the first converts he baptized. She took the Christian name Hannah, because of its biblical significance. It is the name of the mother of the prophet Samuel—and by then Ajayi was already becoming widely known in English missionary circles under his new name: Samuel Ajayi Crowther. As

Anglicanism's first African bishop, Crowther would become the most famous African Christian of the century. But his struggles in that position—and the reasons behind them—are still debated today.

"White man's graveyard"

"About the third year of my liberation from the slavery of man, I was convinced of another worse state of slavery, namely, that of sin and Satan," Crowther wrote. "I was admitted into the visible Church of Christ here on earth as a soldier to fight manfully under his banner against spiritual enemies."

The church embraced him quickly, and he soon became a model for what the missionaries had hoped for African converts. After a few years of schooling in the colony, he went to London, then returned to Sierra Leone to become one of the first four graduating students of Fourah Bay College, sub-Saharan Africa's first university. He soon developed a reputation for linguistic skills and was recruited by the Church Missionary Society to work on the Niger Expedition of 1841.

This was only one year after David Livingstone had first left Scotland as a missionary to southern Africa, and if British Christians thought about Africa at all, it was usually as the White Man's Graveyard. Nevertheless, the idea that drove Livingstone—Thomas Fowell Buxton's belief that "Christianity, Commerce, and Civilization" in Africa could end slavery for all—was also behind the Niger Expedition. Crowther, along with a missionary of German descent named J. F. Schön, was to implement the Christianity part of the triad.

Two months into the journey, the chief medical officer wrote, "Fever of a most malignant character broke out on the ***Albert***, and almost immediately on the other vessels, and abated not until the whole expedition was paralyzed."

Discovery of the malaria parasite was still more than half a century away—Europeans knew nothing about how to protect themselves against it, thinking it was caused by "bad air" (thus the name of the disease). But they knew it could be deadly, as indeed it was to the Niger contingent.

One ship was loaded with the ill and sent back. Within two days there were enough casualties to send another. Eventually, all but 15 of the 145 Europeans on the Niger Expedition contracted malaria, and 40 died.

The mission is usually remembered as "ill-fated." But Schön and Crowther survived—and Crowther's reputation thrived. Not only was his work the most thorough of any on the journey, but he was an African, and thus deemed more fit for African travel. Schön urged the CMS to make Africans like Crowther a key part of evangelism on the continent.

A colleague in Sierra Leone agreed: "There is no one more fit to be entrusted with the ministry of the gospel, among his own brethren, than Samuel Crowther. However rarely the solid knowledge of Samuel Crowther is found among his brethren, it is so far more rarely combined with such ***modesty*** as his."

The CMS head at the time, Henry Venn, needed little convincing. He believed overseas churches should be "self-supporting, self-governing, and self-extending," and therefore wanted African priests and bishops to oversee the African churches. Crowther was an ideal candidate.

Crowther was summoned back to England and made a priest on Trinity Sunday, 1843. Then he returned to Sierra Leone and began preaching in both English and a language on which he had begun to write linguistic texts—his own native Yoruba.

This was probably the first time that an African language had been used in liturgy. It was certainly the first

time the Yoruba had heard the gospel in their own tongue—something that Crowther himself found overwhelming.

"Although it was my own native language, with which I am well acquainted, yet on this occasion it appeared as if I were a babe, just learning to utter my mother-tongue," he wrote. "The work in which I was engaged, the place where I stood, and the congregation before me, were altogether so new and strange, that the whole proceeding seemed to myself like a dream. ... At the conclusion of the blessing, the whole church rang with ***ke oh sheh***—so be it, so let it be!"

Shortly after his arrival, Crowther was sent to Abeokuta, Yorubaland (western Nigeria) with a German missionary named C. A. Gollmer, several Yoruba Christians from the Sierra Leone mission, and English missionary Henry Townsend—who would go down in history less for his mission work (he was reportedly an excellent linguist, devoted to Abeokuta) than for his opposition to Crowther.

Crowther's team was greeted warmly, and each morning, between 100 and 200 of the town's 50,000 people listened to him preach in Yoruba under a tree between two markets. Crowther's mother, with whom he reunited during this time, was not his only convert.

Some historians suggest that the response was so positive because a local pagan oracle urged the town to be hospitable to the missionaries. Other forces were at work, too. When the missionaries organized British military reinforcements to help Abeokuta repel an invading army of some 10,000 to 15,000 men (and women!), it was hardly a surprise that other local chiefs asked for their own holy men with such friends. Buxton's plan seemed to work in Abeokuta, as the town left the slave economy for the cotton trade.

The patient quarry worker

"Crowther was no mere romantic, bowing to native custom and practice," says Yale University historian Lamin Sanneh (himself a Nigerian convert from Islam to Christianity). "[He] would not denounce or applaud indigenous institutions or native authorities merely for their being African."

Nevertheless, while Crowther confronted representatives of Islam and the old religions of Africa, he treated these groups less harshly than did many of his white counterparts. Some of the latter, for example, criticized Crowther for not being stricter against polygamy—or against alleged lapses by his own African assistants.

To everything there is a season, Crowther replied. "Rough quarry men ... hew out blocks of marble from the quarries, which are conveyed to the workshop to be shaped and finished into perfect figures by the hands of the skillful artists. In like manner native teachers can do, having the facility of the language in their favor, to induce their heathen countrymen to come within reach of the means of Grace and hear the word of God."

"What is lacking in good training and sound evangelical teaching," he said, could be provided by others.

But Crowther was not, as some critics claimed, soft on sin. In later years, when taken hostage by a local chief who demanded 200 slaves for his release, the former slave said he would rather die than see one more African taken captive into slavery, "a great abomination in the sight of God."

Black bishop

In 1854, a new Niger Expedition was planned, and again the CMS enlisted Crowther for the task. This time, the team met with success and no loss of life. Venn then sent Crowther on a third mission up the Niger River. A shipwreck that left him stranded turned out to be a blessing, as the African priest began

work with the Nupe and Hausa peoples. As Crowther's work began to reap converts, Venn's dream of an African church planted and maintained by Africans began to take form. It only needed one thing.

An African bishop.

"Can one among the African clergymen be found to whom so great a responsibility can with safety be trusted?" asked the ***Church Missionary Intelligencer*** in May 1864. "This question the Church Missionary Society has ventured to answer in the affirmative. Nearly 21 years have elapsed since the Rev. Samuel Crowther was ordained a deacon. ... He has made full proof of his ministry. The new missions on the Niger imperatively require episcopal superintendence.

... To delay any longer the native episcopate would be unduly to retard the development of the native church."

Not everyone agreed. Chief among the opponents of such a move was Crowther's missionary colleague, Henry Townsend. "The superiority of the white over the black man, the Negro has been forward to acknowledge," he said. "The correctness of this belief no white man can deny."

The only reason that Africans accepted Crowther's authority, Townsend argued, was because he answered to a white man. Better, he said, to keep blacks as schoolmasters and catechists. "There is one other view that we must not lose sight of, vis., that as the Negro feels a great respect for a white man, that God kindly gives a great talent to the white man in trust to be used for the Negro's good. Shall we shift the responsibility? Can we do it without sin?"

Townsend's views were not shared by everyone in the missions community. The CMS Parent Committee, for example, warned him that such sentiments were not fit for a missionary. "Townsend's only advantage, and a critical one at that, was his racial views being shared by all the white missionaries [on the Niger mission] ... as the CMS found out when it asked directly which of them would be willing to serve under Crowther," writes Sanneh. "It was a disconcerting discovery."

But Venn would not be dissuaded. He brought Crowther back to London and said he was recommending his consecration as bishop. The priest initially refused, but he was apparently persuaded by the advice of Schön and by Venn's own pained rebuke, "My son Samuel Ajayi, will you deny me my last wish before I die?" (He had another nine years of life left at the time.)

And so, in a June 29, 1864, ceremony that filled Canterbury Cathedral beyond capacity, Crowther became the first African bishop in the Church of England.

But bishop of what? On one hand, his see was impossibly large, sometimes defined as "the countries of Western Africa beyond the limits of the Queen's dominions" or "from the Equator to Senegal." On the other hand, he wasn't granted control over the major outposts such as Lagos and Abeokuta, since the CMS apparently feared angering his missionary critics.

Crowther was headquartered in Lagos, spending as much as nine months of the year there—and thus away from his diocese (still more a mission diocese than Venn's vision of a self-supporting church). In addition, he was dependent upon local merchants of the West Africa Company—not always supportive of religious figures, let alone African ones—to travel up the Niger.

This was remedied in part when English supporters gave him his own steamer, appropriately named the ***Henry Venn***, after the missionary statesman, recently deceased. Crowther planned to let an African merchant run the ship, so long as its commercial profit made its way back into the missionary work. But Venn's replacement overruled the bishop and handed the boat over to two whites. With it, he gave them authority over all Africans involved in the Niger Mission—without asking or even telling Crowther.

From there, tensions only escalated. Venn's replacement further undercut Crowther's authority by handing control of the Niger Mission's "temporalities" to a committee in 1879, following it the next year by appointing a Commission of Inquiry into allegations of misconduct by Crowther's subordinates. Chief among the charges was that the bishop's African assistants were neglecting Christianity for commerce, though other charges were more shocking. For example, a lay leader under Crowther's care was charged with beating a housemaid to death.

The Commission of Inquiry's report, says Sanneh, "was a hatchet job, highly damaging to Crowther and the mission, and libelous to the extent that it was secreted out to London without Crowther or any of his assistants seeing it."

All but three of the Niger Mission's 15 Africans were fired. When Crowther protested, he was charged with violating his code of office. He died shortly thereafter, and a white bishop was put in his place. The continent would not see another African Anglican bishop until 1952, sixty years after Crowther's death.

White missionaries like Townsend won the battle, but they lost a significant part of the war. They had their white bishop, but African Christians were so outraged by the treatment of Crowther that they rebelled. In the year after Crowther's death, several African Anglicans—including five of Crowther's Niger Mission assistants dismissed by the commission—formed the Niger Delta Pastorate, independent from the Church of England. It was not quite Venn's vision of a three-self church, but it would define much of African Christianity for the next century.

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Pioneer of Self-Euthanizing Missions

To Henry Venn, a mission's only purpose was to render itself unnecessary.

Ted Olsen

Had the Church of England's evangelism operation been the nation's royalty, Henry Venn would have been a king. His eponymous grandfather was one of the most influential evangelicals of his day (known largely for his shaping of Charles Simeon). His father, John, was rector of Clapham during its emphasis on moral renewal (antislavery crusader William Wilberforce was among his parishioners) and one of the founders of the Church Missionary Society (CMS).

But Henry Venn was no elitist—especially where race was concerned. Though Venn spent his life as a missions administrator, rather than as a missionary (in fact, he rarely spoke publicly, and never visited the mission field), he befriended Africans throughout his life.

One of his earliest memories was of playing with Africans sent to England for education. And he later recalled the words of an African merchant he had met. "Treat us like men, and we will behave like men," the merchant had told him. "Treat us as children and we shall behave like children."

This idea became a foundation of Venn's thinking as president of the CMS, a position he held from 1841 to 1872. European missions to Africa could produce infant Christians, but these could only grow to adulthood under a "self-supporting, self-governing, and self-extending" native church.

He likened a mission to scaffolding: "The master builder is the chief actor, and all the poles and platforms which he creates are the chief objects; but as the building rises the builders occupy less and less attention—the scaffolding becomes unsightly and when the building is completed it is taken to pieces." The purpose of sending missionaries, he said, is "the euthanasia of a mission."

Venn was not alone in his ideas, which were based in the vision of racial equality his father and other Clapham Sect members had promoted in their fight against slavery. But racism, backed by the rising philosophy of Social Darwinism and a growing state interest in colonialism, soon undermined his long-term goal of promoting indigenous Christianity.

"Even missionary societies suffer from the tendency to underrate the social and intellectual capacities of the native races," he lamented.

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Holy Johnson and the Ethiopian Church

Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God, said the Psalm. Yet racism in the mission churches clouded that vision. James Johnson (1836-1917) offered a solution.

Ted Olsen

This is terrible," James Johnson wrote as European missionaries undercut Bishop Crowther's authority on the Niger Mission. "This insult to him ... has incensed the whole native community elsewhere irrespective of denominational distinctions. ... There is a limit to patience."

Like Crowther, Johnson was a Yoruba graduate of the Fourah Bay Institution, but it was his parents, not himself as in Crowther's case, who had been rescued from slavery. Johnson himself was born and raised free, in Sierra Leone, and became a catechist at the colony's southernmost village, Kent.

It wasn't until he had been in the job for a while, however, that he experienced a personal conversion. As he read the third and fourth chapters of Zechariah to schoolchildren, "the Lord spoke to me as my Savior, and within that week at a Holy Communion service I found salvation. ... on that occasion the joy and gladness of personal salvation led me to offer myself to God that he might send me out as a missionary among heathen people."

After two years, Johnson was transferred to the Freetown Grammar School, where he had first been educated. There, he quickly gained a reputation for an intense moral code—which he often imposed on others. He even withheld the dinners of students who hadn't finished their math homework. (For this rigor he became known as "Holy" Johnson.)

Reclaiming a lost legacy

Johnson became a deacon at the influential Pademba Road Church and in 1866 was ordained a priest. During this time, he began to preach his vision of African nationalist Christianity, named Ethiopianism (p. 8) for Psalm 68:31: "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God" (KJV). The early church was dominated by African clerics, he noted, such as Augustine, Tertullian, and Cyprian. But somewhere along the way, Africa lost its missionary fervor, and "the judgment of the Lord has rested upon her for her negligence to disseminate Christian truth."

Now at last, he believed, the independent African church was returning. "Africa is to rise once more," he preached. "Her tears are to be wiped off her eyes; her candlestick is to be replaced ... the word of the Lord above all is to cover her as the waters do the mighty deep: where this is to be the case then she will take her place with the most Christian, civilized, and intelligent nations of the Earth." Soon the continent would see what a truly indigenous church could do.

Islam and traditional religion were the barriers to this, he said, but so was racism in the European mission: "In the work of elevating Africans, foreign teachers have always proceeded with their work on the assumption that the Negro or African is in every one of his normal susceptibilities an inferior race, and that it is needful in everything to give him a foreign model to copy. ... The result has been that we ... have lost our self-respect and love for our own race ... and are, in many things, inferior to our brethren in the interior countries. There is evidently a fetter upon our minds even when the body is free, mental weakness, even when there appears to be fertility."

While many white missionaries opposed Ethiopianism, Johnson sometimes also faced opposition from his own African parishioners. We can see why, perhaps, when we learn that as priest of St. Paul's Breadfruit Church in Lagos, Yorubaland (now Nigeria), he refused to baptize children with non-African names. Still, he grew in influence, becoming superintendent of all CMS missions to interior Yorubaland. But he never became a bishop.

In the wake of Crowther's loss of control of the Niger Mission, many Ethiopianists were eager to leave the European denominations to form wholly independent churches. Johnson supported some separatists, but he refused to leave the Church of England, even taking a position as assistant bishop under Crowther's white replacement.

Still, he continued to advocate for self-sufficiency. "The desire to have an independent church closely follows the knowledge that we are a distinct race, existing under peculiar circumstances and possessing peculiar characteristics," he said. "The arrangement of foreign churches made to suit their own local circumstances can hardly be expected to suit our own in all their details."

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The Brilliant Career of Joseph Kiwanuka

Over the protests of a divided church, the scholarly Ugandan priest became the first African Catholic bishop. Just three years after his death, 12 more Africans would follow in his footsteps.

Sarah E. Dahl

Tulidde Buddu—we have eaten Buddu; we have made it our own!" The cry spread through the ranks of the native Ugandan Catholic clergy on a bright day in May 1939, when the news broke that Joseph Kiwanuka, a young Ganda (ethnic Ugandan) missionary-priest, had been nominated bishop of Masaka. This British East African region was prime real estate—it encompassed Buddu County, the heart of the Catholic mission to Uganda—and it was to be led by the first native African bishop of modern times.

However, as the native clergy rejoiced, many European Catholic missionaries in the country were gravely concerned. In a revolutionary experiment, the Ugandans had indeed "eaten" Buddu: Masaka was now the first diocese on the continent administered wholly by African clergy rather than European missionaries. Among the white missionaries, doubts remained. Were the natives ready to lead their own church? Masaka would be a test for a continent.

The man at the head of this experiment, Joseph Kiwanuka, rose impressively to meet the larger-than-life expectations placed upon him. Under Bishop Kiwanuka, Masaka shone as an example of authentically African, authentically Catholic Christianity, and as a testament to the power of the Christian gospel to simultaneously transform and adapt to local culture.

A Ganda in robes

Born in 1899, Joseph Kiwanuka was raised in a devout Catholic home on the shores of Lake Victoria. Each day, his father led the family on the eight-mile trek to Mass at the nearest mission station.

Soon after Joseph's fourteenth birthday in 1913, African Catholics rejoiced when Bishop Henri Streicher ordained the first native Ugandan priests, Basil Lumu and Victor Mukasa Wameraka. Soon afterward, Father Wameraka visited Mitala Maria Mission Elementary School, where Joseph attended. The young Kiwanuka was so impressed with the sight of a Ganda man in clerical robes that he decided he, too, would seek ordination.

After completing five years at a minor seminary, a middle and high school for boys aspiring to the priesthood, Joseph enrolled at Katigondo Major Seminary. He drew the attention of Streicher, now an archbishop, with his extraordinary academic abilities.

The archbishop, who had labored in Africa his entire career, had one overarching pastoral priority: "To get one indigenous priest is for me more important than to convert 10,000 people." Although Joseph was young, Strei-cher recognized his promise as a future leader.

However, Streicher understood that, despite Joseph's brilliance, he would never be given leadership in the African church without training in Rome. So after his ordination in May 1929, Father Kiwanuka packed his few earthly belongings and sailed for Italy.

The first black White Father

A black priest who constructed elegant philosophical arguments in perfect Latin deeply impressed the faculty of the Pontifical Angelicum University. Kiwanuka earned a licentiate and doctorate in canon law. In 1932, he defended his dissertation on the marriage contract with superb composure, patiently working out the intricacies of canon law for his readers. He graduated summa cum laude. As he boarded his ship to return to Uganda, Rome was abuzz over the young African who was clearly the intellectual superior of many European clergy.

Back home he entered the Society of Missionaries of Africa, known as the White Fathers for their cassocks. He became the first black White Father in the order's history. After several pastoral appointments, Kiwanuka was made a seminary professor at Katigondo, where he trained future priests to take the gospel to their own people.

Meanwhile, the Ugandan church was changing. Streicher retired in 1933, and Rome divided his old diocese in two. Masaka, the larger half, was administered for six years under a vicar general, while Rome delayed acting upon Streicher's wishes that an African be ordained as bishop (a move rumored to be opposed by British authorities).

In 1939, when Kiwanuka reached the age of 40, the newly ascended Pope Pius XII acted decisively. Like Pius XI before him, the pope believed that "the missions in Africa represent today the richest harvest of conversion," and that Africans were the most effective missionaries on their own continent. He appointed Father Kiwanuka vicar apostolic over Masaka, a position that would evolve into a full bishopric once Masaka was formally declared a diocese.

The reaction was swift and intense. Protest arose from missionaries in Masaka, who believed the church in the area was still too young to be handed over to the natives. On the other hand, Ugandan clergy praised the wisdom of the pope, saying that like a good father, he had (in the words of historian John Baur) "given his grown up son the best part of his property." At the center of the controversy stood a fundamental question about missions: when ought the missionary labor be handed over to the convert?

The making of an African apostolate

Amid the uproar and rejoicing, Joseph Kiwanuka was consecrated at St. Peter's in Rome on May 25, 1939 by Pope Pius XII, with retired Archbishop Streicher assisting. Bishop Kiwanuka took the phrase ***Monstra Te Esse Matrem***, or "Demonstrate Your Motherhood" as his insignia—a challenge to himself, his diocese and his church to live out authentic catholicity and show motherhood to all people.

Upon his return, Bishop Kiwanuka placed 56 well-trained African priests at the head of Masaka parishes. These priests were often related to those they served through complex kinship ties; their intimate relationship with African society resulted in more nuanced evangelism. Kiwanuka followed Streicher's example of sending his brightest seminarians to Europe for further education. In Masaka, the vision of a self-governing, self-perpetuating African church was a bright spot on a continent still struggling under paternalism, colonialism, and racism.

Although much of his work as a bishop was administrative, Bishop Kiwanuka's days were anchored by devotional practices. Each morning began with private prayer, followed by an hour of meditative prayer with the diocesan staff. The bishop faithfully celebrated daily Mass, and he stopped at noon each day to pray the Angelus. Kiwanuka closed his days with evening prayer and the Rosary.

As the African colonies moved towards independence, Bishop Kiwanuka played an increasingly public role preparing his nation for self-rule. In his own diocese, he established elected lay parish councils and parents' associations for church schools, and he taught the importance of lay responsibility for local institutions.

He served on the Buganda Constitutional Committee in 1955 and authored the influential pastoral letter, "Church and State," which urged democratic maturity and rule of law as the nation sought independence. Describing movements around charismatic personalities such as the infamous Milton Obote as "snare[s] hidden in the ground," he warned prophetically, "now if anyone wants to tread on it and is caught in it, everyone will be able to tell him: After all, you trod on it while you saw it clearly." The day after Kiwanuka's death, Obote abolished the constitution and seized power.

In 1960, two years before Uganda gained independence from the British, Joseph Kiwanuka was appointed Archbishop of Kampala. By now, as Adrian Hastings writes, "the moral authority of the Archbishop—a man of great experience and firmness of mind—was vast."

Living legacy

Thus armed, Archbishop Kiwanuka set off to the Second Vatican Council in 1962. He faithfully attended the Council sessions and argued eloquently for incorporating traditional African music into the liturgy and for partnering with other denominations in ministry to Africa.

As Archbishop of Kampala, Kiwanuka advocated the canonization of the Martyrs of Uganda, Catholic Christians murdered in Uganda between 1885 and 1887. On Mission Sunday in 1964, with great joy and tears in his eyes, Kiwanuka assisted Pope Paul VI at St. Peter's as, for the first time, black African Christians were declared saints.

Archbishop Kiwanuka did not live to see the end of Vatican II; he fell ill in February 1966 and died soon after.

Pope Paul VI visited Kampala three years later and consecrated no fewer than 12 African bishops in Kiwanuka's old cathedral, several of whom had ministered under Kiwanuka. As he looked out at the face of the African Catholic Church shaped by Joseph Kiwanuka, he said: "You can and you must have an African Christianity. ... Now you Africans are your own missionaries, with an indigenous apostolate totally your own."

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The Prospect Terrified Me

Apolo Kivebulaya, a convert from Islam, bravely preached to witch doctors, hostile chieftains, and Pygmy tribes.

Steven Gertz

The Ugandan mother had given birth to twins—and for her people, this signaled impending sorrow. Someone else in her family would soon die. She must hide the children from sight so the village would not share her misfortune. Then, baptized Christian though she was, she must visit the witch doctor to propitiate the spirits.

But then an evangelist arrived at her hut. He picked up the twins and presented them openly to the village. The people stood frozen. Surely the spirits would punish such outrageous behavior with death. But nothing happened. The children—and the rest of the village—lived.

The evangelist knew exactly what he was up against. Born in 1864, Waswa Munubi had survived the death in infancy of his own twin brother. He wrote, "If a twin dies, the parents do not weep. They announce the death by saying the child has gone back, and everyone knows what that means."

Waswa grew up the son of peasants in the country now known as Uganda. His parents apprenticed him to a witch doctor, but when he discovered the man tricking people out of their possessions, he left him to learn about Islam, recently brought to the chief's court by Arab traders.

"Our father first began to learn to read in the days of Mukabya from the Moslems," Waswa wrote. "Kabaka Mutesa commanded all his chiefs and people to read from the Moslems and to keep their fasts."

"Chief Mutesa, I presume?"

But when Waswa turned 13, H. M. Stanley, who had discovered David Livingstone in 1872, paid a visit to Mutesa's court and persuaded the chief to begin "reading" in the Christian religion. The chief was probably more impressed with Stanley's guns than with his Bible, for Mutesa had already parted ways with the Arabs and now needed protection. But the chief's welcome opened the door for his people to embrace Christianity.

Stanley's expedition opened the way for other missionaries too, notably Alexander Mackay, who arrived in 1878. Waswa credits Mackay with planting seeds of belief in his life. "When I looked at the European," he wrote, "his eyes sparkled with kindness." Mackay organized a church, and members of the chief's court began attending his classes.

But then the chief rejected Christianity and put Mackay under house arrest. When Mutesa died in 1884, his son Mwanga unleashed a violent persecution on the infant church. No one knows how many perished, but in a single vicious rampage in 1886, Mwanga ordered the execution of 32 Christians—the famed "Uganda Martyrs" whose memory is still preserved in an Anglican and Roman Catholic feast day.

Mwanga lost his people's support, however, and together Muslims and Christians seized power from the chief. Predictably, the alliance dissolved, and as Waswa was still considered a Muslim, he was forced to join their army—now raiding the countryside. But his heart was not in it; when his companions

began setting villages on fire and burning their victims, he abandoned them and took up residence among the Christians.

Waswa briefly flirted with hemp smoking, but when he began attending Christian classes, he quit the practice. Shortly after this, he converted to Christianity.

Waswa requested baptism in 1894 and took a new name—Apolo Kivebulaya. "Apolo" honored the evangelist of Acts 18:24-25; and "Kivebulaya"—meaning "the thing from England"—was given to him because he wore a suit under his long white garment.

Shortly after this, Apolo's fiancée died. He later viewed this as providential, as it freed him for missionary work.

Meanwhile, the Christians with British military aid expelled the Muslim armies, and the call went out for missionaries to enter the recently stabilized region of Toro, or western Uganda. Apolo answered the call and began planting a church there. But in a series of unfortunate incidents, Apolo was accused of storing the chief's belongings and arrested and imprisoned by the British in Kampala.

Facing the Mountain

Eventually Apolo was released without trial, and soon he set out for a new mission field, accepting the challenge of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) to evangelize a tribe in the Belgian Congo. Blocking his way were the snow-capped Ruwenzori mountains. Intimidating though these were, Apolo trekked across them into the winter. Finally he crested the ridge and glimpsed his continent's heartland for the first time.

"I stood and looked far away to the Congo. The prospect terrified me." But the pull of the Great Commission and his compassion for lost brothers and sisters urged him on. In December 1896 he began ministering in the town of Mboga.

At first the work went well. But as Apolo's influence among the people grew, the chief (or Tabaro) resented the intruder and began slandering the Christians.

"There is no God," said the Tabaro. "Let them bring back the charms and incantations." When the Tabaro's sister accidentally fell on a spear intended as building material for Apolo's church, the chief accused Apolo of murder and had him escorted back to the English authorities in Uganda.

In this darkest hour of Apolo's life, Jesus appeared to him in a dream. Apolo heard him say, "Be of good cheer; I am with you." He answered, "Who is speaking to me?" And he heard, "I am Jesus Christ. Preach to my people. Do not be afraid." From that day, Apolo's spirits revived. Soon CMS members intervened for the imprisoned missionary and secured his release.

The Belgians, meanwhile, contested the Congolese border with Uganda, and Mboga changed hands. This temporarily closed the door for further ministry in the Congo, and Apolo returned to Uganda for 20 years of productive ministry. In 1903, the CMS ordained him a priest on Namirembe Hill in Kampala, and he began planting numerous churches across Toro, traveling hundreds of miles annually by foot and bicycle. The people soon said that Apolo's big flat feet with spread-out toes enabled him to walk anywhere—he never wore any shoes.

Word of his ministry spread, and CMS missionaries came to visit him. They praised him: "[Apolo] never had the opportunity of theological training in the ordinary sense of the term, but his devotion, his saintliness of life, his understanding of men, and his missionary passion have made him one of

the strongest forces in the diocese."

Apolo gave rigorous attention to the spiritual disciplines, waking early for prayer and Bible study. He cared deeply for his congregations, taking in children from the village to live at his home and building a house for widows and deserted women. He lived simply, owning only two coats and giving nearly all his pay to his teachers.

People also told stories of Apolo's near miraculous powers. When a famine broke out in 1913, one witness reported that Apolo "went to Kitagweta to give Holy Communion and told them to be patient in Jesus and He will even give you rain. ... [He] prayed and it rained straight away." Once, Apolo sailed onto Lake Edward to visit an island when a storm blew up. Apolo sang, and to his companions' surprise, the storm quieted.

Those who met Apolo spoke of his contagious joy. One missionary wrote, "His face is an inspiration, and he is greatly beloved by us all for his simple wholeheartedness and desire to win souls." Apolo sang hymns as he traveled and led exuberant crowds to welcome bishops or missionaries who approached his home in Kabarole.

Back to the Congo

With Christianity firmly established in Toro, Apolo's thoughts returned to the church in Mboga. The Belgians had loosened their restrictions on travel, and in 1915, Apolo traded a well-earned year's leave in Kampala for a renewed term of service in Mboga. He arrived to find the missionary outpost in shambles. "When I reached Mboga, I found some of the Christians possessed by an evil spirit. Some were practicing witchcraft. Some had three wives, some two, and there was too much drinking of beer."

Apolo set about rebuilding the church and reviving his classes. The new chief clashed with him, falsely accusing him of stealing from the village. Apolo had to face down Chief Sulemani's challenge. In church one Sunday, the missionary publicly rebuked the chief: "Sulemani has turned his back on God," he said (the chief had flirted with Catholicism and then reverted to tribal religion), "and God will turn his back on him!" Sulemani contracted leprosy and died later that year.

Sulemani's son, Enoke, was no better. He accused Apolo of not paying his taxes to the Belgians, though the attack fell flat, as Apolo was on good terms with the Belgian government. Delivering yet another prophetic barrage, Apolo predicted Enoke would lose his kingdom and "dig potatoes" in exile. When Belgian authorities later found Enoke stealing ivory, they removed him from his chieftainship. Enoke ran away to Toro where on his food plot he did indeed dig potatoes.

Singing with the Pygmies

Soon Apolo received another vision, this time directing him to the forest of the Pygmies in the Congo. The Pygmies stood no taller than 4 feet, 8 inches, and were known for their skill as forest trackers and for their accuracy with bow and poisoned arrow. Some tribes accused the Pygmies of cannibalism, though the evidence is inconclusive.

Apolo hired the freed Pygmy slaves to interpret for him, and he put together a team of teachers. In 1921, they entered the forest. Three years later, Apolo baptized his first converts. In the early 1930s, near the end of his life, he was visiting 14 different forest tribes every year.

One witness told how Apolo, when first meeting a Pygmy tribe, would sit among the people and sing to them. This greatly amused them, as they respected Apolo's old age and loved to sing themselves. Apolo also brought with him salt—a prized commodity for the Pygmies—and told his teachers to "lend" their possessions to the people, though they knew the Pygmies had no concept of returning

things. Thus, the missionaries befriended the tribes.

Final years

In 1927, Apolo was called to Kampala and elected vice president of the CMS. It was the culmination of a life's work: in 1890, one church with 200 members stood on Namirembe Hill; in 1927, Uganda could boast 2,000 churches with nearly 185,000 members. According to a missionary at the ceremony, "Apolo said he knew now he was a member of the great CMS council, and felt very honored; his dear old face was shining with the light of God. ... I felt like kneeling down and asking him for his blessing."

The day Apolo died, he wrote this final prayer:

> ***"O God our Father / And the Son Jesus Christ / And the Holy Spirit / May you give me a blessing while in this world / While you lead me through the forests / Through the lakes and the mountains / So that I may do your work among your people. / Grant that I may be loved by you / And by your people. / Amen."***

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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A Soul of Fire

William Wade Harris - a Liberian activist - left an unsuccessful local ministry to trail across the Ivory Coast. In 18 months, he baptized 100,000 converts.

Elizabeth Isichei

In 1910, a middle-aged African sat in a jail cell in Liberia. Locked up for political activism, he now found his mind turning to God. He little suspected something was about to happen that would make him one of the most effective evangelists Africa has seen and the founder of an influential denomination.

According to William Wadé Harris's later testimony, what happened was that the angel Gabriel entered his jail cell. With a sound like gushing water, the Spirit descended on the incarcerated Episcopalian.

"You are not in prison," the angelic messenger assured him. "God is coming to anoint you. You will be a prophet. Your case resembles that of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. You are like Daniel." Gabriel instructed him to replace his western clothes with a white gown and to shun alcohol.

Harris's wife, Rose, hearing the news, assumed her husband had gone mad. Overcome by grief, she fell ill and died.

Who was William Wadé Harris, and why was he in jail?

Harris was a member of the Grebo ethnic group, a people of southern Liberia, closely related to the Kru. The Kru were famous as seamen. For centuries, every ship coming to trade on the West African coast would stop to take on board Kru seamen, who were fearless, skilled, and loyal. Wadé, pronounced Woddy, was his Grebo name. He was born between 1860 and 1865, and to understand his life we must know a little about the history of Liberia.

Liberia's ruling class were free black settlers from America. Only a relatively small number of African Americans ever took this step—17,000, some of whom were forced to emigrate, since they were freed on this condition. (There were about 200,000 free African Americans in the States in the early nineteenth century, and most of them chose to stay in the nation they and their forebears had done so much to build.)

The invisible Liberians

The first settlers arrived in 1822. In 1847, Liberia became an independent black republic; it was the only African nation to retain its independence throughout the colonial period. (Ethiopia, the other exception, was ruled by Italy for a short time.) The founders originally intended to call the capital of their new state "Christopolis," but in the end it became Monrovia, after the American president of the day.

The new state mirrored American political institutions—Capitol, Senate, and all. It had many weaknesses, some of them economic in origin. Under the True Whigs, who ruled from 1878 until a military coup in 1980, the settlers monopolized political power and controlled the economy. They rendered the indigenous peoples of Liberia invisible in the motto on their national crest; "The love of Liberty brought us here."

Meanwhile the Grebo and Kru, in particular, welcomed both Christianity and western education. Since the settlers were Christians already, white missionaries concentrated on this field, encouraging literacy both in English and in local languages. The Kru and Grebo were hostile to the settlers and their monopoly of power. In 1873 they had attempted to found an independent Christian state under the motto "In God We Trust." This was the world into which young Wadé was born.

His father was not a Christian, but he was brought up by an uncle who was a Methodist pastor. Harris became literate in English and Grebo. The name he adopted and the lifestyle of his uncle's household show how much the settlers and educated indigenous people had in common. Harris signed on as a sailor and made several coastal voyages as a youth, and in his old age would refer to himself humbly as a "Kru boy."

In 1881 or 1882, Harris was soundly converted in a Methodist meeting. In 1888 he became an Episcopalian and began working for that church as a teacher and catechist, and for the government as an interpreter. He lost both jobs because of his political activism. He landed in prison for raising the Union Jack. The Kru and Grebo hoped that their region would become a British Protectorate, though this never happened. When he was in jail, in fact, there was an unsuccessful Grebo uprising.

Drumming up a crowd

For several years after his vision, Harris preached in Liberia but had little impact.

Then on July 27, 1913, he set out on a remarkable missionary journey to the east. His goal was the French colony of Ivory Coast. A mosaic of ethnic groups, the colony was at that time primarily a Catholic mission field—but that church had had little impact.

Harris traveled with two female companions: Helen Valentine, an educated widow, and Mary Pioka, who later bore him a son. The women drew audiences by singing songs as they beat time with gourd rattles (see photo, p. 5).

The man who had once, as a respectable Episcopalian, ordered his shoes from the States now went barefoot. He wore the costume revealed to him—a white gown, with black bands or straps, and a white turban. Such distinctive garments, often though not always white, are characteristic of many African prophetic churches, a symbol of purity and a transformed life, and of separation from an unregenerate world.

Wherever he went, Harris also carried a Bible (the English Authorized Version), a cross-like staff, a gourd rattle, and a bowl for baptism. The staff may have been an echo of Moses; it was adopted independently by many other African prophets. Harris sometimes destroyed his staff and got a new one, afraid people would begin to worship it.

Harris's message was simple, much the same as that taught by the mission churches, but he struck a deep chord among his hearers. He asked them to burn the images of their traditional gods—"God has sent me to burn the fetishes," he said. Harris emphasized avoiding work on the Sabbath (Sunday) and keeping it holy.

Most important, he offered his hearers immediate baptism—a privilege denied by the mission churches. These churches required years of study and preparation before baptism, which meant that the new Christian felt vulnerable, without the protection offered by his old religious practices on the one hand, and by baptism on the other. During a single 18-month period during 1913-14, Harris baptized between 100,000 and 120,000 new Christians.

Power evangelist

William Wadé Harris was larger than life—a biblical prophet in modern Africa. Many stories are told of his "power encounters" with the land's traditional religious specialists (diviners or priests of ancient divinities). His miracles of healing entered legend. It was said that he could call down rain from the heavens, and that he inflicted madness on some who resisted his message. On one occasion, people hid some of their religious statues in the bush, to avoid the bonfires—only to see them destroyed by a mysterious fire.

How did Harris communicate with these villagers? He did not speak French, but neither did they. Pidgin English was the lingua franca of the coast, even in French colonies, and he made much use of it. But he usually preached through interpreters, often young men living locally and working as clerks for trading firms. He relied on them to continue his work after he left, and he appointed twelve Apostles in each congregation.

The prophet and his companions got as far as Axim, in the far west of what was then the Gold Coast. It was there that he met a famous African lawyer and nationalist, Casely Hayford, who was so impressed by Harris that he wrote the first book about him, published in 1915. Said Hayford, "He is a dynamic force of a rare order—It seems as if God made the soul of Harris a soul of fire."

Many African prophetic leaders founded churches. Harris, however, did not intend to do so. Wherever he went, he told his followers to wait for "Christians with Bibles." Some who responded to Harris's message joined the Catholic missions—which saw their 80 baptisms in 1914 jump to 6,700 per year from 1917 on. In 1924, Methodist missionaries reached Ivory Coast. They found to their amazement that they were welcomed by thousands of Harris converts. Today the Methodist church there dates its foundation, not from 1924 when the missionaries arrived, but from 1914 when Harris did. Harris Christians contacted the Prophet, who sent a message urging those he had baptized to join the Methodists, not the Catholics.

Soon some difficulties developed. The missionaries, attempting to build up self-supporting churches, insisted that Christians pay a tithe—not an easy thing for an impoverished villager who also had to find money for taxes. The missionaries also opposed polygamy, and they questioned Harris closely on that issue (see sidebar, p. 25).

Precious legacy

The Prophet and his companions turned back at Axim and retraced their steps along the coast. By this time World War I had broken out, and colonial officials were anxious about potential disturbers of the peace. Ministering where his heart led him—in the Ivory Coast—Harris was stopped by authorities and deported to Liberia. Through the following years, he would make at least eight attempts to return. Always, he was turned back at the border.

Harris continued to preach in Liberia and made several missionary journeys to Sierra Leone, but he never again had the success of his Ivory Coast days. He continued to wear his distinctive dress and to marvel at what God had achieved through a "Kru boy." A missionary who met him in 1926 said, "He lives in a supernatural world in which the people, the ideas, the affirmations, the cosmogony and the eschatology of the Bible are more real than those he sees and hears materially."

William Wadé Harris died in his daughter's house, in extreme poverty, in 1929. Harris would live until 1929, but his prophetic mission lasted just those 18 months. This pattern—a brief but hugely effective ministry ended by the intervention of a colonial government—also characterizes the ministries of two great prophets who were his contemporaries. Garrick Sokari Braide, in the Niger Delta, was called by God in 1912, imprisoned in 1916, and died in 1918. Simon Kimbangu (p. 32), in what was then the Belgian Congo, had a public ministry that lasted less than a year, and spent the last 30 years of his life in prison. His followers compared this with Jesus' 30 years of hidden life and three years of public

ministry.

Not all his spiritual children became Catholics or Methodists. In 1979, it was estimated that Ivory Coast, with a population of 5 million, had 1 million Muslims, living in the north, 200,000 Protestants, and 500,000 Catholics. (Most Ivorians were still traditionalists.) There were also 100,000 (the figure is now closer to 200,000) members of Harrist churches—strongest near the capital, Abidjan.

The largest of these was founded by amalgamating a number of different congregations under the leadership of John Ahui. Grace Tani (Thannie), who died in 1958, founded the Church of the Twelve Apostles in western Gold Coast. She was a traditional religious specialist whom Harris converted, and she considered herself one of his wives. This church strongly emphasized healing, and it carried on Harris's practice of denouncing traditional religion. It used the Bible in rituals (though it did not read Scripture in services) along with the cross-staff, rattles, and Harrist hymns.

The Deima Church, founded in 1942 by Marie Lalou, who died in 1951, is the second largest Harrist church in Ivory Coast. Lalou saw herself as Harris's spiritual successor; she believed that he had driven witchcraft away, but that it had returned, and that she was the one chosen to expel it again. Like Harris, her followers destroyed traditional cult objects.

William Wadé Harris was without a doubt the most successful missionary in West Africa's history. Unlike some other African church leaders, he concentrated totally on the conversion of non-Christians. His own favorite hymns, according to his grandchildren, included "Jesus Lover of My Soul" and "What a Friend we have in Jesus." A "shout" preserved from his public ministry runs like this:

> "Let's try hard, so we will conquer
> The devil and his kingdom,
> That when Jesus comes
> We will wear white robes."

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African Family Values

Harris was one of several indigenous Christian leaders who took an open approach to polygamy. They cited social conditions and biblical support.

Elizabeth Isichei

The question of polygamy caused trouble for Harris. Although he believed that monogamy is the ideal, he also felt it was not always possible in Africa. At Axim, he took further wives. This may have been, in some cases, a way of giving a social identity to women who had been professional specialists in traditional religion. But at least one of these women bore him a child. In later years he would also marry a woman from Sierra Leone.

Not surprisingly, the missionaries working in the Ivory Coast were uncompromisingly hostile to polygamy and questioned Harris's open stance. A leading Harris Christian, John Ahui, took their questions to Harris, who refused to condemn the practice.

Polygamy was not a straightforward issue in Africa. On that continent, as in the ancient world, those who had a large number of children were considered greatly blessed—increasing the attractiveness of polygamy if a first marriage issued in no children.

African converts who were already in a polygamous marriage faced a difficult decision. The mission churches insisted that before they could become baptized, they send away all their wives but the first. This was clearly unfair (and often a social catastrophe) to the other wives. The open stance of Harris and other indigenous leaders provided an attractive alternative.

Moreover, as African Christians studied the Bible, they quickly discovered that the Old Testament patriarchs and kings practiced polygamy. If polygamy was permitted then, they reasoned, why not now, in Africa? When discussing the issue with a white missionary, Harris himself cited the example of the much-married Solomon.

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African Apostles: Christian History Timeline

Featured Evangelists

Olatunrinle, Christianah c. 1855 - 1941, b. Ondo, Eastern Yorubaland (Nigeria)

Kivebulaya, Apolo c.1864- 1933, b. Kiwanda (Uganda)

Harris, William Wade c. 1865 - 1929, b. Cape Palmas, Liberia

Charlotte Manye 1872 - 1939, b. Fort Beaufort, Eastern Cape, South Africa

Orimolade, Moses 1879 - 1933, b. Ikare, Western Nigeria

Akinyele, Isaac 1880- 1965, b. Ibadan, Western Nigeria

Kimbangu, Simon c. 1887 - 1951, b. Nkamba, Congo Free State (now Democratic Republic of Congo)

Nsibambi, Simeon 1897 - 1978, b. Buloba, county of Busiro, Uganda

Kiwanuka, Joseph Nakabaale 1899 - 1966, b. Nakirebe, Mawokota county, Uganda

Oshitelu, Josiah Olunowo 1902 - 1962, b. Ogere, Ijebuland (Nigeria)

Crowther, Samuel Ajayi 1808 - 1891, b. Osogun, Yorubaland (Nigeria)

Johnson, James "Holy" c. 1836 - 1917, b. near Waterloo, Sierra Leone

Mokone, Mangena Maake 1851 - 1931, b. Sekhukhuneland, Northern Province, South Africa

Choramo, Mahay early 1920s, b. Kucha, southern Ethiopia

Christian Events/Movements

1799 Church Missionary Society founded.

1804 British and Foreign Bible Society founded.

1840s Roman Catholic missionary societies The Congregation of the Holy Ghost and the White Fathers founded.

1886-1887 Ugandan Christians martyred for their faith by chief Mwanga.

1890s Western missionary control of the Nigerian and South African churches provokes African leaders

to form the independent "Ethiopian" movement.

1903 Afrikaner P. L. Le Roux joins a group dependent on John Alexander Dowie's church in Zion, Illinois, U.S.A Le Roux passed on Zionism to the church in South Africa, now called the Zionist Apostolic Church.

1920s Prayer groups within Nigerian churches birth the Aladura "praying people" movement.

1930s Revival sweeps Uganda and Rwanda, marked by conversion experiences associated with visions and public confession.

1968 Vatican Council II ends, accelerating the development of African clergy and leading to an African Catholicism dominated by African clerical and lay leadership.

1975 The WCC's choice of Nairobi for their General Assembly amounts to a Western declaration of the African church's coming-of-age.

1994 Pope John Paul II convenes an African Synod to indigenize Christianity in the areas of liturgy, marriage, and ancestor reverence.

Colonial Events

1787 Britain establishes the colony of Sierra Leone, where freed slaves are settled.

1807 Britain declares the African slave trade illegal.

1827 Fourah Bay College is founded and draws English-speaking Africans across West Africa.

1871 H. M. Stanley tracks down David Livingstone and goes on to explore Uganda and the Congo for Britain.

1876-1912 Britain, France, Belgium, and Germany scramble for African possessions.

1896 Invading Italian army defeated by Menelik II's Ethiopian army at Adowa, thereby protecting Ethiopia from foreign control.

1899 Boers invade Cape Colony in South Africa, sparking war with Britain.

1914-18 Britain and Germany clash in Tanzania, where Britain deploys over 50,000 African soldiers.

1920s Britain establishes a system of indirect rule through African chieftains, a system that survives for 30 years.

1939-45 Africans across the continent are recruited to fight in World War II.

1957 Britain gives the Gold Coast (Ghana) its independence, the first in sub-Saharan Africa.

1960 Seventeen African nations gain their independence.

1980 The former Southern Rhodesia gains its independence as the Republic of Zimbabwe.

1990 Namibia (formerly Southwest Africa) gains its independence.

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A Hunger For Holiness

East Africa's second generation Christians faced that age-old spiritual problem - dullness of hearts. Simeon Nsibambi's message of a victorious life sparked a revival that continues today.

Mark Shaw

His dream was to study abroad. So he applied for a scholarship, finished filling out the form, and placed the envelope carefully in the mail. With the posting of that letter, in ways he could not imagine, he was about to become the leading figure in the East Africa Revival, a 40-year awakening that changed the spiritual map of Eastern Africa.

Simeon Nsibambi was born in Uganda in 1897 to Walusimbi Kimanje, a chief of Uganda's most dominant tribe, the Buganda. He received his formal schooling at Mengo High School and King's College Budo. During World War I he joined the African Native Medical Corps and was decorated for his distinguished service. After the war, in 1920, he was made Chief Health Officer in the Bugandan king's government. He excelled as an athlete in both football and wrestling, and as a singer and artist. But it was his natural leadership abilities that would loom largest in the future.

Nsibambi became a Christian in 1922, three years before his marriage to Eva Bakaluba, with whom he would have 12 children. But education—the one thing necessary to cement his status as one of Uganda's elite—seemed to occupy this young rising star more than the gospel. Study abroad, in his mind, was essential.

The reply to his application finally came. He was turned down. His best hope for advancement had been dashed.

Deeply frustrated, Nsibambi turned to God for answers. A vision came. God spoke to him and asked him a troubling question. What value did a scholarship to study abroad have compared to what he already had been given, that pearl of great price, the gospel of salvation? Nsibambi was disturbed by this vision. Ashamed and repentant, Nsibambi began to preach on tree-studded Namirembe Hill, overlooking the busy center of Kampala, Uganda's capital. On the street corners near the great Anglican cathedral of St. Paul the Apostle with its rounded dome, he proclaimed the themes of brokenness and renewal. With those sermons in the streets, the first leaves of revival began to stir.

Bigger winds of change were blowing across African Christianity in the 1920s and 1930s. Most of the change was a reaction to a missionary Christianity that many African adherents felt was too Western and too rigid. In 1929, Reuben Spartas left the Anglican church of Uganda in reaction to perceived abuses by white leaders and founded the African Orthodox Church. Similarly in West Africa, the Aladura (praying) churches of Nigeria stressed the role of supernatural evil and healing in reaction to the mission churches that emphasized moral evil and personal justification. These churches were founded by African prophet figures dissatisfied with the missionary churches in which they had found their own salvation (see p. 35).

For African Christians like Nsibambi, however, the greatest challenges to faith did not come from missionary imperialism, witchcraft, or ancestral spirits. For a growing number of second-generation African converts in the 1930s and 1940s, the main issue was spiritual dullness. They confessed a Lord who rose from the dead. Yet many felt rigor mortis rather than resurrection power was the normative experience in their churches and in their souls.

A church with "higher life"

After his scholarship crisis and God's call to preach, Nsibambi still struggled with an inner emptiness of soul. He longed to know the power of the divine will and a full experience of divine grace. Help came in the form of a white stranger.

J. E. Church, Joe to his friends, was a new medical missionary with the Rwanda Mission (an offshoot of the Church Missionary Society), working at Gahini Hospital in Rwanda. Like many who worked in the Rwanda Mission, Church was an Anglican deeply affected by the "higher life" teaching of the British Keswick revival, and openly critical of the spiritual state of the church in Uganda and Rwanda.

Keswick teaching had its roots in the 1875 Dwight L. Moody revival in England. It taught that the power of indwelling sin in a believer can be broken by a strong faith experience in which the believer both internalizes the death of Christ and surrenders to the control of the Holy Spirit. This faith experience, it taught, took place after conversion. After this experience, the believer enjoyed "victorious Christian living." Without it, the believer lived in defeat as a carnal Christian.

In 1929, finding himself in a state of acute spiritual dryness, Church took some time off in Kampala. There he encountered Nsibambi.

Church wrote in his diary of the meeting with Nsibambi that would change his missionary career. "Yesterday a rich Muganda ... in government service rushed up to me at Namirembe and said he had heard me speaking ... about surrendering all and coming out for Jesus. He said he had done so, and had great joy in the Lord, and had wanted to see me ever since. And then he said in his own words that he knew something was missing in the Uganda church and in himself, what was it? Then I had the great joy of telling him about the filling of the Spirit and the Victorious Life." Following this conversation, Nsibambi met with Church again to go over the Scofield notes on the filling of the Spirit and prayed to "quit all sin in faith." After several days of prayer and Bible study with Nsibambi, Church returned to Gahini Hospital "in the power of Pentecost."

The change in Nsibambi was visible and permanent. He quit his job as a public health worker and devoted himself full time to preaching and renewal. When Church returned to Kampala several months later he was confronted by an irate missionary who demanded, "What have you done to Nsibambi?" Church enquired what the problem was. She replied, "Oh, he's gone mad and is going around everywhere asking people if they are saved. He's just left my gardener." She insisted Africans were not ready for this new teaching about sanctification and the Holy Spirit.

Revival fires

More and more Africans became attracted to Nsibambi's message of total surrender to Christ and joined with him. Among these was his younger brother, Blasio Kigozi, who joined Church at Gahini in 1931 and began challenging his African colleagues to seek a deeper Christian life. But the message was not well received. One of Kigozi's most vocal critics was Yosiya Kinuka, a hospital worker who resented being called a "Laodicean" or half-hearted Christian.

Kinuka was the son of a chief of the Ankole tribe. He was proud of his ancestry and resistant to the message that spoke of his sinful nature and demanded repentance. Yet he could not get the message out of his mind. Upon the urging of Kigozi and Church, he agreed to visit Nsibambi in Kampala. Kinuka described their meeting: "I had never seen such a fervent Christian before. We kept talking about the subject of being born again. Simeon had heard that the spirit of the hospital was bad and he asked me the reason. When I began to tell him he turned to me and said that it was because of sin in my own heart, and that that was the reason why the others on the staff were bad. ... My sins became like a burden upon my back, and I yielded to Christ."

Kinuka publicly confessed his sin of nominalism and spiritual pride. By doing so, he established a characteristic pattern of the East Africa Revival.

After Kinuka surrendered to God, Nsibambi and Kigozi spoke at a church convention at Gahini in 1933. At that convention revival fires began to blaze. A new kind of African Christian was born—the ***abaka***, those on fire. From this convention, teams of revivalists carried the flame to neighboring countries. They were called the ***balokole***, the saved ones.

The revival at Gahini in 1933 was a prelude to a greater outbreak of spiritual fervor at Kabale, Uganda in 1935. Kigozi, Kinuka, and Nsibambi shared the stories of the ***abaka*** of Gahini. Many confessed their sins publicly and sought the second birth.

Tragedy struck soon after. Kigozi traveled to Kampala in January 1936 to challenge church leaders with the need to ***zukuka*** (awaken). Before he could deliver his message he was struck down by tick fever. He died on January 26, 1936 and was buried on Cathedral Hill, in a crowded funeral ceremony officiated by Nsibambi. Inscribed on Kigozi's tombstone was the word ***zukuka***.

Despite the death of a key leader, the revival grew. In April 1937, Church and Nsibambi led a convention just outside Nairobi, Kenya. They sensed that the deepest corporate sin of the Kenyan church was hatred and mistrust between black and white. The team preached to responsive crowds, and many publicly confessed sin. As one participant said: "I have never before seen any white man admit that he had any sins."

Nsibambi's preaching at revival meetings emphasized two themes. The first theme was echoed in the oft-repeated phrase: ***Ekibi kibi nyo***, "Sin is Sin." The ugliness and destructiveness of sin was so clear to him. But of equal emphasis was the softly spoken ***ekissa***, Luganda for mercy. The bridge between dealing with sin and receiving mercy was public confession of such sins as "debt, dishonesty, immorality, and hatred of Europeans."

Meanwhile, the expanding revival was receiving mixed reviews among the missionary community back in Uganda. Many feared it was simply religious froth. Some thought public confession of sin was scandalous. Others worried it would split the church. The head of the Church of Uganda, Bishop Simon Stuart, was generally sympathetic, though sensitive to the voice of missionary critics. He envisioned the Church of Uganda's diamond jubilee celebrations in 1937 as just the platform to promote the revival in the Ugandan church. Bishops, however, are not always prophets. Instead of an outbreak of renewal, a new wave of opposition broke over the church.

The Mukono Incident of 1941

The full force of that wave crashed upon one of the newest leaders of the revival, William Nagenda, a brother-in-law to Nsibambi. The timing of Nagenda's emergence was critical. In 1941 Simeon Nsibambi fell sick with an undisclosed illness that Church simply described as a "weakness." Nsibambi was to remain an invalid, confined to his home near the Namirembe Cathedral, until his death in 1978. Though he would continue to exercise an enormous role in the course of the revival, it was Nagenda who emerged as the heir apparent.

In 1941 Nagenda was a student at Bishop Tucker Theological College in Mukono, Uganda, where he became campus leader of the pro-revival faction. He gathered a group of about 40 students who prayed for revival and spoke out bluntly against the immorality, theological liberalism, and high church worship on campus—all of which they saw as evidence of spiritual deadness. John Jones, the warden of the college, felt that he was the personal target of much of this criticism. He responded by banning revival meetings and preaching from campus. The ***balokole***, Jones declared, were ***bajeemu*** (rebels). Nagenda

and his disciples drafted a letter in December 1941 replying to the charges. They were not rebelling against school policies, they wrote, but against the modernist spirit at Mukono that "minimizes sin and the substitutionary death of Christ on the Cross, and mocks at the ideal of separation from the world to a holy and victorious life." Jones expelled Nagenda and 29 others. The Church of Uganda polarized.

Bishop Stuart initially took the side of John Jones, whom he called "St. John," and supported the expulsions. He removed the licenses to preach from a number of revival leaders including Nagenda and Church. These were not restored until 1944, after much debate over the Bishop's 14-point plan of restoration. Many pro-revival Ugandans saw the document as just another expression of an authoritarian church attempting to destroy the revival.

On top of such criticisms, Nsibambi was soon faced with rogue elements of the ***balokole*** who began claiming they had reached a state of sinlessness. He opposed this group and was able to counter its teaching before it discredited the mainstream of the revival.

Nsibambi saw at the root of all perfectionism an inadequate view of the cross. When Nagenda visited Nsibambi and complained about his inability to crucify the old nature and achieve perfection, Nsibambi replied, "Don't you know, William, that your old man was crucified for you, long ago, at Calvary. ... Go home and rest ... in the finished work of Christ." Characteristic of Keswick teaching is the emphasis on overcoming sin through internalizing the death of Christ by faith. Nagenda's striving for power over sin was doomed to fail, Nsibambi discerned, if he kept looking at himself rather than his Savior. Nsibambi had seen even in the search for sanctification a desire to develop a righteousness of one's own, apart from the imputed righteousness of Christ.

The events at Mukono pointed in the direction of an inevitable split of the Anglican church in Uganda. As the tension reached its climax in 1943, Bishop Stuart issued a memorandum of reconciliation, published as ***The New Way***, complete with a set of guidelines by which the revivalists and anti-revivalists could find common ground and avoid schism. Both sides agreed, averting division and ushering in the richest decades of revival yet.

Widening scope and enduring legacies

During the 1950s the revival reached its peak. Nagenda and Church traveled to India, America, Europe, Brazil, and all over Africa with the message of brokenness before the cross. Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, and Kenya remained the epicenters of renewal.

Church writes that "leaders of Christian work and visitors to Kampala would not leave without a visit to Nsibambi, and would often return home with a new challenge and blessing." Upon his death in 1978, Nsibambi was the patriarch of a movement that had altered East African Christianity. Millions of Christians had been touched by the revival, representing a new, vital Christianity, shaped by African leadership.

Sadly, the specter of separatism persisted, and some denominations broke apart. One prominent revival faction that emerged in Uganda in the 1970s called itself the ***Okuzukuka*** or Awakening. Leaders began to condemn as sources of spiritual coldness many indifferent things—business, insurance, farming, dogs, joining in cooperatives, and even certain kinds of dress and hair fashions.

More positively, the East Africa Revival served as forerunner to Africa's explosive late twentieth- and early twenty-first century charismatic awakening. The humble beginning of this "next Christendom," as Philip Jenkins has called it, can be seen in Tanzania. There, in the 1940s and 1950s, a leader named Festo Kivengere presided over an awakening marked by revivalists, open-air preaching, and conventions. Though many traditional denominations resented these new structures of renewal, they prepared Tanzania for the wave of Western Pentecostal missions that came in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Pentecostal preachers began new churches—rivals to the older churches. And once again, struggle between the faith of the older generation of saints and the new winds of the Spirit dominated the landscape of Christian East Africa. Simeon Nsibambi would have felt right at home.

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The People's Prophet

Simon Kimbangu's brief but powerful ministry inspired faith in Central Africans and fear in white authorities. Imprisoned for stirring up the Congolese people, Kimbangu became the catalyst for Africa's largest independent church.

Steve Rabey

Simon Kimbangu was an infant when he received a blessing from a Protestant missionary and nearly 30 when he heard the divine call: "I am Christ. My servants are unfaithful. I have chosen you to bear witness before your brethren and to convert them. Tend my flock."

"I am not trained," he argued, though he had been schooled at a Baptist mission, "and there are ministers and deacons who are able to serve in this way." He fled his village to toil in distant oil fields, but the call hounded him.

Finally, he returned home to preach the Word. Women gave up their pagan fetishes. Men gave up all but one of their wives. Then in 1921 the healings began. A sick woman got out of her bed and walked. A dead child was reportedly raised to life. And a blind man named Ngoma regained his sight after the prophet daubed his eyes with paste made of soil and saliva.

Soon thousands of people left their jobs and flocked to N'Kamba in Central Africa to see the Holy Spirit's power and hear the prophet. Missionaries resisted his efforts. One charged the prophet with unforgivable sins against Caucasian Christianity: "Kimbangu wants to found a religion which is in accord with the mentality of the African."

Since there were no provisions for stoning native heretics, officials did the next best thing. They punished the prophet with 120 lashes and packed him off to a solitary cell in a far-off prison. They hoped that would take care of the "crackbrained" Simon Kimbangu and the gullible fanatics who followed him. But they were mistaken.

African advent

Simon Kimbangu was born in 1889, into a Central Africa already changed by the long presence of white foreigners spreading their often-conflicting notions of God, civilization, race, and commerce. Portuguese explorer Diogo Cao was looking for a route to India when he sailed into the Kongo River in 1482. Catholic missionaries arrived a decade later, and while they baptized kings and chieftains who imposed Christianity on their people, their success was superficial—the gods of ancient ancestors continued to reign supreme.

When Protestant missionaries began to arrive in the 1870s, they found a popular pagan piety lightly embellished with Christian touches, including a belief that crosses conveyed magical powers. Among these newcomers were British Baptists energized by England's evangelical revival. These came to Africa to save souls and fight the slave trade, but they nurtured a paternalistic and patronizing attitude toward the native people, viewing them as depraved children who needed the white man's correctives.

It was to a school run by these Baptists that Kimbangu's aunt took the young man when his parents died. He stayed at the British Baptist Missionary Society school and mission at Ngombee Lutete for many years. He was baptized with his wife at the mission in 1915 and became a lay preacher and evangelist there in

1918. It was also at the mission that he began experiencing the visions that would change his life.

The Kimbanguist church traces its beginnings to April 6, 1921, the day Kimbangu healed a sick woman. His fame spread from that day, and soon a movement formed around him. It did not take long for white religious leaders and colonial government officials to notice Kimbangu and his followers. They moved swiftly and forcefully to clamp down on a movement that they suspected taught unorthodox theology, and that they feared would cause declining attendance at other churches, labor stoppages, social disruption, and possibly even rebellion.

Kimbangu's message seems, however, to have been both orthodox and apolitical. None of his sermons survive, but followers described him as a humble and sober man who taught submission to authorities and racial reconciliation. Still, white missionaries began to investigate Kimbangu on April 26, and a governmental investigation followed in May. Colonial administrator Leon Morel slammed Kimbangu's creed as a "parody" of Baptist teaching; his critique sparked widespread Protestant opposition. But it was Catholic missionaries who most feared Kimbangu's message and most energetically sought Kimbangu's arrest.

The first attempt to capture Kimbangu came on June 6, but the prophet escaped in an episode followers describe as a miracle. Three months later, however, he voluntarily gave himself up. Charged with sedition and hostility to whites, he was sentenced to death. Concerned Protestants had the sentence reduced to life in prison, and Kimbangu languished in the Elizabethville prison in Lubumbashi for decades. He died there on October 12, 1951.

"We, the blacks, are prisoners"

"Just as the work of Jesus was carried on by the apostles after His death, the same was true of the prophet Simon Kimbangu," said Solomon Dialungana, one of three sons who guided their father's movement through heretical schisms and government persecution. Officials clamped down on Kimbangu's rapidly expanding following. They forbade them from holding public meetings, deported as many as 100,000 to distant areas of Africa, and killed as many as 150,000. "We have been forsaken by both Catholics and Protestants," said one distraught follower. But the Kimbanguist movement kept growing.

The forced deportations only spread the movement throughout the continent, as Kimbangu's disciples won others to Christ through their piety and strict morality.

Persecuted followers poured their sorrow into hymns that were collected by the Belgian authorities: "Jesus was a prisoner,/ Jesus was smitten./ They are smiting us, too./ We, the blacks, are prisoners./ The whites are free." Another hymn describing the armor of God was misinterpreted by colonial officials as a call for armed rebellion: "We who are carrying on our cause/ Let us be clothed and armed!/ Jesus will protect us./ Let us clothe and arm ourselves!"

As if these struggles weren't enough, a number of self-styled preachers claimed Kimbangu had appeared to them in visions and taught that indigenous pagan practices and polygamy were compatible with Christianity. Some of these "Ngunzist" preachers advocated labor strikes, tax revolts, hatred of whites, and the violent overthrow of colonial oppressors. (Such conflicts have given rise to often heated debates about "pure" and "pseudo-" Kimbanguism.)

It fell to Kimbangu's sons to guide the outlawed movement as well as they could until the church finally received official recognition in 1959. The Church of Jesus Christ on Earth through the Prophet Simon Kimbangu (or EJCSK), the first indigenous African body to affiliate with the World Council of Churches, now has between 5 and 8 million members, leading Harvard's Harvey Cox to call it "the largest independent church on the continent."

Historian Adrian Hastings has compared the evolution of Kimbanguists, who worshiped in other churches

during the decades of persecution before forming their own independent church body in the 1960s, to early Methodists, who worshiped in Anglican congregations for decades (indeed, until after their founder's death) before launching out under their own denominational banner.

The ambassador's new church

Kimbangu's youngest son, Joseph Diangienda, became the official head of the EJCSK, and in the 1960s he concentrated on regathering disconnected followers, building a mausoleum for his father's remains in N'Kamba (the church's New Jerusalem), setting up preachers' colleges and seminaries, and formalizing the church's doctrines and practices.

Diangienda also maintained the church's apolitical stance, steering clear of opportunities to become the "official" church of the Republic of Zaire, the despotic Mobutu regime, or the current People's Republic of Congo (which, according to the U.S. State Department, has kidnapped and held church missionaries).

In the face of perpetual social chaos, the EJCSK has continued to emphasize a strict moral code that forbids polygamy, smoking, the consumption of alcohol and narcotics, and bathing—or sleeping—naked. Worshipers take off their shoes in church, and women and girls cover their hair.

Services are lively, though less ecstatic than those in more demonstrably charismatic congregations. In addition to lengthy sermons, services include joyous processions, the waving of palm branches, congregational prayers, the reading of the Ten Commandments, and enthusiastic singing accompanied by orchestras featuring flutes and drums.

There are three official church holidays: April 21 (the commemoration of Kimbangu's healing of a sick woman), October 12 (the day the prophet died in prison), and Christmas. These holidays are the only times church members celebrate communion, and they do so with uniquely African elements: cakes made with indigenous grains and vegetables, and a sweet honey-wine.

The EJCSK also emphasizes prayer and fasting, cell groups, rigorous church discipline, and the confession of sins to church representatives. The church is fully self-supporting financially, with both men and women serving in the ordained ministry.

Simon Kimbangu is revered much as saints are in the Catholic tradition. Though the church rejects the notion that Kimbangu is an African Messiah, they do call him "the ambassador of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Diangienda describes his father's role in the booklet "The Beloved City":

"Our fathers cried for a 'chief,' a saviour, but no saviour came, until they said in resignation that God did not know us black people. He only knew the whites. ... The people hid from the missionaries and remained in the grasp of fetishism, of witchcraft, and of other evil practices. Then on 6 April 1921, the first miracle occurred. ...

"Through Simon Kimbangu, who was obedient to God, the promises of Jesus have been fulfilled and the Name of the Father and the Son has been glorified. Through him the Congolese realized that God and Jesus had turned to us in mercy. The sorrow and suffering of our fathers had been heard by God the Father, and our tears were wiped away."

Some whites may still sympathize with the Belgian colonial rulers who felt Kimbangu's creed was too African to be truly Christian. Others would agree with the character in Barbara Kingsolver's best-selling novel ***The Poisonwood Bible***: "You can't just sashay into the jungle aiming to change it all over to the Christian style without expecting the jungle to change you right back."

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Supernatural Faith

Known for their fidelity to prayer and confrontation with the spirits of indigenous religion, West Africa's Aladura churches grew from the radical faith of a group of visionary leaders.

Faith moves mountains—and cultures. For the West African Aladura Christians, spiritual things—whether holy or, in the case of native religion, hostile—are as tangibly real as the landscape, and those who pray in faith can expect tangible, sometimes startling results.

The name Aladura, Yoruba for "Owners of Prayer," is proudly worn by a family of churches that sprang from the ministries of charismatic prophets in Yorubaland (Nigeria) after World War I. These churches have since spread far beyond their West African roots. After the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970), Aladura churches emerged in that country, and through the West African Diaspora they have become firmly established in Britain, North America, and other parts of the world.

Fervor and generosity in congregational life, strong devotion to prayer and fasting, openness to dreams and visions, the frequent use of prayer for the healing of mental and physical illness—the Aladura share all of these thoroughly biblical traits with the Zionist churches of South Africa. Both groups are part of a larger family of prophetic African initiated churches that flourish in some African countries—such as Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Ghana—but are much less common in others.

Members of Aladura and kindred groups often wear a distinctive dress, such as white robes, to symbolize their separation from the world. They are uncompromisingly hostile to African traditional religion, and this contributes greatly to their appeal: they offer their followers protection against witchcraft—which still strikes fear in the hearts of many postcolonial Africans.

The most prominent Aladura churches are these:

The Christ Apostolic Church grew out of an Anglican Bible study group founded in 1920 and was associated with the British Apostolic Church from 1931 to 1941. Its distinctive hallmark is its rejection of both traditional and western medicine.

The Cherubim and Seraphim Society was founded by two visionaries, Moses Orimolade and Christiana Abiodun, in 1925. Though it divided into many separate churches, nearly all of these in time reunited. Its members wear white robes and embark on long preaching tours.

The Church of the Lord (Aladura) was founded by another visionary, Josiah Ositelu, in 1930.

The Celestial Church of Christ, one of the most popular Aladura churches, was founded by a Porto Novo carpenter, Samuel Oschoffa, in 1947. It grew into a major church from the 1960s on, after the establishment of a branch in Lagos.

The Aladura churches were originally relatively small; but there was a great influx, often of the poor and uneducated, during the Revival of 1930. This revival was led by Joseph Babalola, a road-grader driver who reluctantly became a prophet and leader after a series of visions. Babalola's revival was powerful, if short lived; he called on people to burn their traditional religious images, and thousands responded and joined either Aladura or mission churches.

The following are profiles of four of the most influential leaders.

—Elizabeth Isichei

Keeper of the Names

Josiah Ositelu (1902-1966) was too mystical for the Anglicans or even other Aladura leaders. But out of a long career as a witch-busting evangelist, he founded a far-flung Aladura church.

"I will give you the key of power like Moses, and will bless you like Job." So ran one of the thousands of Divine messages Josiah Ositelu believed he received directly from God—complete with sacred symbols, names, and even a unique form of writing. In 1926, during a series of harrowing night battles against the power of witches, he called on God by revealed names like ***Anomonolnollahhuha***. In an April 1927 revelation, he received his own personal holy name, ***Arrabablalhubab***, which he used for the next 20 years as a personal signature.

Ositelu was the son of an illiterate pagan farmer from Ogere in Ijebuland (Nigeria). His father and grandfather were men of chiefly lineage. Several siblings born before Josiah all died at a young age, allegedly through the evil forces of witches. Throughout his life Josiah would call on God to counteract the evil forces of witchcraft.

A mystic from childhood, who received his early schooling at the Anglican school at Ogere, Josiah prophesied, read signs in the sky, discerned witches, and heard angel voices. This caused anxiety to his parents and eventually got him dismissed from the Anglican Church, though not before he had served for many years as a catechist. In 1928, two years after he had his first revelations and was dismissed from the church, Josiah Ositelu returned to Ogere to preach. He spoke in tongues during his meetings, using the holy names he had been taught. Soon he acquired the reputation and following of a prophet, spurring leaders from established Aladura churches to ally with him.

The union proved short-lived when Ositelu tried to impose his teaching that God must be called by certain secret names before prayer could be heard.

He accepted his rejection by these other leaders as the fulfillment of another foretelling vision, in which he had heard "The Elders shall hold council to change your heart, but you shall prevail."

Independent again, Ositelu returned to the rural towns and began to plant churches under the name The Church of the Lord. Growth came slowly, but its onset, in the 1940s and 1950s, was tidal. Soon his church spread through Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Europe, and North America.

Ositelu became Primate of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) and lived to see a new generation take the reigns of leadership, yet his church suffered no fewer than 18 schisms. However, Josiah Ositelu approached his death in 1966 a contented man, reckoning that he had fulfilled words given to him in his youth: "I will build the New Jerusalem in you. You are the one whom Jesus Christ has sent like the last Elijah to repair the Lord's road and make his way straight."

—Robert Schirmer

Elder and Statesman

Isaac Akinyele (1882-1955) was above all a holy man—a man of impeccable character who gave liberally of his wealth, judged impartially, and exercised authority with loving care.

Isaac Akinyele grew up in an Anglican family in the Yoruba and predominantly Muslim city of Ibadan, in western Nigeria. He was a member of the Yoruba elite of his day. He worked for a time as a civil servant and then became a successful entrepreneur, establishing cocoa plantations.

Until 1924, Akinyele was a devout Anglican layman. He then joined the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC, known at the time as Faith Tabernacle), an Aladura group with roots in Pentecostalism that strongly emphasizes Bible study, and remained a faithful member for the rest of his life.

He refrained from the use of both western and traditional medicine, as the church required, even when his children fell ill. He also gave up alcohol and tobacco, saying that it was harder to give up smoking than Western medicine! Some Aladura churches—but not CAC—tolerated polygamy. Isaac was married with seven children but from the 1930s, decided that God was calling him to abstain from sex, even within marriage.

One of the problems the Aladura faced was that nearly all secondary schools were run by the mission churches. CAC founded a grammar school to which Isaac contributed generously, when necessary paying the teacher's salaries. He anonymously sent substantial monthly donations to other churches as well. It was only when he died, and the money dried up, that people found out where it came from. He contributed much of his own church's collection, putting in small coins so that the source would be less obvious. He worked for years as an unpaid senior pastor and led a series of revivals in the city in the 1940s and early 1950s, teaching that a church must always be in a state of revival, or it would die spiritually.

Isaac was deeply involved in community affairs. He was an incorruptible customary court judge who insisted on paying for even the smallest gifts from litigants. Many Christians believed that they should not hold chieftaincy titles, because they were often linked with traditional religion. Isaac was appointed to various traditional offices, which he always held in a Christian way. For example he was appointed Balogun, one of the city's highest titles. The Balogun was supposed to hold a staff, anointed weekly with sheep's blood. Failure to do this was thought to bring death upon the delinquent one. Isaac had a Christian staff made, with a cross, dedicated by church members with prayer and fasting

In 1955, he became the Olubadan (non-hereditary traditional ruler) of Ibadan. Although some objected, because of his total rejection of traditional religion, he was chosen by an overwhelming majority. He then prayed for his political opponents.

Isaac was a prosperous and successful man, who used his wealth to help Christian and charitable causes, and needy individuals. He held public office with his reputation intact, and without making any concessions to traditional religion. His elder brother Alexander was a holy and much loved Anglican bishop, and in their old age the two, who were very close, spent much time together.

—Elizabeth Isichei

Wonder Worker

As with many African church leaders, the ministry of Moses Orimolade (1879-1933) had its origin in a vision.

From outside the CMS mission church, the pastor could see a strange phosphorescent glow lighting the interior. Singing like that of a large choir wafted through the evening air. The pastor went to investigate—and came upon a child sitting in the middle of the empty church, quietly regarding him through unruffled eyes. The child, born Orimolade Okijebu, a scion of a chiefly family in Ikare, Western Nigeria, would soon be known as Moses Orimolade. He would go on to a storied career of evangelism and wonder-working—eventually co-founding the Cherubim and Seraphim Society.

Like Paul, Moses had his thorn. As a young man, he was a paralytic, and mocked for his disability. He prayed for God to manifest power and was given a dream. In the dream an Angel gave him a rod—for victory, a royal insignia—for powerful prayer and powerful speaking, and a crown—for honor and respect.

After the vision, he recovered the use of his legs (though he remained partially lame throughout his life) and used them to spread the gospel throughout Nigeria. At one town he condemned the once-popular practice of human sacrifice with these words: "God created man in his own image. It is unjustifiable to carry out human sacrifice, and furthermore it is sacrilegious." Hundreds converted.

At another town he is said to have quoted the entirety of Genesis and Exodus from memory and interpreted it verse by verse to the transfixed congregation.

On one famed occasion, when an adversary called Orimolade a liar and tried to harm him with charms, the man suddenly found himself unable to stand and collapsed, unconscious. Moses prayed and the man revived. From that time on he was known as Baba Aladura, or "the praying father."

Moses refused to use the first-person pronoun "I," saying "Only God is the great 'I Am.'" Refusing gifts from impoverished admirers, he kept all his worldly wealth in a reed basket and a box, and he often bade needy persons take what they needed.

After his death, the Cherubim and Seraphim Society named their leader a saint, and today prayers are offered to the "God of Moses Orimolade."

—Robert Schirmer

Missionary Mother-Hen

Christianah Olatunrinle (c. 1855-1941) took the difficult step of destroying all the images of her protector spirits. Then she preached her way across Nigeria, with the message of a God above all spirits.

Like Isaac Akinyele, Christianah Olatunrinle was a member, not a founder, of an Aladura church—in this case, the Cherubim and Seraphim. She grew up in a chief's family in the eastern Yoruba state of Ondo. She had an unhappy arranged marriage, which produced one child, a daughter, and after a time she left her husband. Both before and after her marriage, she was deeply involved in long distance trade and became so wealthy that, for example, she returned her marriage dowry. She was an active Anglican but had not abandoned traditional religion; fearing that her prosperity would attract jealousy, she had sought protection in charms and traditional ritual.

In 1926, Olatunrinle went to Lagos on a business trip. If she was really born in 1855, she would have been 61, but it may well be that her age has been exaggerated, to make her later career even more remarkable. In Lagos, she attended a meeting of the recently founded Cherubim and Seraphim.

Initially reluctant to abandon the protection of traditional religion, as the group required, Olatunrinle was converted by a vision—one of many throughout the her long life. Returning home, she destroyed all her protective talismans. Soon afterwards, her only daughter, now the mother of four children, died, but this tragedy did not weaken her faith. Later one of her granddaughters would join her in her Christian work.

In 1933, a vision led her to embark on an epic missionary journey, on foot, with two companions—she paid the expenses. The trip, to both eastern and northern Nigeria, was the first of several such preaching tours for Olatunrinle. In the Cherubim tradition, she sometimes mounted a direct challenge against traditional religion.

Like Isaac Akinyele, Christianah Olatunrinle was rich and generous, and a born leader. She bought land for a church and supported a school, called "The Lord's Glory." She brought up many poor children, who regarded her as their mother. Nine days before her death, she had a final vision—of a hen with many chickens, carried away by a great bird.

—Elizabeth Isichei

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A Transatlantic Alliance

Two South Africans changed their country by linking their church with an African American church

Joan Millard

Mangena Mokone and Charlotte Maxeke—uncle and niece—wanted nothing more than to see South Africa transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. But they chafed under white denominational structures. Joining others who proudly held up the banner of "Ethiopianism" (pp. 8, 14), these two powerful leaders left, respectively, Methodism and Presbyterianism, and joined hands with an African American denomination that had a history uncannily similar to their own.

Mangena Maake Mokone (1851-1931) was born in Sekhukhuneland in what is today the Limpopo Province but was then called the Transvaal. He was a member of the Sotho tribe and the son of Maake, a sub-chief. When the boy was 12, his father was killed in a war against the Swazis. At the age of 16, Mokone left his mother and with a friend went to Durban on the Natal coast, where he found work as a "kitchen boy" in the home of a Wesleyan (British Methodist) lady named Mrs. Steele.

The Wesleyans first came to South Africa in the 1800s as part of the military force that took over the Cape from the Dutch. When the first Methodist missionaries arrived in the early 1800s, they discovered Methodist Societies founded by local Transvaal men who had traveled to Natal or the Cape, where they had been converted and educated.

By the time Mokone went to Durban, it contained many local Methodist lay preachers (Wesleyan local preachers were not ordained) who supported their ministries by working at trades like shop-keeping and farming.

"Rowdy" for God

As he swept Mrs. Steele's bedroom each morning, Mokone saw her Bible, which she read every day. The young man wished he could read, too. Soon he began attending the Aliwal Street Chapel, and he proved himself an excellent pupil at the chapel's night school.

One Sunday Mokone heard a local preacher, Mr. T. Fine, preach about how pits were dug to trap animals and how the devil uses the same strategy to trap people. Deeply affected, Mokone was converted, and he soon became a local preacher himself.

Mokone seemed especially endowed with spiritual power in preaching. During one service, he so moved his congregation that they fell to their knees ***en masse***, weeping loudly. Alarmed Europeans commanded the congregation to "***Vuka***!" (get up). They insisted that Mokone be replaced by a less "rowdy" minister.

For over a decade, Mokone worked as a carpenter by day and preached at revival meetings at night. Despite his dedication and success, it was only in 1880, when the annual conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church met at Pietermaritzburg, that Mokone was accepted as an "on trial" probationer minister.

After a year as a probationer at Newstead in Natal, Mokone was posted to Pretoria in the Transvaal. There he opened a school. By 1883 his work had grown from a congregation of six people and a school

with three children to a crowded church and a packed school of 45 young scholars. As part of his work, Mokone, with the help of a fellow minister, translated the Methodist Catechism into Sepedi, his home language.

In December 1886, nearly two decades after leaving her, Mokone was reunited with his mother during a missionary journey to his native country. Mokone later wrote of the experience. Not recognizing him, "Three times she denied that I was Mangena, and at last she found out that I am the same. Oh there was great joy to see." The chief also received him with open arms, saying, "(We) are willing to receive Methodist missionaries at any time."

Finally in 1887 Mokone became a full Wesleyan minister. At that time, the meetings of the Methodist Church in the Transvaal Synod were racially separate. The practice had begun to avoid keeping white ministers from their churches in the long teaching and examining sessions for black preachers. But Mokone found this separation distressing—he felt that African ministers were being excluded from discussions among white ministers.

Founding and finding an African church

In 1892, Mokone resolved to leave the Methodist Church and start his own inter-tribal "Ethiopian" Church (pp. 8, 14). He gave a number of reasons. Native preachers had been treated unfairly, he said—he was one of only two African ministers who had been ordained, although others had been in training for several years. Stipends given white and black ministers varied widely. And some white ministers in the denomination had shown a "lack of care" for black ministers.

When he made his separation from the Wesleyan church official in October 1892, Mokone was not supported by the other black ministers in the synod. But soon, as he founded and led the new Ethiopian Church in Mabastad, Pretoria, Mokone was joined by disenchanted Methodists from other areas. At the opening ceremony for the group's first church, in 1893, a white Methodist minister from Pretoria, the Reverend Geoff Underwood, preached the dedicatory sermon. He used as his text Genesis 28:19: "And he called the name of that place Bethel."

This was the same text that the American Methodist pioneer bishop Francis Asbury had used when he preached the sermon at the opening of the first African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Philadelphia in 1794. Those free, enslaved, and ex-slave blacks in America who left the Methodist Church in Philadelphia to establish that new denomination also held dear the Scripture verse so central to African Ethiopianism—Psalm 68:31: "Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God."

Mokone had a niece, Charlotte Manye, who was studying at the AME-linked Wilberforce University in Ohio. He read the letters she wrote home and was impressed by her accounts of the educational and mission work of the AME. She also sent him an AME Book of Discipline. Mokone determined to ask the AME to start work in South Africa and to join with his Ethiopian Church. This was agreed at a Conference held at Pretoria in March 1896.

In 1898, AME Bishop H. M. Turner visited South Africa. At Cape Town Mokone, the presiding elder of the Ethiopian church, met Turner, who re-obligated to full-time ministry those who had come from other churches and ordained other preachers. This marked the formal establishment of the AME in South Africa.

Mokone continued to serve the AME Church, first as the presiding elder for the Cape (1898) and later in the Transvaal. His name on the conference rolls came second after the bishop's. In 1903 someone suggested a "Mokone Day" to honor him as founder, but Mokone asked that they wait until he died. Today "Mokone Day" is remembered by the AME in South Africa, and his legacy is embodied in the large number of AME churches in South Africa.

The rest of Charlotte's story

Charlotte Manye (1874-1939) did much more than write those influential letters from Ohio. As a teenager in the Northern Cape, South Africa, Charlotte and her sister Katie sang with a choir named the Jubilee Chorus. The group toured England for two years (now as the "Kaffir Chorus"), singing to Queen Victoria at her summer palace on the Isle of Wight. The sisters learned to speak English fluently with a British accent. They learned other things too: Charlotte met Emmeline Pankhurst, who at the time was fighting for woman's rights. She also met two African-

Americans, the Bogee brothers, who told her about Wilberforce University, a historically black university in the United States.

Charlotte went to America to join the Orpheus Singers, an American choir. She met Bishop Derrik of the AME, who helped her to enter Wilberforce University. While she was studying she wrote letters home describing her experiences—letters that inspired her uncle, Mangena Mokone, to align his new Ethiopian Church with the AME.

There were other South Africans at Wilberforce University too—all men. Among them was Marshall Macdonald Maxeke, who she married in 1903. Together they worked for the AME in South Africa, he as a minister and she teaching and working to improve conditions for the African people—under the inspiration of Booker T. Washington, her teacher at Wilberforce. Charlotte graduated as the first black South African woman to earn a B.S. degree. Her husband earned a B.A.

"I left a Basuto girl"

When Charlotte returned to South Africa, she was warmly welcomed by the AME—the bishop asked her to give the missionary address at the 1901 Conference. After a standing ovation, she spoke of the need for mission ("Cape Town outcasts must be brought to Christ") and ended with the words: "I left a Basuto girl and returned an African girl for the whole of Africa."

Charlotte and Marshall began to work for the AME as missionaries at Ramogopa, the home of her father. Later they were invited to open a school at Idutywa, in what was then the Transkei. In 1908 they moved back to the Transvaal and established the Lilian Derrik Seminary at Evaton.

For the rest of her life, Charlotte Maxeke worked for her brothers and sisters in the South African church. She became president of the AME's Women's Mite Missionary Society (later the Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society) and founder and organizer of the Bantu Women's League (now the African National Congress Women's League).

In 1925, Charlotte addressed the South African Missionary Conference on ***The African Christian Mother***, confronting the problems of drunkenness and poverty. She praised the early missionaries: "Now the early missionaries in this country knew what they were doing. They studied us; they lived with us; they moved among us." But times had changed: "But what happens to us today? ... Many times when we go to visit one of our missionaries we find, when we knock at the front door, somebody tell us 'Go round to the kitchen.'" She concluded, "He (the African) must be taught to work among his own people." But the African must not work in isolation. The walls of racism must be breached. "We need Christian women, the Europeans to have conferences with native women ... so that we may know each other."

Charlotte also made her mark as a social worker or Native Welfare Officer. She was the first black woman to be made a probation officer. An article in the Cape Argus said of her: "Recognizing the value of her work, the government has now created for her the post of Welfare Worker."

Charlotte outlived her beloved Marshall, who died in 1928. She died in 1939 at Kliptown, Soweto, and is

buried in the Pimville, Soweto, cemetery. The AME church at Kliptown is known as the Maxeke Memorial Church.

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A Leopard Among the Bannas

Mahay Choramo faced down hardship and violent opposition to the murderous nomads of Ethiopia's southern frontier.

Aaron Belz

His name means leopard, but after 50 years of ministry in southwestern Ethiopia, he would rather be known as "Mahari"—merciful. Now in his eighties, Mahay earns 300 birr (less than $40) a month as an itinerant evangelist in this hot and rugged land.

Ethiopia, one of the world's oldest surviving kingdoms, is also one of its proudest. It holds the distinction of being the only African nation never to have been colonized (except briefly, during 1936-41, by Mussolini's Italy; Liberia also escaped colonization but was founded in 1822 by Americans). Its heritage stretches from figures such as the Queen of Sheba, who visited Solomon and is said to have had a son by him, to Emperor Haile Selassie, whose League of Nations address in 1936 stands as one of the great moments in twentieth-century political rhetoric.

Ethiopia's 440,000-square mile landscape is similarly mythic. The Semien mountains rise to 15,000 feet in the north, descending through hundreds of coffee plantations to rivers, waterfalls, and lakes, and stretching out into a blistering hot southern terrain that can scarcely be farmed.

In the extreme southwest, near the intersection of the Kenyan, Sudanese, and Ethiopian borders, is the Gamu Goffa region—home of the Bannas, a dangerous pagan people that became Mahay Choramo's riskiest mission.

Wineskins old and new

Mahay lives in Soddo, a sprawling town halfway between the capital city of Addis Ababa and Gamu Goffa, smack in the middle of the Ethiopian highlands. He is elderly and tired but still active, having refused a comfortable retirement. Instead, he persists in his calling as an evangelist and mercy-worker. He knows that despite a burgeoning evangelical movement in southern Ethiopia, there is still great poverty, suffering, and spiritual need.

Ethiopia is a study in contrasting forms of Christian belief. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, since its founding in the fourth century, has represented the core of national culture. But the EOC's membership is made up almost entirely of the elite Amhari-Tigrai class—a predominantly northern, more urban and educated people. Furthermore, EOC liturgy is set in the ancient language of Geez (geh-uz), and the only other language spoken is Amharic. The EOC is landlocked, as it were, in Amharic culture.

It is not surprising that the people in southern Ethiopia, such as the Bannas and the tribes that surround them, find themselves estranged from the EOC. While most non-Amharic Ethiopians are happy in their culture, the EOC has not made frontier missionary work a priority.

A second powerful factor in Ethiopian Christianity has been the New Churches Movement, initiated by the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) in 1928 when Haile Selassie himself invited non-Orthodox missions to work in southern Ethiopia. The diametric opposite of Ethiopian Orthodoxy, SIM's values were aggressively evangelical, trans-cultural, and largely formed in North America. Its primary objective was to plant

churches. Though SIM's leaders tended to be white and foreign, their desire was to translate Scripture into non-Amharic tongues, so they could draw closer to the people of rural Ethiopia than could the national church.

Birth of a passion

Mahay was born in the early 1920s in Kucha, a short distance from his current home. When he was a child, SIM evangelists visited his town and proclaimed God's love for all people of every culture. Such a radical experience was this for Mahay that he chose to throw over his pagan belief system in favor of a simple message: man is sinful, but God offers forgiveness freely through Christ.

That message translated into a powerful fixation in Mahay. Soon after his conversion, he learned Amharic well enough to read the Bible and translate portions of it for people around Soddo. He began to pray fervently and regularly. In cooperation with SIM missionaries and the church they inspired—the Wolaitta Kale Heywat Church (WKHC)—Mahay worked for the poor of the Wolaitta region in southern Ethiopia, bringing them food and supplies. He extended his ministry to Kaffe, supporting himself with farming coffee (which he loved) and selling salt.

Mahay endured regular government opposition, which was especially heavy during the 1940s and 1950s. Even though Haile Selassie had officially welcomed non-Orthodox missionaries, Ethiopian society did not welcome them. Mahay would appear before government officials with his Bible in hand, claiming it as his sole defense. Often he spent time in jail.

Nomad's land

In the 1970s, Mahay and his SIM friends engaged their toughest challenge—to reach into Ethiopia's deep southwest, the region of Gamu Goffa. It is home to the Bannas, nomadic herdsmen all but unreached by modernization.

Hardships are many in Gamu Goffa. The land is dusty and hot except for a few months when monsoons overflow every gully with rain. Agricultural life is not a viable option, and even managing livestock isn't easy. There are also cultural hardships—most Gamu Goffa tribes have little respect for human life. Children considered "cursed" can be killed or aborted immediately. Men, warriors with mud-packed hair, can raid and slaughter neighboring tribes for seemingly inconsequential reasons. Women wear up to 100 pounds of bracelets on their arms and neck, a permanent fixture of their anatomy. Outsiders are rarely welcome.

The evangelical move into Banna territory began in 1969 with SIM missionaries Charlie and Marion Bonk, who built a school and a clinic. SIM had already started successful Christian movements among nearby tribes, the Aras and the Malis, so there was hope that God would work in the harder and more violent Bannas, too. Indigenous Ara and Mali evangelists promised to help SIM communicate the gospel to the Bannas.

Mahay, his wife Balynish Dooballa, and their children all allied themselves with the Bonks in 1970, building a home several hours' journey south. Their approach was a little different from the traditional SIM method of building modern facilities and bringing in supplies by helicopter. Mahay built a home in the Banna style, a round dwelling with walls of dried mud, sealed in clay, and a thatched grass roof. In such a typical home, there are no partitions, the cooking is done over a wood-burning fire, and livestock often share living space with humans. Such an arrangement is not without its conveniences: milk can be obtained on demand from a cow's udder, and so can highly nourishing blood from an opened vein in its neck.

Mahay recalls the early days among the Bannas: "Sometimes they would get angry with us because we

did things which offended them, especially in the early days when we did not know any of their language. Then we would talk to them through an interpreter and become friends again. We learned to eat their food with them and to drink milk with them. ... We became friends."

Piercing the darkness

Within a few years there were more than 40 other Christians living with Mahay and his family among the Bannas. One of them was Petros, an Ara tribesman who had been converted years earlier. He had gone to Bible school in Addis Ababa, married, and became an evangelist himself. In November 1973, Petros was speared through the abdomen by a Banna warrior, his neck slashed, and medical supplies stolen from his corpse. The fledgling Christian community went into shock. The Banna celebration that followed added insult, and a new sense of the radical nature of reaching across cultural barriers.

But Mahay and the others stayed, and the Bannas' resistance slowly softened. Several professed Christ, and many others came to rely upon SIM medical assistance, food, and supplies.

Perhaps the most encouraging moment of this several-year saga, at least for Mahay, was the return of a Banna prodigal named Gursho. Gursho had murdered a fellow tribesmen 17 years previously and been sentenced to a lengthy term in prison. There, Christian inmates had led him to Christ, and he had devoted himself to learning Scripture and even Amharic. When Gursho returned, he immediately latched onto Mahay and became his right-hand man. In fact, he literally became Mahay's next-door neighbor.

Thirty years later, Mahay is still going strong. A survey taken in 1991 showed that the evangelical movement as a whole had reached 14 percent of the total population, thanks largely to the Kale Heywat Church (the name means "Word of life") and its zealous evangelists.

Missionary Doug Stinson describes Mahay Choramo in June, 2003 as "an 81-year old evangelist [who] sports a baseball cap and several days' stubble of beard. His shoulders are slumped and one hand rests on the dashboard. He dozes as we travel the rough road. He is going to fetch a blind boy to enroll in the School for the Blind in Wolaitta, Mahay's home area. He says he would have walked the two-day journey to get the boy if I hadn't been going."

Mahay Choramo, a small part of the Wolaitta evangelical movement, is also a large part of the advancement of God's kingdom on the frontiers of southern Ethiopia.

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Resources: Go Tell It!

Many are telling the continuing story of the African church. Here are some of the best renditions.

COLLIN HANSEN & CHRIS ARMSTRONG

When we study the history of the church in twentieth-century Africa, we come face to face with that most exciting, fluid, and sometimes confusing thing: history in the making. Many of the stories of African Christianity in this period are just now being told—or have yet to be told. That is why the first resource we are recommending in this issue is not a book but a website; the Dictionary of African Christian Biography, at www.gospelcom.net/dacb/. There you will find the stories of many Christian leaders from throughout African history, browsable by country or alphabetically. These are written by scholars, missionaries, and eyewitnesses. An occasionally uneven writing style does not diminish the importance of this record of the lives of Africa's apostles, nor the fascination of the stories themselves.

Another enjoyable, popular entrée into the stories of these apostles is Frederick Quinn, ***African Saints: Saints, Martyrs, and Holy People from the Continent of Africa*** (Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002). Quinn provides a quick portrait for many of the most influential figures in African church history, stretching back to such early North African leaders as Anthony of Egypt and Augustine of Hippo.

Global church histories

Most Western readers have received a significantly "westocentric" view of church history. In recent years, church historians have been working to change this, beginning to produce what will doubtless prove a bountiful crop of global church histories.

This is a new animal—among its few precedents are Kenneth Scott Latourette's multi-volume ***History of the Expansion of Christianity, Christianity in a Revolutionary Age***, and ***History of Christianity***. For a profile of Latourette, see our issue 72, How We Got Our History.

Here are three of the best recent attempts to bring between two covers the spread of Christianity outside as well as inside the traditional Christian strongholds of the West:

Adrian Hastings, ***A World History of Christianity*** (Eerdmans, 2000). Particularly strong on how the church and the many cultures of the world have interacted and conditioned each other, this volume is both scholarly and very readable. This is not surprising, given its editor (see our mention below of Hastings's ***The Church in Africa: 1450-1950)***.

Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, eds., ***History of the World Christian Movement (Vol. 1): Earliest Christianity to 1453*** (Orbis, 2001). This history was written, as most future efforts at global Christian history will have to be written, through a collaborative process. A series of consultations were held that involved scholars from Asia, Africa, Latin America, North America, and Europe; from Protestant, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, and Orthodox communions; and experts in the disciplines of history, missiology, theology, and sociology.

Paul R. Spickard and Kevin M. Cragg, ***A Global History of Christians: How Everyday Believers Experienced Their World*** (Baker, 1994). More popular in flavor than the previous two volumes mentioned, and well illustrated, this book tackles the daunting task of describing how billions of ordinary

Christians through the centuries experienced faith. The authors also pay particular attention to people and movements on Christian orthodoxy's outskirts.

African church histories

A scholar of great erudition who can write sparkflng narrative when the story turns dramatic—as it so often does in African Christianity—Adrian Hastings has written perhaps the definitive African history in ***The Church in Africa 1450-1950*** (Oxford University Press, 1994). That 500-year period saw African Christianity move from the fringes to the forefront of the continent's religious scene. Hastings also points out the parallels between the development of Islam and that of Christianity in Africa.

Another serious claimant to the title of "standard reference text on African Christian Churches," Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed's ***A History of the Church in Africa*** (Cambridge University Press, 2000) focuses on African initiatives when telling the centuries- long story of Christianity's development and spread on the continent.

John Baur's years of lecturing to African theology students have served him, and the readers of his ***2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African History 62-1992*** (Paulines Publications Africa, 1994), well, despite an occasionally turgid writing style. This is a study of the Catholic Church and its missions to the African peoples. The book also addresses some Protestant history, but its greatest usefulness is in filling a void left by other works that covered Catholic issues from an outside perspective.

Elizabeth Isichei, in her ***A History of Christianity in Africa*** (Eerdmans, 1995), has provided a fast-paced yet detailed narrative that stands as the most readable comprehensive history of the African church. Isichei places today's developments in the context necessary for understanding the continent's needs and projecting its future trajectory.

An earlier paperback contribution that still has merit (and pictures) is Jonathan Hildebrandt, ***History of the Church in Africa*** (Africa Christian Press, 1981, 1987, 1990). Hildebrandt emphasizes the continuity of Christian faith in Africa from biblical times until the present and highlights the tremendous contributions of a few special leaders, including some described in this issue of CHRISTIAN HISTORY.

Finally, if the colonial period has captured your imagination and you want to know more, see Thomas Pakenham's ***The Scramble for Africa: The White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876 to 1912*** (Random House, 1991). History has probably never seen such a remarkable land-grab as the scramble for Africa conducted by the European imperial powers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Political intrigue and indigenous reaction boil through the period, the characters are unforgettable, and Pakenham captures it all in compelling prose.

Interpretations

Important "orienteering tools" for the newcomer to African Christian history are several recently published books that offer theological and sociological interpretations of the explosion of faith in the historically "developing" nations.

Two of the best of these are by historian Andrew F. Walls. In his award-winning ***The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*** (Orbis Books and T&T Clark, 1996), Walls argues that Christianity's most important question is how the faith will be identified at each stage of its missionary development. Throughout African history this question has been hotly debated among foreign missionaries and indigenous church leaders who held sometimes disparate views about Christian identity in the midst of Africa's diverse spiritual climate.

In ***The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*** (Orbis Books and T & T Clark, 2002), Walls draws on his long experience as a missions historian who has researched and taught in Africa, to provide readers with a fascinating look at the unintended consequences introduced into that continent by Western missionaries.

Philip Jenkins's ***The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*** (Oxford, 2002) lays out a startling diagnosis of Christianity's present and a prognosis for its global future. This broad overview of Christianity in the developing world has alerted many to the major "axis shift" that has already begun.

Along the way, Jenkins introduces the secularizing West to Africa's brand of Christianity, which tends to be theologically orthodox, mystical, and evangelical. This relatively small book provides an insightful introduction to contemporary issues while offering a number of projections regarding future Christian expansion and increased violent conflict with Islam.

Kwame Bediako, from Ghana, is one of Africa's leading Christian interpreters of Africa and African Christianity. A theologian, Bediako presents, in ***Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*** (Orbis Books and Edinburgh University Press, 1995), a view of African Christianity from the inside out rather than from the outside in. This perspective helps readers understand Africa's current and potential global impact on Christian theology and social issues.

For a theological assessment of African church history that celebrates the tremendous work of God on that continent, see Mark Shaw, ***The Kingdom of God in Africa: A Short History of African Christianity*** (Baker, 1996). Based on a conceptual framework borrowed from H. Richard Niebuhr's justly famed ***Kingdom of God in America***, Shaw's book portrays the African church as uniquely blending God's sovereignty, Christ's redemption, and a Spirit-led involvement in social justice.