

KIKUYU CHRISTIANITIES¹

BY

JOHN LONSDALE
(Trinity College, Cambridge)

Introduction

Christianity in Kikuyuland, central Kenya, is a century old. From the outset there have been many Kikuyu Christianities. They have differed over their theology, their spiritual, mental, marital and bodily disciplines, forms of worship and formulae of self-government, and over how far personal salvation demands social justice. This religious plurality is due in part to the imported motley of missionary churches, Italian, French and Irish Catholics, Anglican English, Presbyterian Scots and American Baptists. More profoundly, it reflects the mystery of Christianity, its many 'contestable possibilities', open to individual interpretations of the Bible.² Deeper still, Christian diversity has voiced an already disputatious local culture. The Kikuyu case confirms Adrian Hastings's general thesis, that Africans have had a large hand in making their Christianities—even at a time when they had seemingly lost their narrative power, in the heyday of an ostensible white missionary and colonial hegemony.³ In more recent years the shortage of land and jobs has attacked the bases of self-realisation and responsibility; to achieve full manhood has become even harder than winning proper womanhood. That has only made Kikuyu Christianities more urgent in their variety.⁴ Meanwhile, in an encounter that Hastings puts at the heart of nationhood,⁵ Kikuyu readings of the Bible as an allegory of their own history, a story of national servitude, salvation, exile and return, have helped them face the morally, indeed theologically, divisive test of finding themselves to be, more consciously than before, a nationality, a people.

Kikuyu Christianity's historical variety is easily sketched in. Its initial sociology of conversion defies any attempt at pattern-making. The pioneers were from a stateless society, one without the concerted power to decide who could or could not aspire to a new therapeutic community

or knowledgeable authority.⁶ Many sorts of largely young men and women, kinless and well-connected alike, first tested the new faith and its learning. They then led different lives; some remained close to their mission, others were careless of or opposed to it. Many black Christians scarcely met a white missionary at all and were less likely to do so over time. Missionary numbers remained small, Christians multiplied. From the 1920s, Africans themselves entered the ordained ministry; and Kikuyu penalised the missions slow to start such church building.⁷ Kikuyu theologies have covered a broad spectrum of belief, accordingly. In the 1920s Christians divided on the compatibility of Christ and clitoridectomy, on how far faith should replace custom. Some left the missions to lead independent churches with a Christian-national project. Others founded 'praying' churches for whom any politics was an offence to the Spirit. In the 1930s others still were swept into the mission churches' Revival which fostered love for white brethren who were similarly 'broken'. The nationalism of Christians and non-Christians alike was still more contested in the years after the second world war. Some Christians fell martyr to the seemingly pagan insurgency called 'Mau Mau'; but others took to the forest, Bible in pocket, gun in hand, and deplored the tactical influence of traditional diviners. Finally, today, the theology of power could not be more divided. Some Kikuyu pray for the President as God's agent on earth and allow a legitimate sphere for Caesar's reasoned rule; others fear that the state is in league with the Devil and rest their only hope on the Second Coming.

But to what end is this parading of a local Christian sectarianism? Adrian Hastings's own work suggests three issues. The first is the nature of 'the long conversation' between Christian and African cosmologies;⁸ the second is whether one can properly identify an African church history, a narrative of growth or crisis which influenced actors in their time; and, finally, how far doctrinal variety was inter-related, debated and perhaps modulated, rather than a mere cacophony of different voices for ever out of tune. Did not these diverse Christianities help to articulate different interests and subjectivities as they became more aware of their conflicting claims within a growing ethnic nationalism? All three issues are fraught with controversy.

The terms of the discursive relation between Christian and African cosmologies have attracted a spirited historiography. The nub of the controversy is how far colonial Christianity provided a hegemonic vision persuasive enough to transmute racial inequality from an injustice demanding political resistance into a ladder of cultural ambition. Any answer must respect historical contingency. Cases differed with the

nature of indigenous thinking on personal and societal destinies; the tendency of the colonial power, whether or not responsive to the fears and demands of white settlers, to respect or exploit African authorities; the nationality and doctrines of the local mission societies; and so on. The Kikuyu case is but one among many. Its internal diversity nonetheless suggests three general points.⁹ The first is that the terms of the religious 'conversation' were argued out between Africans as well as with whites. Kikuyu generated, within their own changing moral economy, the discursive energy which enlivened their debate with colonial Christianity. Some of their first converts were as 'enthusiastically confrontational' toward indigenous inequities as in other parts of Africa.¹⁰ Secondly, however, there was compromise as well as confrontation in the cross-cultural encounter. Each protagonist, missionary and African enquirer, found areas of uncertainty in the other's position, perhaps particularly on the question how far God, whoever He was, poured His blessings only on people of self-disciplined social virtue.¹¹ Finally, not least in Kenya with its settler minority bent on building 'a white man's country', colonial projects were rarely agreed between Africa's colonizers. Missionaries shuddered at the proletarian future that settlers offered their adherents; and found ways to practise their belief that a living church needed an autonomous, peasant, base. Colonial hegemony foundered on competing ideologies that overlapped with African debate.¹² In short, the mutual doubts and confusions of the conversation between white and black could not long support, let alone mask, their unequal power relations.

But, secondly, can diversity shape a church history or does it merely breed multivocal clamour? Kikuyu Christianities do indeed seem to have had a joint history, a sense of period, even stages of growth,¹³ in which the terms of debate changed, to voice new contests while never quite silencing the old. Many historians now deprecate narrative as a hindrance to understanding past actors who had little idea whence they came or whither they were going. This properly professional reservation is in the present case outweighed by two considerations. One is the acute narrative sensibility of any who at some personal cost change their explanations of the world and their place in it; the retrospectively providential steps in their own story give it propulsive power. The same is the more true of any young church that invokes a newly incarnate, historical, God.¹⁴ This sense of living in a purposive story can be all the more powerful when, to recall the third issue suggested by the Kikuyu case, a new political community is also in the making, a prophetic arena which lends to the base metal of human conflict a halo of duty to the dead and the unborn.

It is admittedly difficult to give shape to the first decade of this century when Kikuyu made their earliest enquiries into, and creative appropriations of, Christianity. They came forward—to adopt a Kikuyu view that implies anything *but* a ‘colonisation of the mind’—often rebelliously, from different kin circumstances or working lives, out of personal crisis or political calculation. Nonetheless, the second decade of Christian life, the 1920s, may, without constricting its variety, be seen as an energetically discursive project of *Reconciliation*. This was a creative attempt to translate the former, precolonial, moral discourse of age, generation and clan obligation into the basis of a new people whose redemptive colonial narrative of endurance, duty and salvation was prefigured in the Bible. For many of this first generation of *athomi* or ‘readers’ it was axiomatic that to save true Kikuyuness from extinction one had to be what their parents condemned as delinquent, a Christian. To be both Christian and Kikuyu was to control an otherwise threatening modernity. Ethnic nationalism was a moral project, a rethinking of the terms of social belonging, before it was a political one. After this ‘stage of growth’ there could be no looking back. The demands of ‘moral ethnicity’—this collective debate about how to obey the local tenets of moral economy in new times—could never be entirely ignored in the future, however private one’s hopes of salvation.¹⁵

This ethnic appropriation of Christianity provoked the next, costly, phase of growth, *Revival*, broadly construed and incorporated within different movements. It was a time when Christianity deepened its hold on Kikuyu imaginations. I do not by that phrase impute any primordial ‘essentialism’ to Kikuyu; to the contrary, they renegotiated social duty as changing times required. But they were driven by the moral necessity to tame their wilderness, the forests of their corrugated highlands, to clear a field for prosperous civilisation.¹⁶ Social labour made fruitful God’s gifts; pleased ancestors; and brought forth a wealth which was justified in repaying its sacred and social debts. Like other Africans, civilisers of a poor and capricious continent, Kikuyu followed a theology of abundance.¹⁷ The project of reconciliation had begun to Christianise its terms and images. But from the 1930s Kikuyu had to argue out its implications, urgently and afresh, as the moral context changed. Competitive white and black rural capitalisms had emerged; and private property, by denying its social debts, evoked a rising fear of envious witchcraft between Africans no less than a growing resentment of white settlerdom.

Christians faced this new wealth differently. To missionary dismay, their Protestant adherents, a Christian establishment, continued to accept

the old cosmic equation between wealth and virtue. The new 'praying' churches, the *akurinu*, repudiated mammon in a puritanical theology that owed nothing to missionary or Kikuyu thought and all to scriptural study. The 'independent' churches, founded by men who had left the missions, cleansed wealth by investing it in public improvement. Revivalists proper, 'born again' within the mission churches in a movement from out of Anglican Uganda, warded off contamination by confessing the Blood of Jesus. Later, trying to cement a militant political loyalty, Mau Mau initiation fended off envious witchcraft with the old cleansing medium of the blood of goats. All these approaches tackled a single problem: growing social inequality in a context where a single political voice was increasingly in demand. Discordant they may have been, but they were intimately related, often critical of each other.

Only since independence have the Kenyan churches, in which Kikuyu are often prominent, faced the issue of the state. While many Kikuyu leaders in colonial times, Mau Mau generals included, compared their struggles with the test of freedom God had set in Exodus,¹⁸ it was not until political sovereignty passed to Africans that the hardest questions were asked about its earthly purpose. Images of exodus did not desert the popular imagination; but were joined by evocations of exile—under Darius, or Nebuchadrezzar—and of the Devil. In the early 1990s the churches were government's only open opponents, an established yet popular voice of *Reproof*, in which the claims of secular authority were tested—in an arena of ethnic competition, not always disinterestedly—against those of the people of God.

Reconciliation

The earliest surviving Kenyan African painting in western style portrays the parable of the prodigal son.¹⁹ Its artist, in 1929, was a Kamba student at Uganda's Makerere College, member of an ethnic group closely related to the Kikuyu. It represents the desire of many pioneer Christian men, on entering into marriage and elderhood, to recover those morally reciprocal ties with non-Christian kin and neighbours which they felt they had lost. Such rupture was only partly due to missionary discipline; it also reflected a militant Kikuyu response to the new faith. Christianity would not have divided Kikuyu or other African peoples among themselves had not many found its message so compelling.²⁰

In explaining how missionary faith became indigenous belief, one cannot do better than follow Taylor, for the Baganda, or Karanja, for the Kikuyu, in discerning a fourfold, interlocked, process of congruence,

detachment, demand and crisis.²¹ Missionaries found Kikuyu belief had points of *congruence* with their own; their denominational patronage also matched the competitive openness of Kikuyu culture. Kikuyu were *detached* from old ties and freed to associate with others of their kind as much by their own social rifts—generational friction, the moral failings of the great hunger suffered at the turn of the century—as by colonial dislocations. The urgency of the *demand* which ‘readers’, *athomi*, ‘felt the Gospel laid upon them’ to disown such received observances as family sacrifice often startled their white pastors. But *athomi* never faced quite the *crisis*, or test of faith which, on some readings, Ganda converts met in having to choose between saviour and king in ‘a fiery moment of martyrdom’. In its decentralised political context, less greedy for martyrs, the Kikuyu Church nonetheless ‘wrestled with its conscience for years.’²²

The promise of *congruence* lay in the missionaries’ assent to elements of Kikuyu cosmology. Catholics and liberal Protestants thought its monotheism a basis for dialogue. While Kikuyu acknowledged lesser powers in their cosmology, they also seemed to believe in a transcendent and bountiful creator, to whom sacrifice could effectively be made by upright elders. Kikuyu ethics were also admirable: their condemnation of anti-social forces, their generosity and sense of duty. While their ideas of an afterlife seemed vague, Kikuyu did at least speculate on the possibility of resurrection. There appeared to be much for the Gospel to build on. Missionaries nonetheless felt that much needed to be rebuilt. The Kikuyu God, *Ngai*, the divider of good things, was too aloof: proverbially, He was not to be pestered. Kikuyu prophets also had dubious claims to revelation. Prayer was a communal cry in crisis, not regular, private, devotion. Kikuyu trusted God less than they feared sorcery. External contagion substituted for personal sin. Kikuyu abused sex and alcohol, their circle of love was narrow, they laughed at the afflicted, and were terrified of death. As to their initiation rites, while male circumcision was tolerable to Britons then adopting it themselves, female clitoridectomy seemed a cruel and dangerous mutilation. Kikuyu had no dialogue with God such as liberated Christians. Animal sacrifice performed by close kin was the antithesis to the the one true sacrifice, made for all, on the Cross.²³

While no missionary, apart from some American Baptists, wished to destroy Kikuyu belief, while some indeed came to see the Gospel as fulfilling an unconscious African yearning for truth, they recoiled from much social practice, especially to do with sexuality and gender.²⁴ Some separation from old ways seemed needed to inculcate new belief. They

would have agreed with Archdeacon Willis in western Kenya, when calling for a boarding school: 'God himself does not attempt the practically impossible. He did not attempt to give Israel the law in Egypt: He first brought them out, then He taught them . . . ordinary village life is dead against Christianity.'²⁵

But some young Kikuyu also welcomed *detachment*. One of them contrasted Christianity's appeal to the young with the Kikuyu elders' view that juniors were incapable of grasping 'the personality of God'. Another thought parents sent their most disobedient children first to the mission, there to be 'let loose like the English'.²⁶ Christianity thus 'harnessed the energy [of] generational conflict'.²⁷ Many readers also had detachment forced on them, orphaned by famine, with no parents to stop them going to school—or wicked uncles who drove them to it. The first Anglican marriage joined two such waifs.²⁸ There could be no greater case of detachment: a new family formed without benefit of kin, cut off from common ritual practice, dependent on outside patronage. It was clearly no foundation for a local church.

Yet many *athomi* opposed their kin's household authority with what they believed were the Gospel's *demands*. Missionaries marvelled at and rather feared for their courage. Several embarked on their own evangelistic journeys, either entirely without missionary sanction or in areas from which missionaries had withdrawn, and armed only with a vernacular Gospel.²⁹ Some burnt down prayer-trees, destroyed diviners' professional equipment, buried the corpses from which Kikuyu recoiled; even dug up ancestral skulls, daring contagion. The commonest Christian rebellion was refusal to share in household sacrifice—an abstention which made it invalid.³⁰ One gang of readers beat up people they found working in the field on Sundays. Conversely, *athomi* exploited mission patronage to steal a march on age mates, to get circumcised early.³¹

This last example raises the question what inner purpose these delinquent actions served. Why did elders curse readers?³² Missionaries saw in these rebellions proofs of Grace, responses to the Gospel's demand. Doubtless they were, but they came from within a Kikuyu understanding that made them offensively *indigenous* assertions of religious dissent, or upstart claims to self-mastery, *wiathi*, however much they may also have been signs of dependence on new patrons—all in forms not far removed from ordinary Kikuyu practice. There was little to show that Christianity was more than an addition to an existing range of cosmic enquiry, adopted for Kikuyu rather than missionary ends. Orphan marriages were few. More typically missionaries, assisted by African interpreters, preached to large and interested audiences long before the first

baptisms. There were no early Kikuyu martyrs; this absence of divine jealousy makes the Kikuyu experience akin to most others in Africa.

There was, then, a mutual field of questioning between old and new theologies in which missionaries encouraged *athomi* to take the lead in debate, by public preaching. This dialogue helped to spare Kikuyu churches from *crisis* in their early years.³³ But if the Word was crucial, so too was bread. Some of the most dynamic readers came to missions, or their schools, because a prior experience of wage labour made them thirsty for the magical knowledge of the new world of the 'red strangers'.³⁴ Nor did literacy add value to external wage labour alone; it also conferred power in internal Kikuyu politics.

Fluency in colonial courts could tip the balance in property disputes with neighbours; readers were also protected from colonial labour demands. Christianity provided not only a ritually-sanctioned skill with which to continue local politics by other means but also a status that was as much anti-colonial as colonial, even, one might say, neotraditional in its anti-statish localism. Elders came to terms with *athomi* over property and marriage; parents welcomed back truant sons when circumcised, even if by a mission dresser; subclans dedicated land and labour to building mission outschools that plugged them into the new epistemology of power; within a decade of the first baptism, unlettered populations were content to be ruled by young Christian chiefs.³⁵

Missionaries soon faced a mass movement to Christianity such as Hastings has discerned elsewhere in Africa at this time. Its origin can be dated precisely, to 1915-16, when the annual sale of scripture portions leapt from 755 to over 10,000, at 30 cents each, a day's pay.³⁶ It was in 1916, too, that 1,600 readers went off to war in German East Africa (now mainland Tanzania), under missionary officers, as Carriers. Almost all returned alive, in striking contrast to the tens of thousands of unlettered porters who did not have the prophylactic protection of scripture in their kit.³⁷ But it was also at this time that the candidate generation of the two ritual moieties, into which Kikuyu had hitherto divided themselves, began to pay goat fees to the outgoing one, in the sacrificial commutation of private wealth into public responsibility called *ituika*. Readers joined in with their generation mates, once they had ensured that their goats were eaten rather than sacrificed.³⁸ It was also the time when subclans, *mbari*, entirely unbidden by missionaries, started to invest in schooling.

The first world war was of high significance, then, as much for indigenous ritual time as for church-building time. Kikuyu were seizing hold on Christianity while Christianity was taking hold of the land.

After the war, in a ferment of anti-colonial politics, even non-Christian chiefs took offence at being called Judas. Some thought of the political leader, Harry Thuku, as Messiah, others as Moses, and still others associated him with the rainbow-dragon which used to hallow *ituika*.³⁹ This was not a manichean but a theologically plural world. It is not to be wondered that some missionaries called revival meetings, to stiffen Christian vocation against its dangerous social popularity. They wanted their readers to face a crisis which readers seemed as keen to avoid.⁴⁰

One can now see why the boldest politicians in the 1920s, in the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA), a 'young Christian' party, which some Scots dismissed as Anglican, adopted *reconciliation* as their project. The KCA's general secretary, Johnstone Kenyatta, was one of the many orphan *athomi*. Its first Presbyterian office-holder, he founded the vernacular party paper in 1928 and named it *Muigwithania*—one who makes people listen and agree together, a reconciler and, implicitly, a respected elder.⁴¹ Kenyatta thus asserted the KCA's right to be heard as internal conciliator: religious peace had to come before effective anticolonial representation.

The publication of the Kikuyu New Testament in 1926 is said to have given the KCA their title. *Muigwithania* appears in it six times, and carries an authority lacking in the mere *mjumbe* or 'messenger' found in the Swahili version, available since 1909, which many Kikuyu read. It is in the proposal of such terms to white colleagues that one first glimpses the intellectual delight with which Kikuyu scholars explored how to squeeze the most intimate old meaning into newly standardised, and sacralised, words.⁴² The references are to Christ as mediator between God and man (I Tim 2: 5),⁴³ or between a new cosmic covenant and the old (Gal 3: 19-20; Heb 8: 6; 9: 15). *Athomi* must have asked why their own faith should not fulfil God's promises to the ancestors in their own new age.

The passage remembered as the KCA's authority for adopting the title *muigwithania* comes from Hebrews (12: 24),⁴⁴ where Jesus the mediator is also a more eloquent sacrifice than Abel's who, like Kikuyu, had offered only livestock. This was a useful text for *athomi* who wanted to identify the *Ngai* of the Old Kikuyu Testament with the Christian God whom missionaries, on their advice, also called *Ngai*.⁴⁵ Kenyatta himself stressed this continuity in moral theology, as the basis of the two-stage argument with which he and his colleagues pressed for reconciliation. Their underlying premise was that the urban world of wage labour—not Christianity, as their elders thought—presented modernity's main threat to Kikuyu. The first stage of their thesis called on *athomi*

to return to filial obedience; the second turned the tables on elders by claiming that repentant readers were best able to safeguard true Kikuyu civilization.

Athomi found it relatively easy to make terms with the unlettered. Many had already done so with their kin; their favourite simile compared pen and spear, weapons new and old for defence of property. But legal utility was not social harmony. George Ndegwa, a later KCA secretary, rhetorically put the problem. He was proud to be one of the new ritual generation, expected to 'straighten' Kikuyu from the moral disorder associated with the waning of an incumbent moiety's power. But how could he, a 'prostitute' on account of his 'mission clothes', presume to straighten society? His own answer was that this was a false antithesis, based on appearances. Since *Ngai* was the God of other races, one could be Christian or Muslim and yet remain 'Original Kikuyu'.⁴⁶ Christianity did not have to mean corruption; ethnic virtue had to come to equal terms with the modern world.

Muigwithania's readers found a marvellously apt biblical allegory for discussion of how to harmonise the prostitution of foreign ways with true Kikuyuness in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15: 11-17). It was the most commonly cited folktale, old or new.⁴⁷ It taught the virtues of tradition. But obedience to the past was only a step in asserting *athomi* superiority over the elders whom the Bible bade them obey. For readers soon concluded that harmony must be a modern project; and, modern themselves, *athomi* were the best representatives of their people's cause.

Muigwithania argued this with the logic of all conservative reform: Kikuyu faced new dangers; they needed new defences. Readers compared the prodigal's private dissipation with the public fecklessness of Kikuyu who followed 'the road of wilful ways' to Nairobi. Men were absconding from home; women who did so would neither honour fathers nor fear husbands. Town reached into the core of Kikuyudom, destroying kin and property by debauching gender. Yet townspeople should not be deceived: they might take new names but could never remove their black skin nor cease to be Kikuyu.⁴⁸ Male migrants could overcome their rulers' racial contempt only by strengthening the moral fibre of filial duty. Women's own constructions of self-mastery in town and trade as yet made them only more reprehensible in the men's eyes.⁴⁹

Athomi admitted that they had led the way to town's corruptions, but claimed that they alone could avert its fate, which was to 'peter out among the *chomba*' or strangers—the Muslim Swahili, Kenya's first townfolk. Migrant labour, a modern seduction from the moral

economy of rural obligation, needed a modern antidote, a debate about ethnic civic virtue that Christian literacy alone made possible. Kenyatta and his generation believed that any claim for equality in a racially ordered colony must rest on a patriotic but modern ethnicity; and that only they, readers, could awaken it. A self-interested argument, it nonetheless transformed a repentant Christian delinquency into leadership of the Kikuyu common weal. In thinking about the social production of self-mastery in new times, *athomi* started from the premise that the oral transmission of values had been enfeebled by the absence of migrant workers. Literacy, by contrast, widened sociability in parallel with mobility. Literacy made strangers friends.⁵⁰ Charles Ng'undo put best the *athomi* claim to be wiser guardians of society than the elders. Social order, he wrote, had once been inscribed on consciousness by rituals that were now falling into decay. 'A man will not speak to his child or a child address his father for want of a sign.' Christians must update the rituals of instruction. Tea-parties, he suggested—to Christian readers many of whom had foresworn alcohol—could call parents and children together at circumcision, for instance, so that they could 'recognise' each other and thank God. He called on all to 'wake up and turn over the fallow-land of your brains', to think up new ways of conveying social memory.⁵¹ And he had good grounds for thinking that print-religion would do so: Kikuyu proverbs were first collected by student competition in mission schools.⁵²

Kenyatta, too, believed in the socially conservative but patriotically modern role of mission education. From London, where he went in 1929 to represent his people, he reminded Kikuyu of their prodigal's duty to the Almighty, in whom he combined Kikuyu and Christian aspects of God.⁵³ Townsfolk must not think their ethnic identity irrelevant; to despise one's own history invited stagnation. They must unite and thatch—with new grass—the leaky roof of the house of custom. *Muigwithania* was full of calls to record custom, to avert the ignorance of future generations.⁵⁴ Kikuyu were already talking Swahili, a 'foreign jargon' once thought to be gibberish; print alone could save the Kikuyu tongue from extinction.⁵⁵ And Christianity was a better buttress of Kikuyeness than Islam, as Gideon Mugo argued when warning against taking Muslim names. That would only make one a Swahili, a double disgrace: a 'stranger' and yet another subject people. Christian names on the other hand made Kikuyu 'of the one clan of Christianity', equal to all.⁵⁶

But Christianity also divided. One can sense Kenyatta's anger when he described the KCA's struggle for 'all Kikuyu to attain unity, educated

and uneducated, ceasing to ask each other, what Mission do *you* belong to? or, you are not a reader. For if there could be an end of things like these the country of Kikuyu could go ahead in peace.' But one must ask why he chose to anchor this plea on the text 'Galatians 6: 2'.⁵⁷ No Kikuyu would have objected to the first clause of this Pauline injunction: 'Bear one another's burdens'. But what about the rider, 'and so fulfil the law of Christ'? He could have chosen from many scriptural texts, or indeed Kikuyu proverbs, favouring cooperation but without invoking Christ. Kenyatta appears to have understood religious division to be a reflection of other Kikuyu quarrels rather than inherent in Christianity. He could apparently evoke no more unifying sanction for a patriotic project than the Son of the newly trinitarian *Ngai*, both Kikuyu and modern, political actor and moral example. Gideon Mugo, an influential Anglican, backed Kenyatta up. He agreed that churches were cattle-kraals, protecting Kikuyu value against the hyena of colonialism. Indeed, he visualised Kikuyuland as itself a church, part of a world-wide communion. *Athomi* were not a separate clan, merely those who had first heard the Gospel. Mugo pleaded for ethnic unity, in impeccably Christian, incarnational, terms. Missionaries were wrong, he thought, to disapprove of politics as 'worldly', for 'we are all of us of the world.' Had not Christ's parting words to his disciples been 'that the Church was to be built here on Earth until he should take us to His home above'? In a delightful change of image, illustrative of the permeable terms of 'the long conversation', Mugo concluded that 'the people of the little digging stick', a nickname for Kikuyu, should agree together like the smoke that mingled above their huts.⁵⁸ *Athomi* seem to have found it impossible to imagine 'the country of Kikuyu' detached from its framework of church organisation—however divided—and Christian hope.

The best confirmation of this thesis lies in the outcome of the so-called female circumcision crisis of 1929, when some Protestant mission stations lost ninety per cent of their congregations and scholars in protest against the missionary demand that they forswear clitoridectomy for their daughters.⁵⁹ Apart from the American Baptists who never recovered, because their school system was poor and missionary authority unyielding, church and school rolls more than revived within five years. Moreover, even dissent was Christian. The defenders of clitoridectomy invested much money and effort in independent schools and the churches without which they could not imagine education, yet continued the cross-cultural 'conversation'. They asked the white Anglican bishop to confer the apostolic succession on their ordinands; only when

he refused did they turn elsewhere for legitimacy—and to a still older church, the African Greek Orthodox. This they did, not in obedience to a supposed colonial Christian hegemony but, rather, as a claim to equal legitimacy in a world thronged with competing ethnicities, only one of which, the British, had hitherto had the audacity to proclaim itself universal.

Revival

Much has been written on the East African Revival of the 1930s, by Hastings among others.⁶⁰ Two reminders are in order here: that Revival was only one—and perhaps a minor—strand in the thread of Kikuyu Christian revival; and that this period of church-building seems best grasped as an era of moral confrontation between new biblical readings and rural capitalism's violations of the old moral economy of obligation between wealth and poverty. The publication of the Kikuyu New Testament in 1926 was the originating date, not the arrival of Ugandan evangelists a decade later. The independence of the Bible-reading mind, and the contestability of Christianity's possibilities in a self-consciously divided society, could scarcely be more vividly displayed. On the one hand, the vernacular scriptures authorised the reconciliation attempted by *Muigwithania*. But two years of devoted reading, in caves, also gave birth to the first 'praying' or *akurinu* church. This was perhaps the first Kikuyu church to realise that the Holy Spirit was the most demanding person of the Trinity; He condemned political involvement and material wealth, and left clitoridectomy to the private conscience.⁶¹ In every respect this teaching was contrary to the KCA programme. If the KCA were reconcilers, then the *akurinu* were revolutionaries, dissident Kikuyu in every sense other than their insistence on ritual purity; and even this was more Levitical than Kikuyu. Kenyatta (by now Jomo) voiced a common, internally critical, opinion when he called them 'a bunch of lunatics'.⁶² It was also early in the 1930s that perhaps the most remarkable among several Kikuyu itinerant preachers, Mwangi wa Nyarere, first proclaimed the culturally revolutionary demands of Christ. He deliberately distanced Christ from the old Kikuyu cosmology, utterly opposed to the KCA, and missionary, project of a cumulative theological continuity.⁶³

Ironically, it was the 'independent' churches, their numbers swelled by the female circumcision crisis, that most closely followed the teaching of the missionaries from whom they had seceded; but then, alone of the 'revivals' under consideration, they deepened not their fidelity

to Christ but to pre-Christian prophecy;⁶⁴ indeed they expelled *akurinu* prophets and refused a hearing to Mwangi. Christian rebirth could nonetheless revalidate African practice and belief; the energetic differences in the African side of the 'long conversation' are endless. When Revival 'proper' came within the mission churches, its brethren not only attested to the cleansing power of the Blood of the Lamb, they confessed sin publicly in what looks like an 'African' defence against accusations of witchcraft.⁶⁵ One of the leading revivalists, later Bishop, Obadiah Kariuki was also very 'Kikuyu' in committing himself to God out of gratitude that he and his age-mates had been spared the worst ravages of the Spanish flu pandemic of 1919.⁶⁶ These were all marks of seriously considered, and prayed, Christian division in face of the most contentious issues of Kikuyu moral ethnicity, not least the theology of wealth and poverty. They had little to do with missionary teaching and more to do with the Gospel's contestable demands, that revived both Christian faith and, in some, African ritual practice, while making the latter still more anathema to others. Wealth and poverty were even more contentious by 1950.

By 1950 all Kikuyu leaders were literate and familiar with Christian doctrine, not least the militant leaders of Mau Mau. Whites charged Mau Mau with anti-Christian paganism. I have argued elsewhere that this was not so.⁶⁷ The best way to prove this is to examine the movement's teachings with respect to moral ethnicity, by comparison with the teaching of the several Kikuyu Christianities, of which there were by now three distinct protestant strands. Mau Mau's relations with them were governed by the churches' views on moral ethnicity's contract between rich and poor. The first Christianity was that of the establishment, of missionary origin but with parish organisations now almost wholly African. It was worldly in belief and practice, conventionally Kikuyu in its estimate of wealth—that it was the reward for using God's talents, just as poverty was the price of neglecting them. Its sensibilities were closer to the Old Testament than the New.

However much missionaries would deny it, Mau Mau owed much to this first Christianity; the former's militants grappled with the latter's failures and widened its popular appeal. The chief missionary failure was an inability to enter the peasant world of personal evil. Prayer to God was no answer to the evil willed by other men on earth. Missionaries found Mau Mau oaths disgusting because, with their own generalised belief in original sin and a scientific attitude to disease or the caprice of nature, they did not grasp the full horror of the occult power that Kikuyu knew to be available to their enemies. Mau Mau

oaths seem to have been not so much opposed to Christianity as supplements to it in a magical field that missionaries did not enter. A major element in Mau Mau ideology, therefore, seems to have been non-Christian rather than anti-Christian. Mau Mau also gave Christian ideas a wider audience. Its politics was voiced in hymns, *nyimbo*. Their theology seems to have come from the independent churches; these believed, with both the missions and the old religion, in justification by works. In all other respects the *nyimbo* were eclectic; as in the days of Harry Thuku, theirs remained a theologically plural world. Belief in the old God, *Ngai*, in Jehovah, in a political Christ, anger against sorcery, all played a part, coloured by a civic religion of ethnic nationalism. The *nyimbo* were no more anti-Christian than those of any nation that enlists God on its side at time of war. They compared Kikuyu to the children of Israel and the British to the Egyptians. These echoes of an Exodus by a tribe *already* knowing God were made the more resonant by the publication of the Kikuyu Old Testament in 1951, missionary and black Christian linguistic effort feeding political dissent.⁶⁸ The *nyimbo* compared Kenyatta with Moses, leading to freedom and wealth, not to salvation. In one he was also, implicitly, Messiah: 'he gave his life to save us'.⁶⁹ Mau Mau hopes were thus couched in a purposive tradition that owed much to the Christianity of reconciliation, *muiguithania*. A political faith, its *nyimbo* were however full of biblical—if also witheringly Kikuyu—calls to good behaviour: men were known by their fruits, the prodigal must return to his people, the lazy could expect no freedom, nor wastrels 'free things'. Only toil gave a right to the land that the British ought to give back.⁷⁰ This-worldly Kikuyu religion, whether of the Christian establishment or of remembered moral economy, was pressed into political service. But this exercise was scarcely more hegemonic than the missionary project before it.

For there was also dissident belief, as there had been since at least the 1920s. The praying churches, emerging from the caves of 1926, had by now split into two traditions. The first, the *dini ya Jesu Kristo*, came into prominence in 1947. Its members cut up a Kikuyu tailor who refused to make them a flag free of charge; then killed three policemen. The *dini* (sect) said that government had fallen; the police were the devil's soldiers. Respectable Kikuyu, Kenyatta included, thought the sect worse than mere lunatics by now: they were animals.⁷¹ There was no evidence, other than in inflamed British imaginations, that the *dini* had anything to do with Mau Mau; and it was quite unlike the other praying churches. These continued to separate themselves from normal life. Unlike the missions, they actively opposed sorcery and were obsessed

with ritual cleanliness. They refused to drink blood or to mix 'godliness with politics'. Indeed, one of their prophets held that only those of his adherents who found it too hard to obey God should turn to Kenyatta.⁷² The praying churches, *akurinu*, were alone in bringing consolation to the poor; but they did not preach action on their behalf.

Some missionaries explained Mau Mau as the politicians' response to Revival within the mission churches. That is not proven; as I have argued, they seem to have sprung from similar roots of social anxiety. Revival attracted some of those few Kikuyu who enjoyed material success. They listed their deadly sins as worldliness, anger and envy, to be washed in the blood of Christ. Mau Mau members were similarly freed from imputations of witchcraft, if by the blood of a ram.⁷³ The *akurinu*, Revival and Mau Mau look to have had different answers to sorcery in the new moral economy of money. This does not mean that the missions were right to see Mau Mau and its Kikuyu resistance as locked in religious war. Just as Kikuyu knew many Christianities, so too a decentralised society harboured different Mau Maus. Some gangs did fight Christianity; a dead goat desecrated at least one church altar.⁷⁴ Many church-school teachers died, and one or two pastors. In 1953, the Emergency war's first year, over sixty teachers were attacked; nearly half were killed.⁷⁵ This was a small minority of the hundreds of teachers employed but revivalists felt especially threatened; some were martyred for refusing to drink the blood of goats. Two Anglican revivalists were killed for giving tea to thirsty policemen; others were spared precisely because they could be trusted not to help the police.⁷⁶ Catholics felt particularly at risk because Mau Mau feared the power of the confessional; yet the most senior insurgent commander went as a Catholic convert to the gallows, his last words being as much Kikuyu as Christian: 'Farewell to the World and all its belongings.'⁷⁷ Moreover, had Mau Mau leaders ordered a general attack on the churches, there would have been many more martyrs; with no wire, guns or searchlights they had no defence. Virtually all African clergymen survived, perhaps because most of them refused to bear arms. Those who died were probably killed not so much because of their faith but because their refusal to take the oath breached security; sub-clan disputes over church property also took their toll. White missionary school-supervisors, who motored hundreds of miles a month with their teachers' pay-packets during the Emergency war, were never ambushed; an Anglican, Cyril Hooper, whose missionary father's typewriter had produced the first KCA petition a generation earlier, left unrepaired his car's broken exhaust-pipe so that Mau Mau, hearing him, would let him pass unharmed.⁷⁸ Guerilla

fighters in the forest complained that their generals were too Christian; some generals complained that guerillas were too influenced by witch-doctors.⁷⁹ Religious belief was both transcendent and a concentrate of political thought, deeply contested, appealed to by all, the hegemonic property of none.

Reproof

All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness.

David Gitari, then Bishop of one of the Kikuyu Anglican dioceses, directed this Pauline injunction against critics of his political use of scripture in mid-1987, at a time when church-and-state relations were more vocally controversial than at any time in Kenya's history.⁸⁰ The Bible is the only universal literature Kenyans possess, telling the same stories, with all their contestable teleological possibilities, in all the main vernaculars. It shapes the popular imagination. A missionary, revisiting his embattled flock in the Emergency, exclaimed of Kikuyuland, 'This is Gospel country!' and listed the parables he could see there illustrated.⁸¹ Kikuyu, one fifth of Kenya's population, had made that journey of the spirit long before. It is impossible to understand Kenya's political culture otherwise. The Kikuyu novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o, an avowed atheist, has complained that he cannot escape the imagery of the Bible.⁸² Three points about the Bible and politics can be made in conclusion: the deepening popular understanding of the Word; the strength which this gives to prophetic criticism by church leaders, if on different theological grounds; and the divergent Kenyan continuities, to restate one theme of this essay in a broader context, that persist through change.

First, then, the deepening popular understanding. Kikuyu have long quarried the Bible for contemporary comment, but it is important to remember that in the creative task of Bible translation they first put their own images *into* its Word. They imagined Boer farmers as Pharaoh's taskmasters, both of them *kaburu*, a corruption of 'corporal'; they converted the settlers' 'White Highlands' into a Kikuyu Canaan. Gideon Mugo had said of Thuku's arrest in 1922 that Goliath had come against him; a generation later Mau Mau, too, saw themselves as under attack from the Philistine giant.⁸³ Since independence, hymns of Exodus have persisted—such as 'Water is bitter', *mai ni maruru*, which contrasts the politicians' failure to refresh people with the life that Moses released from the rock.⁸⁴ The most striking *change* in imaginations of evil has

been that dread of the Devil has replaced fears of witchcraft, perhaps because of the closer popular association between money and the state than in colonial times. People resent the need to bow before politicians who have made an idol of money.⁸⁵ Money now destroys relationships, as witchcraft once did. The tea, *chai*, of Christian sociability and ethnic memory of the 1920s and euphemism for Mau Mau oathing in the 1950s, has become the slang for bribes to state officials and a poison to one's posterity.⁸⁶ Only the Devil could encourage the regime to destroy slum settlements or its citizens, more bloodily, in the recent campaigns of 'ethnic cleansing'. Resentment of oppression has brought a new moral readiness to take the part of the poor, entirely absent from the era of Mau Mau. Taped songs relayed in Kenya's mini-bus *matatus* have been especially subversive: 'God, a person who hates the needy hates you, because you are the one who created the needy.' Hatred has increased because 'money has driven this country mad. . . you have assumed that money is your God.' 'We feel very bad when people are praying to the power of the devil here in Kenya. Banish the devil to go away from us.' Does this centralisation of the source of evil confirm the Christianisation of the popular mind?⁸⁷

The regime complains, not without reason, that Kikuyu and other church leaders confuse ethnic self-interest with the cause of the Kingdom of God, and use universal biblical reproof for particularistic ends.⁸⁸ But at the memorial service held in March 1995, in London, at the twentieth anniversary of the radical politician J.M. Kariuki's still unsolved death, the reading from Amos 5: 4-15, where the prophet condemns those who afflict the just, take bribes and oppress the poor, was aimed as much at the 'ruthless leadership by the late dictator Kenyatta', as one of the prayers put it, as against the present, almost entirely non-Kikuyu, government.

Without a popular biblical imagination, which cuts churchgoing politicians to the quick, as it did non-Christian chiefs in 1922, it is hard to see, secondly, how the sermons of Bishop, now Archbishop, David Gitari, amongst other clerical critics of the state, could carry so effective a weight of moral reproof. Kenya's experience supports Richard Gray's suggestion that, just as the Devil has concentrated African images of evil, so too the coming of the Kingdom is now an all-encompassing vision of justice.⁸⁹ However, in illustration of a continuing rift between establishment and popular Christianities, Gitari and other leaders take care to give Caesar his due, and ascribe no satanic power to the state; yet their critique contains as much Old Testament fire as Gospel patience. King Rehoboam, who chastised Israel with whips and scor-

pions, or the emperor Darius who enacted a decree of which he soon repented but could not amend, have both represented the ruler of a one-party state who consults no one—as against President Moi’s vision of a consensual leadership that nurtures the energies of its clients.⁹⁰ In 1987 both press and parliament debated the hermeneutics of Darius’s tyranny, following one of Gitari’s sermons. His life was threatened, apparently by ruling party thugs; but he persevered in his critique of power and asked, amongst other awkward questions, why there was ‘No Naboth to say No’ to corrupt land seizures.⁹¹

The persistent appeal of Old Testament prophecy makes Gitari a child of both Kikuyu history and Christian training, the product of a long, international, conversation on equal terms. His God is driven to anger against injustice by His love of His creation; catastrophe awaits the unjust state, as in pre-Christian times hatreds brought drought. Establishment Kenyan Christianity’s concern for justice has deep, ecological, roots.⁹² These can also be seen in the new, 1989, Anglican service of Holy Communion. Its prayers make more frequent mention of manna, bread and grain, than in metropolitan usage. Prayers for the ancestors, those who drank from the Rock—‘and the Rock was Christ’—build a bridge between pre-Christian, Old Testament, Africa and Christian, New Testament, Africa.⁹³ The reconciling task of *Muigwithania* continues. At a vulgar level, it is now possible to sing, reverently, of a God who ‘gave his only son to be sacrificed *like a goat* so as to bring understanding to his people’—a simile which I am sure could not be found in the previous eighty years of Kikuyu recorded literature, unless in derision. But that example of modern consciousness also implicitly makes the point that the holy people of God who complain of state persecution have a self-interested ethnic identity, as the regime complains. As another ambiguous example of continuity one can point to the National Council of Churches’ voter-education pamphlet of 1992. While its commissioning text was from Exodus 18: ‘Moreover, choose able men from all the people, such as fear God, men who are trustworthy and who hate a bribe’, one of its cartoons showed the state as an ogre, with a mouth at the back of his neck with which to eat up the unwary, a common figure of Kikuyu folktales.⁹⁴ Kenya has a Christian political imagination that has not ceased to be divisively Kenyan.

Some might suggest an exception to that observation. It certainly seems that a new value is being accorded to women, even unmarried mothers, the property-owners of town, once seen by *Muigwithania* as the wasters of male substance. Prominent in local churches, women are in some Kikuyu areas being welcomed back as a source of commercial

capital for their rural clans, formerly the domain of patriarchy. 'Nowadays', as one woman has explained, 'the church is your clan.' On the eve of a new millennium, another woman, Wairimu, a seller of maize and beans, has observed, 'We are a nation of single mothers. It all started with the Emergency and it will only end with the Second Coming!'⁹⁵ Perhaps here, in the reconciliation of men and women, some might see the beginning of a new stage of growth. The self-realisation of both men and women, stunted by poverty and oppression, is forcing each gender to recognise how much each needs the other. Elderly Kikuyu might say that the churches were merely sponsoring a return to the gender equality within households that once upheld precolonial moral economy.⁹⁶ The long conversation continues, and in the vernacular too.

NOTES

1. Many have helped me formulate my ideas on this topic by discussion over the years and in criticism of earlier drafts of this essay. I am grateful to the Revd Paddy Benson, Professor Bruce Berman, the Revd Canon Peter Bostock, John Casson, Dr Yvan Droz, the Revd Griphus Gakuru, the Revd Dr Gideon Githiga, Dr François Grignon, Dr Amrik Heyer, Professor John Iliffe, Bildad Kaggia, the Revd Grace Karamura, the Revd Dr John K. Karanja, Professor Greet Kershaw, the Revd Canon Graham Kings, Professor Paul Landau, Mungai Mbayah, Professor Godfrey Muriuki, Dr Jocelyn Murray, the Right Revd Stephen Mwangi, the Right Revd Daniel Munene Ng'oru, Professor John Peel, the Revd Dr Carrie Pemberton, Derek Peterson, Dr Malcolm Ruel, Professor Richard Waller and George K. Waruhiu—and to the editors, Dr David Maxwell and the Revd Dr Kevin Ward.

2. Stephen Sykes, *The Identity of Christianity* (London, 1984) pp. 254-7: in Richard Gray, *Black Christians and White Missionaries* (New Haven & London, 1990) p. 77.

3. Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950* (Oxford, 1994) pp. 437-92.

4. See two important recent theses on the relations between gender and the religious imagination: Yvan Droz, 'Migrations Kikuyu: des Pratiques Sociales à l'Imaginaire. Ethos, Réalisation de Soi et Millénarisme' (Neuchâtel PhD thesis, 1997); and Amrik Heyer, 'The Mandala of a Market: a Study of Capitalism and the State in Murang'a District, Kenya' (School of Oriental and African Studies PhD thesis, London, 1998).

5. Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1997).

6. Motivations for conversion suggested by Valeer Neckebrouck, *Le Onzième Commandement: Étologie d'une Eglise Indépendante au Pied du Mont Kenya* (Immensee, 1978) pp. 316-18—a sadly neglected work; and Droz, 'Migrations Kikuyu', pp. 244-7.

7. By comparison with the Presbyterians and Anglicans, understaffed and with a tradition of self-government, who led the way in church-building, the growth of the Catholic community was slow to match the relatively large missionary numbers, thanks to the high, universal, qualifications demanded of African Catholic priests. Conversely, adherents of the (mostly) Baptist and American Africa Inland Mission were always few. The AIM lagged in indigenous church building; it also employed unusually many missionaries. Its Kijabe mission has long been the single largest mission station in Africa.

8. For the terms of controversy see, especially, Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, in two volumes: *I: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* and *II: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago and London, 1991, 1997).

9. I discuss the first two in my 'Jomo, God, and the Modern World', forthcoming in Jan-Georg Deutsch, Peter Probst & Heike Schmidt (eds.), *African Modernities* (Chicago, 2000).

10. Hastings, *Church in Africa*, p. 448.

11. The most famous African doubt in the Anglican mind was sown by William Ngidi in Bishop Colenso of Zululand, questioning the literal truth of the Pentateuch: Jeff Guy, *The Heretic: a Study of the Life of John William Colenso 1814-1883* (Pietermaritzburg and Johannesburg, 1983).

12. As new research has emphasised. See, Derek Peterson, 'Dancing and Schooling: Missionaries, Athomi and the Outschool in Late Colonial Kenya' (Minnesota MA thesis, 1996); John Casson, "'To Plant a Garden City in the Slums of Paganism": Handley Hooper and the Future of Africa', *Journal of Religion in Africa* XXVIII, 4 (1998), pp. 387-410.

13. For which the (atypical) model is provided by John V. Taylor, in his *Processes of Growth in an African Church*, enlarged in *The Growth of the Church in Buganda, an Attempt at Understanding* (both London, 1958); John K. Karanja compares Ganda and Kikuyu experience in the Conclusion to his 'The Growth of the African Anglican Church in Central Kenya, 1900-1945' (Cambridge PhD, 1993)—a work without which this essay would scarcely have been possible; it is due to be published in Nairobi as *Founding an African Faith: the Anglican Church in Central Kenya 1900-1945*. Hastings, *Church in Africa*, pp. 371-85, 464-8, 472-5, 571-6, 596-9, augments Taylor's model for Buganda.

14. J.D.Y. Peel, 'For Who Hath Despised the Day of Small Things? Missionary Narratives and Historical Anthropology' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, 3 (1995) pp. 581-607.

15. John Lonsdale, 'Moral Ethnicity, Ethnic Nationalism and Political Tribalism: the Case of the Kikuyu', pp. 93-106 in Peter Meyns (ed.), *Staat und Gesellschaft in Afrika* (Hamburg, 1996); for elaborations see, Mordechai Tamarkin, 'Culture & Politics in Africa', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 2, 3 (1996) pp. 360-80; and Bruce J. Berman, 'Ethnicity, Patronage and the African State: the Politics of Uncivil Nationalism', *African Affairs* 97 (1998) pp. 305-41; Hastings, *Construction*, cap 7. For critiques, Aidan Campbell, *Privileging the Primitive: African Ethnicity and the Rehabilitation of the West* (London, 1997); Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Kampala, Cape Town & London, 1996) p. 188.

16. John Lonsdale, 'The Moral Economy of Mau Mau', in Bruce Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* (London, 1992) pp. 265-504.

17. John Iliffe's *Africans: the History of a Continent* (Cambridge, 1995) rests on this view.

18. Generally, see Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York, 1984).

19. In the Margaret Trowell archive, School of Oriental and African Studies, London—an observation I owe to Dr Elizabeth Dunstan.

20. The crux of Jocelyn Murray's 'The Kikuyu Female Circumcision Controversy, with Special Reference to the Church Missionary Society's "Sphere of Influence"' (University of California at Los Angeles PhD, 1974).

21. Taylor, *Growth of the Church*, pp. 43-9. What follows holds more true for Anglicans and Presbyterians than for Catholics and Baptists.

22. Karanja, 'Growth', p. 280.

23. This paragraph summarizes A.R. Barlow, 'Notes on Points of Comparison and Contrast between Kikuyu Religious Beliefs and Customs, and Christianity' (nd, but c. 1908): Edinburgh University Library, Barlow papers, Gen 1786/1/52. Barlow was not alone in his sympathetic comparisons: see, Samuel G. Kibicho, 'The Continuity of the African Conception of God into and through Christianity: a Kikuyu Case Study', pp. 370-88 in E. Fasholé-Luke et al. (eds.), *Christianity in Independent Africa* (London, 1978). I discuss the question how far missionaries may have 'theologised' Kikuyu cosmology, in order to engage in conversation with it, in 'Jomo, God, and the Modern World'.

24. Kevin Ward, 'The Development of Protestant Christianity in Kenya, 1910-1940'

(Cambridge PhD, 1976) p. 99. For missionary distaste for Kikuyu social practice see, Murray, 'Kikuyu Circumcision Controversy'; Neckebrouck, *Onzième Commandement*, cap 8.

25. J.J. Willis to F. Baylis, 24 Nov 1910: CMS Archives, A.7/08. For similar sentiments expressed by missionaries in Kikuyu, see Harry Leakey, 1908, quoted by Karanja, 'Growth', p. 65; Hulda Stumpf, 1914, quoted by David P. Sandgren, 'Twentieth Century Religious and Political Divisions among the Kikuyu of Kenya', *African Studies Review*, 25 (1982) p. 197.

26. Parmenas Githendu Mockerie, *An African Speaks for his People* (London, 1934) p. 27; E.N. Wanyoike, *An African Pastor* (Nairobi, 1974) pp. 25, 57.

27. John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge, 1979) p. 228.

28. Jeremy Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta* (London, 1972) pp. 37-9; Obadiah Kariuki, *A Bishop Facing Mount Kenya* (Nairobi, 1985) p. 17; Brian G. McIntosh, 'The Scottish Mission in Kenya, 1891-1923' (Edinburgh PhD thesis, 1969) p. 151; Ward, 'Development', p. 111; David Feldman, 'Christians & Politics: Origins of the Kikuyu Central Association in Northern Murang'a 1890-1930' (Cambridge PhD thesis, 1978) p. 76; Karanja, 'Growth', pp. 25-8.

29. For example, (Archbishop) David Gitari's memory of how his father, Samuel Mukuba, responded to God's summons in 1919: in Dorothy Smoker (ed.), *Ambushed by Love: God's Triumph in Kenya's Terror* (Fort Washington, PA, 1994) pp. 200-02; and a (fruitless) teenage missionary journey, in Jeffrey A. Fadiman, *When we Began, there Were Witchmen: an Oral History from Mount Kenya* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, 1993) pp. 231-36.

30. Robert W. Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa* (London, 1978) p. 82; David P. Sandgren, *Christianity & the Kikuyu* (New York, 1989) pp. 42-3; Karanja, 'Growth', pp. 33-8; McIntosh, 'Scottish', p. 408; Ward, 'Development', p. 129.

31. Ward, 'Development', p. 113; Harry Thuku, *An Autobiography* (Nairobi, 1970) p. 8.

32. Wanyoike, *African Pastor*, p. 85.

33. The best discussion of the Christian-Kikuyu dialogue is in *ibid.*, cap 4.

34. John Lonsdale, 'The Prayers of Waiyaki: Political Uses of the Kikuyu Past', pp. 240-91 in David M. Anderson & Douglas H. Johnson (eds.), *Revealing Prophets: Prophecy in Eastern African History* (London, 1995).

35. Marshall S. Clough, *Fighting Two Sides: Kenyan Chiefs and Politicians 1918-1940* (Niwot, CO, 1990); Feldman, 'Christians and Politics'; Karanja, 'Growth'.

36. Karanja, 'Growth', p. 153n. For comparison, Hastings, *Church in Africa*, pp. 443-78.

37. Geoffrey Hodges, *The Carrier Corps: Military Labor in the East African Campaign, 1914-1918* (Westport, CT, 1986) pp. 176-83.

38. For this interlocking of 'Kikuyu' and 'Christian' time see, Lonsdale, 'Waiyaki'.

39. Lonsdale, 'Moral Economy', pp. 369-74.

40. Ward, 'Development', pp. 312-5.

41. T.G. Benson, *Kikuyu-English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1964) p. 183; and instruction from Godfrey Muriuki. What follows summarises my "'Listen while I Read": the Orality of Christian Literacy in the Young Kenyatta's Making of the Kikuyu', pp. 17-33 in Louise de la Gorgendière et al. (eds.), *Ethnicity in Africa* (Edinburgh, 1996).

42. For which see Karanja, 'Growth', cap 5. For another view, Derek Peterson, 'Colonizing Language? Missionaries and Gikuyu Dictionaries, 1904 and 1914', *History in Africa* 27 (1997) pp. 257-72.

43. This is the only instance in the Swahili Bible in which Christ the mediator is translated *mpatanishi* or peacemaker/reconciler, equivalent to *muigwithania*.

44. Murray, 'Controversy', p. 100; Gideon Mugo in *Muigwithania* 1, 3 (July 1928), 10. *Muigwithania* is found in the Kenya National Archives (KNA): file DC/MKS. 10B/13/1. Translations from the vernacular by A.R. Barlow (for information of the police).

45. Karanja, 'Growth', pp. 139-41. Fadiman, *When we Began*, p. 233, for an early Kikuyu sermon on the distinction between the blood of a ram and the blood of Christ.

46. George Ndegwa to editor, *Muigwithania* i, 4 (August 1928) p. 10. See Kenyatta's editorial reassurance on the unimportance of differences in clothing in the same issue, p. 5.
47. P.K. Karanja 'Those who Take Counsel together Do not Come to Destruction', *ibid.* i, 4 (Aug 1928) p. 11; Kiongo wa Kahiti *ibid.*, i, 10 (Feb-Mar 1929) p. 15; M.J. Muchikari, *ibid.*, i, 11 (April 1929) pp. 9-10
48. Sentiments expressed by Kiongo wa Kahiti and Muchikari. They are similar to those of 'Red' Xhosa in the South African port of East London, observed by Philip Mayer in the 1950s: see his classic, *Townsmen or Tribesmen* (Cape Town, 1961).
49. Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago & London, 1990); Claire C. Robertson, *Trouble Showed the Way: Women, Men and Trade in the Nairobi Area, 1890-1990* (Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1997).
50. Cf., Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York, 1982) p. 74.
51. C. Ng'undo, 'One Does not Part from One's Clan or Circumcision Guild' *Muigwithania*. i, 12 (May 1929) p. 5.
52. G. Barra, *1000 Kikuyu Proverbs* (Nairobi, 1939).
53. Kenyatta to *Muigwithania*, i, 11 (April 1929) p. 5; *ibid.*, i, 12 (May 1929) pp. 8-10.
54. S. Karimu, 'The Blessing of the Ancestor', *ibid.*, i, 4 (August 1928) p. 12.
55. S. Njuguna wa Karucha, 'Kikuyu time', *ibid.*, i, 6 (October 1928) p. 10.
56. Gideon Mugo Kagika, 'Hold Fast to Tribal Names', *ibid.*, i, 7 (November 1928) p. 1.
57. Kenyatta, 'A Message from *Muigwithania* to the Leaders and Workers of all the Missions which Are in Kikuyu Country', *ibid.*, i, 4 (August 1928) p. 3.
58. G.H.M. Kagika, 'Setting forth What is Right', *ibid.*, ii, 1 (June 1929) pp. 7-8.
59. From a large literature see, especially, Murray, 'Circumcision Controversy'; Ward, 'Development', caps 5 & 6; my own approach is in 'Moral Economy', pp. 385-97.
60. Hastings, *Church in Africa*, pp. 596-600.
61. Jocelyn Murray, 'The Kikuyu Spirit Churches', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 5 (1974) pp. 198-234; Philomena Njiri, 'The Akurinu Churches: the History and Basic Beliefs of the Holy Ghost Churches of East Africa 1926-1980' (Nairobi University MA thesis, 1984).
62. Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (London, 1938) p. 277. For a survey of his writing see, Bruce J. Berman and John M. Lonsdale, 'The Labors of *Muigwithania*: Jomo Kenyatta as Author, 1928-45', *Research in African Literatures* 29, 1 (1998) pp. 16-42.
63. Ward, 'Development', pp. 323-34.
64. Lonsdale, 'Waiyaki.'
65. A view I owe to the Revd Grace Karamura.
66. Kariuki, *Bishop Facing Mount Kenya*, p. 22.
67. Lonsdale, 'Moral Economy', pp. 441-5.
68. L.S.B. Leakey, *Defeating Mau Mau* (London, 1954) pp. 57, 63, 71; Maina wa Kinyatti (ed.), *Thunder from the Mountains: Mau Mau Patriotic Songs* (London & Nairobi, 1980) pp. 18, 39, 40.
69. Leakey, *Defeating Mau Mau*, p. 69; also pp. 57, 59, 66-8, 70-3; wa Kinyatti, *Thunder*, pp. 47, 56-7; Renison Muchiri Githige, 'The Religious Factor in Mau Mau' (Nairobi University, MA thesis, 1978) p. 284; Wanyoike, *African Pastor*, pp. 180-5.
70. Leakey, *Defeating Mau Mau*, pp. 60, 68-7; wa Kinyatti, *Thunder*, pp. 18, 19, 26, 31, 38, 45, 90; see also B.A. Ogot, 'Politics, Culture and Music in Central Kenya: a Study of Mau Mau Hymns 1951-1956', *Kenya Historical Review* 5, 2 (1977), pp. 275-86.
71. Reports in *Mumenyereri*, 29 Dec 1947, 5 & 12 Jan and 9 Feb 1948: KNA, MAA. 8/106; Evanson N. Wamagatta, 'A Biography of Senior Chief Waruhiu wa Kung'u of Githunguri, Kiambu District, 1890-1952' (Nairobi University MA thesis, 1988) pp. 265-7.
72. Joseph Ng'ang'a Kimani, 'Rules written on 3 March 1950' and 'Things to be observed by all Godly people', in Sandgren, *Christianity and the Kikuyu*, pp. 161-74.
73. Wanyoike, *African Pastor*, pp. 165, 167.

74. *East African Standard* (Nairobi) 8 Aug 1952.
75. S.H. Fazan, *History of the Loyalists* (Nairobi, 1960) pp. 9, 80.
76. E.M. Wiseman, *Kikuyu Martyrs* (London, 1958); Smoker, *Ambushed by Love. Hastings, Church in Africa*, pp. 599-600, is not wrong to describe Revival and Mau Mau as 'symbolically incompatible', but too narrow.
77. Githige, 'Religious Factor', pp. 52, 182-3; Wanyoike, *African Pastor*, pp. 193-6; Wiseman, *Martyrs*, pp. 15-17; Silvana Bottignole, *Kikuyu Traditional Culture and Christianity: Self-examination of an African Church* (Nairobi, 1984) p. 232.
78. Oral information from Cyril Hooper and the Revd Dr John K. Karanja.
79. John Lonsdale, 'Moral Ethnicity and Political Tribalism', in Preben Kaarsholm & Jan Hultin (eds.), *Inventions and Boundaries: Historical and Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Roskilde, 1994), pp. 142-50: 'a forest debate'.
80. 2 Timothy 3: 16: David M. Gitari, *Let the Bishop Speak* (Nairobi, 1988) pp. 47-54.
81. T.F.C. Bewes, *Kikuyu conflict: Mau Mau and the Christian Witness* (London, 1953) pp. 18-19.
82. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics* (London, 1972) p. 3.
83. For these transliterated images, Lonsdale, 'Moral Economy', pp. 383-4, 458.
84. Agnes Chepkwony, *The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Development: a Study of the National Christian Council of Kenya 1963-1978* (Uppsala, 1987) p. 156.
85. Oral information from the Revd Dr Gideon Gichuhi Githiga.
86. Droz, 'Migrations Kikuyu', pp. 306-10.
87. Translations of Kikuyu songs on audio cassettes, 1992, courtesy of Dr François Grignon of Institut Français de Recherche en Afrique, Nairobi. For much other evidence see, Droz, 'Migrations Kikuyu'. Compare, Birgit Meyer, 'Modernity and Enchantment: the Image of the Devil in Popular African Christianity', pp. 199-229 in Peter van der Veer (ed.) *Conversion to Modernities: the Globalization of Christianity* (New York & London, 1996).
88. Mutahi G. Ngunyi, 'Religious Institutions and Political Liberalisation in Kenya', pp. 121-77 in Peter Gibbon (ed.), *Markets, Civil Society and Democracy in Kenya* (Uppsala, 1995).
89. Gray, *Black Christians*, p. 105.
90. G.P. Benson, 'Ideological Politics versus Biblical Hermeneutics: Kenya's Protestant Churches and the Nyayo state', p. 181 in H.B. Hansen and M. Twaddle (eds.), *Religion and Politics in East Africa* (London, 1995).
91. For Rehoboam, I Kings 12. Canon Kings tells me that theology students drew their own analogy between Rehoboam's and single party rule. I am grateful to him for much eyewitness insight and documentary ephemera related to recent years. For Darius and the subsequent public debate, Gitari, *Let the Bishop*, pp. 35-46; for Naboth, David Gitari, *In Season and out of Season: Sermons to a Nation* (Carlisle, 1996) pp. 102-10.
92. Benson, 'Ideological Politics', and David Throup, "'Render to Caesar the Things that are Caesar's": the Politics of Church-State Conflict in Kenya 1978-1990', pp. 177-99 and 133-76 in Hansen and Twaddle (eds.), *Religion and Politics*; Gideon Githiga, 'The Church as the Bulwark against Extremism: Development of Church-State Relations in Kenya 1963-92' (Open University PhD thesis, 1997); Galia Sabar-Friedman, 'Church and State in Kenya, 1986-1992: the Churches' Involvement in the "Game of Change"', *African Affairs* 96 (1997) pp. 25-52.
93. *A Kenyan Service of Holy Communion* (Nairobi, 1989).
94. National Christian Council of Kenya, *Why You Should Vote* (Nairobi, 1992); Inge Brinkman, *Kikuyu Gender Norms and Narratives* (Leiden, 1996).
95. Heyer, 'Mandala', caps 11 and 12; quotes from pp. 238, 264.
96. Carolyn Martin Shaw, *Colonial Inscriptions: Race, Sex, and Class in Kenya* (Minneapolis and London, 1995), cap 2.