MICHIGAN STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

CONTRASTING ASPECTS OF AFRICAN DECOLONISATION PROCESSES AND MISSIONS IN WEST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA: GHANA AND ANGOLA AS CASE STUDIES

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"When God wants to test his angels, the only thing He has to do is to send them to govern a newly independent country".

(Dennis Austin)

"Colonialism was a social process that decolonisation continued".

(John Lonsdale)

Abstract

A major result of the Second World War was a radically new world constellation. In 1945, Soviet Russian and American troops in Torgau at the Elbe shook hands over the ruins of an old Europe that never would dominate the world as it had done before. A bipolar world order had come into being, now dominated by anti-colonial superpowers. Yet, many European nations were still clinging to their overseas colonies in the hope that they could contribute to repairing their diminished political and economic position and prestige in the new global context. New approaches had to be developed and choices made regarding the world-wide changes affecting also the colonies still under European control, and affecting, likewise, Catholic and Protestant Missions operating there.

This article deals with the decolonisation processes of the British colony, Ghana, and the Portuguese colony, Angola, and how churches and their missions were involved in these processes. The year 1992 has been chosen as the terminus ad quem *because, in that year, elections took place in both Ghana and Angola, though in quite different circumstances and with quite different results.*

GHANA

Missions and Colonialism

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in the Gold Coast — Ghana in 1471. Along a coastline of 300 miles, thirty major forts were built by various nations and used as trading posts. When the Dutch left in 1872, the British Colonial Office proclaimed the Gold Coast a British colony two years later.[1] After the Berlin Conference (1884/85), Britain

began to take its colonising task more seriously by extending effective occupation into the Ashanti area (making it a Crown Colony) and into the Northern Territories (declaring them a Protectorate). These three parts were to form, in future, the territory of independent Ghana.[2]

British colonial administration in West Africa was characterised by 'indirect rule' which tried to make use of traditional authorities to coax African societies into 'civilisation'; it was, however, mainly based on sparse resources, and contributed to an image of 'old Africa'.[3] During World War II, discussions took place on the future of colonies, with two clear options emerging: either reform or demise of the colonial Empire. Consensus on the latter was achieved in Britain only in the late 1950s[4]. Under external and internal pressures, the British government finally decided to grant its African colonies independence. It now wished to make the Gold Coast an exemplary model of decolonisation which should, moreover, contribute to restoring Britain's diminished international standing.[5]

Christian missions started their work in the Gold Coast effectively in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, after the abolition of the slave trade but before the formal establishment of the colony. The Basel Mission arrived in 1828 and the Methodists in 1835. The Catholic Church returned in 1880, with missionaries of the Society of African Missions (SMA). The first 'pioneer missionaries' showed great interest in African culture and promoted African leadership in the church, but the 'post-partition missionaries' stressed their 'civilising mission' and kept control of the church in their own hands.[6]

Missionaries generally had no problem with colonialism as such, since they concentrated on the good things the new way of life they

1. See Douglas Coombs, *The Gold Coast, Britain and the Netherlands, 1850-1874* (London, Oxford University Press, 1963).

2. Ivor Wilks, *One Nation, Many Histories: Ghana Past and Present* (Accra, Ghana University Press, 1996), 52 claims that what the British had done was to bring 'tribes' together to create the Gold Coast, but they had destroyed a nation, namely, Greater Asante. Wilks' question whether he appears to be taking a 'too Asante-centric view' (42) might receive a positive answer.

3. R. F. Holland, *European Decolonization 1918-1981: An Introductory Survey* (London, Macmillan, 1985), 31-32.

4. H.S. Wilson, *African Decolonization* (London, Edward Arnold, 1994), 54-56; Holland, *European Decolonization,* 66.

5. Holland, *European Decolonization,* 191-200, dealing with, for Great Britain, the humiliating Suez Crisis, 212-220.

6. Harris W. Mobley, *The Ghanaian's Image of the Missionary: An Analysis of the Published Critiques of Christian Missionaries by Ghanaians, 1897-1965* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1970), 21-22, 25 and 170. See also Frans J. Verstraelen, "Missionaris-Boodschap-Cultuur in Ghana" in *Wereld en Zending,* 15, 3 (1986), 213-221.

propagated brought to the African people. In this respect, they still echoed a conviction expressed by Henry Venn, in his *West African Colonies* of 1865, in which he links the British colonies on the coast to the blessings of Christian civilisation.[7] The missionary approach at the time was one of replacement not of integrating valuable aspects of traditional insights and methods in their educational and health care activities. Missionaries also propagated Christian values like the uniqueness of each human being and his worth before God, which clearly distinguished their work from the official colonial system.[8]

Paul Gifford has aptly summarised the significant role of colonial Christian missions in the process towards independence by saying: "important in the creation of Ghana were the Protestant missions . . . and Ghana's history cannot be understood apart from the elite they created".[9] This elite became the main actors in the political decolonisation process. They also contributed to the decolonisation of missions by criticising the missionaries *inter alia*, for their superiority thinking notwithstanding the two shameful world wars, and by rejecting the wholesale imposition of the Western culture in the name of Christianity.[10]

Missions and Nationalism

When Europeans first arrived on the Gold Coast, they met small independent states, which never voluntarily gave up their sovereignty. In the so-called Bond of 1844, it is true, some local chiefs acknowledged some form of British jurisdiction pertaining to judicial and police matters but that did not imply, in their view, renouncing sovereignty.[11] Their always-present spirit of independence became manifest when, after the British intended to completely withdraw from the Gold Coast in 1865, educated men from the Fante States started planning a national form of government. In 1871, they formed at Mankesim, the Fante Confederation and prepared a rather progressive constitution.[12] But after the abrupt

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7. Henry Venn, *West African Colonies. Notices of the British Colonies on the West Coast of Africa* (London, Dalton and Lucy, 1865), 14.

8. See "The Church and African Culture" for an analysis of "replacement" and "evangelisation" in F. J. Verstraelen, *An African Church in Transition: A Case Study on the Roman Catholic Church in Zambia* (Leiden, Interuniversity Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research, 1975), 318-337, esp. 318-320 and 327-329.

9. Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London, Hurst and Company, 1998), 57. See also J. D. Fage, *Ghana: A Historical Interpretation* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 63. On page 105, Fage gives some information about seven notable early examples of this new elite.

10. Mobley, *The Ghanaian's Image of the Missionary*, 155.

11. Fage, *Ghana*, 74-75.

12. David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850-1928* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963), Ch. VI; Fage, *Ghana*, 75-76; W. E. F. Ward, *A History of Ghana* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1954), 237-9, 251-264. The Fante Federation was also meant to assist Kommenda in its war against Elmina, an ally of the Dutch.

reversal of British policy by declaring the Gold Coast a British Colony, there was a "tragicomical situation" as the authors of the Mankesim Constitution were treated by British officials as traitors to the British queen "to whom, in fact, the chiefs and people of the Gold Coast states had never owed allegiance".[13]

Expectations of the educated elite to obtain self-government through gradual Africanisation of colonial government personnel were soon frustrated after a considerable increase of European administrative personnel in the 1890s. From this time onwards, an anti-colonial mood developed in three stages: resistance, reform and revolution as follows:

— Coastal African lawyers and traditional rulers jointly agitated against attempts at expropriation of land and they did form in the 1890s the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society.
— The African lawyer J. E. Caseley Hayford, dissatisfied with colonial reforms, founded in 1918, the National Congress of (British) West Africa.
— In a volatile situation after the Second World War, a frustrated old elite, now reinforced by a vast new class of emancipated professionals, and young men still adrift between two worlds, founded in 1947, the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) with Dr. J. B. Danquah as its leading spirit. It was the first political party in the strict sense, demanding independence "as soon as possible".
— Kwame Nkrumah, for a while organising Secretary of the UGCC, founded, in 1949, a more radical party, the Convention People's Party (CPP) which demanded "Self Government Now". Nkrumah emphasised this demand with "Positive Action", which included strikes and semi-violent actions.

When in the first democratic elections of 1951, Nkrumah obtained a clear majority, the British government invited him to head a transition government of limited responsibility, which he accepted.[14]

To evaluate the involvement of Christian missions in a proper way, a distinction has to be made between the church as an institution and the church as a community of members, the laity. The church as an institution was represented by European missionaries and their African co-workers, who usually towed the line of the foreign missionaries.

The missionaries shared with the colonial administrators not only a similar cultural background but also a civilising mission, which they considered not yet completed. They therefore had a concern with stability due to fear about the consequences of change, the more so since they did

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13. Fage, *Ghana*, 76.
14. *Ibid.*, 76-85.

not experience any threat from the colonial government to their spiritual, evangelising mission. The missionary system therefore shared, unwittingly though, the hegemonic ideology of the colonial system, which tried to defuse or reduce serious political challenges to the *status quo*.[15]

The thinking and structural aspects of the decolonisation process within the official church did follow *mutatis mutandis* the decolonisation thinking and practice of the colonial government. It is therefore not surprising that not until 1949, when the colonial government had, in principle, accepted the demands of the nationalists, we come across a public statement issued by the Christian Council on "Christianity and Political Development", which *inter alia* outlined the right to self-government, and the relationship between church and political parties.[16]

When we look at individual Christians, the church was very much involved in the nationalist movement. Nearly all the main leaders of the successive nationalist movements were Christians who had received their formation with Christian influence from Protestant mission schools. David Kimble, in his extensive study on the rise of Gold Coast nationalism, rightly stated that "the nationalist movement could hardly have got under way had it not been for the remarkable work of the Missions in the field of education".[17] That there was hardly any Catholic of stature and influence who got involved in the pre-independence struggle, apart from Kwame Nkrumah, has been recently explained as due to the fact that Catholic missions did not provide higher (secondary) education before the late 1930s, while the Protestant missions had done so much earlier.[18]

The Christian missions provided many services to the people, which were a contribution to the foundation of independent Ghana.[19] Yet, it is significant to note that independent church structures of major Christian denominations were not established until 1950.[20] The devolution of ecclesiastical power by the mission systems, indeed, took place

15. For the concept of hegemony, see Jef Haynes, *Religion and Politics in Africa* (London, Zed Books, 1996), 5, 7-9.

16. Robert T. Parsons, *The Churches and Ghana Society, 1918-1955* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1963), 184.

17. Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 166.

18. Charles C. Palmer-Buckle, "The church in the African state: The Roman Catholic Experience", in *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 1-2 (December 1998). The author, Catholic Bishop of Koforidua, refers to St Augustin College founded in Cape Coast in 1936 and Holy Child College, established in 1946.

19. Parsons, *The Churches and Ghana Society*, Part V, 119-192.

20. F. J. Verstraelen, "Ghana, West Africa: Between Traditional and Modern" in *id.* (ed.), *Missiology: An Ecumenical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995), 71. The Presbyterian Church was formally established in 1950, the Methodist Church in 1961, the Catholic Church became an ecclesiastical province in its own right in 1950.

concomitantly with the devolution of political power by the colonial system.

Mission Churches and Independence: The Nkrumah Period, 1951-1966

After three elections (1951, 1954, 1956), the British Government felt secure enough to hand over power. In the third and final elections, during which there was a strong opposition from the Ashanti-based National Liberation Movement (NLM), Nkrumah's CP obtained a majority of 71 out of 103 seats, and Ghana was declared an independent state on March 6, 1957. Nkrumah, now head of state, started moving fast towards socialism, stressing a strong central control of major aspects of the nation, thereby using a rather virulent anti-western and anti-capitalist rhetoric. This was, of course, embarrassing for the British government, which expected independent Ghana to become a model to be applied elsewhere in British-ruled Africa.[21] It was certainly also disturbing to the Christian churches which were holding strong positions of influence in Ghanaian society.

Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972) who, as a boy, had been baptised into the Catholic Church, now declared: "Today, I am a non-denominational Christian and a Marxist socialist, and I have not found any contradiction between the two".[22] Precisely, it was his Marxist leanings that worried the Church leaders and they became even more worried when Nkrumah's followers started to extol the CPP by applying to it the Beatitudes, and, later on, by applying to Nkrumah titles like *Osagyefo* (Saviour) and *Asomdwehene* (Prince of Peace), a clear reference to Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah.[23]

A confrontation between Church and State was, therefore, bound to occur. An example of an early confrontation was the protest made by the Christian Council against the inscription on the pedestal of the statue of Nkrumah erected in front of Parliament House: "Seek you first the political kingdom and all other things shall be added to you", a clear adaptation of Matthew 6:33. This protest was to no avail.[24] Apart from the use of religious language applied in a political sense, there were a number of actions undertaken by the Nkrumah regime against which churches voiced their protests. Such protests were directed against the obligatory

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21. Holland, *European Decolonization*, 219.
22. Kwame Nkrumah, *Autobiography* (London, Panaf Books Ltd, 1973), 10. According to Palmer-Buckle, "The Church in the African State", 41. Nkrumah's Egyptian wife was a Coptic Christian and his children were baptised in the Catholic Church.
23. John S. Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Ghana, 1949-1966* (Accra, Asempa Publishers/Christian Council of Ghana, 1988), 140-151.
24. Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 118-120.

formation of party branches in the churches; the assumed atheistic ideology propagated in the Ghana Young Pioneer Movement, and the Preventive Detention Act of 1958. The churches claimed that, in the context of an increasing authoritarian-totalitarian state, they had to keep up the defence of moral standards and human rights as an integral part of their God-given mission.

Were the churches always right and Nkrumah and his regime always wrong? There was, of course, much reason for criticism of Nkrumah's life and work, certainly when national politics were sacralised, a personality cult of Nkurumah developed that took the character of religious worship, and human rights were violated. However, there were also instances when churches at times demonstrated a lack of sensitivity and understanding regarding aspirations of a leader and his ruling party in a newly independent state as the following examples show.[25]

When Nkrumah indicated that his government claimed control over education, this was understood by the churches as an attempt to keep religion out of the school. Churches were too accustomed to having a quasi-monopoly in education. They did not realise that the people in Ghana lived in a pluralistic society and that whoever controls education can instil their worldview at the expense of others.[26] The socialist orientation and Nkrumah's 'Plan for Education' were completely foreign to most church leaders. Compromises were made but the fundamental differences were never genuinely discussed.

Church leaders were not always sensitive to the exuberant pathos of politics in a newly formed state. Many years later, the Anglican Ghanaian theologian, John Pobee called the protest of the Christian Council against the inscription on Nkrumah's statue "frivolous" because it was not sensitive to the political mood of the country as a whole.[27]

On other occasions, church leaders showed lack of insight into traditional cultural history by, for instance, protesting against the title *Osagyefo* (saviour), a title used for Fante chiefs who went to war as "saviours in battle". Many churches at that time were still headed by expatriates who did not realise that their criticism of national government were doubly resented as imperialistic, neo-colonial interference.[28]

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25. For these examples, see Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah*, Chapters VII and VIII, and Verstraelen, "Ghana, West Africa", 84-87.

26. Haynes, *Religion and Politics in Africa*, 114-115.

27. J. S. Pobee, "Church and State in Ghana, 1946-1966", in *id.* (ed.) *Religion in a Pluralistic Society: Essays Presented to Professor C. G. Baeta* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1976), 130; Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 119 repeats the same argument but the word 'frivolous' has been left out.

28. Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah*, refers to the British Anglican bishop, Rosevaer, who criticised the Young Pioneer Movement (130-132) and to the Dutch Catholic bishop van der Bronk who criticised the sending of young people to communist Cuba (76-77).

After Nkrumah had been ousted from office by a military coup on February 24, 1966, an article in the *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* evaluated Nkrumah's regime saying: "Our first attempt to govern ourselves has failed".[29] However, evaluations made later acknowledge that Nkrumah was not merely a misfit and that the churches were not without blame. The Preface to the publication of papers presented at a symposium, held in 1985 at the University of Ghana, Legon, on the merits and demerits of Kwame Nkrumah says: "His name shall endure as the leading emancipator of Ghana, the leading protagonist of African independence and unity, and a statesman of world stature of the twentieth century".[30]

One of the major questions discussed immediately after the fall was could the churches not have exercised a more beneficial influence on the process of nation building than, in fact, they did? The answers given claim that, indeed, they were partly to blame because of their lack of sensitivity, understanding and of preparedness for dialogue.[31] Part of the difficulty for the churches was that they were still firmly tied in theology and ethos to their founding churches in Europe and America. They were also more reactive to situations initiated by party or government and were not proactive as spiritual and moral guides in the rapid social and political transformation from Gold Coast to Ghana.[32]

After Nkrumah, 1966-1992

In the period 1966 to 1992, the people of Ghana experienced four military coups, two short-lived republics, while in 1992 they entered the fourth Republic. Some new developments and approaches in church-state relations were the following:

First, the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches or Charismatic Ministries, a fast growing ecclesiastical player, entered the public arena in the beginning of the 1970s. These churches are usually quite willing to co-operate with any form of government, be it military or civil. They apparently do so not so much out of ideological but rather pragmatic reasons: a desire for respectability and recognition. Governments, which

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29. N. K. Dzobo, "Christian citizenship and politics in post-coup Ghana", in *The Ghana Bulletin of Theology*, 3, 7 (December 1969), 41.

30. Kwame Arhin, "Preface", in *id.* (ed.), *The Life and Work of Kwame Nkrumah* (Accra, Sedco Publishing Ltd. 1991), X. The same text in Kwame Arhin, *A View of Kwame Nkrumah, 1909-1972* (Accra, Sedco Publishing Ltd., 1990), 2 except that in the 1991 text, "the architect of her economy and social revolution" has been left out.

31. See F. J. Verstraelen, "Is the church to blame?" in *id.*, "Ghana: After the coup and Vatican Two" in *Catholic Voice* (Cape Coast), 43, (v) (1968), 69-70; Dzobo, "Christian citizenship and politics in post-coup Ghana".

32. K. A. Dickson, "Religion and society: A study in church and state relations in the First Republic", in Arhin, *A View of Kwame Nkrumah*, 135-151. See also Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah*, 142-144.

often experience criticisms by mainline churches, tend to court the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches for affection and loyalty. However, there is, within these churches, a growing social awareness and involvement. In addition, with their stress on a "new birth" for their followers, it could, in the long run, become a real asset for creating a strong moral nation.[33]

Second, in today's socio-political context of Ghana, the mainline churches appear to be the only bodies independent of, and making demands on the state. They generally succeed in maintaining autonomy and integrity in the face of hostility of a given government, though some of their clergy are co-opted in a kind of hegemonic alliance with government for personal benefits like obtaining tax exemption.[34] The Christian Council and the Bishops' Conferences are now working closer together regarding national issues more than they did before.[35]

Third, when in 1990, the Rawlings regime, under intense pressure, accepted a return to civilian rule, the churches, the Christian Council in particular, created an alternative independent forum for expressing viewpoints on a new democratic system.[36] Fourth, when the opposition disputed the election of Rawlings as President (November 1992), a tense and dangerous situation was the result. The Bishops' Conference and the Christian Council, this time strengthened by the Ahmadiya Muslim Mission (unfortunately, the influential Federation of Muslim Councils declined the invitation) invited the leaders of all political parties to join them in a meeting. This meeting apparently saved the country from civil war, although not all political problems were resolved.[37]

Fifth, after the return to democratic rule in 1992, the churches were trying to redefine their position and role in public life. In the Catholic Church, an examination of conscience took place on why the church had failed to groom political leaders, why it had misunderstood their aspirations, and why the churches had often remained fragmented in

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33. J. Asamoah Gyadu, "The church in the African state: The Pentecostal/charismatic experience" in *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 1, (ii) (1998), 51-57.

34. Gifford, *African Christianity*, 109.

35. For instance, when General Acheampong tried to impose Union Government, and Flight-Lieutenant Rawlings wanted to put into operation the Religious Bodies Registration Law, the Christian Council and the Bishops' Conference took a common stand against both governments' actions deemed negative. See R. Aboagye-Mensah, "The church in the African state: The Protestant experience in Ghana" in *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 1, (ii) (Dec. 1998), 45 and Gyadu, "The church in the African state", 53.

36. See Aboagye-Mensah, "The church in the African state", 46. See also Kwesi A. Dickson, "The church and the quest for democracy in Ghana", in Paul Gifford (ed.), *The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1995), 261-275.

37. Aboagye-Mensah, "The church in the African state".

regard to national issues.[38] The Christian Council started a project to promote democratic culture in the country.[39] The Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches, through all kinds of initiatives and activities, seemed gradually to be reducing the dichotomy between religion and society.[40] In sum, the Christian churches in modern-day Ghana appear better prepared than before to play their rightful and beneficial roles in Ghana's public life.

ANGOLA

Missions and Colonialism

The Portuguese "colonial" period of Angola lasted from 1483 to 1974/5. The word colonialism has been put in quotation marks because Portugal had been present in Angola all that time, but the effective occupation of the whole territory started only from the 1920s. With the Portuguese came also the Catholic faith, but after the banning of religious orders in Portugal in 1834, a revival of Catholic evangelisation of the Angolan people began with the arrival of the French Holy Ghost Fathers in 1866. Protestant missions arrived in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although the Portuguese were suspicious of protestant missionaries, the latter were guaranteed free entrance due to regulations laid down at the Berlin Conference of 1884/5. After Portugal became a Republic in 1910, which opted for separation between church and state, protestant missions obtained legal status. Portugal itself could provide only a few missionaries. While Portugal was apprehensive about the fact that the vast majority of Catholic missionaries were foreigners, its apprehension turned into fear and hostility regarding the foreign Protestant mission societies entering Angola, which, by 1920, were nine. Portuguese colonial officials feared a denationalising influence of these Protestant groups.[41]

Portuguese colonial policy has clearly been defined by Joaquin de Silva Cunha in his course for students at the Instituto Superior de Ultramar as follows: "The final objective of native policy is to accomplish the integration of the native population of the colonies into the Portuguese nation by the progressive transformation of their practices and moral social concepts".[42] Portugal assigned these tasks to the Christian missions, which administered practically all educational and other welfare

38. Palmer-Buckle, "The Church in the African State" (1998), 37-38. The bishop mentions that out of the seven heads of state, four had a Catholic background.

39. Aboagye-Mensah, "The church in the African state", 46.

40. Asamoah Gyadu, "The church in the African state", 56.

41. Lawrence W. Henderson, *Angola: Five Centuries of Conflict* (London, Cornell University Press, 1979), 112-113.

42. J. de Silva Cunha, *Appontamentos I*, Unpublished mimeographed lesson notes (n.d.), 171-172, cited in Henderson, *Angola*, 161.

Institutions in the rural areas until 1975. This was not unlike what other colonial powers in Africa did, but Portugal insisted on the use of the Portuguese language, forbade the use of vernacular or, for instance in the case of the Bible, always with a Portuguese parallel text.[43] This policy was a constant during the whole colonial period and was intensified when Salazar took power in 1926. The policy was called Lusotropicalismo, which explained and justified Portugal's presence in Africa. Portugal considered itself an exception among the European imperialists by being non-racist in its tropical territories and by practising racial egalitarianism in both legislation and in informal human interaction.[44] While many Portuguese during Salazar's regime were convinced of this ideology, the liberation movements in Angola and many Angolans of all races rejected Lusotropicalismo as mysticism because it did not correspond to the Angolan reality.[45]

Meanwhile, Salazar, with his Estado Novo (New State) and his Colonial Act of 1930, was binding Angola more closely to Portugal. Considerable investments were made in infrastructure and in production of mining and agriculture. New opportunities attracted settlers,[46] amounting to 40 000 in 1940 and 340 000 in 1974. The population was divided into *indigenas* (non-civilised), *assimilados* (civilised non-whites)[47] and Europeans, who formed the top rank of the imperial hierarchy. *Assimilados* were only 80 000 as late as 1960, while the *indigenas* formed the majority of a population of 4, 5 million, of whom 97% were classified as illiterate. During the 1950s and 1960s, expropriation of land took place leading to the expulsion and forced cultivation of cash crops.[48] In a revised Constitution, the term "colonies" was replaced by "Overseas Provinces of Greater Portugal".

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43. Henderson, *Angola*, 151.

44. Wilson, *African Decolonization*, x. The term lusotropicalismo is coined by the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre, who argued that miscegenation had been a positive force in Brazilian history, creating a unique fusion of races and cultures. Salazar's New State adopted the ideology of Lusotropicalismo as a vindication of their unique "civilising mission".

45. Manfred Kuder and Wilhelm J. G. Moehlig (Hrsg), *Angola: Naturraum, Wirtschaft, Bevölkerung, Kultur, Zeitgeschichte und Entwickelungsperspektiven* (München, Weltforum, 1994), 181.

46. Wilson, *African Decolonization*, 82, mentions that only few settlers were of the South African or Rhodesian type. Most came to make money and returned to Portugal as quickly as possible.

47. An *assimilado* had to have competence in the Portuguese language, be economically independent through having a formal job, and had abandoned the traditional way of life. However, he was not really integrated into the Portuguese nations (Henderson, *Angola*, 26-28).

48. Inge Tvedten, *Angola: Struggle for Peace and Reconstruction* (Boulder, Westview Press, 1997), 26-28.

A Concordat between Portugal and the Vatican in 1940 gave the Catholic Church a favoured position, while the Mission Statute of 1941 officially entrusted all missions with the task of rural education. This task was, however, far beyond their capabilities as shown by the fact that, in 1960, only 9% of school-age children received primary education. The Protestant missions, apart from promoting the vernacular in Bible translations, were sometimes instrumental in providing higher (university) education through scholarships for studying abroad. All top leaders of the nationalist movement in the 1960s were, in one way or another, linked to protestant missions, which were, therefore, often linked to the liberation struggle.[49] There is, however, also a geopolitical reason for this linking. Each nationalist movement had a regional and ethnic base which, more or less, coincided with a region and an ethnic group in which one of the major Protestant mission societies was operating. However, Benedict Schubert, author of a very detailed study of the involvement of the churches in the Angolan predicament during the period 1961 to 1991, qualifies the too generalised equation of Bakongo = Baptists = FNLA; Kimbundu = Methodist = MPLA; and Ovimbundu = Congregationalist = UNITA, by rejecting, as a propagandistic opinion, that "the" Protestants were on the side of the fight for freedom, while "the" Catholics continued to support the colonial *status quo*.[50]

Missions and Nationalism
In 1961, the war of independence started in Angola, as Portuguese nationalism violently defended its overseas province of Angola, and Angolan nationalism violently reclaimed Angola for its people as an independent state. Although Angolan independence came almost fifteen years later than most African countries, Angolan resistance, in fact, had a long history. There is the impressive figure of Nzinga Mbandi, for forty years queen of Ndingo/Matamba (1623-1663), who withstood the Portuguese when the sovereignty of her kingdom was at stake and who is, today, honoured in Angola as a proto-nationalist. There are many examples of early active resistance to intruding Portuguese presence and control.

There were, for instance, the Carnaval-type celebrations, which, in the 17th century, but also in recent times, mocked the overbearing Portuguese conquerors. There was the Bailundu war of 1902 to defend the rights of local kings and their caravan trade. There was also the revolt of 1917 in protest against forced labour. Because these forms of violence

49. Kuder and Moehlig, *Angola*, 179.
50. Benedict Schubert, *Der Krieg und die Kirchen 1961-1991* (Luzern, Exodus Verlag, 1997), 190-206. For a review in English, see Frans J. Verstraelen, in *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*, 56 (2000), 245-246.

took place in areas where Protestant missions were active, the colonial authorities accused them of having instigated the people to revolt and, thus, made missionaries scapegoats.[51]

After the Second World War, there was acceleration toward an organised opposition to colonial rule. In Angola, associations emerged that were interested in local history and culture. The political consciousness of the *assimilados*, who before were more or less cut off from the broader society, was growing. Angolan students in Portugal established in Lisbon the African Study Centre in 1951, from which the best-known nationalist leaders, such as Neto, Mondhlane, and Cabral, emerged.[52] Several young aspiring Angolan politicians were either imprisoned for some time or prevented from returning home.[53]

The earliest political group with independence as a declared goal was PLUA (Party of the United Struggle of African Angola), founded in 1953. In 1956, it combined with other organisations to form the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) with Antonio Agostinho Neto as leader and with the Mbundu and *assimilados* as the main support base. The main alternative was the FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola), founded in 1962, with the Kongo in the northern regions as base and Holden Roberto as leader. In 1966, UNITA (National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola) was established, with Jonas Savimbi as leader. Its main bases were the Ovimbundu of the Eastern Highlands. Each movement had its own political outlook, namely: MPLA was Marxist, FNLA had an ethnic orientation focusing on the Bakongo. UNITA was chameleon like, changing successively from a Maoist, to ethnic, and finally, Western orientation. Although all movements emphasised nationalism, they were, from the start, strong ethnic and regional divisions among them, which were worsened by strong personal ambitions of the leaders.[54]

When in 1961 there was the first outburst of violent anti-colonialism, the colonial government reacted with severe repressive measures, using, for instance, napalm bombs against suspected villages. Later, the government improved certain conditions, such as abolishing forced labour and making efforts to improve African education. Only small pockets of the country, such as Cabinda and districts of the North were directly affected by military action. In 1966, UNITA opened a new front in the east. By the mid-1970s, Portugal could not cope with the three colonial wars

51. David Birmingham, "Asking the historical questions: Angola and the Church, 1491-1990" in *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*, 54, 4 (1998), 266-267.

52. Kuder/Moehlig, *Angola*, 187.

53. Tvedten, *Angola*, 29.

54. *Ibid.*, 29-31.

taking place simultaneously in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau any longer.

Young officers of the Armed Forces Movement (AFM) overthrew the Portuguese dictatorship of Marcelo Caetano in April 1974 in the so-called "revolution of flowers". The new leaders of Portugal were bent on giving the colonies independence. An attempt by General Spinola, the chosen AFM leader, to keep Angola within the Lusophone Federation failed. In the Portuguese brokered Alvor Agreement of 15 January 1975, all three Angolan liberation movements agreed to form a joint transition government and to hold elections before the official declaration of independence, fixed for 11 November 1975. Unfortunately, the nationalist leaders did not find a way to co-operate and, before elections could be held, an inter-movement fight started, which soon developed into a bloody civil war.[55]

The missions were caught up in the clash between the two nationalisms. The Protestant missions, after the 1961 uprising, experienced more restrictions than before from the colonial regime; even the possession of a Bible was deemed proof of disloyalty to the colonial state. Yet, there was no co-operation among them, as each church tried to find its own pragmatic accommodation to the difficult times.[56] The Christian Council of Angola (CAIE) was established only after independence in 1977 as a co-ordinating co-operative of Protestant mainline churches.

The Catholic Church experienced a conflict of loyalty. To understand its position, one should realise that there were, in fact, three Catholic "churches" in Angola. The Bishops, the "official church", usually continued to support the colonial government in what they saw as its civilising mission. The "other church", consisted of a small group of priests and lay people who challenged the "official church" for its paternalism and cultural chauvinism and for failing to mediate between the fighting parties.[57] Finally, there was the "church of the masses", for whom Christianity was a useful superstructure that assisted in social progress; only a tiny minority of whom were conscious Christians concerned about the future of church and nation.[58]

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55. *Ibid.*, 33.

56. Birmingham, "Asking the historical questions", 271.

57. Twenty-two Holy Ghost Fathers, missionaries in Angola, signed a statement sharply criticising the official church's support for the colonial system. Part of the statement is published in *IDOC International*, 43 (Rome, 1972). See Henderson, *Angola*, 218-219.

58. G. Cuppen (ed), *Een nieuw volk, een nieuwe kerk? Angola* (s'Hertogenbosch, Nederlandse Missieraad, 1979), 210-216. This publication of more than 500 pages is a collection of important, mainly church documents from the period around independence till the middle of 1978.

The military coup of April 25 1974 in Portugal was a decisive catharsis for the Portuguese to end their colonial rule in Africa, including Angola. However, as early as 1958, the Bishop of Porto had sent a letter to Salazar insisting on governmental change. This action, much publicised, led to the Bishop being exiled. Opposition to Portuguese colonial rule was stimulated when, on July 1, 1970, Pope Paul VI received the leaders of liberation movements from Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique. To an outraged Portuguese government, Radio Vatican made clear the Church's attitude towards the independence of new nations by referring to documents of the recently held Vatican Council.

Mission Churches and Independence

During the transition period between the Alvor Agreement (15 January 1975) and the date fixed for independence (11 November 1975), when it was not yet decided which party would rule, MPLA and UNITA leaders visited church leaders and missions. When visiting the Archbishop of Luanda in May 1975, UNITA leader Savimbi stated, "we are convinced that peace cannot be achieved with arms".[59] Meanwhile, heavy fighting had broken out between the MPLA and the other two parties, in which South African troops supported UNITA and the MPLA received assistance from Cuban troops. The fight prevented elections from being held. On November 10 1975, the last Portuguese governor transferred political power to "the people of Angola", without any formal ceremony being held. The MPLA, after having ejected its contenders out of Luanda, declared Angola's independence on November 11 1975.

At its first Party Congress in December 1977, the MPLA adopted Marxism-Leninism as its guiding principle. Religion was considered a factor of alienation, and Christian influence was curtailed by nationalising church-run schools and confiscating church welfare and training institutions such as hospitals, seminaries, printing presses, and the Catholic Radio Station. Neto, son of a Methodist pastor, now President, declared that "neither Catholics nor Protestants can become members of our party. Perhaps after fifty years, there will be no church anymore in Angola".[60]

The Catholic Bishops had already reacted to the MPLA's Marxist ideological orientation in a Pastoral Note on 22 November 1976 in which they stated that the Catholic Church had no objection against building a socialist society as long as it remained open for human and Christian values. "The church's social doctrine condemned the ills of capitalism,

59. Cuppen, *Een nieuw volk, een nieuwe kerke?*, 261, 264.
60. Haynes, *Religion and Politics in Africa*, 91-93. The quotation is from Schubert, *Der Krieg und die Kirchen*, 187. After Neto's death in 1979, this restriction was lifted.

but she cannot accept an ideology which denies the existence of God and which demonstrates a radical intransigence towards the fundamental principles of a Christian understanding of the human person".[61]

The Methodist Bishop Emilio Carvalho, in an extensive address on November 17 1976, expressed in a positive way that a socialist construction of independent Angola was, for the churches, not so much a problem as a chance.[62] The Catholic bishops referred in their note to the contradiction between the freedom of religion guaranteed in the Constitution and the attacks on the churches that were occurring. They were thinking in terms of confrontation with government rather than co-operation which Bishop Carvalho was breaking a lance.

The harsh reactions of the MPLA government were not, merely, based on its ideology; they can partially be explained on the basis that it saw the churches as a threat – churches were in closer contact with the people than the government was. Though church-state relations had become strained, the state needed the contributions of the churches in the area of promoting national welfare. In 1981, Dos Santos, who succeeded Neto as President in 1979, met with the Catholic Bishops and both sides agreed to respect the position of each other and to work together for the development of the nation. As a result, responsibilities for social welfare were gradually transferred back to the churches.[63]

By the late 1980s, it had become evident that the centralised government structure, with its "command politics", had led to an extremely inefficient bureaucracy which was incapable of solving Angola's problems. The government could also no longer cope with internal and external pressures for democracy and pluralism. In June 1990, in the wake of the downfall of Communism in Eastern Europe, the MPLA Central Committee approved multi-partyism and formally abandoned Marxism-Leninism in favour of "democratic socialism". It also opted for a mixed economy based on the laws of the market. The People's Assembly approved these reforms in March 1991 and introduced a law to forestall the creation of ethnic and regional political groupings.[64]

In this new opening towards democracy, the Christian Council (CIAE) and the Evangelical Alliance of Angola (AEA) jointly published, beginning 1990, a position paper on "Peace and Democracy: A Contribution of the Angolan Churches", in which they pleaded that a multiparty system should be a requirement and not simply a possibility as some politicians were still advocating. The Catholic Bishops also published a pastoral

61. Cuppen, *Een nieuw volk, een nieuwe kerk?*, 486.
62. *Ibid.*, 472-482; Schubert, *Der Krieg und die Kirchen*, 195-198.
63. Haynes, *Religion and Politics in Africa*, 93.
64. Tvedten, *Angola*, 51-53.

letter on "Peace and Democracy".[65] Thus, still, the Protestant and Catholic Churches could not speak with one voice, even on an issue so vital to Angolan public life.

The Angolan people, weary of civil strife and its concomitant suffering, were longing for peace in a new political set up. Both contending parties had squandered much of the public's good will as can be seen from the graffiti on the walls in Luanda, which read: "MPLA rouba, UNITA mata" (MPLA steals, UNITA kills).

Under a new agreement, the Bicesse Peace Accord, dos Santos and Savimbi agreed to demobilise their troops and to merge them into a single army as well as to hold elections. The election took place on September 29 and 30 1992 and was judged by 400 international observers to be free and fair. The MPLA won 129 seats (53, 8%) and UNITA 70 seats (34,1%) of the total 220 parliamentary seats, while, for the Presidential elections, dos Santos obtained 49, 57%, while Savimbi obtained 40,07% of the votes. Savimbi soon raised charges of fraud and threatened renewed civil war, which he, in fact, resumed by occupying several towns and attacking Luanda.[66]

Instead of appealing to Savimbi to accept the outcome of the elections, negotiators suggested power-sharing solutions. Savimbi, however, maintained his allegation of fraud and expanded his military operations. Thus, in Angola, the struggle for power continued, but above all, the suffering of the Angolan people, notwithstanding the pleas of both Catholic and Protestant churches for peace and democracy.

GHANA AND ANGOLA'S EXPERIENCES COMPARED

Colonialism and Missions in Ghana and Angola
The Portuguese were the first European nation to come into contact with local African states and people in both Ghana and Angola. The Portuguese remained in Angola, while in Ghana, several other European nations were represented. The Portuguese were eventually displaced and the British became the only ruling colonial power. In both countries, effective occupation developed from trade relations. Effective occupation of Ghana started in the 1890s, while in Angola, it started in the 1920s.

There was a striking difference between British and Portuguese colonial policies, for while the British in Ghana practised "indirect rule" which left some room for traditional customs and culture, the Portuguese sought to integrate their Angolan subjects into the Portuguese way of life,

65. Schubert. *Der Krieg und die Kirchen*, 285.

66. Tvedten. *Angola*, 58-60.

insisting on the use of the Portuguese language and culture and on Africans abandoning their old ways of life. After the Second World War, both colonising powers were concerned with keeping a certain status and prestige within the new bipolar world. Britain tried to regain international, especially US, recognition by advocating speedy self-government for its African colonies and, particularly, by trying to make the process toward independence in the Gold Coast (Ghana) become a model for decolonisation elsewhere. In contrast, Portugal was determined to keep up an image of a world empire by promoting its African colonies, including Angola, to overseas provinces of Greater Portugal.

With respect to Christian missions, Portuguese missionaries were the first to bring coastal people of both Ghana and Angola into contact with Christianity. Protestant missionaries arrived in Ghana in the 1830s, before the formal establishment of the Gold Coast Colony, while Catholic missionaries returned in 1880, after the Colony had been established. Though the British colonial government had historical and cultural links with British missionaries, it had no objection to missionaries of other nationalities. Portuguese colonial authorities, on the other hand, particularly under the Salazar regime, favoured the Catholic mission because it was expected to guarantee the *lusotropical* process. The Portuguese government looked at the Protestant missions (entering Angola in the second half of the 19th century) with suspicion, if not hostility, but could not prevent them entering Angola since the Berlin Conference had regulated free missionary movement to all African territories under European control.

Catholic and Protestant missionaries in both Ghana and Angola generally supported the colonial agenda of "civilising" the Africans and they did not take any overt steps to promote decolonisation. They merely reacted by following political developments as they unfolded and were ready to accept African self-government when it came. However, indirectly, Christian missions influenced very much the process towards political independence, not only through their education, but also through the propagation of a Christian worldview and ethos, which stressed the unique worth of each human individual before God.

The nationalist movement in both colonial Ghana and Angola was based on African popular discontent with the negative aspects of colonial rule, but was carried by a small, but vocal elite. There is, however, considerable difference regarding the type of elite and the timing of the emergence of nationalism in the two countries. In Ghana, organised nationalism can be said to have begun with the Fante Confederation of the 1870s, developed in the early twentieth century, culminating in the militant nationalism of the 1940s, which now demanded independence. In Angola, on the other hand, a nationalist anti-colonial spirit found

embodiment only after the Second World War, starting with Associations which fostered nationalist consciousness and led to the rise of organised nationalist movements from 1953 onwards. The difference in the timing of the rise of nationalism in Ghana and Angola can be explained by the difference in colonial policy and the orientation and history of the education system in the two countries.

It is interesting to note that, in both Ghana and Angola, the pioneer nationalist leaders were almost all the products of Protestant mission schools or of Protestant influence in general. Important in the rise of nationalism in Ghana was the early start of education, first through the Castle School, and later through other Protestant schools that were established. Mission graduates were prominent along the coast in the mid-nineteenth century, while in the late nineteenth century, Ghanaians with considerable Western education (lawyers, medical doctors, wealthy cocoa farmers) were able to advance their interests and articulated their criticism of British colonial administration through, for instance, the *Gold Coast Methodist Times*.[67] The modern nationalists who started political parties from 1947 onwards were following in the footsteps of the early elite. The elite of Angola was different from the elite of Ghana, for in Angola, to be educated meant to become an *assimilado*; someone cut off from the local culture and the broader society. Only after the Second World War did many *assimilados* get involved in nationalist movements as leaders.

It is striking that, in Angola too, each leader of the three main nationalist movements (MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA) had a direct connection with one of the Protestant missions. The reason was not so much the Protestant education system, as was the case in Ghana, for that that system was no more developed than the Catholic system, which had even a greater, though still very limited, range of activities. The close link of these nationalist leaders to Protestant missions can be explained by the fact that the three nationalist movements had their bases in the same region where the Protestant missions were operating and where they exercised considerable influence, thus illustrating the *cuius regio, illius et religio* principle.

The struggle for independence in Ghana consisted mainly of strikes and semi-violent actions and was of very short duration (1947-1951). The transition from colony to independent state went relatively smoothly because the British government, in the end, facilitated the process towards independence, albeit not out of altruism. In Angola, a long war of liberation from 1961 to 1974 was waged mainly because the Portuguese government

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67. Gifford, *African Christianity*, 57. See also, Mobley, *The Ghanaian's Image of the Missionary*.

rejected African demands for independence, maintaining that Angola was an integral part of Portugal itself. In this clash of two nationalisms, it was not, in the end, the military power of the nationalists that resolved the conflict but a military coup against a dictatorial government in Portugal that proved decisive in convincing Portugal to hand over power in "its overseas provinces".

Independence and Christian Mission Churches
While both Ghana and Angola eventually achieved independence, the manner in which this goal was attained and the nature of independence differed considerably. Ghana's independence was achieved through elections in which Nkrumah's CPP won a majority of the vote, making it possible for Britain to transfer power to a legitimate government, which, therefore, could start building a new Ghana. In contrast, independence in Angola was achieved through the MPLA's unilateral declaration of Angola as a People's Republic, after inter-movement fighting had frustrated elections. Thus, the Portuguese Governor handed over power to 'the people of Angola', because the government was not, really, legitimate. Not surprisingly, Angola's independence resulted in a civil war, which was complicated and prolonged by the interference, in the Cold War context, of international powers. Only after the demise of communism in Eastern Europe did a serious effort to bring about peace in Angola get under way. Even then, the Angolan protagonists could not reach an agreement, several internationally brokered peace accords notwithstanding.

Christian churches in both countries were alarmed by the choice of Marxist socialism by the Nkrumah and Neto governments. In Ghana, the clash between church and state during the Nkrumah period (1957-1966) was relatively mild, since Nkrumah's rhetoric was not always matched by actual practice and, generally, churches were allowed to continue with their work. In Angola, on the other hand, the Neto government pursued a doctrinaire Marxist-Leninist line according to which religion was a phenomenon of the past which should be disposed of in the name of science. Thus, the government nationalised church-run welfare institutions, although it soon discovered that it could not maintain them.

In both countries, the churches tried to exercise their prophetic mission in public life. In Ghana, both Protestant and Catholic churches criticised Nkrumah and his regime for abuse of religious language for political purposes. In Angola, where religion had been fully ostracised, it was mainly the Catholic Church that voiced criticism and concern about the ongoing civil war, and the violations of religious freedom. The Protestant churches, denominationally divided, were less able to address national issues collectively. In a sense, it was paradoxical that the Catholic

Church moved from being the "official church" of the colonial state to being the most influential church of the national state.[68]

In their criticism of the first independence governments in both Ghana and Angola, the churches were not always sensitive to the immense problems facing governments in trying to reconstruct their newly independent countries. The choice of a Marxist, strongly centralised government in both countries could have been understood as a symbolic rejection of their former capitalist colonial status and the system that underpinned it. There were also pragmatic reasons for the choice of centralised governmental systems, for it was felt that such a governmental system could more easily deal with obstacles seen as blocking development than a Western-type democratic system, which was considered a luxury in the urgent task of building a nation. Despite the Marxist rhetoric, however, neither of the two countries were ever fully Marxist in ideology and practice; rather, what they practised was what might be termed semi-Marxism which left room for co-operation with the so-called free world,[69] enabling the governments to take advantage of the Cold War bipolar world by playing one side against the other.

The fact that, after Nkrumah's fall in 1966, Marxism as an ideology of government disappeared from Ghana's political scene and that, after Neto's death in 1979, the Marxist regime became less rigid and Marxism was jettisoned in favour of "democratic socialism" in 1991 confirms the viewpoint that the atheistic part of Marxist ideology, which the churches were condemning, had not deeply entered or affected the minds of the politicians, let alone, the people. This could easily have been established had the churches engaged in dialogue with those in power as part of their effort to fulfil their prophetic mission. Lastly, in both countries, the struggle continued. In the case of Ghana, reflection continued on defining or re-defining the role and the mission of the Church in a country striving to develop a "culture of democracy".[70] Meanwhile, in Angola, the churches

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68. Birmingham, "Asking the historical questions", 272.

69. Thom Kerstiens, *The New Elite in Asia and Africa: A Comparative Study of Indonesia and Ghana* (New York, Frederick A Praeger Publishers, 1966), 202-207.

70. Maxwell Owusu, "Culture and democracy: Some persistent problems", in *Insight: Quarterly for the Christian Ghanaian Intellectual*, 2, 4 (Nov-Dec 1967), 40-46, analyses the ingrained cultural attitudes of authoritarianism in Ghanaian society and emphasises the crucial role of argument and discussion in the establishment of democratic institutions. A symposium convened by the All Africa Conferences of Churches (AACC) in 1991 discussed *inter alia*, democracy in an African setting, particularly the fact that "Democracy is not a ready-made structure which can simply be transferred intact to Africa from abroad". See A. Karamaga (ed.), *Problems and Promises of Africa: Towards and Beyond the Year 2000* (Nairobi, AACC, 1993), 30. See also Ngoy D. Muhinda-Nyanga, *La Reconstruction de l'Afrique. Foi et liberté pour un continent en conflict* (Nairobi, Conference des Eglises de toute l Afrique, 1998), chps. 2 and 3.

had to find ways in which to effectively contribute to ending the civil war through a struggle for true liberation based on justice and reconciliation.