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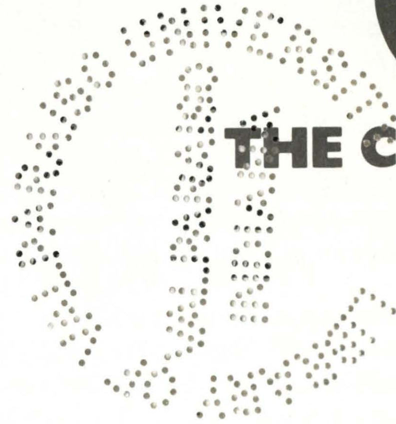

THE CRESSET

NOVEMBER, 1980

A Special Issue On Africa

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A Special Issue On Africa

THE CRESSET

Cover

Starving Family. Clay. 7 in. Kenya, 1974. The sculptor, Babu, is a self-trained artist in his twenties whose work largely takes the form of social commentary.

Inside Cover

Standing Woman. Wood, pigment. 9½ in. Yoruba (Nigeria). Early twentieth century.

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In the National Interest

In his delightful play Saint Joan, *Bernard Shaw makes Joan's secular enemies accuse her of the heresy of Protestantism and her religious enemies accuse her of the heresy of Nationalism. In a scene where they conspire to burn her at the stake, the following exchange occurs between Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, and Richard de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick:*

Cauchon: To her the . . . people are what the Holy Scriptures describe as a nation. Call this side of her heresy Nationalism if you will: I can find no better name for it. I can only tell you that it is essentially anti-Catholic and anti-Christian; for the Catholic Church knows only one realm, and this the realm of Christ's kingdom. Divide that kingdom into nations, and you dethrone Christ. Dethrone Christ, and who will stand between our throats and the sword? The world will perish in a welter of war.

Warwick: Well, if you will burn the Protestant, I will burn the Nationalist.

And Joan is sainted in the fire laid by the Church fearing her Nationalism and the state fearing her Protestantism. Shaw's double irony here is apt, for in principle the greater danger to the state is indeed Protestantism and the greater danger to the Church is indeed Nationalism.

In practice, of course, a later Protestantism quickly made peace—and eventually common cause—with the modern state. And the modern Church, in all its denominational tentacles, by and large curled up with Nationalism. Even where the Church is oppressed by the state, its resistance to the state is often as much in the name of the oppressed nation as it is in the name of the Lord of the nations.

In our time Nationalism has bred Nationalism prolifically, principally by the actions of imperialistic nations arousing the reaction of Nationalism in their colonial empires. Leading us into a discussion of the "imperial claims" of Nationalism in this special issue on Africa is our November alumni columnist, Mel Piehl. Having served his senior year as editor of the Torch, *the student newspaper, he graduated from the University in 1968. He took his Danforth and Woodrow Wilson Fellowships to Stanford University where he earned his Ph.D. in history in 1980. His dissertation concerns the Catholic worker and the origins of Catholic radicalism in America.*

Dr. Piehl is presently Assistant Professor of Humanities in Christ College of the University where he teaches in the freshman interdisciplinary honors program and researches and teaches his specializations: American intellectual history, urban history, and African history. He is married to Eileen Ash (VU 1967) and they have two daughters, Valerie and Stephanie.

The Cresset *welcomes alumnus Piehl to* In Luce Tua.

The Editor

IN LUCE TUA

We, The People: The Perils And Appeals Of Nationalism

Mel Piehl

Of all the great nineteenth-century ideologies, only nationalism seems to be thriving. While both classical liberalism and Marxism have lately fallen on hard times, the surge of nationalism throughout the globe continues. Surveying events of the last decade, David Riesman recently remarked that, "To an internationalist like myself, nationalism has proven to be the strongest force in the world—a surprise and disappointment also to Marxists."

What gives nationalism its strength? Like religions, mass ideologies combine intellectual and popular appeals in subtle, effective ways. But more than other modern movements, nationalism has been able to gather up universal elements of the human condition and distill them into a simple yet flexible set of ideas that appeal to all sorts of men. That these ideas, and the institutions that uphold them, are too simple to encompass man's actual social and political life has not so far diminished their appeal, any more than their demonstrated connection with political conflict and war.

The evidence for nationalism's persistence is abundant. Since World War II about a hundred new states, from Antigua to Zimbabwe, have joined what old textbooks used to call "the family of nations." The names of these new nations now compete with old ones in the headlines. In Vietnam and Afghanistan the two nuclear superpowers met up with aroused nationalism with unfortunate results. In the Middle East resurgent Islam has generally moved in alliance with the "foreign" ideology of nationalism in places like Iran. The dangerous Palestinian-Israeli conflict essentially involves the claims of two rival nationalisms to the same piece of territory.

Some might contend that many of these developments represent not so much nationalism as anti-colonialism—part of the "Third World's" rejection of Western domination. While some of the new states, such as Vietnam and Iran, do represent ancient political entities, others, such as Pakistan, Upper Volta, and Guyana, are entirely

That nationalist ideas, and the institutions that uphold them, are too simple to encompass actual social and political life has not so far diminished their appeal, any more than has their demonstrated connection with political conflict and war.

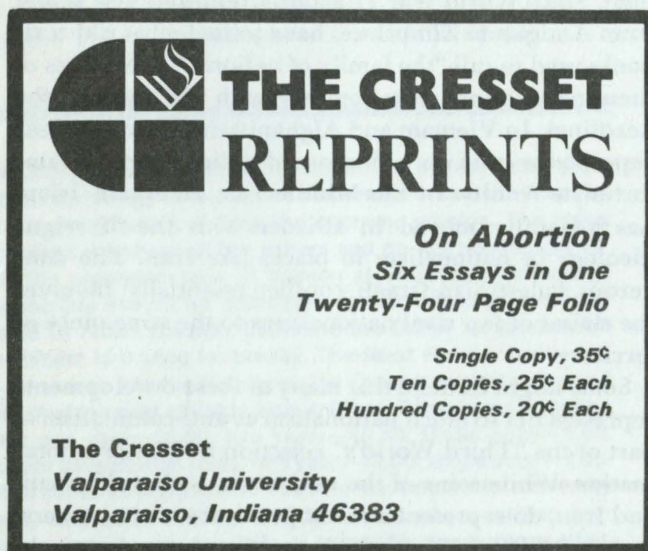
new creations following artificial colonial boundaries.

Yet what is remarkable is how thoroughly the political elites of the former colonial areas have adopted the institutions and ideology of nationalism for their societies, and how quickly they have been caught up in typical nationalist conflicts involving national unity, economic independence, and rivalries with neighboring states. The ink is barely dry on declarations of independence and new constitutions when the young countries' armies—armed by East, West, or both—are engaged against secessionists or neighbors. Although the details differ, one finds similar factors at work in hundreds of cases. For example: the Biafra (Ibo) secession effort in Nigeria; the Indian-Pakistani conflict over Kashmir (now flaring up again); the various efforts to break up Zaire, the former Belgian Congo; the successful Bangladesh breakaway from Pakistan; the Kurdish conflicts with Iraq, Iran, and Turkey; the Argentine-Chilean dispute over portions of Tierra del Fuego; the Polisario war against Morocco in the former Spanish Sahara; the continuing civil war in Chad.

Notably depressing instances of new nationalist conflicts currently exist in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, where the border war with Somalia has produced hundreds of thousands of refugees, many of whom are expected to starve in the near future; in Cambodia, where the only sure losers in the war between the Pol Pot regime and the Vietnamese invaders are the Cambodian people; and in East Timor, the former Portuguese colony where the Indonesian attempt to defeat the Fretelin independence movement has left an estimated 200,000 to 600,000 dead. (Neither the Red Cross nor the United Nations has been allowed in to check.)

Even the tiniest of states are not immune. On July 30 of this year the *New York Times* reported that the New Hebrides had achieved independence after seventy-four years of British and French rule. The new nation of 112,000, henceforth to be called Vanuatu, inaugurated its new president, the Rev. Walter Lini, at ceremonies to which President Carter sent James Michener, author of *Tales of the South Pacific.*

Unfortunately, the usual nationalist difficulty cast a cloud on the occasion. Jimmy Stevens, a former bulldozer driver with twenty-five wives, is leading a separatist movement on the Vanuatuan island of Espiritu Santo. Stevens seized the town of Luganville with a band of tribesmen armed with bows and arrows. According to the *Times,* Stevens's independence drive is being backed by French and mixed-race planters and the Nevada-based Phoenix Foundation, which is seeking to establish a tax haven on the island eight hundred miles east of Australia.



Nationalism and Anti-Colonialism

Westerners may smile over such affairs, as over the general phenomenon of mini-states, which seem to represent some kind of comic *reductio ad absurdum* for nationalism. But rising nationalism is not confined to former colonial areas. Over the past ten years Europe has seen conflicts involving Breton nationalists in France, Basques and Catalans in Spain, Croatians and others in Yugoslavia, Flemings and Walloons in Belgium, and Scottish, Welsh, and Irish nationalists in the not-so United Kingdom. Each of these conflicts differs in character, history, and intensity. The Northern Ireland situation, for example, contains strong religious and class as well as nationalist elements. But all share the essential nationalist ingredient of some group claiming a denial of the principle of self-determination.

In North America we are most familiar with Quebec nationalism, represented by Premier René Levesque and his *Parti Quebecois,* which recently lost a referendum authorizing his government to negotiate an independent "sovereignty association" with the rest of Canada. The electoral loss was a blow to the separatists, but it occurred partly because the Ottawa regime promised a significant devolution of powers to the province. If it follows through on that promise, the resultant weakening of national government may make the centrifugal forces at work in Canada irresistible. Already there is a regional polarization of political parties reminiscent of the American situation in the 1850s: the Progressive Conservatives are almost exclusively a Western and Maritime party; the Liberals represent Ontario and the Canadian nationalists in Quebec. Although the separatist noises beginning to come from the oil and grain

The underlying strength of nationalism lies not in new popular movements but in its continuing function as the legitimizing ideology for the sovereign nation state, the institution that is everywhere granted a legal monopoly on violence.

rich Western provinces seem so far mostly calculated for effect, further concessions to Quebec could make them serious.

Again, it might be argued that these highly visible nationalist trends are overshadowed by other powerful forces working toward international integration. Travel, communications, environmental concern, the nuclear threat, the spread of scientific and cultural exchange, and particularly the increasingly interdependent character of economic activity all seem to work toward breaking down national barriers. In certain areas regional institutions such as the European Common Market, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), and OPEC create powerful forces that inhibit the old-time economic nationalism of tariffs and market restrictions. Compared to such developments, the newer nationalist movements may seem more colorful than significant.

Nationalism and Internationalism

It is probably true that militant nationalism of the sort that existed in Europe before World War I has diminished. But the underlying strength of nationalism lies not in new popular movements but in its continuing function as the legitimizing ideology for the sovereign nation state, the institution that is everywhere granted a legal monopoly on violence. Although there has never been so much awareness of mankind's interdependence, this is largely interpreted in ways that maintain the primacy of national institutions and identities. When we say "we," the "we" referred to is still most often "we Americans," not "we North Americans," "we Westerners," or "we human beings." The use of the adjective "international" for the wider scope of human affairs (as in international economics, international travel) indicates that the fundamental mode for men's dealings with one another remains the national community.

A fine illustration of nationalism's hold on the world is the Olympics. Theoretically devoted to international good will and common athletic endeavor, the games are in fact showcases for nationalism, with great attention given to flags, anthems, and national team scores. Proposals to mute these elements have run up against the fact that the nationalist rivalry greatly enhances the popular appeal of the games. I know people who become fanatically attached every four years to the fortunes of the American team, and end up shouting epithets at foreign athletes and referees on their television screens. One imagines similar reactions in other living rooms around the world, as German, Japanese, Indian, and Brazilian fans cheer on their teams and nations. If the Olympic games exhibit Marshall McLuhan's thesis about television creating a "global village," they may also remind us that villages have not often been, except in myth, places of social harmony.

But why should we be any more concerned about fervent reactions to the Olympics than we would be about the equally rabid feelings of, say, Chicago Cubs fans as their favorites win the pennant and World Series? The answer, of course, is politics. However irrational we might judge Chicago fans to be in their loyalty to the Cubs and hostility to the Cardinals, there is no political significance to their behavior. But when the American and Soviet teams compete, or do not compete, at the Olympics, no one can escape the political implications.

As the late David Potter pointed out in his essay, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa," nationalism's greatest appeal and danger is that it links the psychological attachment of people to national communities with an exclusive attachment to the political institution of the nation-state. Nationalism may be defined as the view that all human beings can be divided up into national communities, and that each of these national communities should be politically organized into sovereign nation states. The doctrine of sovereignty, which came to nationalism by way of such political theorists as Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes, has always insisted that the autonomy and exclusiveness of national rule are essential to political life. The nation-state is the atomic unit of nationalist politics, and it can only be split when the principle of self-determination has been denied.

The problem with this, as Potter points out, is that national communities are not so easily defined, and even where they may be said to exist, the psychological feelings of the people within them are inevitably complex, ambivalent, and changeable over time. While the sovereign nation state claims to be autonomous, absolute, and indivisible, the actual social and political feelings of any people toward "the nation" will vary enormously by region, class, sex, age, experience, and so on. Even the same individual may have varied and contradictory feelings about "his" nation, and may find his loyalties in conflict. Potter used this distinction to illustrate problems in interpretation of the Civil War—many Southerners did not so much lose their attachment to the United States as find it superseded by their attachment to the South and slavery. But he also suggests that historians and other scholars have too often accepted and therefore endorsed the simplistic dogmas of nationalism.

An awareness of nationalism's dual character has led some writers to try to distinguish nationalism and patriotism. Patriotism is defined as the simple, natural love of one's own country, and is distinguished from the chauvinistic tenets of nationalism. In this view, nation-

Some writers try to distinguish nationalism and patriotism: a true patriotism is consistent with a reasoned and critical perspective on one's nation's actions, and it recognizes and honors the equally patriotic feelings of other people.

alism turns man's natural ethnocentric attachment to his own kind into a dangerous aggressiveness, while patriotism keeps these feelings within proper bounds. A true patriotism is consistent with a reasoned and critical perspective on one's nation and its actions, and it recognizes and honors the equally patriotic feelings of other peoples.

This distinction is valuable because it recognizes that feelings toward the nation-state are more complex than nationalist doctrine would lead us to believe. But it does not really settle the inherent contradictions that Potter notes in the ideology of nationalism. It fails to emphasize sufficiently that the power of nationalism comes from the unbreakable link it forges between man's natural attachment to his human community and his ultimate political loyalty to the sovereign state. Speaking of patriotism rather than nationalism does not alter the nature of this connection, and it may even confuse the issue, because the more benign term obscures the essentially political character of the phenomenon.

For it must be understood that nationalism succeeds by focussing non-political feelings on the political institution of the state. Man does naturally feel strong attachments to his native people, place, and culture. As anthropologist Clifford Geertz has concluded, the particularity of these cultural attachments is crucial to the very meaning of what it is to be human. "We are, in sum, incomplete or unfinished animals," Geertz says, "who complete or finish ourselves through culture—and not through culture in general but through highly particular forms of it: Dobuan and Javanese, Hopi and Italian, upper-class and lower-class, academic and commercial. . . . Without men, no culture, certainly; but equally, and more significantly, without culture, no men."

Nationalism and Patriotic Fervor

The ordinary human feelings for accustomed homes, families, native language, religion, friends, and neighborhoods—even foods, clothing, buildings, and landscapes—thus tend to become loaded with cultural meaning and emotion. Anyone who has lived away from his native land for any extended period knows how poignant and compelling these feelings can be. The genius of nationalism is to gather up all these diffuse feelings and make them the source of political identity and loyalty. Diffuse and complex feelings toward society and culture are charged and focussed on the national community and the national state.

The national state is able to do this because it alone of modern institutions claims the exclusive sovereign jurisdiction over all the people and activities within a given territory. It can therefore appear to transcend or unify the divisions of values, religions, social forms, political loyalties, and so on, that necessarily exist among the population of any very extensive territory. The state therefore tends to become the symbolical focus for the whole way of life of a given people, even in its non-political aspects. Even if the American national state were to disappear, we might still be American in our values, culture, religion, and language, just as Greeks or Armenians have retained their identity during long centuries of conquest.

But the principles of nationalism transform these complex sentiments into simple political loyalty to the national state. In modern society, the individual seldom declares public loyalty to his community, culture, or occupation, but from childhood on he publicly pledges his allegiance to the state and its symbol, the flag. Similarly, nationalist hymns or anthems frequently link feelings for native land and society with political loyalties and symbols. "O Canada! Our home and native land!" says the Canadian anthem. "True patriot love in all thy sons command. With glowing hearts we see thee rise, the True North strong and free. O Canada! We stand on guard for thee." The Soviet anthem speaks of "Great Russia, Our Soviet land, Created in struggle by will of the peoples, United and mighty forever to stand." It is nationalism that finds such expressions not only satisfying but the only valid state of affairs for a political society.

For most of human history things were not so simple. For the Greeks the ideal of the *polis* was the most powerful force in social and political life, but it was balanced and sometimes contradicted by loyalty to a common Greek culture and religion that transcended the individual state. In great multi-national empires of Rome and India, it was obviously impossible to tie cultural or religious feeling to political loyalty; only a minimal political acquiescence was required of the population.

For most of the middle ages political and cultural loyalties were even more fragmented: a Polish-speaking peasant might be owned by a German lord fighting for a Hungarian cardinal who backed the French faction in Rome. Although proto-national configurations did exist, they were undermined by more powerful class and feudal loyalties. Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror* describes a typical situation: "Enguerrand was caught by his English marriage on the prongs of a forked allegiance. He could neither take up arms against his father-in-law, to whom he owed fealty for his English lands, nor, on the other hand, fight against his natural liege lord, the King of France." A feudal manual of the day recommended that a vassal in such a bind should render service to one lord and hire a substitute to fight for the other. But in this case Enguerrand hit on a third

If we cannot escape being part of a world of nationalism, we can at least question the more imperial claims of nationalism.

option. He decided "to leave in pursuit of a Hapsburg inheritance from his mother which lay across the Jura on the Swiss side of Alsace and had been withheld from him by his cousins Albert II and Leopold III, Dukes of Austria."

To the nationalist such situations are intolerably messy. But they better reflect the ambiguity and complexity of human social relations than the rigid structures of modern nationalism, with their clear national boundaries, multi-colored maps, official citizenships and passports, and theoretically black-or-white political loyalties. Woodrow Wilson once said that there could be no such thing as a "hyphenated American." He might be shocked by our proliferation of German-, Irish-, Italian-, Afro-, Greek-, Jewish-, (etc.) hyphens. Of course these are still understood primarily as designations of ethnic origin. Nationalism draws the line at real cultural or political pluralism. The federal government's recent study of bilingual education, for example, made it plain that the purpose of such programs must be to teach English to Spanish-speaking youngsters, and not in any way to grant Spanish equal status with English in American education.

Nationalism and Political Loyalty

The aim is obviously to prevent the kind of minority nationalism polarized around cultural differences that has appeared in Canada and elsewhere. That makes sense if we assume that nationalism will continue to thrive as it has. If nationalist appeals ever seriously diminished, however, we might discover that the natural complexity and ambiguity of human loyalties would be a better antidote to group conflict than a rigid adherence to nationalism. We might then find it natural that, say, Lutherans in the U.S. and the Soviet Union and Sweden could feel stronger attachments to one another than to some fellow citizens of their respective states. We would not be surprised that Greek or Jewish or Mexican Americans would feel not only mixed cultural loyalties but political attachments to foreign states as well. And we would acknowledge what is already the case: that many employees of multi-national corporations are more loyal to their companies than to their original nations.

Nationalism is not going to disappear any time soon. The nation-state is firmly rooted in societies around the globe, and all such states share a common interest in the system. Political alternatives are hard to imagine, much less bring into being. But if we cannot escape being part of a nationalistic world, we can at least examine the roots of nationalism's appeal and question its more imperial claims.

Watercolor Called November

What visions dance
in these burning leaves?
November: the finger of God
straightens this place
to truth.

These silent pines framed
by liquid clouds;
the erect fences trim, shape
and seize the wild,
collecting orphaned leaves
in casual families.

The horse drops a frosty
breath, stands trim, as spare
as the fence, as white—
stands still as trees,
rooting silently in the uncut.

What wildness this wildness knows,
lying wanton, waste,
unanswered save by clattering
jays, crossing battle
at sixty feet.

Frogs court in waterless lakes
and call God their father
more than I.

—at the sharp edge of moonfall
two deer appear, soft whispers
curving the air, cutting sound;
they stand blinking loudly.
They do not see me plying the sky
with prayers.

With quiet discretion
they move among the frogs—kneel,
sip, twirl and bound—
the last leap throwing a tail
white against the dropped blue sky.

The frogs plop like a turgid rain
into the eye of water;
their ripples leaving, catching
at last all in increasing circles,
air, dim sky, sly trees, me
listing like a question
on the white fence.

Ed Ingebretsen, S.J.

The Changing Image of Africa:

An Introduction:

Theodore M. Ludwig

In his influential essay, *The Image,* Kenneth Boulding argued that our knowledge and our behavior are governed by our "image" of the world, our subjective knowledge structure made up of unquestioned "facts" and values. The image of Africa held for centuries by Europeans and Americans is a tragic example of the powerful combination of ignorance and self-interest in creating and perpetuating destructive attitudes and behavior toward people of a different culture: Africa is the "dark continent," home of sub-human fetish worshipers and cannibals, fit to be slaves to superior peoples. Fortunately, we feel, in the enlightened world of the twentieth century we have moved beyond such an image, for the mass media regularly report on happenings in Africa and bring us "up to date."

But the new image turns out to be not unlike the old, only more bloody and repugnant: Idi Amin who eats children, endless coups and executions, anonymous masses shuffling about for their European employers, poverty and cultural deprivation. The new image may be more dangerous than the old, however, for it arises from "the facts" transmitted to us by on-the-spot journalists and TV cameramen, and thus it legitimizes our cherished belief that our own culture and vital interests are infinitely superior and rightly to be maintained by the political and economic action of our country.

In a Christian-humanist academic community such as Valparaiso University, such simplistic images of other cultures have to be challenged and changed. But they are generally such deep-rooted and pervasive images that the challenge has to come from various sides, at various levels. Thus it was that a group of interested people in the Valparaiso University community, led especially by the indefatigable enthusiasm of Lois Reiner, mounted a multi-disciplinary, multi-dimensional African Forum at the University during 1979-1980. This forum was an attempt at a different kind of pedagogy, involving people from different academic disciplines, students, and non-university people in an extended common undertaking of investigating and reflecting on the realities of African culture.

Supported by the College Project Fund of the Danforth Foundation as well as the American Friends Service Committee of Northwest Indiana and Valparaiso University, the Forum focused on cross-disciplinary panel presentations and discussions of various dimensions of African history, religion, literature, art, music, geography, politics, economics, and law. Several important features made this Forum somewhat different from other such attempts at cross-cultural understanding. The Forum did not originate with any department or program of the University but simply from an *ad hoc* group of concerned citizens who felt the need for such a common investigation. The Forum did not rely on outside experts. Apart from the kick-off talk by Dennis Brutus and a concluding discussion by Lou Palmer, the panel presentations were all conducted (without honorarium, it might be noted) by members of the Valparaiso University academic community. In this way the discussion moved beyond the confining limits of specialized disciplines and interests. Involvement of non-faculty people of the community was significant both in the planning and in the actual presentation of the Forum. And, over an extended period of four months, African themes were presented in additional art displays, cultural arts events, special programs and foreign films, so that, for those of the University and the community who chose to participate, there was opportunity for sustained immersion in the project of changing and deepening our heretofor flat and shallow image of Africa.

And how did our image of Africa change? The following representative essays provide some indication. The overall effect was certainly to shatter stereotypes of African culture and to raise one's awareness of the tremendous complexities, the problems and resources of Africa. We encountered sharply contrasting perspectives on Africa, from the romance of the Muntu Dance Theatre and traditional African art and music to

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Tradition, Trauma, and Transcendence

The Valparaiso University Africa Forum

the stark cinematic realism of *Ceddo* and *Ramparts of Clay* (See "The Reality-Effect of Third World Cinema" by Richard Maxwell in the January 1980 *Cresset*). We confronted different political proposals concerning Africa, from Dennis Brutus's invitation for common action to change our country's involvement in South Africa to Lou Palmer's espousal of Africa as a symbol for American Black separatism. We learned how economic development is tied to the geopolitical situation, how a one-party government can be more democratic than a two-party government, how the imported European legal system is mis-matched to African culture.

But above all, this extended investigation of African culture impressed all with the depths of the resources of African people as they continue to draw upon their traditions, bent but not broken by centuries of European exploitations. This image of Africa is presented in a representative way in the following essays, which, except for James Scherer's and John Strietelmeier's, were originally presented as talks during the Africa Forum. James Scherer's essay was one of his Gross Memorial lectures presented at Valparaiso University in January, 1980, coinciding with the Africa Forum, and John Strietelmeier's essay is his regular column as the campus diarist of the *Cresset*.

The Christian Century in the Continent of the Future

Contemporary African culture still draws on traditional resources, and Edgar Senne sketches the main elements of the traditional African worldview. Senne shows that, contrary to European misunderstandings, Africans have a clear conception of a supreme God, remote, without images, together with a sense of nature as alive with divinities and spiritual powers. Very important to Africans is a continuity of communion with the "living dead," the ancestors, for it is this communion which provides identity and family solidarity. From this perspective one can begin to understand the trauma of Africans uprooted from their ancestral lands and the attraction of freedom movements which promise restoration of the traditional sense of communal solidarity.

Susan Adams Brietzke provides a fascinating look at the traditional and the contemporary in African literature. Traditional literature, like everything else in African culture, has been torn apart by the great disjunction in Africa, the European colonialist intrusion. The power of oral literature is still impressive today, and the series of attempts by modern writers to regain this tradition and forge a new cultural identity are moving and full of promise. Brietzke demonstrates the power modern writers find in appealing to the old traditions, invoking, for example, Ogun, the God of War, to deal the death blow to the apartheid South African government and restore the Black Nation.

The troubled economic scene in Africa is the concern of James Bernard, who shows the problems—and a few possibilities—of African development. Again the traditional economic structure has been disrupted by European intrusion and exploitation; the old economic centers and alliances no longer function, and foreign investment means foreign drain-off of profits. A big question is whether the African peoples can both draw on their traditions of solidarity and transcend their traditions of tribalism in creating new regional economic units.

Africa's role in the renewal of the Christian church is the focus of James Scherer's essay. A former missionary, Scherer remains active in the church's outreach to nations of the "Third World" and this month is lecturing at the Overseas Ministries Study Center in Ventnor, New Jersey, on missions in developing nations. In one of his Gross Memorial lectures at Valparaiso University published here, he discusses the rapid growth of the Christian church in Africa and shows how traditional ideas and practices have found fresh expression within the African Christian church. Particularly important in Africa has been the church's strong support of social justice and reform. For the weary church of the post-Christian West, this "Christian century" in Africa poses many challenges and promises. In many ways, as Scherer writes, Africa is "the continent of the future." ■

The Primal Vision

Some Basic Features of African Traditional Religion

Edgar P. Senne

Any attempt to understand the current African scene would be seriously incomplete without consideration of the place that religion has in the total picture. Thus, the steering committee of the African Forum has asked me to present to you a very brief sketch of "some basic features of African Traditional Religion." This sub-title for my presentation is formulated with very special care and requires some extended comment.

The first thing we must do is to remind ourselves of what is indicated by the word "African." We must recall that the African continent is more than two and a half times the area of the continental United States. Within that vast area there are something like one thousand different "peoples" or, as they are somewhat loosely designated, "tribes." Each of these can be seen as a religious and cultural entity in itself. How then can we refer so generally to something like *African* religion? The first thing we will do, then, is to limit the territory by recalling that much of North Africa has for many centuries participated quite directly in Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultural and civilizational developments. We will exclude this area from our considerations and give our attention to African religion south of the Sahara. Even here it is very difficult to generalize, and yet both African and Western scholars have dared to do so and have been successful to at least some degree. In sub-Saharan Africa there are a number of features which allow for careful generalization.

The second word in the sub-title that requires some comment is the word "traditional." What do we mean by "African *traditional* religions"? We mean those forms of religious thought and behavior which guided and gave meaning to African life before there was any significant contact with either Muslim or western Christian influences. In many parts of Africa this means that we will try to look at religious beliefs and practices in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. However, it should be noted that many of these traditional beliefs and practices have persisted to the present time. As late as 1963, John V. Taylor estimated that of the 135 million people in sub-Saharan Africa, 70 per cent of them were neither Muslim nor Christian. They were still guided by what he calls "the primal vision," that is, traditional religions.[1] We observe, then, that traditional forms of religious belief and practice are by no means irrelevant to an understanding of contemporary Africa. They remain a vital force in the midst of all the changes that have been and are taking place.

Finally, in our comments on the sub-title of this presentation we need to make a few basic observations about the word "religion." Religion is that system of symbols or meanings which incorporates and integrates all aspects of life. Because religion provides such a comprehensive view of man's total existence, African traditional languages most often have no word that can serve as even a near equivalent to our word "religion." Religion is not a thing in itself or a separated part of life; it is a way of seeing everything. The existence of the world is a religious datum; the structure and order of the natural world is religiously viewed; the organization of society, the ways of hunting, fishing, or farming have religious validations; the way of valuing or treating cattle and goats, the way of laying out a village or compound, the way of constructing a hut, ways of marrying and propagating are all pieces of religious data, part of that comprehensive vision of a world that is permeated with vital Power, with spirits and gods. Because all life is religious, it is punctuated with those special moments of prayer, sacrifice, offering, sacred festival, divining ceremonies, and innumerable other forms of ritual behavior. Thus, to look at religion large and whole is to look at that whole vision of life. We must, therefore, be aware how modest is our undertaking as we draw out in this presentation only a few basic features of that large vision.

What are some of those features? First, there is God. Yes, indeed, Africans have always believed in God. This may seem very nearly obvious to us, yet it was not always so obvious for those who looked at Africa. In 1867 explorer Sir Samuel Baker reported to the Ethnological Society of London that "without any exception, they [the Nilotic tribes of the southern Sudan] are without a belief in a Supreme Being, neither have they any form of worship or idolatry; nor is the darkness of their minds enlightened by even a ray of superstition. The mind is as stagnant as the morass which forms its puny world."[2] Another famous explorer, Sir Richard Burton, wrote: "The negro is still at that rude dawn of faith—fetishism—and he has barely advanced to idolatry. . . . He has

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[1] John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 28.

[2] As cited by Benjamin C. Ray, *African Religions* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1976), p. 3.

Traditional forms of religion are by no means irrelevant to an understanding of Africa today. They remain a vital force in the midst of all the changes that have been and are taking place.

never grasped the ideas of a personal Deity, a duty in life, a moral code, or a shame of lying."[3] Author Burton goes on and on in a similar vein. These are only representative examples of the kind of information that was fed back into the European centers of study about Africa. But, of course, it turns out that they were very wrong. Their eyes were not prepared to see clearly in Africa and their minds were not prepared to understand.

African traditional societies believe that there is a Supreme God. He is the one, they say, who has no mother or father. He is the one who created the whole world in the beginning of time. The Zulu say he is "the Wise One." The Akan say, "only God is wise, who sees both the inside and the outside of man." The Ila people say he is the one whose "ears are long." So, God is the all-knowing, the all-seeing, the all-hearing. He is also the one who is everywhere, "like the wind and the air." He is all-powerful, "the one who clears the forest," "the one who strikes terror in the nations." The Kikuyu people of Kenya say of Ngai (God),

> No father nor mother, nor wife nor children;
> He is all alone.
> He is neither a child nor an old man;
> He is the same today as he was yesterday.[4]

So great is God and so beyond all human comprehension that Africans do not dare to make an image of him. Often they are forbidden to speak his real name, except in the most formal sacred ceremonies. He is a spiritual being, beyond all materialization. A Pygmy hymn says,

> In the beginning was God,
> Today is God,
> Tomorrow will be God.
> Who can make an image of God?
> He has no body,
> He is as a word which comes out of your mouth.
> That word! It is no more,
> It is past, and still it lives!
> So is God.[5]

A common theme in African myths of creation suggests that in the beginning God and man lived in close proximity to each other. This was a paradisaical time, a time of happiness and abundance. But it ended when something very terrible happened. Human beings did something they weren't supposed to do and the paradise was lost. One version of this thematic says that God lived in a hut near the first village and commanded that the people were not to try to see him. For a while the people obeyed, until curiosity got the best of the women and they tried to peek into God's hut. This made God very angry and he removed his presence far away beyond the sky, far from the lives of humans. Since then there is trouble and famine, war and stealing on earth.

Another version says that God originally lived in the sky, but the sky was very close to the earth. The mother of mankind was busy doing her womanly work of pounding the traditional food, fufu. She kept on bumping the sky with her pestle as she energetically went about her work. To get away from her pounding, God took his sky-home and moved up higher. The woman then told her sons to gather all the mortars and to pile them up so that they could follow God to his distant sky-home and be close to him once again. This they did, but just before they could reach him they ran out of mortars. The woman then advised her sons to take the bottom-most mortar out and to pile it on the top and thus to reach God. The sons obeyed her, and the whole tower came tumbling down, killing many of the people. Since then, God is far away.[6]

When God Moves Up in the World

This leads us to a discussion of what scholars often refer to as the "remoteness" of the Supreme God in African experience. Notwithstanding all the things that we have said about African belief in the Supreme God, there is widespread evidence that he is felt to have gone far away and taken a kind of passive stance over against mankind's day by day existence. There are many statements to the effect that God is so distant that he pays little or no attention to humans; consequently, humans pay little or no attention to him either. So we find no priesthood for God, no festival days, no temples or shrines, and his name is rarely mentioned. Perhaps this is why earlier observers concluded that Africans didn't know the concept of a Supreme God.

Yet there is also evidence that when things are really falling apart in this world, when it appears that no other spiritual powers can handle the crisis, the people once again cry out in desperation to the Supreme One. If he could create in the beginning, then he is also the one who has the power to prevent that creation from a complete return to chaos. Is the Supreme God then very transcendent, very far away, or is he felt to be immanent, very near? Often within the same society the answer would have to be both, and as we move from society to society we find significant variation. So we recognize a kind of tension in the African experience of God on this point, and for now we leave it at that.[7]

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

[4] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophies* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1970), p. 43.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 44. See chapters 4-7 for Mbiti's discussion of African ideas about God. See also the same author's *Concepts of God in Africa* (London: S.P.C.K., 1970) and Edwin W. Smith, ed., *African Ideas of God* (3d ed.; London: Edinburgh House Press, 1966).

[6] Mbiti, pp. 117-129.

[7] For a general discussion of the remoteness of the Supreme God, see Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), pp. 118-125.

Perhaps it is better not to force terms like monotheism or polytheism upon African religion, for in so doing we seem to lose the paradoxical quality of the African religious experience.

If God has no images, no priests, no temples, and no special festival days, then what is the point of all the religious activity that we see? For the most part, it is the worship of the divinities or gods. The Supreme God, it is often said, has turned over the affairs of this earth to lesser beings, his wife, sons and daughters, as they are often called. In many African societies there is believed to be a whole host of such spiritual beings, the Yoruba of Nigeria listing as many as seventeen hundred of them. In some rather vague way they derive their power from the Supreme God, and manifest that power in the world of humans. This is one of the chief points at which divine power is in daily and close contact with the human world.

When Divinity is One and Many

Often such divinities are associated with natural phenomena, such as the sun, the storm clouds, the earth, the lakes and rivers, and the crops or livestock. People encounter the activity of these divinities at every significant turn in their daily routines. They are called upon for help with the food supply, for healing of disease and epidemics, for divining the future, for diagnosing problems in families and villages. Unlike the Supreme God, these divinities usually have their cadre of priests, their images and shrines, and their regular schedule of annual festivals. Sometimes these divinities show themselves as friends and helpers while at other times they are experienced as punitive and even vindictive. They must be honored according to their liking, cajoled and supplicated. Often this means the people must bring to them expensive sacrifices of animals and crops. Sometimes they possess people, and through that possession make known their will that the person dedicate a whole lifetime to their priesthood. They make people sick and they heal them; they cause abundance and they cause famine. One thing is certain, no one can ignore them, for it is in them, more than anywhere else, that supernatural power is encountered.[8]

Using categories derived from Western thought, it would appear that, at this level, African religion is polytheistic. But, there is serious question as to the adequacy of this designation. Some writers have gone to great length to show that all these divinities are only like attributes and manifestations of the Supreme God, thus painting a picture of a kind of diffused monotheism. However, other African scholars have said that this is not at all the case. In fact, they accuse the former of trying to justify the validity of African religion by conforming it to a Western and Muslim religious category, namely, monotheism. It is a difficult problem to sort through and to systematize. Perhaps it is better not to force terms like monotheism or polytheism upon this complex structure of African belief, for in doing so we seem to lose some of the richness and paradoxical quality of the African religious experience. One African scholar from Nigeria offers the following summary of this ambiguous problem:

> The correct interpretation of the position of the divinities is that they constitute only a half-way house which is not meant to be the permanent resting place for man's soul. While man may find the divinities "sufficient" for certain needs, something continues to warn him that "sufficiency" is only in Deity (God). Technically, the divinities are only a means to an end, and not an end in themselves.[9]

We move now to a third feature of African traditional religion, namely, the belief in spirits. Nearly everywhere we turn in Africa we observe that people simply take for granted the existence of non-embodied or disembodied beings. These are the spirits, and they are of many kinds and origins. Some are believed to have been created by God as a race of spirits, forever reproducing itself and increasing in numbers. Some are believed to inhabit various natural phenomena. There are tree spirits, spirits of the crops, spirits of the snakes and crocodiles, spirits associated with water sources, and spirits of the wild animals. In addition to these, there are those spirits that were once upon a time human beings, long ago dead and long ago forgotten by name. They are the nameless, faceless strangers who forever dwell in the forest or the bush outside the villages. Sometimes they are capricious and it takes a skillful religious specialist to determine how best to deal with them. Sometimes they want sacrifices, and if they don't get them the result will be sickness, madness, or some other form of vengeance upon those who have neglected them.[10]

The famous East African anthropologist, Louis B. Leakey, records an account about Kikuyu migrations southward in central Kenya in the late nineteenth century. As the people became more numerous, they needed more land to farm. They moved into a new territory, once occupied by another tribe. The territory was covered with thick forest. The first thing that they did was to conduct an elaborate ceremony through which they adopted all the people who might ever have been buried in that land to be their very own ancestors; that is, they made them Kikuyu. The idea was that the land belonged to the spirits of the people who were buried in it, and to take it without their permission would be the equivalent of stealing it, no matter what payment might

[8] Mbiti, *Concepts*, pp. 114 ff.

[9] E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1975), p. 171. Another helpful discussion of this problem may be found in Ray, pp. 50 ff.

[10] Mbiti, *Concepts*, pp. 123-127. See also his *African Religions and Philosophies*, pp. 102-107.

African traditional languages often have no word even a near equivalent to our word "religion." Religion is not a thing in itself or a separate part of life; it is a way of seeing everything.

be made. Such an action would certainly result in terrible retributions for the new occupants and make it impossible to live there. However, by adopting these spirits into their own tribe, the Kikuyu assured themselves of their blessing.[11]

The second ceremony that they performed was in preparation for the clearing of the forest for their little farms. In this ceremony they had to convince the spirits of the trees to move to another grove nearby, one which they assured the spirits would be much nicer for them than the one they were leaving. So the tree spirits were coaxed and cajoled into moving. Then and then only was it safe to establish residence and to begin clearing the land for farming.[12] Examples of this kind could be multiplied from many parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

When the Dead are Among the Living

Another important feature in African traditional religion is the firm belief that the dead whom the people have known and who have played so important a part in the life of the society continue to live in some disembodied form and continue to play a significant part in the communal life. They have died and left the earthly body, but they continue to live. John Mbiti calls them "the living dead."[13] Most authors have called them the ancestral spirits. These spirits are remembered by name and face. They are fathers and mothers and grandparents to the fourth and fifth generation. As long as there is someone around who knew them personally, so long must they be honored, respected, and oftentimes feared. Once there is no longer any one who remembers them, they seem to join that vast number of nameless and faceless spirits about whom we have already commented.

Almost everywhere there are ceremonies of communion with these living dead. Note that we are referring to these ceremonies as communing and not as worshipping. African authors have consistently pointed out that there is a big difference between worship, which is given only to God or divinities, and communion ceremonies, which are directed to the living dead. When the African is about to take his food, he will first toss a morsel over his shoulder and say something like, "grandfather spirits, eat and be happy with us." Or, before he takes his drink of palm wine, he will slosh a bit on the ground and say, "May our father and mother spirits drink palm wine and be happy." To give food or drink first to the elders is a necessary gesture of respect, and this necessity is extended also to those living dead, who though they have left the body are nonetheless powerfully present. Good relations with these spirits is sought in a multitude of daily gestures and ceremonies.

In many societies the living dead are the most powerful guardians of tribal custom and morality. The Supreme God does not watch over such details in the communal life, but the living dead watch very closely. After all, they are the ones who have preserved and passed on all the sacred customs and moral standards to the next generation, and they will not sit still for frivolous change or random neglect. If the laws of marriage and sexuality are violated, it is the living dead who will be offended and will bring punishment. If the ceremonies of initiation are not properly conducted, even if there be but a minor flaw in the ritual process, the spirits of the living dead will insist upon retribution and correction.[14]

Just how the living dead are thought about differs significantly from one group of people to the next. In some societies they seem to be mostly feared and placated; in others they are joyfully invited to join in all public ceremonial action. In some societies they are ignored until they get disturbed and cause trouble, whereupon the village pulls out all the stops to make them happy again and to get them off their backs. One thing is certain, the living dead are experienced by Africans as powerful agents, capable of blessing or cursing, and they must be taken seriously. A poet of Mali sums it up well.

> Those who are dead are never gone:
> they are there in the thickening shadow.
> The dead are not under the earth:
> they are in the tree that rustles,
> they are in the wood that groans,
> they are in the water that runs,
> they are in the water that sleeps,
> they are in the hut, they are in the crowd,
> the dead are not dead.
>
> Those who are dead are never gone,
> they are in the breast of the woman,
> they are in the child who is wailing,
> and in the firebrand that flames.
> The dead are not under the earth:
> they are in the fire that is dying,
> they are in the grasses that weep,
> they are in the whimpering rocks,
> they are in the forest, they are in the house,
> the dead are not dead.[15]

In this very brief presentation, we have had a glimpse of the spiritual life of traditional Africa. God, divinities, spirits, and the living dead—these are but a few of the important spiritual realities which have secured the past, which vitalize the present, and which will influence the shape of the future in Africa.

[11] L. S. B. Leakey, *Mau Mau and the Kikuyu* (London: Methuen and Company, Ltd., 1952), pp. 2-5.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

[13] Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophies*, pp. 107-110.

[14] For an overview of this topic see *Ibid.*, pp. 266 ff. See also Geoffrey Parrinder, *West African Religion*, pp. 115-127.

[15] Cited in Taylor, p. 160.

The Black Voice / Traditional and Contemporary African Literature

Susan Adams Brietzke

There is a Kongo proverb that says "the human heart is not a bag into which one may plunge one's hand," but this article must do just that.[1] I shall move back and forth across thousands of miles of sub-Saharan Africa and over hundreds of cultures across several centuries to pluck out some generalizations about African literature that may prove useful. I have chosen sub-Saharan Africa largely because my own African experience was there and because, with the exceptions of Ethiopia and Liberia, this enormous area has lived, and in the case of much of southern Africa continues to live, under European colonialism. The implications of this shared colonial experience for modern writing in English will be touched upon in the discussion of the themes that dominate recent writing from Africa.

I propose to deal first with traditional African literature, that is, the oral tradition in pre-literate Africa. Second, I shall comment on the arrival of the European colonialist and his attitudes toward the African and, more importantly, what colonialism meant for the African's attitude toward himself and his own culture. Third, I shall examine how the African writing in English has struggled to regain his lapsed self-respect and that of his "Europeanised" countrymen and how he continues to function as a powerful force for self-examination and change in modern independent Africa. Finally, I shall look at how Black writers in South Africa have used their pens to great effect and continue to be harassed, banned, jailed, exiled, or murdered for their writing.

We have largely lost touch with our oral tradition in this country. We tuck our poetry and stories between hard covers rather than share them orally; it often embarrasses us to read aloud. Drama still tends to be a thing we watch performed on a stage. We would feel foolish answering the radio or television. However, when we go to hear a folk singer, tell children's stories, or participate in many Black American religious services, we are taking part in the oral tradition. The oral tradition remains important to much of Africa, though it spent its colonial years cleansing itself of much of its "primitive" heritage.

Essentially, pre-colonial sub-Saharan Africa was preliterate; that is, there was no written language available and no felt need for one. There were a few exceptions, especially a small literature in Arabic script among the Swahili, but nothing of great consequence. Entertainment, history, ritual, and news reporting were oral, and the forms they took were a matter of very great pride. Most recently, Alex Haley in *Roots* made us aware of one important aspect of African oral tradition when he sought out the *griot* in The Gambia and traced his ancestor, Kunta Kinte. As literate people we have let our memories atrophy, but histories and legends of astonishing length and complexity live on today in Africa as they do in parts of eastern Europe among some nonliterate singers. The oral literature takes many forms: work songs, children's songs and lullabies, praises, religious songs, elegies, fables, myths, and proverbs.

It is important to understand that there are no static or fixed versions of stories in the oral tradition. There is enormous latitude for creativity in each performance. No two tellings will be exactly the same, and elements will be shifted, embellished, or eliminated according to the audience's tastes and the personality of the performer. Nor does the performer sit back under a tree and puff at his pipe; he often accompanies himself on an instrument, engages his audience as a chorus, and may act out the narrative using his face and voice to full effect. The oral historian or the praise singer may be a professional story-teller attached to a court, but more likely he will be a free-lance, wandering minstrel. Of course, much of this literature belongs to everyone and is an important part of everyday life.

Praise songs are a common and impressive part of traditional and modern African life. The subject of the panegyric is enormously variable. In the following extract the rhythm comes through despite the translation; there would almost certainly be drum accompaniment. Ogun is the Yoruba god of iron-making and war.

> Ogun kills on the right and destroys on the right
> Ogun kills on the left and destroys on the left
> Ogun kills suddenly in the house and suddenly in the field
> Ogun kills the child with the iron with which it plays . . .
> Ogun, the fire that sweeps the forest
> Ogun's laughter is no joke.
> Ogun eats two hundred earthworms and does not vomit.[2]

[1] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 519.

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The majority of early colonialists viewed Africans as a race born to serve. They were, after all, sons of Ham, and it was thought they were incapable of anything approaching civilization.

Panegyric has a natural place in the courts of the traditional chiefs, but it is equally at home in modern Africa at national ceremonies when the praises of Senghor, Kamuzu Banda, Mugabe, or political hopefuls are in order. There is another aspect of this praise-singing which may be fading to some extent and that is the singer's historical license to criticize or even insult where he sees fit. This might have been a suicidal option at the courts of Amin or Bokassa.

The Ethiopians take enormous pride in the clever manipulation of one of their principal languages, Amharic. They love to build layer upon layer of meaning through complex metaphor. They call this *sam enna work* or "wax and gold": one must melt off the wax before discovering the nugget of inner meaning. We had firsthand experience of this in our early days in Ethiopia when an Ethiopian friend took us to one of the many small one-room bars that are such a fixture in African urban areas. An Ethiopian woman, an *azmari* or praise singer, was singing rather beautifully amid one clutch of people and then moving on to another. When she came to us, Andargatchew licked a dollar note and stuck it on her forehead and had a few words with her in Amharic of which we were totally innocent in those days. She then turned to us and began to sing our praises in Amharic much to the delight of Andargatchew and the others in the bar. We grinned and shuffled and were relieved when she had finished. Andargatchew then translated and did a critique of her style, her clever turns of phrase. He, at any rate, felt he had got his dollar's worth and done right by his guests.[3]

Oral Literature in Pre-Literate Africa

I should now like to turn briefly to proverb as an African art form. African conversation and story-telling employ a dense web of figurative expressions and this language has often enriched the work of the African writer in English. The proverb is an important expression of this figurative language. Proverbs are teaching devices; how often we caution with "the pot calling the kettle black" or "people in glass houses . . ." In using proverbs we fall back on the unassailable folk wisdom of our culture. One African version of the "pot calling the kettle black" is from the Nyanja of central Africa: "Baboons laugh at each other's backsides." The following is another version of "Rome wasn't built in a day": "One day is not sufficient to rot an elephant." And from southern Africa: "A wife is like a blanket; when you cover yourself it irritates you, and yet if you cast it aside, you feel cold."[4] The oral tradition lives on in Africa, sometimes in ancient forms and frequently in a very updated, twentieth-century guise. It is well to note that, at a very rough estimate, eight out of ten Africans are still non-literate in either a European or an indigenous language.

What happened when the white man "discovered" Africa? In the early years of colonial intrusion, his acquisition of slaves was his first interest. But other interests were operating—the pursuit of glory for king and empire, the trade potential (clothing the savages, after all, meant an enormous market for fabrics), the possibility of vast untapped natural resources, the Christian duty to bring the savages to God, and (a motive which still is strong in many parts of Africa) the opportunity to exploit the marvelous advantage of cheap labor. The majority of early colonialists viewed Africans as a people born to serve; Africans were, after all, the sons of Ham, and it was thought that they were incapable of anything approaching civilization. These notions were supported by such people as Kipling (who wrote about the Indian natives) and Gobineau in his infamous "Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races." Gobineau puts the black man at the bottom of the scale of human beings and describes him emphatically as a creature born for sensual gratification and totally incapable of intellectual activity. Given this sort of white literature, the early colonialists forged ahead with no qualms. The notion of black inferiority was rarely examined, for to do so would be to question the white man's position in Africa and his sacred calling to bear the white man's burden.

Indeed, the colonialist and the missionary brought with them some very useful things; modern medicine comes immediately to mind. Tucked among the medications in the colonialist's portmanteau, however, was Christianity and the firm belief that the pagan images must be smashed and the savages given a crack at salvation. Overtly, in most cases, and certainly always by implication, the African who came into contact with the European learned to recognize that his was a primitive and barbaric way of life and that the only hope for him was to reject his cultural heritage, his clan, his ancestors, his family, and everything that made his world go round.

The explorer Sir Richard Burton tells of early nineteenth-century colonial attitudes:

> The savage custom of going naked, we are told, has denuded the mind, and destroyed all decorum in the language. Poetry there is

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 113-14.

[3] There is an example of praise-singing keeping pace with the times. The following short praise seems to me to have a charm quality about it. A South African is praising a thing of which he is very proud and on which he depends heavily.

> My frail bicycle . . .
> Horse of the Europeans, feet of tyre,
> Iron horse, swayer from side to side. *Ibid.* p. 145.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 396-410.

As literate people we have let our memories atrophy, but histories and legends of astonishing length and complexity live on orally in Africa today as they do in parts of Eastern Europe.

none. . . . There is no meter, no rhyme, nothing that interests or soothes the feelings, or arrests the passions. . . .[5]

As late as the 1850s, a collector of oral literature writes with some sense of revelation:

Now as the Grammar proves that African languages are capable of expressing human thoughts—some of them, through their rich formal development, even with an astonishing precision—so specimens like the following . . , show that the Africans actually have thoughts to express, that they reflect and reason about things just as other men.[6]

I think it is important to note that this astonishing idea that Africans "reflect and reason about things just as other men" springs from an examination of African language and oral literature.

This astonishment is a serious indictment of the blindness of the white colonialist, and modern African writers now feel it their duty to restore what one hundred years of presumed black inferiority leached out of their cultural identity. According to their own lights, however, the colonialists were the saviors of the benighted people of Africa. As the colonial government grew, upsetting the native way of life, the missionaries as teachers offered a new system of allegiances to fill the vacuum created by the disruption of the native way of life by the white masters. Central to an understanding of the new white masters was a knowledge of that powerful acculturating tool—language, the white man's language.

But what happens to your notion of yourself when your medium of reasoning becomes an alien language—a *lingua franca*? What happens when you realize that you cannot communicate with the power structure of your world in the language you learned at your mother's knee? More especially, what happens when you realize that your language and the culture it represents is an object of scorn to your masters? This is the position of the detribalized Africans who now fill the urban areas, do business, teach, run the government, and write.

This question of language and cultural disintegration brings me to the dilemma of the modern detribalized African writer in English. For the moment, I shall deal with independent African countries. Many Africans, of course, have developed fluency in English and for a few it is now their first and only language. In the urban areas where members of various tribes mix, English is a useful common language and it has taken on a distinctive African flavor—especially the so-called pidgin of West Africa and the South African street talk. But can a real African literature be molded in a foreign language? Can the African writer turn his back on the 800-odd indigenous African languages? Simply, yes. He must in order to gain the largest readership in his own country and to reach the educated elite whom he often criticizes. The African writer concerns himself with political and social issues at the same time that he tries to treat the related issue of his traditional heritage. Independent African countries have a keen appreciation of the power of literature to expose delicate issues and to influence public debate.

Négritude Among Francophone Africans

The question of the loss of tradition became an important consideration of a Pan African group in the 1930s; they formulated a new style of writing for Blacks called *Négritude*. Dominant figures here were West Indian Aimé Cesaire, Americans Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes, and West Africa's francophone Léopold Senghor and David Diop. Traditional African culture, they argued, must be taken out and admired. Africa is beautiful. Black is beautiful. A great deal of poetry from both sides of the Atlantic grew out of this notion. This movement is the basic force responsible for the existence of such groups as Chicago's Muntu Dancers. These dancers are American Blacks asserting their own special claim to the African heritage and the beauty of Blackness and Black culture. *Négritude* images dwelt heavily on the Earth Mother Africa, the beauty of Black women, the rhythm of the elements. The Congo River began to represent the umbilicus: Senghor (the same Senghor who has been President of Senegal since independence) combines some of these ideas with an assertion of the superiority of the oral tradition:

Ho, Congo, to weave your name into
generous rhythms
Over waters, rivers and the whole of memory

[5] R. F. Burton, *Wit and Wisdom from West Africa; or, a Book of Proverbial Philosophy, Idioms, Enigmas, and Laconisms* (London, 1865), p. xiii, quoted in Finnegan, p. 26.

[6] S. W. Koelle, *African Native Literature; or, Proverbs, Tales, Fables and Historical Fragments in the Kanuri or Bornu Language* (London, 1854), pp. vi-vii, quoted in Finnegan, p. 529.

Papering Over Our Faults

The *Cresset* apologizes to all its subscribers for the flimsy paper stock erroneously used to print our October issue and especially to Professor Jerry Uelsmann whose photographs suffered poor reproduction in that issue because of the weak opacity of the paper. Any subscriber whose October issue arrived in a damaged condition should let us know that unhappy fact with a postcard, and we will speedily send a fresh copy in a first class mailing envelope free of charge. Meanwhile, we have every assurance from our printers that they will restore the *Cresset* to quality paper stock as soon as new supplies are secured. **The Editor**

An African version of "Pot calling the kettle black" is "Baboons laugh at each other's backsides" and a version of "Rome wasn't built in a day" is "One day is not sufficient to rot an elephant."

> Let me wake to the voice of *koras* [the storyteller's stringed instrument]
> The scribe's ink has no memory.[7]

Négritude was powerful in the 1940s and 1950s, especially among francophone Africans, and it served the important function of bolstering national feeling in the days leading up to independence. The English-speaking African writings benefited from and participated in the *Négritude* movement, but bridled at the term. The Nigerian writer Soyinka said: "A tiger does not go about shouting his tigritude." Their attacks on *Négritude,* especially in the early 1960s, became bitter. Opponents stressed the importance of bringing Africans into the realities of the twentieth century. There is no going back to notions of the idyllic past, they argued. It is necessary to become selective, to take what is the best and most useful from both cultures.

At independence there was a small educated Black elite in most countries; many had taken university degrees in the metropolitan countries. African writers in independent countries have continued their role as preservers of the culture, but they are instrumental, too, in creating a new African cultural identity. Like the praise singers of old who exercised their right to insult and criticize, writers function as the watchdogs and the interpreters of social change. They frequently zero in on the Black elites who have taken over the government. I wish to consider first some West African modern writers, then I shall turn to East Africa and, finally, to South Africa.

The Nigerian Chinua Achebe comes immediately to mind. He is the elder statesman of modern African literature. His novels are standard reading in all African schools and his themes are taken up again and again by younger writers—the cataclysmic meeting of Africa and the West, the dire consequences of this meeting several generations later, and corruption in business and government. In *Things Fall Apart,* his first and perhaps finest novel, Achebe achieves a remarkable feat: he translates the figurative quality of traditional Ibo into English. "Proverbs," writes Achebe in the novel, "are the palm oil with which words are eaten."[8] The central figure, Okonkwo, is a successful man who prides himself on his ability to control his life within his traditional African social structure. When the West touches his village for the first time, turns his son against him, and undermines the central authority of the clan, Okonkwo kills a white man's messenger out of frustration and then commits suicide. The postscript to the novel is moving for a number of reasons. After we have lived through Okonkwo's life—his despair at the disintegration of the clan and finally his own suicide—it is the white man who has the final word. As the District Commissioner walks away from Okonkwo's dangling body, the tragedy of this human being is very far indeed from his mind:

> In the many years in which he had toiled to bring civilization to different parts of Africa he had learnt a number of things. One of them was that a District Commissioner must never attend to such undignified details as cutting down a hanged man from the tree. Such attention would give the natives a poor opinion of him. In the book which he planned to write he would stress this point. As he walked back to the court he thought about that book. The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate.[9]

But the story of Okonkwo's clan is not finished. Okonkwo's grandson, Obi, in Achebe's novel *No Longer at East,* is the pride of the village.[10] The villagers have struggled to send him to England to take a university degree and now they hope to reap the rewards of having their representative in the city. But on a civil servant's salary, Obi cannot satisfy the demands of his clan that he display all the luxurious material advantages they expect of one returning from the white man's country. His personal integrity fails him; he takes bribes and is caught. The novel explores the personal flaw, but it also explores the flaw in the "fit" between traditional and Western culture.

Detribalized Black Writers in English

Ayi Kwei Armah's novel *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* considers in more detail the issue of corruption and the problem of the many Black politicians and bureaucrats who stepped into the molds of their European counterparts. His novel is set in Ghana in the days preceding the overthrow of Nkrumah's regime. The Ghanian people felt they had been betrayed by their politicians whose interests did not extend beyond lining their own pockets. Armah's dominant image is decay and putrefaction. His hero, who remains nameless—perhaps because he is only a shadow, a man out of his own time—lives in a sort of limbo. The man is a booking clerk in a railroad cargo office and, despite pressures from family, he is incapable of accepting bribes and thereby bettering himself. There is wonderful irony in the scene where the fat Black businessman offers him a bribe to book his lumber on the next train and the man refuses:

> "I will not take it" he said, too quietly, perhaps. . . .
>
> "Look, I mean it. I offer you three times. Is good money."

[7] L. S. Senghor, "Congo," *African Voices,* P. Rutherford, ed. (New York: Vanguard Press, 1960), p. 166. Translations of this poem may differ dramatically.

[8] Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann, 1958), p. 6.

[9] *Ibid.,* p. 187.

[10] Chinua Achebe, *No Longer at Ease* (London: Heinemann, 1960).

What happens to your notion of yourself when your medium of reasoning becomes an alien language and you realize that your native language and the culture it represents are objects of scorn?

"I know."

"Then take it."

"No." The man shook his head very gently, but there was a finality in the gesture which even the visitor could no longer mistake.

"You refuse?"

"Yes."

The frown on the visitor's face made it impossible to judge whether the grimace was one of contempt or self-pity. His hand touched the money lying on the table and stopped there.

"But why," he shouted, "Why do you treat me so? What have I done against you? . . . What's wrong?"

"Wrong?"

"Yes, my friend. Why do you behave like that?"

"I don't know."

The man was left alone with thoughts of the easy slide and how everything said there was something miserable, something unspeakably dishonest about a man who refused to take and to give what everyone around was busy taking and giving, something that was criminal for who but a criminal could ever be left with such a feeling of loneliness?"[11]

One more West African must be mentioned because, in my opinion, he is the greatest writer that Africa has yet produced. Wole Soyinka is a poet, essayist, playwright, actor, critic, and novelist from Nigeria. The reason his fame is international may be that his plays, while always set against an unmistakably African backdrop, deal with timeless human issues—greed, lust, power, and pride. The following is from a short poem he wrote about looking for a room during his student days in England. The pain and frustration are almost palpable as he speaks from an English telephone booth. It is called "Telephone Conversation."

The price seemed reasonable, location
Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived
Off premises. Nothing remained
But self-confession. "Madam," I warned,
"I hate a wasted journey—I am African."
Silence. Silenced transmission of
Pressurised good-breeding. Voice, when it came,
Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled
Cigarette-holder pipped. Caught I was, foully.
"HOW DARK?" . . . I had not misheard. . . . "ARE YOU LIGHT
OR VERY DARK?" Button B. Button A. Stench
of rancid breath of public hide-and-speak.
Red Booth. Red pillar-box. Red double-tiered
Omnibus squelching tar. It *was* real! Shamed
By ill-mannered silence, surrender
Pushed dumbfoundment to beg simplification.
Considerate she was, varying the emphasis—
"ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT?" Revelation came.
"You mean—like plain or milk chocolate?"[12]

[11] Ayi Kwei Armah, *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (London: Heinemann, 1968), pp. 36-7.

[12] Wole Soyinka, "Telephone Conversation," *An Introduction to West African Literature,* Oladele Taiwo, ed. (London: Nelson, 1967), p. 97.

I shall mention only two of the many East African writers and they are both Kenyans, Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Okot p'Bitek. Ngugi was very much in the news two years ago when he was imprisoned in Kenya after the publication of his latest novel *Petals of Blood*.[13] His novels express his interest in the effects of independence in the rural areas and the politicians' betrayal of the people's trust. His line of argument in his latest novel has a distinctly Marxist flavor, rare among African writers in English.

A Protest Against Westernization

P'Bitek is a poet and a member of the Achole tribe in a country where the Kikuyu tribe has long dominated. He is a lawyer and an anthropologist currently teaching at the University of Nairobi. His *Song of Lawino* is standard fare in many African classrooms now and was originally written in his native Achole language. It uses a traditional lament form and is the protest of a village woman against the Westernization of both her husband and her country. Her song covers many aspects of the Western world which she has brushed against. She comments on her husband:

My husband pours scorn
On Black People,
He behaves like a hen
That eats its own eggs
A hen that should be imprisoned under a basket.[14]

The Western concept of time confuses her; she does not comprehend that one must be on time, that one can count time's passing, and especially that one can waste time.

[Time] does not flow
Like beer in a pot
That is sucked
Until it is finished.

It does not resemble
A loaf of millet bread
It does not get finished
Like vegetables in a dish.[15]

Christianity in the form of the local Catholic mission baffles her. The apparent cannibalism of the Eucharist offends her and she finds the notion of the immaculate conception a particularly difficult idea to accept. Intertribal feuding, a very divisive tendency in some African countries, does not escape her notice:

And while the pythons of sickness
Swallow the children
And the buffalos of poverty

[13] Ngugu Wa Thiongo, *Petals of Blood* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978).

[14] Okot p' Bitek, *Song of Lawino* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1966), pp. 16-17.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

Many contemporary African writers now feel it their duty to restore what the white colonialists leached out of their cultural identity during one hundred years of presumed black inferiority.

Knock the people down
And ignorance stands there
Like an elephant,

The war leaders
Are tightly locked in bloody feuds,
Eating each other's liver . . .[16]

Song of Lawino was banned in Malawi in the early 1970s; clearly Lawino's criticism of Black politicians rubbed them the wrong way.

Finally, I want to turn to South Africa, a vast and rich country still in the tenacious grip of white colonialists. The Black writer's plight here is a tragic one, but it does not prevent him from risking his life to write. Of the many fine South African writers, I choose two representatives: Dennis Brutus (Brutus delivered the keynote address for the Africa Forum at Valparaiso University) and Can Themba. They were both educated in South Africa and both were teachers (it was in the classroom that Brutus first ran up against the apartheid government). Themba turned to journalism and short-story writing; Brutus primarily wrote poetry. Brutus was imprisoned in South Africa and then exiled by the government which banned his works. Themba went into voluntary exile only to have his writings later banned also. Themba, whose work centered on Black issues in the urban areas, succumbed to despair after the banning of his work and died an alcoholic at the age of 44. Brutus, however, has never stopped writing and speaking since his exile and has become a powerful anti-apartheid voice outside South Africa.

Anti-Apartheid Voices in South Africa

Themba described his relaxed and spontaneous style as a self-corrosive cynicism. He performed a risky experiment while working as a journalist for *Drum*, a popular Black magazine, by visiting various white churches on several Sunday mornings where the policy of apartheid very much extends to services of worship. At a Dutch Reformed Church (a conservative Afrikaaner Protestant group) the deacon laid an ambush for him. Themba, to his surprise, was permitted to stay for the service, but when he left there was a Police Special Branch car waiting for him. Themba writes:

Inside the car a thick-set man said, "What are you people trying to do?" I kept quiet. "You are from *Drum*, are you not?" I remained quiet. "I'm Major Spengler, Special Branch." I was impressed. "Are you a member of the African National Congress?" [a prohibited Black organization]

"No."

"Any other organization?"

"No. Only Drum" . . .

Then an old lady from the outcoming congregation was saying, "Where is he? Where is he? I've got to see him." She bent down to look into the car. She looked at me and said, "*Jou* Satan!" . . .

Next day the Special Branch quizzed the Editor, asked him if he believed in apartheid! All this police action just because a Non-white wanted to go to church.[17]

Dennis Brutus's work, on the other hand, shows an enormous amount of control. His poetry covers a broad range of subjects; he is well-traveled and has found inspiration for his work in many countries. There are many superb love poems. Perhaps because his activities outside of writing are trained on breaking the apartheid regime, he does not feel the need to fill his poems with his deepest political concerns. In the following poem, however, I believe we do get an insight into the pain of an exile committed to a country that he cannot return to:

I *am* the exile
am the wanderer
the troubadour . . .

Gentle I am, and calm
and with abstracted pace
absorbed in planning,
courteous to servility

but wailings fill the chambers of my heart
and in my head
behind my quiet eyes
I hear the cries and the sirens.[18]

In conclusion, I should like to mention an important new contribution to African literature. I wrote earlier that I feel Wole Soyinka is Africa's greatest writer to date. Once again, in his lengthy poem *Ogun Abibiman* he has spoken in his strong African voice. Soyinka, always at home with tradition, invokes Ogun, the God of War, to deal the death blow to the apartheid South African Government and restore Abibiman, the Black Nation. I think this is an important literary acknowledgment by independent Africa that the struggle in southern Africa is the vital issue of the day for all of Africa. Soyinka's synthesis of several elements seems to me perfect; the poem is modeled on the age-old African panegyric and war song, the African gods and heroes take center stage and yet the subject matter is the Africa of today and tomorrow:

In time of strength, the elephant stands alone
In time of hunt, the lion's grace is holy
In time of flight, the egret mocks the envious
In time of strife, none vie with Him
Of seven paths, Ogun, who to right a wrong
Emptied reservoirs of blood in heaven
Yet raged with thirst—I read
His savage beauty on black brows,
In depths of molten bronze aflame
Beyond the eyes' fixated distances
And tremble![19]

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 196.

[17] Can Themba, *The Will to Die* (London: Heinemann, 1972), pp. 75-76.

[18] Dennis Brutus, *A Simple Lust* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1973), p. 137.

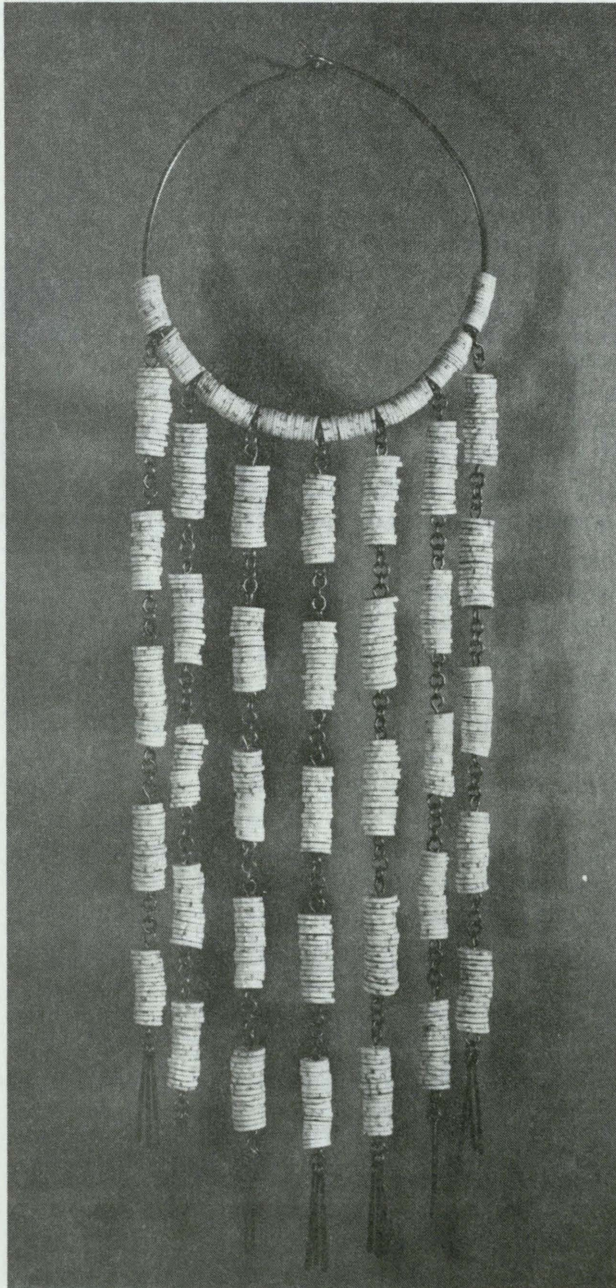
[19] Wole Soyinka, *Ogun Abibiman* (London: Rex Collings, 1976), p. 22.

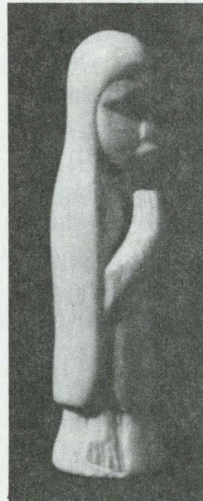
Valparaiso University Art Exhibit

Jack A. Hiller

ARTIFACTS FROM THE AFRICA FORUM

The photographs on these two pages and on the cover are of works selected from a large exhibit of African art assembled by Mss. Susan Brietzke and Jessie Hiller for the Valparaiso University Africa Forum. The works seen here try to capture the range and variety of the works in the exhibit, many of which were loaned to the exhibit from the art collections of University friends.

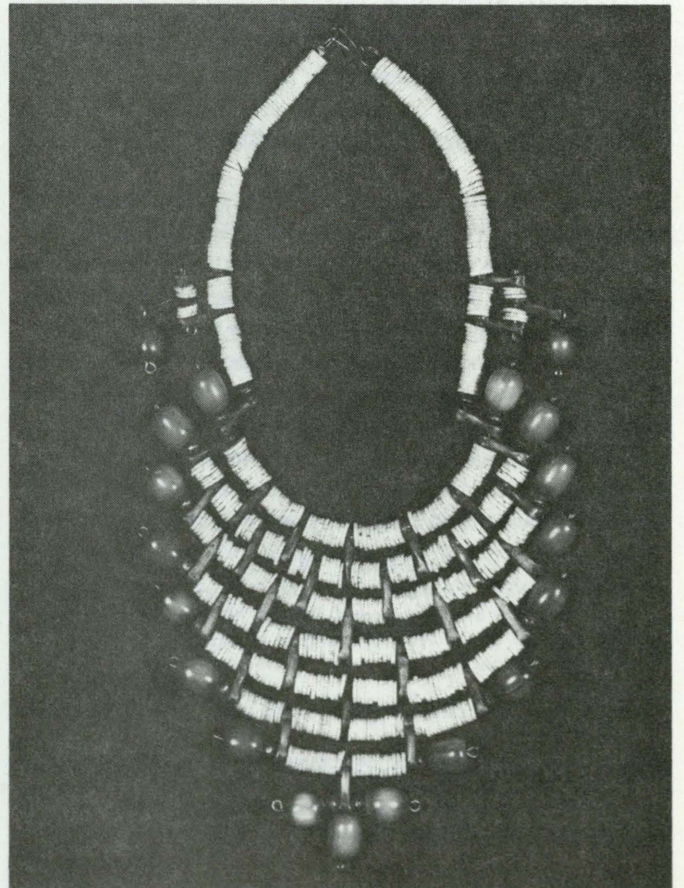




Page 20: Left, *Necklace.* Ostrich shell and brass. 18 in. Kenya, 1974. Center, *Praying Figure.* Ivory. 2¼ in. Makonde (Tanzania), 1966. Bottom, *Necklace.* Amber, bone, ostrich shell, and brass. 14 in. Kenya, 1974.

Page 21: Left, *Comb.* Ebony. 8¼ in. Makonde (Tanzania), mid-twentieth century. Right, *Comb.* Ivory. 7½ in. Probably Kamba (Kenya), mid-twentieth century.

Photographs of the African art in this issue are by Jessie L. and Jack A. Hiller and by Richard H. W. Brauer.



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The Long Shadows Of Colonialism

The Economic Legacy and Prospects of Africa

James A. Bernard, Jr.

To understand the economic evolution of Africa in modern times as well as its contemporary economic problems and future prospects, it is necessary to draw attention to certain unique features of Africa which mark her off not only from the industrialized countries, but also from the rest of the Third World. These features have shaped her past, condition her present, and are likely to cast long shadows on her path into the future.

The first of these features is that most of Africa has been for decades, and continues to be, economically the most disadvantaged part of the world. World per capita income figures sharply separate Latin America from the rest of the newly developing world and suggest a parity of underdevelopment for Asia and Africa. While the economic backwardness of Africa makes the task of development immensely difficult, it also offers her the opportunity to learn from the experience of others and the possibility to avoid their mistakes.

The second feature of African experience that should be emphasized is the impact of colonialism. Although the great majority of the developing countries have at one time or another shared in the colonial experience, some features of the experience have been unique to Africa. Whereas colonialism in other continents goes back three to four hundred years, in Africa it has been a relatively modern phenomenon, in many cases dating back less than a hundred years. Furthermore, although African countries were among the last to attain political independence, decolonialization was brought about with a speed and abruptness which had no parallel in other parts of the colonial world. Finally, in contrast to the Asian experience, colonialism in many parts of Africa was either preceded or followed by the settlement of large numbers of Europeans from the metropolitan countries into the newly conquered colonies. This was, for instance, the case in Algeria, Tunisia, Kenya, Tanganyika, Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, the Belgian Congo, South Africa, South-West Africa, and the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique.

These two special features of the colonial experience have had a profound impact on African society and economy. The relatively short duration of African colonialism meant that myriad changes—much the same changes as those imposed by Western technology on simple and static Asian societies which could adjust to them at a leisurely pace over a period of two to three hundred years—had to be telescoped in Africa into a matter of five to six decades. The shattering impact of colonialism in Africa was further reinforced by the arrival of hundreds of thousands of settlers, who proceeded, in league with the metropolitan powers, to dispossess the local inhabitants of their land and to compel them to seek livelihood as wage earners on their farms. Whereas most Asian societies slowly developed durable institutions and structures which could withstand the onslaught of Western technology and culture, the African societies were fragile, often collapsing from the shock waves of Western technology and culture. Thus, whenever indigenous institutions and structures were replaced by modern ones, the latter tended, in Africa much more than in Asia, to resemble Western models.

The third special feature of the African situation is also a result of European colonialism and settlement. Although much of Africa moved swiftly to independence from colonial rule in the sixties, there continued to be in the seventies large areas of Africa under explicit or implicit white minority rule, e.g., South Africa, Angola, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), and Namibia. These countries account for between 25 and 30 per cent of the total gross product of Africa and thus no meaningful discussion of Africa's economic future can occur without considering the impact of the evolution of Southern Africa on the development of the rest of the continent. At stake are the prospects for economic and political co-operation among independent African countries and the distribution and diversion of their resources for long term economic growth and development.

The foundations of the modern sectors in the economies of almost all the African countries were laid during the colonial period. Thus the present structure of African economies as well as the path of development

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A high degree of economic integration was imposed during the colonial period, and a return to economic integration can be a starting point for a long-run economic strategy in the future.

were largely determined during this period. Despite the efforts made in some countries in the sixties and seventies to modify this structure, the economies of virtually all the African countries continue to display the characteristic features of a colonial economy. The colonial pattern of economic modernization and expansion in Africa took essentially three forms: (1) the creation of a modern economy through the settlement of immigrants from the metropolitan powers and from other parts of the colonial empire, (2) the exploitation of the resources of the country by mining companies, plantations, and trading companies made possible by the infusion of external capital and enterprise, and (3) the growth of cash-crop production by peasant farmers. Although most economies combined elements of all three patterns of growth, the dominant form of economic expansion tended to place them in one category or the other.

Growth without Development in Africa

Growth through the large-scale immigration of settlers from the metropolitan powers was a feature of such countries as Algeria, Kenya, Rhodesia, Mozambique, and South Africa, and to a lesser extent of Tunisia, Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia, and Belgian Congo. By one means or another, the settlers succeeded in appropriating vast tracts of land for large-scale modern farming. At the same time the presence of relatively large numbers of high-income groups led to a substantial development of the manufacturing and service sectors. However, typically the indigenous population remained outside the islands of prosperity created by the immigrants. The administration of the country, and the ownership and management of modern enterprises in commerce, industry, and agriculture remained almost wholly in the hands of expatriates and European and Asian settlers. Even the production of cash-crops by African peasants was discouraged by official policy in most of these countries. Thus the participation of Africans in the modern sectors of the economy took the form of unskilled labor.

It was possible for countries in this group to achieve high rates of economic growth as long as there was a substantial infusion of capital, skills, and enterprise from abroad. But once the change of circumstances made this difficult, there was a dramatic reversal of their economic prospects. The coming of political independence to countries such as Algeria and Kenya brought an end to this pattern of development and led in the years immediately preceding and following independence to economic stagnation caused by the massive flight of capital and the emigration of large numbers of European settlers and officials. The other countries of substantial European settlement are in Southern Africa and have been able to maintain high rates of economic expansion by reliance largely on European skills, capital, and management, and the exploitation of black labor by a series of restrictions on their economic activities.

The second characteristic pattern of colonial capitalist penetration took the form of investment in mining and agriculture by what have since come to be known as the multinational corporations. The prototype of this pattern of economic expansion took the form of exploitation of minerals, but some cases extended to plantation agriculture. Countries experiencing economic transformation by this mode included Northern Rhodesia (copper), Belgian Congo (copper and diamonds), Liberia (rubber and iron), Mauritania (iron), Guinea (aluminum), Gabor (petroleum and manganese), and Libya (petroleum). While heavily dependent on one or two products, countries in this group managed to sustain high rates of economic growth based on the exploitation of their mineral resources. However, during the colonial period the mining sector remained an alien enclave meeting most of its input requirements by imports and disposing all of its output to markets overseas. Its impact on the domestic economy was confined to the limited generation of local employment and additional public revenues. A very substantial proportion of the high profits earned in mining was repatriated to overseas investors.

THE CRESSET REPRINTS

The Makonde and Their Sculpture

Jack A. Hiller

The twelve page reprint contains the full text of Dr. Hiller's essay on the Makonde and their sculpture and features seventeen photographs of significant works of Makonde sculpture. The reprint is especially valuable for courses in African art, African studies programs, and Black studies programs. A sample copy is *free* when requested with a 15¢ stamped and self-addressed 9 x 12 mailing envelope.

The Cresset
Valparaiso University
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30¢ per copy

Perhaps the single most significant feature of the African economy today is its fragmentation into a number of politically distinct entities with only marginal economic links to one another.

This mode of economic expansion in the African context has been aptly described as "growth without development." While during the colonial period the expansion of the mining sector had limited impact on the rest of the economy, its potential for modernization of the total economy was quite considerable, with a different pattern of utilization of the resources generated by it. In the post-independence period, one African country after another has sought to increase the benefits derived from the mining sector by alterations in the ownership, taxation, price, and royalty arrangements as well as by insistence on training and employment of local staff in high-level jobs. However, in some African countries the pattern of distribution of benefits has remained essentially unchanged from colonial times.

The New Demand for African Energy

The third pattern of economic transformation took the form of cash-crop production and exports by peasant farmers. This form of growth was important in such diverse countries as Ghana (cocoa), Nigeria (cocoa and palm oil), Ivory Coast (coffee), and Uganda and Tanganyika (coffee and cotton). In contrast to the other two patterns, this form of development was based firmly on indigenous enterprise and capital. Although foreign companies and middlemen were important in the early stages of the development of peasant cash production in organizing the export of these crops, these functions were subsequently taken over by state marketing boards in most African countries. This pattern of development was important because it introduced millions of peasants to operating in the monetary sector of their economies. At the same time, during limited periods of favorable prices for tropical products, the expansion of peasant cash-crop production could generate high rates of economic growth. Furthermore, in contrast to the other two paths of growth, peasant production ensured a wide diffusion of the benefits of growth.

However, the limitations of reliance on peasant production for the generation of growth have become obvious in a number of countries. In the first place, most of the expansion in production has taken place by cultivation of additional land; the growth in the productivity of land and labor has been relatively limited. Secondly, where countries have attempted to attain high rates of production of export crops, they have often run into marketing problems which have cancelled out the effects of increased production by lower export prices. Finally, the levels of income derived from the production of cash-crops continue to be relatively low, owing to the use of traditional techniques of production and shortage of capital.

No matter what the dominant pattern of development, virtually all the African tropical countries on the eve of independence displayed in an extreme form the characteristic features of underdevelopment: low per-capita incomes; dominance of primary production in total output; dependence on primary products for exports and on imports for most manufactured consumer, intermediate, and capital goods; low development of physical and human infrastructure; and heavy reliance on imported manpower for most of the high-level jobs. In countries with substantial white immigrant populations the economy was somewhat more diversified, but the economic position of native Africans was even worse than in other African countries.

The attainment of political independence by most African countries in the late fifties, sixties, and seventies marks a watershed in the economic development of the continent. In the countries of substantial European settlement the whole basis of colonial economic policy had to be abandoned; in others, where European settlement was not important but European capital, skills, and enterprise were expected to play a central role in the creation of modern agriculture, mines, and industry, the old assumptions had to be revised in the light of many changes brought by independence. The post-independence period has been characterized in many countries by vigorous efforts to accelerate social and economic development, but the style and substance of policies have changed. In most cases the state is playing a more active role in promoting economic development. At the same time, important differences in economic ideology and approaches to development have emerged among African countries.

In the fifties most African economies were able to attain high rates of economic expansion fueled by the commodity boom of the post-war period and by substantial inflows of private capital and skilled immigrants in countries such as Kenya, the Rhodesias, Congo, Morocco, and Gabon. Toward the end of the decade, with a reversal in the prices of primary products, some of the dynamism evaporated from these economies and the imminence of independence caused large outflows of capital and skilled manpower. As a result the early sixties saw a slackened growth rate of African economies. Although economic growth accelerated in the later years of the sixties, the African economic performance in that decade was relatively disappointing.

Beginning in the late sixties and early seventies and continuing through the present, a resurgence in demand for minerals, particularly oil, and energy-related resources has stimulated export earnings of several African countries. A partial list of mineral rich areas would be: oil from Nigeria, Libya, and Algeria, copper from Zambia and Zaire, iron ore from Liberia, Guinea, and Mauritania, as well as cobalt from Zaire and bauxite

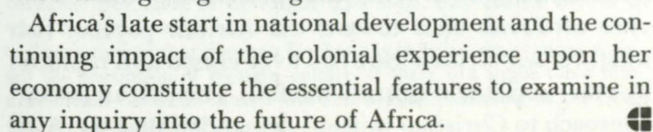
Some African leaders have taken a short term view of their nations' interests.

from Namibia. In light of these "new" demands for African minerals and energy resources it is not surprising to note a shift in African economic structure showing a reduction in the share of agriculture as a percentage of gross domestic product and an increase in mining as a percentage of GDP. While a resurgence of demand for African energy and mineral resources can stimulate needed export earnings revenues it is not sufficient to insure beneficial or orderly growth. Skilled management, long-range planning, efficient infrastructure and labor markets, etc., must be present to allow the most positive economic results for African peoples.

A potential route could be the re-emergence of closer intra-African trading regions or markets along economic rather than political lines. Perhaps the single most significant feature of the African economic scene is the fragmentation into a large number of politically distinct entities with only marginal economic links with each other. During the colonial period a high degree of economic integration was imposed. For instance, the vast French Empire in West and Central Africa was divided into two administrative and economic units: the West African Customs Union and the Equatorial African Customs Union. Within each unit of several colonies there was a common currency, free movement of trade, and a number of common services. There were similar arrangements in the Belgian Colonies of Congo and Rwanda-Burundi.

The Clash of Economics with Politics

In the British African Empire, the East African countries of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika had a common market, a common currency, and an impressive range of common services such as railways, airways, tax collection, research, and higher education. One of the unfortunate developments in the post-colonial period was the dismantling of many of those co-operative arrangements. A return to economic integration can be a starting point for a long-run economic strategy for Africa during the next several decades. This approach, however, is full of constraints and beset with many difficulties. The leaders in these countries take a fairly short-term view of their national interests, are reluctant to surrender sovereignty over crucial areas of economic policy, and often take the easy way out by withdrawing from co-operative arrangements whenever there is a clash of economic and political interests. Thus it is difficult, at best, to achieve continental economic links among neighboring countries.



Africa's late start in national development and the continuing impact of the colonial experience upon her economy constitute the essential features to examine in any inquiry into the future of Africa.

Best Friend

I wake and cannot face
another day, yet
when I hear his truck
I rise to greet my neighbor.
He comes with summer hanging
from his hips, gifts
from his garden: lettuce,
tomatoes, summersquash.
He says they're lining up
for water in the town;
he says he saw a fawn.
I blink and think: doesn't he see
that I'm not here? Familiar
sounds drop from my lips.
My image does the expected.
He talks. I nod. We drink beer
by the old maple. This is
how it's been for twenty years.
It will go on this way. He says
I'm his best friend.

Rudolph Wittenberg

Why?

I whipped that word across my desk
all afternoon; flattened it at last
with heel and fist before retiring.
Fatally, I wished, but non-expiring
it resumed to taunt, to plea
till sleepless, braced with tea
and understandably piqued
I undertook to squash that plague
decisively—with energy.

No giving in nor lethargy
at last resulted from my beating
it with bottles, broom, and heating
iron.
Still clear of eye
and firmly fleshed, *Why?*
lived on quite literally
persnickety and unabashed.

Lois Reiner

By Fire and Spirit / The Maturing of the Church in Africa

James A. Scherer

When we remember that Christianity in Africa is still a relatively young phenomenon, our first and dominant impression of African Christianity today is its tremendous numerical growth. In the late nineteenth century there were relatively few Christians in the whole continent of Africa, and even by 1900 there were perhaps no more than four million, with most of them in the ancient church of Ethiopia. Eighty years later we see a thriving, growing, and dynamic Christian community in most of Black Africa.

The present population of Africa is approximately four hundred million, and it is expected to reach nearly a billion in twenty years. The Christian population is now between ninety and ninety-five million. That is evidence of great growth in less than three generations, and the projections are that the increase in the number of Christians in Africa will be more or less twice that of the general population increase. There could be as many as three hundred fifty or four hundred million Christians in Africa by the end of the century. That is, there will be as many Christians in Africa as there are people in Africa now.

An example of such extraordinary growth is the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (the name means "House of Jesus") in Ethiopia. It was a church with twenty-five thousand members in 1958 and today has risen to over five hundred thousand members. That means it has doubled almost five times in twenty years. The Lutheran Church in Tanzania in 1958 was a little over three hundred thousand members and today numbers eight hundred thousand members. In Madagascar, the Lutheran Church in 1958 numbered two hundred nineteen thousand and in 1980 was about five hundred thousand. If one translates these sample statistics into church growth figures in North America, there would be more Christians than there are people! And we wouldn't have enough church buildings and pastors—which is exactly the problem that many African churches are facing. Our first impression of African Christianity is that of exceedingly rapid numerical growth. That growth has tremendous potential for the future, but it also raises some serious problems.

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The second general impression of African Christianity is one of alienation between African culture and Christian faith, an alienation which must be overcome in the next generation. This alienation of culture from faith began in the colonial era. At the Berlin Conference in 1885, the big powers—Belgium and Britain and France and Germany—carved up Africa at a round table, and white diplomats in Europe thousands of miles away decided the future of Africa. Where they drew the lines, mostly they still remain. They determined which foreign languages Africans would speak. They determined that certain homogeneous tribal units would be divided between the British and the French or the Germans. They made these and other arbitrary decisions which have divided Africa until today.

Such colonial decisions left their imprint upon Africa. One of the facts of African Christian expansion is that Christianity came with colonialism and thrived under its umbrella. It was not unusual for Christianity to be seen as a sort of religious department of the British or French or Belgian Colonial Office, or the missionary to be seen as a kind of religious servant of the colonial state. That impression was reinforced by the fact that when colonial governments saw how useful mission work—Christianization—was for governing their colonies, they were very quick to take advantage of the mission work and to offer grants-in-aid to churches. The churches took over most of the responsibilities for schools and hospitals and teacher training institutions.

There is, therefore, some suspicion of Christianity in Africa, and it certainly is true that the fortunes of the Gospel have been closely tied to those of colonialism. But that is, of course, not the whole story. Along with colonialism came cultural aggression which has worked a deep trauma upon the psyche of Africa. African culture was not merely not taken seriously; it was in fact rejected and despised. White Europeans often adopted the view of *Tabula Rasa* toward the African psyche, that whatever was written there had to be erased and replaced by other social and cultural models. This "clean sweep" approach to Christian mission demanded that the Afri-

With colonialism came that cultural aggression which has worked deep trauma upon the psyche of Africa. Ancient African cultures were not merely not taken seriously; they were in fact despised.

can be completely stripped of his pre-Christian pagan heritage and be equipped with a Western Christian culture. Such mission methods led, of course, to a certain duplicity. If one thing was done in public another thing was done in private. If one thing was done in the city where the missionaries and the churches were, another thing was done in the country in the rural plantations or on the farm or the shamba.

And so the African Christian grew up with a split personality. According to the canons of European Christianity, you couldn't worship your forebears, practice polygamy, or offer libations to your ancestors. Yet many of these practices were precious to Africans; they did not see them as immoral and continued to carry them on in private. That meant one could be catechized and confirmed in the church, but back in the bush he might go through a native initiation rite. The cultural aggression which did not recognize the validity of African culture often led to a kind of dual heritage for African Christianity which continues today and causes cultural schizophrenia. In the next generation it is certainly one of the colonial legacies that Africans will have to overcome.[1]

The Alienation of Culture From Faith

Another form of cultural alienation was the bringing of Western ecclesiastical institutions to Africa and then planting these costly institutions as if they were going to be there for the next thousand years. This alien institutionalization had the effect of saddling African churches with burdens which were well beyond their abilities to carry. Even though those institutions—schools, colleges, high schools, teacher training schools, clinics, welfare institutions—render tremendous service today, they have become top-heavy and make it difficult for the local churches to adapt themselves to their environment.

A further sign of African alienation which has become more visible in the last thirty or forty years is the fact that some Africans who have accepted the Gospel have not accepted the form and the structure of Western Christianity. There are today some six thousand independent church movements in Africa which are for the most part breakaways from mainline Christian bodies. They appear particularly in areas where there has been a dominant missionary presence impeding African advancement, or where missionaries have been particularly insistent on European or American ways of doing things. Here Africans felt especially cut off from their own culture and felt that they were servants of foreign masters. Not surprisingly, about four thousand of these independent church movements are in southern Africa and are very often led by catechists or evangelists once trained by missionaries. Having preached the Gospel and having developed a certain charisma, these native evangelists went forward and established their own movements.

As they looked at the New Testament they began to see a certain discrepancy between the role of ministers in Jesus' day and the role of ministers in the Western churches. They saw that when the apostles went out they cast out demons and healed the sick, and the Africans asked: "Why can't we do this ministry today? Hasn't the Lord Jesus entrusted us with the same gifts? Why are we simply sent out to preach and to catechize and to gather congregations? We want the full power of the Spirit and the wholeness of the apostolic ministry." Therefore we find in these independent churches persons designating themselves as apostles, prophets, and evangelists and claiming the power to heal the sick and to cast out demons. In many places they have gathered small churches; some of them don't last, but some of them have grown very large. Perhaps the largest one, the Kimbanguist Church in Zaire and surrounding countries, has a membership of eight million members. The existence of these churches is a sign of protest against a Westernized Christianity which does not take the African spirit seriously and which does not allow African consciousness to express itself in religious terms through the Church. If the first impression of African Christianity is its great numerical growth, the second impression is its deep cultural alienation.

Let me mention a third feature of African Christianity. It concerns the church as an agent in African modernization and secularization. I think this feature grows out of the fact that very early Christianity in Africa was particularly identified with the opening of schools. Christianity was identified with literacy; it was a religion of the Book, and it was the objective of the church to teach all its members to read the Scriptures. Schools in Africa became one of the most successful means of creating a positive Christian influence in society. They also actually won church members because many young boys and girls who came to the schools emerged as baptized Christians. In that way the early African Christian community grew.

This evangelization through the schools had its dangers. Students who saw the possibility of getting good jobs as colonial civil servants through the schools could develop a kind of Christianity without a great deal of

[1] Racism in southern Africa is a concentrated form of cultural aggression derived from that heightened sense of cultural superiority which was practiced all over Africa. In southern Africa today "separate development" or apartheid says that Africans are, culturally speaking, children: they must be developed separately; they cannot live in a white European world; in their own interests they must be repatriated to Bantustans so that they can live happily in tribal reservations without the disruption of Western culture. If there is a single force that undermines Christian witness and destroys the credibility of the Gospel, it is such racism.

Some Africans sense a gap between the role of ministers in the New Testament and the role of ministers today in the Western churches, and they are seeking the wholeness of the apostolic ministry.

conviction. We might call it "nominal" Christianity in which a person acquires a veneer of Western Christian culture. There was a danger that the Christianity of such a person coming out of the church school would be "nominal" at best. Africans have a proverb that "God has children, but he has no grandchildren." That is to say, Christianity cannot be passed from generation to generation without a reconversion and a recommitment in each generation. As Christianity in Africa grows older, it enters the second and the third and the fourth generation, and fourth-generation Christians in Africa, very much like fourth-generation Christians in any other country, may need to have their faith renewed. There was the possibility that Christianity might contribute greatly to modernization and secularization in Africa through its schools but leave the faith on a relatively shallow foundation. That is the danger from which African Christianity has needed to be rescued by revival movements and the charismatic challenge of independent Christianity.

Having made these three points concerning the growth, cultural alienation, and the secularizing characteristics of Christianity in Africa today, we can see its ongoing search for authenticity. This is the search for an authentic form and expression of African Christianity, adapted to the African spirit and yet faithful to the Christ of the Scriptures. While many missionaries by the turn of the century saw the importance of developing an African church which was self-governing and self-supporting, in actual practice it was impossible for this church to become a truly African church as long as the churches existed in countries that were under colonial tutelage. It was not until the 1950s and the 1960s that country after country in Africa emerged from colonial servitude and started on the road toward independence. Since 1956, when Ghana first attained independence, some forty-five countries in Africa—one-third of the countries in the United Nations—have gained their independence.

During this time of rising national independence, the churches had to rethink their identities as free churches in free nations in African terms. The policy of Africanization, which is the replacement of foreign personnel with African administrators, African theologians, and African pastors, advanced. In 1963 a pan-African Christian organization, the All Africa Church Conference (AACC), helped African churches on the same continent to get to know each other and to exchange experiences for the first time. Prior to that time African churches had direct links with New York or St. Louis or Chicago, Geneva or London, but they hardly knew each other. But now they came to know their sisters and their cousins and their aunts, and this was a new experience for many Africans—for Africans from West Africa to meet Africans from East Africa and Southern Africa and to develop an affinity and common identity.

A dramatic event that signaled the new African identity was the call by an outstanding African churchman in 1971 for a moratorium on Western missions. The Rev. John Gatu, Moderator of a Presbyterian church in Kenya, declared that the time had come when African churches had to become responsible for themselves. And the only way to do that, he said, was to suspend the sending of Western missionaries and funds; this artificial transfusion of manpower, money, and equipment from the outside "makes us foreign entities in our own country." The moratorium meant that each African church would have to make sacrifices, that salaries of pastors would have to be cut, that some programs would have to be cut back, and that some living standards would be lowered. Nevertheless, Gatu and a few other prophetic leaders argued that "for the good of African Christianity, for growth toward maturity, for the increase of our own resources for mission, for the increase of stewardship, for the development of our faith—for all of these reasons we ought to have a moratorium."

A Moratorium on Western Missionaries

As it turned out, there was no moratorium on the sending of missionaries. Quite a few Western churches said, in effect, "We can't do that. It would be against the Great Commission! What would we do with *our* mission fields?" "Well," the Africans, in effect, responded, "you might think about sending your missionaries to your own people. Maybe the need in your own country is greater. The purpose of missions in Africa is not to serve the needs of Western churches by providing slots for their missionaries." Some very useful points were made in that frank discussion. It was a coming of age. It became clearer to all that the nature of the church is neither to be *dependent* nor is it to be *independent.* Rather, the churches must press for *interdependence.* That can only come as *all* churches grow in maturity and *all* churches come together, each with a sense of its own identity and a sense of how it can co-operate in the one great mission. I think the moratorium was helpful in clearing the air and publicizing the grievances of African church leaders who had not previously spoken quite so bluntly.

The search for African identity has also gone forth in the area of theology and ministry. In the last ten years more books were written on African religion, African philosophy, and specifically African theology than at any other time, and these books are now being written by Africans. African theological education has improved thereby, and the thoughtful re-acquisition of African customs—drumming and dancing, for example—into

The nature of the churches is neither to be dependent nor to be independent but to be interdependent. This interdependence occurs only when each church in its own identity grows in maturity.

the liturgical life of African churches has brought a vital, new sense of Africanness. Church titles are becoming more traditional. The office of Bishop is particularly precious to Africans, and many Lutheran churches are adopting the title of Bishop for their leaders. The Methodist Church in Ghana gave up the title of Church Superintendent and adopted the venerable title of Patriarch. Other churches also seek distinctive titles that bespeak an ecclesiastical identity. The cry all over Africa today is self-reliance. The African churches need to be self-reliant in terms of their economy, in terms of adapting themselves to their own cultural context, and in terms of freely drawing upon the whole Christian heritage. This search for authenticity is moving very, very quickly now under African leadership.

The Trials of African Christianity

The future for African Christianity holds some severe trials, and I would like to mention three places where the faith of the church will be tested. The interaction of the Gospel with political and economic forces in Africa bears some resemblance to that of Latin America, though those forces are not so consistently oppressive in Africa. One of the happier situations in Africa is that the church can sometimes participate in nation-building. We can see that particularly in Tanzania which has a national ideology of African Socialism, a socialism which is positive toward African culture, religious faith, and the extended family of kinship relationships, only now projected on a larger scale to include all the people of the nation. As President Nyerere says, and as the ruling party declared in the Arusha Declaration of 1967, the implementation of Ujamaa or "familyhood" is the basic social policy.

Tanzania is a poor country of farmers and peasants, a country in which the people desire to share the wealth of their production and together undertake the building of a new society. One of the marks of this co-operation is the process of "village-ization" in which people living in arid, marginal lands are moved to areas where there is water and electricity, and where there will be schools, health clinics, and agricultural advisors. The church has been given the opportunity to be present in the midst of this experiment in "village-ization." As these people organize their new villages and talk about their social goals, as they meet together to discuss how they will reach their production quotas or deal with problems of their common life, the church is there with a religious dimension in the midst of the developing community. In Tanzania there is a happy collaboration between church and state in which the church does spiritual service in the midst of a massive transition to another kind of society.

This could, of course, become a dangerous collaboration. The church may become so committed to a certain national ideology or a certain governmental program that it loses its independence, but for now the churches in Tanzania are positive participants in this new venture. For its part, the state requires by law that two hours of religious instruction be given weekly in every primary school and secondary school throughout the country. This instruction may be either Christian or Muslim or it can depend upon the religion of the local people. This law has forced Christian groups to come together ecumenically to meet such an educational task, and it has meant crash programs of teacher training in a common religious syllabus for the schools. The churches have been challenged by the government to be present in the midst of a social revolution by providing a religious foundation for the nation's education.

The second trial for African Christianity springs from Marxist revolutionary socialism. Here the best example is Ethiopia, which I know particularly well. There the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus has been doing important pastoral work, has been involved in numerous development projects, and has served as host to a mass communications project, the Radio Voice of the Gospel, which beams religious broadcasting in some nineteen different languages to countries in Africa, the Near East, and southern Asia.

In 1974 the feudal monarchy of Haile Selassie was overthrown, and a year later the Emperor disappeared. The Marxist revolutionary group known as "The Dergue" took power, and the transition from feudalism to "scientific socialism" occurred almost overnight without any preparation. Never before had a word about Marxism been uttered in the country, and young boys and girls in the schools of Ethiopia were suddenly confused by the new signs, slogans, and propaganda.

The church had to gear itself up very quickly to this revolutionary situation. It reduced its budget, cutting the salaries of pastors and church officers, and made other economic plans for survival in this revolutionary atmosphere. The President of the church, Ato Immanuel Abraham, was arrested, detained six months in a dungeon, and then released. The General Secretary of the church, a very able pastor named Gudina Tumsa, is at present imprisoned, his whereabouts unknown, though we believe he is alive. In many ways the government is harassing the church because, as the government says, the church is not collaborating in the revolution and is shielding young people from the consequences of the revolution. (Marxist propaganda meetings are held precisely at the time church meetings are held.) In some cases a death penalty is threatened if people do not renounce the faith, and some local authorities have threatened to close the churches altogether.

Subservient churches that followed the traditional separation of the Two Kingdoms and believed they had nothing to do with politics have become the most ardent defenders of human rights.

Here is a situation which severely tries the church, with some of its leaders in jail, with some local churches closed, and with its communications disrupted. Yet in spite of the persecution it is a sign of God's grace that churches are nevertheless full and the church continues to grow. Even without the benefit of traditional leadership in some places, local congregations continue to meet and do mission. In Ethiopia and also in Mozambique, Angola, and other countries where Marxist socialism is established, the church faces severe trials. These churches desire our prayers for the struggles they are facing.

The third trial facing African Christianity is racism in southern Africa, particularly the church in South Africa itself and the churches in Namibia (Southwest Africa). In recent years black churches especially have had their consciousness raised. Subservient churches that believed that they had nothing to do with politics and followed the traditional separation of the two kingdoms have become the most ardent defenders of human rights and are speaking up on governmental policies. The Lutheran churches in Namibia, by means of a pastoral letter that was sent out to all the parishes to be read from the pulpits, declared that distinctions of nationality or race or ethnic group were dividing the church and that the unity of Christians in their baptism was being threatened by these alien principles. Here is the emergence of a confessing church, a church willing to confess its faith and to declare racism a pagan ideology and a violation of Christian teaching.

Black Churches in Status Confessionis

This same group of Namibian churches brought their appeal before the Lutheran world assembly at Dar es Salaam two years ago. They questioned why white and black Christians having the same confession of faith and belonging to the same Lutheran church cannot commune together. When Christians can be separated at the altar of the Lord by some political or racial principle, it is a violation of the integrity of the faith which must be protested. The black churches were in *status confessionis,* namely there was a violation of doctrine that must be spoken out against because not to do so was to accept the denial of an essential tenet of the faith. The whole world has now been sensitized to this denial of faith by the alien principle of race. It is one of the issues that the South African Coalition of churches is bringing to the attention of churches in this country.

On the question of violence the churches in Africa have walked a very tight rope. No church leader can call for violence and hope to survive as a church leader in southern Africa. Yet many of them feel that violence in some form cannot be long delayed and an Armageddon between the forces of apartheid and the forces of liberation is coming. The churches are biding their time, and they are slow to call for revolution. The next decade is crucial. I think much depends upon whether the democratically elected government of majority rule in Zimbabwe can succeed. If that happens in Zimbabwe, and if that experiment is then repeated in Namibia, then perhaps violence can be avoided. In South Africa, where 83 per cent of the people continue to exist without political rights, the solution is more remote and less promising.

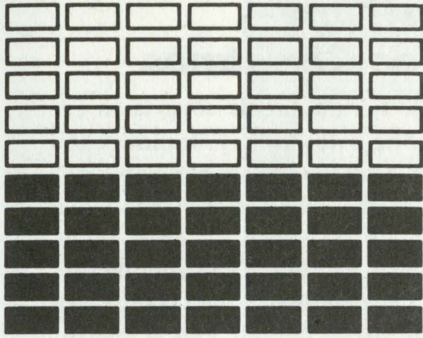
I conclude by saying that, overall, the African churches are adapting creatively and responsibly to the local culture; are re-acquiring the African heritage which was taken from them in the colonial past; and are trying to be relevant in their own social and political situations. They are churches which, having received the gospel for many generations, are now fully convinced that the time has come for them to share the gospel with others. They are churches that are engaged in mission and service.[2] They are churches growing in unity and beginning to see a common vocation. They are churches which, since the All African Church Conference (AACC) in 1974, have seen that God has called them to a missionary role, not simply within Africa but within the whole world. It is from these churches that we can expect a dynamic Christian witness in the future.

At the last Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, a hundred churches from North America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America elected an African as the president of the Federation. That was a mark of confidence in the maturity of the African churches and a recognition of their growing contribution. The African churches are growing closer together and coming to see themselves as brothers and sisters. I think there are the potential marks of greatness and of world leadership in the African churches. The trials I have mentioned are deepening and purifying the churches and leading them to an authentic Christianity which can be a beacon to us all.

My final impression of African Christianity is that Africa is that continent which God may well have reserved for himself. There, when Christianity is in decline in Europe and in the West, where the numbers of Christians grow fewer and their commitment seems feeble, in Africa at least this is *the* Christian century. This is the century when Christians will become the majority of citizens in their land. ■

[2] Perhaps one of the most remarkable demonstrations of Christian service is the churches' care for refugees. People driven out of Uganda, Ruanda, Burundi, Mozambique, and other countries torn by revolution or repression have been shown magnificent hospitality in other countries. The churches have helped the refugees resettle, often with the assistance of the UN or one of the world relief agencies.

Campus Diary



The Continent of Tears

John Strietelmeier

The superficial facts about Africa are easy enough to state. Of the world's continents, it has by far the highest birth rate, the highest death rate, the highest infant mortality rate. It has the largest percentage of population under the age of 15 and the smallest percentage of population over age 65. Its percentage of urban population is the lowest in the world. Its rate of natural population increase is just one tenth of a point less than that of Latin America. Its life expectancy at birth is the lowest in the world—46 years.

Africa is plagued by sweltering heat and stifling humidity in its equatorial zones. It experiences alternating flood and drought in its savannah grasslands. A large part of it is desert or semi-desert. Only small areas in some of the highlands and in the southern tip of the continent offer reasonable security against climatic calamities.

Food production, always a problem in Africa, has broken down in much of eastern and northwestern Africa in the past ten years—in the northwest largely as a result of the encroachment of desert upon formerly productive land, in the east as a result of economic and political pressures which have disrupted traditional ways of doing things.

The catalogue of ills can be extended indefinitely. Poverty, hunger, and disease dominate the greater part of the continent. Tribalism confounds the efforts of statesmen to build strong, viable national states. The demands of the industrialized nations upon the natural resources of the continent drain its wealth without supplying it adequately compensating resources. Long centuries of isolation from the main intellectual and technological ideas of the world leave Africa ill-prepared to keep up with the world around it.

These are some of the significant superficial facts about Africa. Probably most people who know Africa will agree that the facts are essentially as I have stated them. Disagreement will arise when one attempts to account for the facts or attempts to suggest remedies for those African realities which obviously need correcting.

The currently fashionable whipping-boy for all of Africa's troubles is colonialism. (Years ago, it was the "curse of Ham." Earlier in this century, it was the climate.) Colonialism is an attractive whipping-boy because it satisfies the need many of us have to identify devils as the source of our problems. In Africa, the colonialism thesis is even more attractive because African colonialism was of a particularly brutal form, having as it did deep roots in European racialism.

But colonialism was a mixed bag. The evil that it did we hear about daily from African leaders and from the more sensitive white friends of Africa. The good we hear less about, although it is none the less real—hospitals, roads, bridges, airports, safe water supplies, schools, and (most hopeful of all) churches. What Africa might be today had the past 150 years of European colonialism not intervened is hard to say. It is not necessarily the case that it would be any happier or richer or more peaceful than it is now.

Nevertheless, Europeans would find it difficult to make an acceptable argument for a re-establishment of colonialism today, even were that possible. Africa is awakening and the African is beginning to see himself as a person, self-defined and self-directed. He is groping toward an identity that will be authentically his own—an identity congruent with his past but pregnant with possibility for the future, an identity derived from our common humanity but preserving the uniqueness of his Africanness.

It may very well be, that at a time like this Africa needs most of all to be let alone. Not that that is likely to happen, given the wealth and the geopolitical significance of the continent. But to the extent that the outside world is willing to let Africa work out its own destiny—to that extent we may hope for something real and workable to emerge from the confusion of the immediate post-colonial period.

Can Africa manage without the guiding hand of the white big brother? Let me tell you about Curtis Powell, forty-three years old and American born, who teaches at the University of Zambia. For more than half a century, scientists have been trying to find a cure for trypanosomiasis ("sleeping sickness"), a disease which affects 37 per cent of the African continent and has killed millions of human beings and animals. The eradication of this disease would enormously increase the potential food resources of the continent, in addition to saving thousands of lives.

Well, Curtis Powell, according to a recent issue of The *Manchester Guardian*, says he has found a fraction of the trypanosome's basic cell "which at worst gives a good resistance and at best immuno-protection across three different species—mice, rats, and sheep." The next step would be to try this fraction on cattle.

But he needs money to do it—not much, but more than he can get from African sources. In cases like this the generous sharing of our abundance with African genius can work great and wholesome changes. Fortunately, we are already doing some of that and I would guess that the dollars thus spent are about the best-invested funds in our budget.