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## EAST AFRICAN CHRISTIANS AND WORLD WAR I

BY M. LOUISE PIROUET

THE First World War has often been described by writers of mission history as a serious setback to the growth of the church in Africa. The following comment by C. P. Groves on what happened in German East Africa is typical:

It was indeed a major injury to the Christian cause that after but a single generation's work in their own four colonies, missionaries from the land of Luther—for it was mainly Protestant missions that were concerned—should be abruptly cut off and their work orphaned.<sup>1</sup>

Missionary thinking, which Groves reflects, was based on the premise that African Christians, deprived of European leadership, would be bound to wander into wrong paths or lapse into heathenism. Being but children, they needed paternal guidance. When an attempt was made to train African leadership (and sometimes very little attempt was made), the thinking at the time led to a concentration of effort on training men as clergy on the accepted western pattern. Even when such training was successfully carried out, it was generally assumed that European supervision would still be necessary.

An examination of what happened during World War I shows that the missionaries' paternalistic premise was wrong; that the real 'injury to the Christian cause' may have lain, not in the removal of so many missionaries, but in their failure to recognize this as an opportunity rather than as a disaster; and in their attempt to put the clock back after the war was over, and try to re-establish the old, pre-war order of things. The lesson which could have been learnt was altogether missed.

There was a great diversity in the state of development of Christianity in East Africa by 1914. This arose partly out of the fact that in some areas Christianity had been comparatively long-established, whilst in others it was very newly introduced. It also arose partly from the widely differing views among missionary bodies as to what it was that they were trying to accomplish. There was a further divergence between the thinking of those responsible for formulating mission policy, and those who carried it out—or who attributed failure to carry it out to local conditions which they felt they understood better than those who directed from afar. Anglicans and Catholics, who had been in the area longest, had the clearest directives

<sup>1</sup> C. P. Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa*, vol. IV (London, 1958), 17; cf. J. Richter, *Tanganyika and its Future* (London, 1934), 28, 30, 32.

about the need to establish indigenously-led churches, though they were sometimes slow to follow these directives. Some later arrivals on the missionary scene had a less well-developed theology of the church and somewhat visionary ideas as to what mission work would mean. Hence they had little appreciation of how to develop their work beyond the initial stages.

To be ordained as a priest or minister is not, of course, the only way of becoming a Christian leader. Lay leadership, particularly in Uganda, played a major role in the establishment of Christianity in East Africa. But the extent to which missions were willing to train men for ordination is a fairly good indicator of the extent to which they were willing to hand over responsibility, especially in a period when western Christianity in general suffered from an impoverished idea of the position of the laity.<sup>2</sup> By 1914 only the Anglicans and Catholics had made any progress towards the establishment of an indigenous ministry. Because of their much higher educational requirements, progress was slower among the Catholics, but a steady increase in the number of seminarians shows that the progress was real, although the development was virtually restricted to the areas in which the White Fathers were at work. The Anglican Church Missionary Society had, by 1914, ordained 54 men, all but five of them being Ugandans. The remaining five had been ordained on the Kenya coast.<sup>3</sup> In Tanzania, where the C.M.S. was responsible for Anglican work in the west, no ordinations had taken place in areas where they worked, and no progress had been made in central or western Kenya, where work had only been established for a few years. The Universities' Mission to Central Africa, also Anglican, which worked in eastern Tanzania, had, by 1908, ordained twenty men as deacons, nine of whom had subsequently been ordained priest (complete statistics are hard to come by).<sup>4</sup> The White Fathers had ordained the first two Ugandan Catholic priests in 1913, and others followed after a few years; the first two Tanzanian Catholics were ordained in 1917.<sup>5</sup> These figures are somewhat misleading by themselves because ordination had slowed up among Anglicans, although the increase in the rate of baptisms had been maintained, and it also has to be remembered that the Catholics required a much higher standard of educational achievement. Among other missions in East Africa, no Africans had been ordained, nor had any progress been made in this direction.

The outbreak of war in 1914 meant that in varying degrees missions found themselves faced with a reduction in staff and in financial support. Some areas were almost completely denuded of missionaries when all, or almost all, were interned as enemy aliens. Others faced cuts when

<sup>2</sup> J. V. Taylor, *The Growth of the Church in Buganda* (London, 1958), 71.

<sup>3</sup> Church of Uganda, Record Book (Office of the Archbishop of Uganda); Oaths and Declarations signed by clergy of the Dioceses of Eastern Equatorial Africa and Uganda; information supplied by Canon G. Hewitt, official historian of the C.M.S.

<sup>4</sup> A. E. M. Anderson-Morshead, *A History of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa*, vol. I (London, 1959), xxi-xxviii.

<sup>5</sup> White Fathers, *Rapports Annuels 1914/15*: general report by Mgr. Streicher.

people were called up for war service by their home countries, or required to serve as chaplains with the East African forces. For everyone, the war meant that no new personnel arrived, and home leave was stopped. The obvious solution to shortages of staff, one might have thought, was to hand over more responsibility to Africans. But nowhere was this seen as the answer. Hampered by preconceived ideas about the nature of Christian leadership, and by racial arrogance which considered Africans incapable of taking responsibility, the missionaries tried to cope with the situation by working harder and spreading themselves more thinly. The one exception to this, which seems to prove the rule, will be mentioned later.

The usual response of the missions was to try and hold the fort somehow against the day when things would return to normal. The White Fathers suffered a greater reduction of staff than most missions (38 per cent, whereas Groves states that the average reduction of staff in ten selected British missions in Africa was 10 per cent).<sup>6</sup> The number of White Fathers in Uganda was reduced from 116 to 83 when four were called up to serve as chaplains with Ugandan troops, and thirty-one were called up by France. By a reallocation of staff, all their work, except for one institution, was kept going. There was no interruption in the work of the seminary although it was so costly in manpower. The newly-ordained African priests helped to teach there, and seminarians doing their probationary years were a help to over-worked parish priests.<sup>7</sup> This is as near as most missions came to sharing responsibility with Africans. The one institution closed by the White Fathers was the catechists' school, although this appears to have been run by only two priests.

What about African Christians in areas where the number of missionaries was reduced? In 1916 the British advanced into the Buhaya area of German East Africa, and all the German Lutheran missionaries of the Bethel Mission had to leave. Their leader, Döring, was able to make contact with the C.M.S. in Uganda, asking them to take over the work, which they did. This area had long connexions with Uganda and with the C.M.S. dating back to before the arrival of the Bethel missionaries. African evangelists in Buhaya, who had been converted as a result of the C.M.S. mission in Uganda, established a pattern of work which the Bethel Mission did not interfere with. The hand-over to the C.M.S. was in accordance with the wishes of African Christians, and was entirely satisfactory.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps a major reason for its being so satisfactory was that the C.M.S. had only one missionary to spare, the Rev. R. H. Leakey, who had long experience of working in a situation where Africans took initiative and assumed responsibility.<sup>9</sup> Leakey co-operated closely with Andereya Kajerero, the natural leader of the church in Buhaya, who assumed responsibility in the period between Döring's departure and Leakey's arrival,

<sup>6</sup> Groves, *Planting*, 37.

<sup>7</sup> White Fathers, *Rapports Annuels, 1914/15*: general report by Mgr. Streicher.

<sup>8</sup> C. J. Hellberg, *Missions on a Colonial Frontier West of Lake Victoria* (Uppsala, 1965), 124-5.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 138.

assisted by Johana Nshodo and Shedulaka Kibaka, both Ganda who had worked in Buhaya for some years. In 1917 Kajerero attended the Synod of the Native Anglican Church in Uganda together with Leakey.<sup>10</sup> The usual C.M.S. practice of working closely with the chiefs was adopted in Buhaya, and by 1918 five out of the nine senior chiefs in the area had become Protestants, and a mass movement of conversion was under way. Willis, Bishop of Uganda, attributed it to 'the dominant influence of the Christian Baganda . . . the influence of Christian civilisation . . . and the ancient social system, by which the tribe adheres together, and the influence of a few leaders affects the whole.'<sup>11</sup> He might have added that it was not clear how the boundaries would be re-drawn after the end of the war, and the influence of the Protestant establishment in Buganda was probably of great importance in deciding the attitudes of the Haya who thought they might be assimilated to Uganda.

African Christians were not always consulted when such hand-overs took place; nor were they invariably happy about the results. The work of the Neukirchen (Lutheran) Mission on the Tana River in Kenya was handed over to the neighbouring Methodist Mission when the German missionaries were interned in India in 1915. The German missionaries were better liked, and there was relief when they were able to return.<sup>12</sup> A more serious case of dissatisfaction concerned Buhaya where African Christians were happy enough with the hand-over to the C.M.S., but less satisfied with what happened afterwards. The ending of World War I did not spell the ending of difficulties for missions and German missionaries were being repatriated as late as 1921. When they were allowed to return in 1926, the sending societies could often only afford to send a very few missionaries. In 1924, after a period of acute staffing difficulties, and when it was still not known when or whether German missionaries would be able to return to Tanzania, the C.M.S. decided it could not continue to be responsible for the work in Buhaya. C. J. Hellberg has noted that there was some thought of having a Muganda in charge, at least temporarily,<sup>13</sup> but in keeping with the times, it was decided, following a missionary 'inspection' of the area, that Europeans were necessary to run the church. An urgent appeal to London for missionaries was in vain. The Buhaya work was therefore handed over to the South African Methodists who were looking for somewhere to start work in East Africa.

This hand-over was not satisfactory. The Haya Christians were informed of the change and asked to give their consent, but they do not seem to have been consulted in any meaningful sense of the word. Andereya Kajerero, their acknowledged, though unofficial, leader, does not seem to have been present when the hand-over took place between representatives of both missions, and he became the leader of those who were discontented.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 139-40.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in *ibid.* 143.

<sup>12</sup> Groves, *Planting*, 33-4; H. R. Philp, *A New Day in Kenya* (London, 1936), 64; W. B. Anderson, unpublished research notes, kindly lent and used with permission.

<sup>13</sup> Hellberg, *Missions*, 158.

Grievances centred around alien practices introduced by the Methodists (a cinema show in church aroused fierce anger, and it was alleged that there was an over-emphasis on Wesley), but the real grievance concerned the question of African responsibility in the church. H. B. Ladbury was quick to discern this when matters had reached such a pitch between the Methodists and the opposition led by Kajerero that the colonial administration became alarmed at the amount of anti-European feeling.<sup>14</sup> Kajerero and the dissidents had appealed to Bishop Willis of Uganda, and his refusal to become involved may have led to a sense of betrayal and exacerbated the situation. By this time the Bethel Mission found itself able to return, but the Methodists wanted to keep them out. Dr J. H. Oldham, of the International Missionary Council, intervened, and the Methodists were, with great difficulty, persuaded to leave. They showed an extraordinarily un-Christian possessiveness, and demanded that financial compensation be paid to them and to the C.M.S. by the Bethel Mission for buildings erected by the Methodists. The C.M.S. refused to claim the compensation. In this case, African leadership was strong enough to make itself heard and win its point, but not before much damage had been done to the church. Kajerero, whom the Methodists had disliked, was ordained by the Lutherans on their return.

Another case of an unsatisfactory hand-over occurred in southern Tanzania. Here German Lutheran missionaries of the Berlin Mission reluctantly agreed that the High Anglican U.M.C.A., which worked in an adjacent area, should take over two of their stations, Milo and Jakobi. This decision was taken in 1924, but was, like the Buhaya case, a direct result of the war. The U.M.C.A. had already exercised some pastoral care before the formal transfer took place. Trouble occurred because of the considerable doctrinal differences between the two missions, especially on the subject of the sacraments, but also because Archdeacon Johnson, a veteran U.M.C.A. missionary, became very popular with some of the people, so that when there was a possibility of the Lutherans returning, it is said that some people did not want to lose contact with him. In 1929 it was decided to return to the German missions any work they wished to claim back. There was trouble because the U.M.C.A. bishop did not feel he could withdraw entirely, leaving Christians, who had been baptized and confirmed as Anglicans, to the care of Lutherans. The differences between the missions was sorted out at a meeting in Berlin, but that did nothing to help the African Christians. Eventually rival churches and schools were set up, and bitterness grew, Christians who followed one mission mocking those who followed the other. This rivalry lasted a long time.<sup>15</sup>

So far this article has considered African Christians in situations created

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 172-91.

<sup>15</sup> Z. Maneno, 'History of the UMCA Milo', Swahili typescript and translation, Makerere University Archives; A. G. Blood, *A History of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa*, vol. II (London, 1957), 175-6, 260. There is little about this transfer in M. Wright, *German Missions in Tanganyika 1891-1941* (Oxford, 1971).

by the war in which they found themselves the subject of high-level missionary decisions about which they could do little. Attention must now be paid to situations where Africans played a much more positive role in the absence of missionaries. One such occurred in Kigezi, the south-westernmost district of Uganda.

Christianity had entered the neighbouring kingdom of Ankole in 1899, and by the outbreak of World War I the leadership of Ankole was largely in Christian hands. As everywhere in Uganda, African catechists had played a major role in the work of evangelism. When from 1910 onwards, Kigezi became accessible to evangelists, it was natural for some who had worked in Ankole to move on southward. In 1910 Kigezi began to be brought under closer administrative control through the appointment of literate (and therefore Christian-educated) Ganda political agents. These men included catechists in their entourages, and they built small chapels for themselves and their followers to worship in, so that Christianity began slowly to impinge on the consciousness of the Kiga. The leading Ganda political agent, Yowana Ssebalijja, had himself been a Catholic catechist in Ankole before being appointed assistant to a senior chief there.<sup>16</sup> Ssebalijja records:

During 1913 I established headquarters at Mpalo . . . Shortly afterwards I appointed M. Semuye as my deputy in Mpalo and transferred Ssemanda to Kibanga. Much work was undertaken that year including . . . the establishment of headquarters at Nyakishenyi . . . All these headquarters had a church, in which my followers and myself used to pray. The Bakiga considered anyone professing a religion to have a stupid heart and to have died completely!<sup>17</sup>

In the normal course of events one might have expected a European-staffed mission station to have been opened within a couple of years after catechists had begun work. Indeed, in 1913 the White Fathers toured the area to look for a site for a mission. But the war intervened, and neither Anglicans nor Catholics (the only two major Christian groups in Uganda) were able to open a mission until the 1920s. African evangelism was less disrupted by the war, and Ganda and Nyankole evangelists overcame the very considerable hostility of the Kiga to Christianity. The first Anglican catechist arrived during the war, in 1915, when missions were retrenching, not expanding. Ssebalijja records of this:

The first Protestant in Rukiga was Zakaria, who settled on Kikungi hill, on the site of the present headquarters of Ndorwa county. The D.C. removed him from there to Rugarama; however he was killed while touring Bufumbira during the rebellion. In 1916 he was succeeded by another Zakaria, who was also a Muganda. He in turn was replaced by a Munyankole named Zedekia Rwamafi. These men had two churches:—Bukinda and Rujumbura.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> J. Ssebalijja, 'Memories of Rukiga and Other Places' in D. Denoon (ed.), *A History of Kigezi in South West Uganda* (Kampala, 1972).

<sup>17</sup> Ssebalijja, *ibid.* 189.

<sup>18</sup> Ssebalijja, *ibid.* 198; M. L. Pirouet, 'The Spread of Christianity in and around Uganda', *Uganda Journal*, xxxii, 1 (1968), 85.

The leading Catholic catechists were Yohana Kitagana who went to Kigezi in 1911, Augustino Kapere who arrived at about the same time, and Rafaeli Kabukure who arrived in 1915. They and others worked at chiefs' headquarters. Kitagana's saintliness impressed all who knew him.<sup>19</sup>

In 1921 the first C.M.S. missionaries of the Ruanda mission established a station at Kabale in Kigezi en route to Rwanda, their ultimate goal. Although they found 180 baptized Christians awaiting them, they do not seem to have placed much value on the pioneer work of the catechists.<sup>20</sup> The White Fathers arrived two years later: 'Yohana Kitagana was delighted: his great wish had been realised! The fathers found there a fine Christianity flourishing with nearly a thousand people baptized and a few thousand catechumens.'<sup>21</sup> The strength of Christianity in Uganda clearly lay in African initiatives such as this.

Sometimes the war created situations which brought out gifts in people which they did not know they possessed. In 1967 a research student in western Kenya asked several people what they thought would have happened if the missionaries had all left ten years after their arrival. Informants converted by the C.M.S. and African Inland Mission, who had never been without missionary leadership, were sure that the church would have collapsed and the people relapsed into heathenism. But a Seventh Day Adventist, whose missionaries had had to leave South Nyanza when it was invaded by the Germans at the beginning of the war, gave the same answer at first, and then, later in the interview, told how he and others kept the Christians together when there were no missionaries. Another S.D.A. informant replied, 'The church would not have been lost even if the Europeans had left ten years after the establishment of missions. I have an example. All European missionaries were taken to Kaimosi and stayed there for four years 1914-18, but the church did not collapse. I am one of those who held the thread during that time.'<sup>22</sup>

Ugandan Catholics immediately responded to the situation caused by the war. When work on Rubaga Cathedral was threatened with stoppage for lack of funds, over £900 was collected by the chiefs so that work might continue, and when there was no money to pay the catechists they continued to work without pay for the most part.<sup>23</sup> Numbers rose to 95 in the seminary although the students could not be fed as well as usual, were no longer issued with shoes, and had to wear Amerikani instead of black soutanes!<sup>24</sup> It was probably very good for the church to become less

<sup>19</sup> J. Nicolet, *Yohana Kitagana* (Namur, 1947); Denoon, *History*, 231-40, contains an English translation of the parts of Nicolet's work relating to Kigezi.

<sup>20</sup> Kabale Baptism Register; L. Guillebaud, *A Grain of Mustard Seed* (London, n.d.), 17. The 'Summary of Chief Events' on p. 128 makes no mention of the arrival of the catechists.

<sup>21</sup> Denoon, *History*, 234.

<sup>22</sup> Samuel Olaka, Daniel Songa, Joshua Ouma and Isaac Okeyo, interviewed by John Onyango, 16 Dec. 1967, 19 Dec. 1967, 21 Dec. 1967, 22 Dec. 1967. National Christian Council of Kenya Research Project, St Paul's United Theological College, Limuru, Kenya.

<sup>23</sup> H. P. Gale, *Uganda and the Mill Hill Fathers* (London, 1959), 307.

<sup>24</sup> White Fathers, *Rapport Annuel 1916/17*, Mgr Streicher's General Report.



dependent on foreign aid. The value of trained Africans now became apparent, though the missionaries were not always sure that they were adequate replacements for Europeans. Three old boys of St Mary's School, married and reliable men, now taught in the junior school at Rubaga; 'mais ce sont des Nègres et ils ne sauraient pas remplacer les Pères, ni pour l'enseignement ni surtout pour la formation des élèves.'<sup>25</sup> Other missionaries however, were more aware of how much the work depended on Africans, especially the catechists. Remove the catechists, and three-quarters at least of the missionaries' contacts with the Christian population would be gone, let alone anything else.<sup>26</sup> Towards the end of the war, when the Ugandan priests had been placed in parish work, some of the teaching in the junior seminary was entrusted to senior seminarians during the second of their probationary years.<sup>27</sup>

In German East Africa, very few of the African clergy of the U.M.C.A. were able to continue with their work during the period when British missionaries were interned; they were suspected of being agents of the British owing to their connexion with a British mission. They and the teachers were sooner or later imprisoned, and fourteen teachers and two deacons died as a result of their treatment, when many of them were put in chain-gangs. But Canon Samwili Sehoza, who had been left in charge of the church in the Masasi area when the missionaries left, remained free until September 1916, and had two priests and three deacons to help him. He guided the community through a period of famine caused by the requisitioning of most of the grain harvest by the Germans, rationing out what food there was and trying in vain to persuade the German officials to behave more humanely towards the civilian population. Finally in 1916 all the clergy and teachers from the area save one were imprisoned. The one exception was the Rev. Danieli Usufu, who was related to a chief whom the Germans were using, and was therefore allowed to remain free. In the Bondei area the clergy and teachers were imprisoned soon after the outbreak of war, and refused to buy their freedom by giving false information against the British missionaries as they were asked to do.<sup>28</sup> When the mission was able to return in 1916 and 1917 as the country passed out of German hands into British, the missionaries found buildings collapsed or destroyed, and the people afraid to repair them lest they should be seen to be able-bodied and conscripted into the Carrier Corps. But Christianity had by no means collapsed. In the Bondei area where the people had been without trained leadership since the outbreak of the war, one missionary wrote: 'Of the spiritual affairs of these two districts [Kigongoi and Kizara] I think I can say quite definitely that the war has done good rather than bad in the vast majority of cases.'<sup>29</sup> Soon after the war had ended, a further

<sup>25</sup> White Fathers, *Rapport Annuel 1915/16*, St Mary's School.

<sup>26</sup> White Fathers, *Rapport Annuel 1917/18*, Gayaza.

<sup>27</sup> White Fathers, *Rapport Annuel 1917/18*, Bukalasa.

<sup>28</sup> Blood, *History*, 105-11.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid* 120.

ordination course was held; five men were ordained deacons and then made priests only a month later. The Bishop waived the normal period of probation required of deacons before being made priests in view of their courageous leadership during the war.<sup>30</sup>

The only other mission with a large number of British staff in German East Africa was the C.M.S. in the central area of the country. Although they had been there since 1876, no Africans had been ordained, and in comparison with Uganda this area was considered backward, difficult and unpromising. In 1915 the C.M.S. missionaries were imprisoned with those of the U.M.C.A. In 1917, after the fall of Tabora and as the British advanced, some were able to return to the areas in which they had worked to see what had happened. Much to their surprise they found the Christians faithfully carrying on. Here too the church teachers had been suspected of conspiring with the British and many were imprisoned. The C.M.S. Annual Report for 1917-18 reads as follows:

In spite of what they had suffered at the hands of the German askaris . . . most of the African agents had continued their work, and in many places the schools as well as the Sunday services had been carried on. Some, but only a few, cases of backsliding had occurred, and Canon Rogers wrote: 'The work has undergone a test of the severest possible kind, and has stood better than anyone would have anticipated'. . . . The church, school and teachers' house at Buigiri have been burnt, but the spiritual work has been fairly maintained . . . At Zoyisa, an outstation in the district, [work] has been continued ever since the war began, save once when the teacher and his flock had to flee to the mountains for safety. 'There is great keenness and spirituality' among the people, it is said; 'the congregations number about 500; classes are being taught by the catechumens, who also help in the schools; and there are many desirous of becoming enquirers'. A somewhat similar account is given of Cilonwa, another outstation, where Mr. Banks found many candidates ready for baptism.<sup>31</sup>

The next year's report seems almost entirely to contradict this and speaks of the mission work being almost at a standstill. Possibly it was referring to the work of missionaries, for a little further on we find the comment, 'It is not surprising that *some* teachers were found slack in work . . .'.<sup>32</sup> There must have been others who were not. The report for 1920-1 strikes a better balance. Still talking of the war period it notes that 'At some places the congregations appeared to have gone to pieces, at others there was real evidence of endurance, and at several centres there was real progress . . .'.<sup>33</sup> Some of the things the missionaries complained of were simply the result of there being no ordained clergy: 'Great laxity had been prevailing among the Christian population, there being no one to perform marriages.'<sup>34</sup> Perhaps this is partly why, in 1921, the first two

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 120-3; G. H. Wilson, *The History of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa* (London, 1936), 162.

<sup>31</sup> *CMS Annual Report 1917/18*, 35-6.

<sup>32</sup> *CMS Annual Report 1919/20*, 18-19.

<sup>33</sup> *CMS Annual Report 1920/21*, 34.

<sup>34</sup> *CMS Annual Report 1920/21*, 35.

African deacons were ordained.<sup>35</sup> In the next year or two stories continue to filter through of Christian faithfulness when deprived of missionary leadership.<sup>36</sup> Reading through the series of reports the picture seems clear enough. The church did *not* collapse. In some places it went to pieces, and in many places things might have been better if there had been some trained leadership—there was, for instance, no one to baptize or perform marriages. Yet instead of recognizing that the situation among the Christians was very different from what they had supposed, the mission set about restoring the old pre-war order of things, re-establishing ‘discipline’,<sup>37</sup> and going on as far as possible in the old way. After the first surprise of finding that the church had survived, their reports stress the failures rather than the successes. Did the return of the missionaries stifle the delicate plant of self-reliance and initiative which had flowered during the years of the war but of which there is little evidence, at least in mission reports, in the years immediately following?

The group of Christians least able to continue on their own was in the northern section of the Moravian Mission field, in Urambo, Tabora and Ukimbu. The missions in this area had been founded between 1897 and 1903 and very few converts were claimed. In 1910 there were 98 baptized persons and 235 catechumens. After the arrival of the railway at Tabora in 1912 there was alarm among the missionaries about the spread of Islam brought in by migrant workers. In 1913 and 1914 several teachers were dismissed for marital offences, and a number of Christians suspended from communion. During the war the missionaries were interned, though one or two were allowed to keep an eye on mission property, and in 1921 the Rev. N. H. Gaarde was allowed to resume work as a missionary. He visited all the mission’s previous stations, and found things in a bad way. Most of the Christian men had been conscripted into the Carrier Corps, either by the Germans or the British or both, and there was much disease and famine. The tiny groups of Christians had been dispersed, and many had found it difficult or impossible to continue as Christians. The church, in fact, had virtually ceased to exist.<sup>38</sup> In the southern area of Moravian activity, around Rungwe, things were better. The mission had been more successful here, and when the Livingstonia Mission from Nyasaland took over this area in 1921, they found that for the most part the people had continued to practise their Christianity.<sup>39</sup> But the Livingstonia Mission

<sup>35</sup> *CMS Annual Report 1921/22*, 33.

<sup>36</sup> *CMS Annual Report 1921/22*, 33; *1923/24*, 14–15.

<sup>37</sup> *CMS Annual Report 1920/21*, 35.

<sup>38</sup> A. E. M. Shorter, *Chiefship in Western Tanzania* (Oxford, 1972), 339, 342–50; Moravian Missionary Society, ‘The Moravian Church in Western Tanzania’, being extracts from periodical accounts selected by the Rev. T. Kisanji (microfilm, Makerere University Archives).

<sup>39</sup> D. Mwapwele, ‘The Arrival of the Moravians in Rungwe 1891–1914’, manuscript graduating essay (Makerere University, 1966) 14; Wright, *German Missions*, 140–7 gives a more negative picture drawn largely from German mission records and stresses the collapse of buildings.

was dismayed by the lack of training and self-reliance that they found among the teachers here. An African teacher, Yoram Mphande, was sent to make the first contact with the Moravian Christians, and he had great difficulty in getting himself accepted; the people could not believe that an African could be entrusted with such authority, and wanted to wait for the white missionaries to arrive. However, he was gradually able to win their confidence. When a European missionary did arrive, he met and examined all the Moravian teachers, and commented: 'I do not think I had fully realised how great was the gift Livingstonia had in Dr Laws until I saw what other men working upon similar materials and with similar opportunities had done, or rather failed to do.'<sup>40</sup>

The tiny Moravian church in the northern area was something of an exception in being unable to survive when the missionaries left (though it might be argued that it was so small that it had virtually never existed). One Lutheran mission was something of an exception in deciding to ordain Africans and hand over to them when faced with repatriation in 1921. This was the Bethel Mission in Tanga Province, what is now the Usambara-Digo Synod of the Lutheran Church in Tanzania. In 1917 most of the missionaries had had to leave when the British advanced, and no Africans had been ordained, but African teachers carried on and led the church.<sup>41</sup> One of these was Luka Jang'andu, who made himself responsible for the material as well as the spiritual welfare of the Christians at a time when famine was rife: 'He visited other congregations during the war when the missionaries had been taken away. He looked for the lapsed Christians and insisted that there should be coffee estates for the congregations. When he visited congregations he encouraged people to have banana-fields and he punished those who were lazy.'<sup>42</sup> At Bungu where mission work was going well before the missionaries had to leave, there was no set-back: 'In 1917 the word of God was further spread when the church was being run by natives. Those who had accepted Christianity were helped by the Holy Spirit and had a burning zeal without being forced.'<sup>43</sup> People were impressed by the way Christians helped each other, and their pagan neighbours also. 'During that time there was a true manifestation of love. At funerals many came from far and sang hymns and played trumpets. One day during a baptism a pagan was so moved that he wanted to be baptised on the spot—but he was asked to receive instruction first.'<sup>44</sup> (The last sentence would appear to refer to the later period

<sup>40</sup> W. P. Livingstone, *Laws of Livingstonia* (London, 1922) 358; Wright, *German Missions*, 146, gives the catechist's name.

<sup>41</sup> Groves, *Planting*, 29: 'The work of the Bethel Mission in Usambara lapsed'.

<sup>42</sup> Timilai H. L. Guga, 'Research into the History of the Usambara-Digo Lutheran Church', manuscript graduating essay translated from Swahili by M. H. K. Mbwana (Makumira Lutheran Theological College and Makerere University Archives), 12; information on Vuga given by Yerima Mlwati (teacher) and Loti Shemkunta (elder).

<sup>43</sup> Guga, 'Research', 16; information on Bungu congregation given by Stephano Shunda (elder).

<sup>44</sup> Guga, 'Research', 16.

when there were ordained African clergy). 'They helped the sick even though some of them were pagans.'<sup>45</sup>

In 1921 the missionaries who had been allowed to remain until then, because they were engaged in looking after mental patients, also had to leave. It was now decided that instead of handing over their work to another mission, seven men should be ordained. These included Luka Jang'andu and others who had already been virtually doing the work of pastors. Little time was available to the missionaries, and all they could do was give the men three weeks training.<sup>46</sup> Their ordination seems to have been considered a necessary evil, judging by the way it was left until the last moment. But in the absence of the missionaries and under the guidance of these men, the church expanded and entered on what all informants say was a time of great blessing. Luka Jang'andu became the leader among the clergy, and led them in their discussions when they met together.<sup>47</sup> These pastors seem to have worked without pay.<sup>48</sup> The missionaries in Europe, hearing that large numbers were being baptized, were sure that their fears of African irresponsibility were well-founded, and that people were being baptized without adequate instruction, but when they returned they found this was not the case.<sup>49</sup> New work had been started among workers on sisal plantations,<sup>50</sup> the missionaries recognized the good work done and accordingly gave many of the teachers certificates.<sup>51</sup>

When the missionaries returned in 1925, however, they tried to organize and control what had been spontaneous, and thereby ruined it; the church in Tanga Province never seems to have regained what it lost at this time. The research worker who collected this information described the decline as follows:

When the missionaries came back, there were signs that the Holy Spirit had left, for the desire to cooperate to work for the Lord was no more seen. Trouble started when they started grading workers. Hatred started. The intention of the missionaries was to teach the people to pay a regular offering to God (*utumikizi*)—God's tax. This started divisions for each congregation decided on a different amount. For example Mlalo decided to pay 1/- each every month for school fees while Mtae decided to pay -/25. Thus there was a division and although they decided it was very difficult to pay.<sup>52</sup>

It seems a typical example of the European desire to tidy things up and organize so as to obtain control.

The experience of this Lutheran church forms a fitting summary and epilogue to this paper. As in so many other cases, no men had been ordained

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 81; information on Lutindi congregation given by Reuben Kanju and Daniel Kamna (elders).

<sup>46</sup> Guga, 'Research', 81; researcher's epilogue.

<sup>47</sup> Guga, 'Research', 23b; information on Tanga congregation given by Rev. Yakobo Ng'ombe, one of the first seven pastors ordained.

<sup>48</sup> Guga, 'Research', 28b; information given by Rev. Hiyobu Kuyonga, one of the first seven pastors ordained; 32, researcher's epilogue.

<sup>49</sup> Guga, 'Research', 32-3. <sup>50</sup> Ibid. 24; information given by Rev. Yakobo Ng'ombe.

<sup>51</sup> Guga, 'Research', 28b; information given by Rev. Hiyobu Kuyonga.

<sup>52</sup> Guga, 'Research', 32b; researcher's epilogue.

when the missionaries were first removed. Yet the church was able to carry on and natural leaders arose. Again and again the missionaries underestimated the strength of popular allegiance to Christianity. By the missionaries' standards they may have been ignorant of the faith, but their allegiance to it was not determined by the extent of their knowledge. When men were ordained the church was in a much better position not only to continue to exist but to expand. Ordained men could dispense the sacraments which are essential to the full life of a Christian community. (In the C.M.S. area of Central Tanzania it was noted how when the missionaries came back they found people waiting for someone to baptize them, and confusion because there had been no one to perform marriages). But again, as in so many places, the missionaries did not really learn the right lessons from what had happened. They recognized the devotion of those who had led the church, and learned that their fears about irresponsible baptism were unfounded. But although the pastors and teachers had carried on without pay, and had shown foresight in trying to organize the growing of cash-crops and bananas, and generosity in helping each other at funerals and in cases of illness, the missionaries now tried to organize this generosity in their own way. And it brought disaster. The inter-war years are not inspiring ones in the history of missions. Many new hospitals and schools were opened, it is true, and large numbers of people were baptized, but there was little progress in handing over any real responsibility to Africans. Most, though not all, missions did see the need for ordaining Africans, but they seldom went further, or gave them posts of higher responsibility than that of parish priest. There is one interesting exception. That is the consecration of Bishop Joseph Kiwanuka in 1939. The White Fathers worked steadily on in their seminaries, numbers slowly increasing all the time, and then, in 1939, before the cataclysmic events which shook the rest of the missions out of their complacency and forced them to appoint Africans to positions of higher responsibility, this first African Catholic Bishop of modern times was appointed and placed over a diocese staffed by Ugandan priests. The Anglicans, who should have been in the lead, had fallen behind, and not until after the war, in 1947, did they appoint an African Assistant Bishop, Bishop Aberi Balya, also in Uganda.

Only one mission seems to have given much publicity to the part played by African Christians during the war period, and that was the U.M.C.A. In their official histories, in the biography of Bishop Weston, and in Canon Samwili Sehoza's own account of his war experiences, they made much of what African Christians had achieved. Elsewhere, perhaps, there was a subconscious fear that if too much prominence was given to this chapter of church history in East Africa, someone might ask the obvious question, 'Why are missionaries still needed?'<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> In the 1920s financial stringency forced the C.M.S. to ask its Uganda Mission to consider the possibility of withdrawal: see G. Hewitt, *The Problems of Success* (London, 1971), 229.

## SUMMARY

It has usually been supposed that World War I was 'an injury to the Christian cause' because of the disruption of missionary work when mission personnel were called up, interned or not replaced. This view is questioned. Evidence is adduced from the history of the church in East Africa to show that African Christians responded to the situation by shouldering responsibilities in a way which surprised the missionaries on their return. The churches best placed to survive were those in which a beginning had been made to train African clergy. Only the Anglicans and Catholics had made any progress in training indigenous leadership by 1914. But even where this had not been done, leaders emerged, and some churches even grew considerably in numbers without any loss of quality. One example of this is drawn from the Usambara-Digo synod of the Lutheran Church in Tanzania. The missionaries' attitudes and actions on their eventual return are surveyed. Often they were surprised to find that in their absence the Christian communities had not disintegrated as they had feared. But almost always their concern was to 'discipline' the church, and return to the ways of doing things at the outbreak of war, instead of building on the developments which had occurred in the meantime. This sometimes had disastrous consequences as natural leadership became frustrated. The greatest 'injury to the Christian cause' may have been the missions' failure to see that a new method of working was now required of them rather than a return to the old.